

# With us, about us and for us

A co-design framework for cultural practitioners,  
organisations, funders and policymakers

COMMISSIONED BY BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

CO-DESIGNED BY

DAVID BOYD  
JAHSWILL EMMANUEL  
TREVOR GREER  
PRADNYA JOSHI  
BRENDA KENT  
DENIS LONG  
SEAN MCDONNELL  
JOHN MCCORMICK  
DEIRDRE MCKENNA  
NIKKI MCVEIGH  
UNA NIC EOIN  
JANICE SMITH  
MARIA TEGLAS

SEPTEMBER 2021



# engine room

*noun*

the principal source of energy, activity, or strength in a particular context

## Contents

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| <i>About this framework</i> .....  | 4   |
| <i>About co-design</i> .....   | 9   |
| <i>Believe it! The co-design mindset</i> .....   | 13  |
| <i>Do it! The co-design process</i> .....  | 17  |
| <i>Some more toolkits and guides</i> .....   | 34  |
| <i>Thanks</i> .....  | 35  |
| <i>Bibliography</i> .....  | 37  |
| <i>Appendix 1: Defining co-design</i> .....  | 44  |
| <i>Appendix 2: Understand it: Mapping what's already strong in co-design in Belfast</i> .....                          | 47  |
| <i>Appendix 3: Understand it: Case studies</i> .....   | 62  |
| <i>Appendix 4: Understand it: Who are the “uninvolved” and how they might be supported, engaged and involved</i> ..... | 86  |
| <i>Appendix 5: Understand it: Research methods and tools</i> .....   | 120 |
| <i>Appendix 6: Imagine it: Catalyst projects for co-design and involvement...</i>                                      | 125 |
| <i>Appendix 7: Nurture it: Recommendations for Belfast City Council</i> .....  | 145 |
| <i>Appendix 8: Communications plan</i> .....   | 154 |
| <i>Appendix 9: Review it: The evaluation framework</i> .....   | 155 |
| <i>Appendix 10: Definitions from the Continuous Household Survey</i> .....   | 166 |

## About this framework

In its cultural strategy, A city imagining, Belfast City Council wants to create an inclusive city where everyone actively participates in cultural life. That means not just funding cultural activities but supporting people to engage more and differently so that they become agents of change and co-creators of cultural activity.

The first priority in the A city imagining implementation plan is developing a people-focused approach to cultural development by facilitating citizen and sector participation in setting priorities, in decision-making and in the evaluation of cultural policies.

In spring 2021, Belfast City Council commissioned a framework to help the organisations it works with engage in a different way using a facilitative, people-focused methodology called co-design. The council was particularly interested in how co-design could engage groups of people who are traditionally less likely to be seen and heard in cultural life of the city.

“This framework will be the ‘Engine Room’ from which we can power capacity building in the city. Specifically it will:

- Identify those groups and individuals who are currently under-represented in the cultural life of the city;
- Identify the specific needs of these groups in terms of building the confidence to engage with co-design processes and participate in Belfast’s 2023/4 year of culture;
- Present a creative, interdependent approach to co-design which will position Belfast as a laboratory for new, progressive approaches to participatory engagement.” (Belfast City Council )

Smith and Kent Consulting was appointed by the council to develop the co-design framework. Rather than take a top-down approach, they wanted to put the theory in to practice by co-designing it with people with a range of perspectives and expertise.

In May 2021, a co-design team of 13 co-design “engineers” was formed. The 13 engineers<sup>1</sup> come from different backgrounds. Some of them have worked in health, business, engineering, the youth sector or community sector. Some of them are artists or work in theatres, galleries, museums and events. Others have not been to the theatre since we were at school. They are all ages, religions, colours, opinions and passions.

## The co-design team

**David Boyd** is director of Beat Carnival, a community and carnival arts organisation. He has been active in community arts for 30 years and created the Belfast Carnival Parade in 1995. He founded the East Belfast Arts Centre in 1993, which later became the Carnival Centre. Beat Carnival Centre is now based at the intersection of north and west Belfast and the city centre.

**Jahswill Emmanuel** is originally from Nigeria. He moved to NI in 2004. After overcoming racially motivated attacks, Jahswill worked towards opening a community hub for BAME youth to encourage them to participate and integrate through sports and cultural activities. He is the founder of Multi-Ethnic Sports and Cultures NI (MSCNI) and an undergraduate of Ulster University in Community Development. Jahswill has been recognised with many awards for his voluntary work.

**Trevor Greer** has 16 years' experience as a community-based worker in south-west Belfast including community development, good relations, community safety, restorative practice, peacebuilding and working with former combatants.

**Pradnya Joshi** is a freelance facilitator, creative writing mentor, poet, STEM ambassador, health lead and activist from Belfast. She also worked as design engineer. She first moved to Belfast in 2016 from India. Her first language is Marathi. She believes creating the best designs and services require a better understanding of arts.

---

<sup>1</sup> Including Janice Smith and Brenda Kent from Smith and Kent

**Brenda Kent** is one half of Smith and Kent Consulting. She is a music loving, theatre-going chair of a community arts organisation who has lived in England, South Africa and Zimbabwe. She currently lives in Downpatrick and Dublin with her civil partner.

**Denis Long** is a Romanian national who has been living in NI for 12 years. Her background is in education, social work and community development. Denis's particular interest is in achieving social justice, and she is passionate about opening up public services (including the arts) to marginalised groups. Denis's advocacy work for the Roma communities of NI has been recognised nationally and internationally and has set the benchmark for Roma inclusion locally. Married with a young son, Denis enjoys literature and writing poetry in her limited spare time.

**Seán McDonnell** is a youth worker with YouthAction NI, where he coordinates the Radio YNP project. He has previously worked for Raidió Fáilte. He is a sound engineer with Amps Studio and a musician with Aye and Search Party.

**John McCormick** is policy and engagement manager at Versus Arthritis. He previously worked for NICVA, Carers NI and Age Concern NI and managed a library. He is a firm believer in the value of community development and has a passion for empowering individuals and highlighting causes that should be more recognised.

**Deirdre McKenna**, originally from Dublin, is a visual artist who moved to Belfast in 1995, planning to stay for one year! She has contributed to the sector for over 25 years as an artist, organiser, director, collaborator, curator, studio member, advisor and mentor. Belfast is now the place she calls home.

**Nikki McVeigh** has been an expert advisor to the Ministerial Advisory Group for Architecture and Built Heritage Northern Ireland since 2019 and was chief executive of the Ulster Architectural and Heritage Society from 2014 to 2021. She has also worked in architectural practice, project management, community development and education in NI and Scotland.

**Una NicEoin** became executive producer at Prime Cut Productions in 2009. Since then she has produced 21 acclaimed shows that have toured locally and internationally. Una has delivered presentations at a variety of conferences and events for across the UK and Ireland. She was chair of Ponydance Dance Company until 2021 and an artistic associate of Streetwise Community Circus.

**Janice Smith** is the other half of Smith and Kent Consulting. She has worked in publishing, arts development, good relations and community development. In her free time, she likes to read and rock climb.

**Maria Teglas** is the mother of two wonderful children whom she loves very much. It was for them that she moved to NI from her home country of Romania – to offer them a better future. She feels that in this country there are better learning opportunities and the children will be in a better position to choose what they want to do in life. Professionally, Maria works in support of the Roma communities in Belfast, a job that she loves and is extremely proud of.

## How to use this framework

**This framework is for anyone working in the cultural sector**, whether you are an artist or cultural practitioner, a cultural organisation or a funder or policymaker.

**It should also be useful to communities and community organisations** to understand how they can become co-creators of culture and how they should be valued when engaged.

The main framework defines what we mean by co-design and why it is important (pages 9 to 12).

It then explores the mindset that underpins co-design. These beliefs or principles are the foundation of good co-design practice. (Pages 13 to 16)

The framework then outlines eight steps that can be taken to build on this foundation and put theory in to practice (pages 17 to 33). You can adapt these to each activity or project and, essentially, to the different people and groups you are working with.

Finally, there is a short list of other guides and toolkits we found particularly inspiring (page 34).

The appendices, roughly, follow the steps and show how we put theory in to practice when we co-designed this framework.

During the “Understand it” phase, we talked to lots of different people and groups to understand who is less likely to be involved in culture, and why (appendix 4). We also

looked at how organisations locally and further afield and in the cultural and other sectors are already co-designing or engaging people less likely to be involved in culture (appendices 2 and 3).

During the “Imagine it” phase, the co-designers worked in smaller teams to come up with concepts for projects with groups of people who may be less likely to be involved in funded cultural activity (appendix 6).

The evaluation framework will help Belfast City Council “Review it” (appendix 9), while the communications plan will help it market it (appendix 8).

Finally, appendix 7 includes additional recommendations for Belfast City Council to support its own co-design practice as well as systemic changes that are required to “Nurture it” in the sector and the city, such as funding and further research.

## A quick note on the language

Words can mean different things to different people. They can be a barrier that stops people understanding and taking part. We have tried to use the following terms in a particular way throughout the framework.

**Engagement:** In this report, this refers to people either attending or participating in formal funded arts and culture (going to a museum or gallery, taking part in a recital or performance and so on) or attending, participating or consuming arts and culture in less formal or unfunded settings (going to a school play, reading a book and so on).

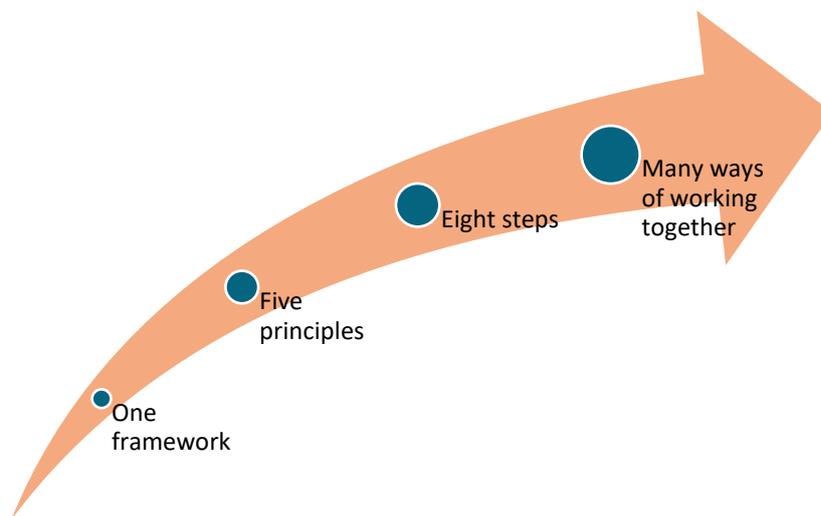
**Involvement:** In this report, this means meaningful engagement designed to enable and empower people to become agents of change and co-creators of cultural activity.

**Outcomes or results:** In this report, these mean changes or differences made for people, places or communities.

# About co-design

“Good co-production can be thought of like a recipe. The core values are like ingredients and *the* core skills are the method. You put the values and skills together to make the right conditions and behaviours for ‘working together’, and as a result you get better outcome.” (Co-production Oxfordshire)

Co-design is **a way of thinking and a way of working** that recognises that people are part of the solution because they are experts in their own experience and supports them to help make decisions about what affects them.<sup>2</sup>



The co-design **way of thinking is a mindset or set of principles** that shapes how you think, how you relate to other people and what you do. If you do not have a co-design mindset, you are not doing co-design.

---

<sup>2</sup> See appendix 1 for an overview of different definitions of co-design and co-production.

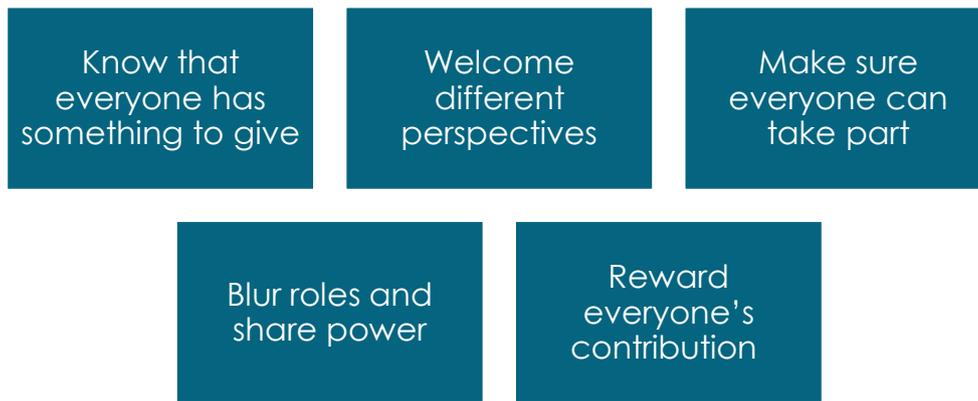


FIGURE 1 FIVE PRINCIPLES OF THE CO-DESIGN MINDSET

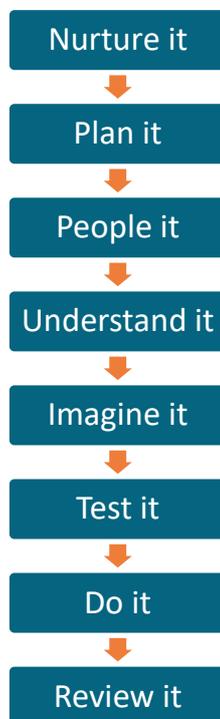


FIGURE 2 EIGHT STEPS OF CO-DESIGN PRACTICE

**The co-design way of working should be tailored to needs of activity and, essentially, doing what matters for everyone involved.** This means it is not something that can be read and rolled out in exactly the same way for everything you do. In Belfast, we talked to people who have been co-designing well for decades, and they are still proud to be learning and developing their practice.

## Why co-design?

“The importance of people with lived experience influencing our work is as important as complying with regulations, properly managing budgets and delivering high quality projects [...] You will only be effective if you truly hear and understand the needs of people and then plan and deliver accordingly [...] While professionals try to do more with less and less – many wise, passionate and eager people with lived experience are left on the bench.” (Kercher)

Co-design is **about getting better ideas and so getting better solutions or results.**

It gets better ideas by **embracing the knowledge, energy, experience, ideas, time, goodwill and inspiration of everyone affected by an issue or involved in an activity.**

Arts and culture do not exist in a bubble, and creative expression is usually a facilitative and collaborative process. This makes a strong foundation for co-design. However, people with lived experience can be left out. This includes audiences, consumers and other advocates who currently visit museums, watch shows, listen to music or read books.

Many cultural organisations already do outreach or other engagement in communities. The principles of co-design will change the nature of those relationships for some by **changing the balance of power.** People whose lived experience means they are less likely to engage with funded cultural activities are most at risk of being left out at this moment.

Co-design is also about **building on what is already there** and what is already strong. This means adding relevance, experience and perspectives, not taking away quality or de-professionalising arts, heritage or culture. Artists, cultural practitioners and other professionals are experts whose experience should be valued alongside that of audiences, consumers, communities and other people affected or involved.

In these ways, co-design is a movement away from conventional project management, change management and design processes and even more facilitative approaches or engagement that appear democratic but do not actually shift power. The table below summarises some of these differences.

| Convention  | Co-design   |
|---|---|
| People and communities are a problem to be fixed                          | People are part of the solution   |
| Organisations have the power  | Organisations are facilitators, and power is distributed among those affected |
| Values the knowledge and ideas of those with the most power and resources | Values the knowledge and ideas of people who are directly affected            |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Professionals are the experts and have the solutions | Everyone is an expert in their own experience and has something positive to contribute |
| Focuses on getting it done                           | Focuses on relationships and outcomes  |
| Blames   | Brings together  |
| Asking for feedback on your ideas                    | Facilitating others to come up with ideas  |
| Convening meetings to get feedback                   | Supporting people to play an active role in governance and decision-making             |

FIGURE 3 DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CO-DESIGN AND TRADITIONAL APPROACHES

As well as better results and more effective and efficient programmes, co-design has the long-term benefit of creating better conditions for future co-design. By involving people in sharing power and making decisions about what affects them, networks and connections are built between people and groups, building social capital.

For the cultural sector itself, more people more involved in more ways that are meaningful to them means that they are more likely to be advocates for arts and culture, concerned for its preservation and continuation.

“They are creating their own art and commissioning their own work; they are organising their own groups and forums; they are independently applying for their own funds. The potential exists for them to be vocal advocates for arts funding and provision in their area, to get their ‘fair share’ of the pot.” (Icarus)

# Believe it! The co-design mindset

The co-design mindset is a set of principles or beliefs that **underpins all co-design work**. If you don't believe in them, you are not doing co-design.



FIGURE 4 FIVE PRINCIPLES OF THE CO-DESIGN MINDSET

You should **share the mindset with the different people and groups you are working with**, and you should **continually test whether you are living the beliefs**. For example, at the start meetings, you could read out the principles or ask each other, Are we doing what matters for everyone here? What else can we do to help you take part? Is there anyone else we need around this table?

## Principle 1: Know that everyone has something to give

This means believing that **all people are assets**. They are the experts in the things they have experienced, so everyone has something to give. This shapes what you see as evidence, who decides who takes part and what you hear.

Co-design is not about everyone being an expert in everything. It is important to **respect different interests and expertise** whether it is an artist, an historian, a set designer, a community worker or a resident. But **nobody is more important than anyone else**. There is equality of regard for all experience and an emphasis on **building relationships of trust** so everyone feels welcome to contribute their own perspective.

You can show that you value each person's knowledge, experience, skills and abilities, influence and connections by taking time to build the relationship and getting to know and understand what they bring to the process.

## Principle 2: Welcome different perspectives

This is about **involving everyone who needs to be involved** and **doing what matters for them**.

Do you know who they are? Do you know where to reach them? Do you know how they like to be reached? This means building **networks across groups, sectors and silos**.

Organisations we spoke to that are already co-designing told us that they spent a lot of time going to meetings, for example, in their local neighbourhood. Even if they didn't say very much, people became aware of them and started to trust them.

Others have told us that "99 per cent" of their work is with organisations from outside the cultural sector. These organisations know how to reach and engage their people, community or "service users". This also creates opportunities to pool resources and assets to work towards a shared goal or outcomes.

## Principle 3: Make sure everyone can take part

**There shouldn't be anything that makes it difficult for any group of people to take part**. This means thinking about where and how the work is done and what **support people need to take part**.

Not everyone has the confidence to share their experience. Some people have different language abilities or different ways of communicating. Being inclusive doesn't mean treating everyone in the same way. It is important to think about how what you do should be **adapted to be relevant** for different groups you are trying to engage with.

Support organisations can be essential when working with vulnerable people. They can be in the room to support and safeguard participants and provide follow-up support that is outside the expertise of a cultural organisation, artist, cultural practitioner or facilitator.

## Principle 4: Blur roles and share power

Co-design means changing ideas such as "service users", "providers", "audiences" or "consumers" to one of **"partners" who are active collaborators in the creation of**

**cultural activity. Organisations become enablers**, facilitating everyone involved to make change.

Sharing power and blurring roles is easier if you establish democratic and inclusive ways of working from the start and show that all contributions are equally valued.

Forming and working with groups with a wide range of participants from different experiences can be challenging for those used to working within a formal organisational structure and those who are not used to working with others at all. Take time to **let the co-design group establish its own ways of working**.

The evaluation of Creative People and Places, a major Arts Council England engagement initiative, found that environments for power sharing are based on:

- i. understanding the local context including what assets are available, what works and why, leaving your own assumptions about the people and the place at the door
- ii. timing and timescales. It is a time-intensive process that constantly evolves as interest, trust, understanding and skills are built
- iii. capacity and skills of staff, residents and partners with different opportunities for different people to become involved at different stages in a "continuum of engagement"
- iv. organisational and systemic change including a "philosophical shift" in the kinds of art and the role of local people as co-creators rather than passive recipients. (Icarus)

## Principle 5: Reward everyone's contribution

Because everyone is bringing something to the process, **everyone needs to get something in return so that there is mutual benefit**.

Payment is a clear way to show to people how valuable their input and commitment are. Some people prefer not to be paid or will ask for payment to go directly to someone or somewhere else, like a charity.

Sometimes people can be rewarded by getting something for free, such as training, experience, a reference or further opportunities to work with your organisations. Tea and cake are both a reward and hospitality. "Never underestimate the power of pizza", several organisations told us!

People can also feel rewarded by friendship, feeling useful or making a difference. Making sure that they hear that they are important is important. Use sharing events, briefings and celebrations at key points. And say thank you, often.

# Do it! The co-design process

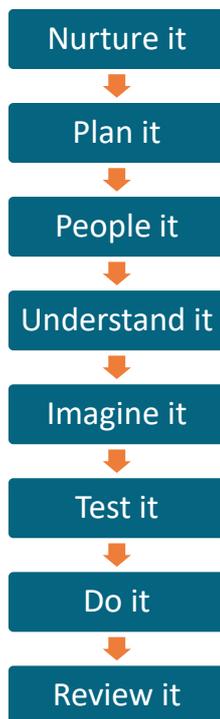


FIGURE 5: EIGHT STEPS TO CO-DESIGN

Conventional design and project management processes involve clearly defined steps that you go through in order.

Co-design is more organic, and **the process itself is as important as the end result**, prioritising relationship building and shared learning. You may find that you **don't follow all the steps always in the exact same order**, and often you may have to repeat a step as new information is discovered, new people are welcomed to the table or new ideas emerge.

## Step 1: Nurture it

Nurture it is about **making sure that co-design is a good fit for you, your organisation and your project**. These checklists can help you think about what you might need to change to create the conditions and environment to support good co-design.

### Is co-design a good fit for your project?

Co-design is not just a buzzword or magical thinking that will bring about the results by just saying the words. Not everything can be co-designed, and not everything is right for co-design (although we would always encourage you to engage people in a participative process so that they can help shape your activity).

Use this checklist to decide whether co-design is right for your project right now.



**Can you really share power and decisions?** Make sure that people can make decisions and be specific about what they can and cannot influence.



**Can you honour your commitments to people taking part?** Or manage their expectations. Pilot projects that don't go anywhere can damage future prospects with people, partners and funders.



**Have you the time and money to do it well?** People we spoke to told us that time is critical. It takes time to build trust and relationships. This is often difficult to get funding for.



**What if it doesn't go to plan?** Does your organisation and your funder recognise that success and failure are not absolutes? How will you capture and share learning? Early, easy wins (and small educational, failures) can be good when you are first starting out.

For more on assessing if co-design is appropriate see

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5cc50b947fdcb81f7939668a/t/5d5e348fda83c10001d624f7/1566454928039/Questions.pdf>

### Do you and your team have the skills?

Organisations we talked to about co-design told us that having key people with key skills – whether it is a project manager, facilitator, artist or other cultural practitioner – is essential to the success of any co-design process.

Not everyone will have all of these skills but being aware of them will help you value different people's expertise.

It takes courage to seriously appraise your own skills and know when to stand back. That you are a practical go-getter with eyes firmly on the end result might make you a great manager, or you may be a great artist with a singular vision, but others may be better at facilitating a co-design workshop.

Here are some of the skills you and your team will need.

- A good grasp of and belief in the principles of co-design
- Skills to structure engagement in terms of content, space, time and rules of participation

- Skills to involve people at the right stage of the process and help them stay engaged
- Facilitation skills to create a safe space, let people feel free to contribute in their own way and the ability to react spontaneously to unforeseen developments
- Patience and curiosity to find better, not quicker answers in a complex world
- Honest communication and good listening skills
- Open-minded, not jumping to conclusions about what is wrong and right and awareness of your own biases and assumptions
- Sensitivity to other people's needs and differences
- The ability to seek out and give constant feedback so everyone is supported and everyone learns at their own pace in their own way
- Skills to turn different interests and conflicts in to tools for exploration and open communication and the experience to know when to call on processes to resolve disputes

For more on the skills and how to put values into action see

How to do good co-production: What's the recipe? Grab sheet in

[www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/file/about-council/CoproHandbook\\_Full.pdf](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/file/about-council/CoproHandbook_Full.pdf)

[www.beyondstickynotes.com/mindsets-for-codesign](http://www.beyondstickynotes.com/mindsets-for-codesign)

## Is your organisation onboard?

“How do we listen to our audiences is in our strategy – how do we do it earlier, how do we keep the organisation's ears wide open?”

YOUNG AT ART

Co-design does not happen in a vacuum. You need your organisation to understand and fully support what you are doing. This is called a whole-systems approach or, more simply, thinking about your organisation as a four-piece jigsaw.

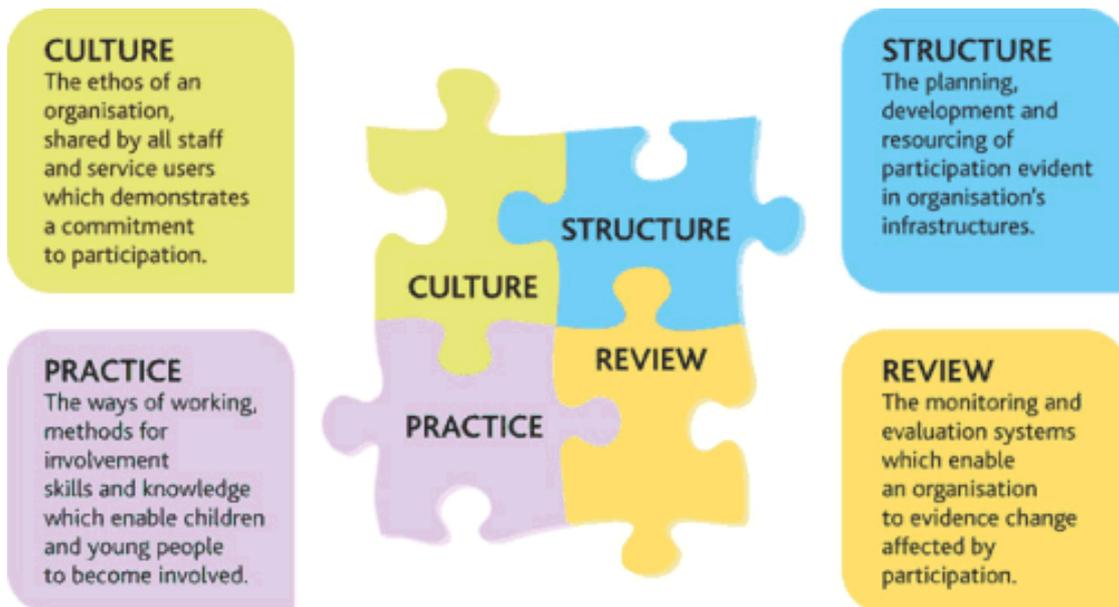


FIGURE 6: JIGSAW FOR EMBEDDING CO-PRODUCTION (SOCIAL CARE INSTITUTE OF EXCELLENCE )

Use this list to start a conversation in your workplace to see what needs to be addressed so you are ready to co-design.

| Culture – what we believe and how we do things  |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-design is important to everyone – staff, board, volunteers</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Everyone knows what it means and why it is a good thing to do</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Everyone can take risks and fail, as long as they learn, and support this with plans for what to do if something goes wrong</li> </ul> |
| Structure – how we organise so we work together   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People with lived experience are brought in when we start a project</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All people get paid or get something they value for taking part</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is enough money and time to do co-design</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nothing is going to be changed that will mess up the plans</li> </ul>  |
| Practice – the way we do our work   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Everyone gets all the information they need in the way they need it</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All the people taking part get trained in co-design and other skills they need</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff get the time, money and freedom they need to co-design</li> </ul>  |

|   |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People from outside the organisation are called on if they can help</li> </ul>     |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We encourage partners and suppliers to use co-design too</li> </ul>                |
| <b>Review – the way we check how we are doing and what we do about it</b>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluating how we do things and if they work is built in from the start</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We set times for reviews to check co-design is working</li> </ul>                  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reviews and evaluation of co-design are done by co-design</li> </ul>               |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We share what we find out and we use it to make our co-design better</li> </ul>    |

An organisation that is comfortable with co-design, can move beyond seeing it as an approach for specific projects and think about how it could be built into different stages across most of its work.

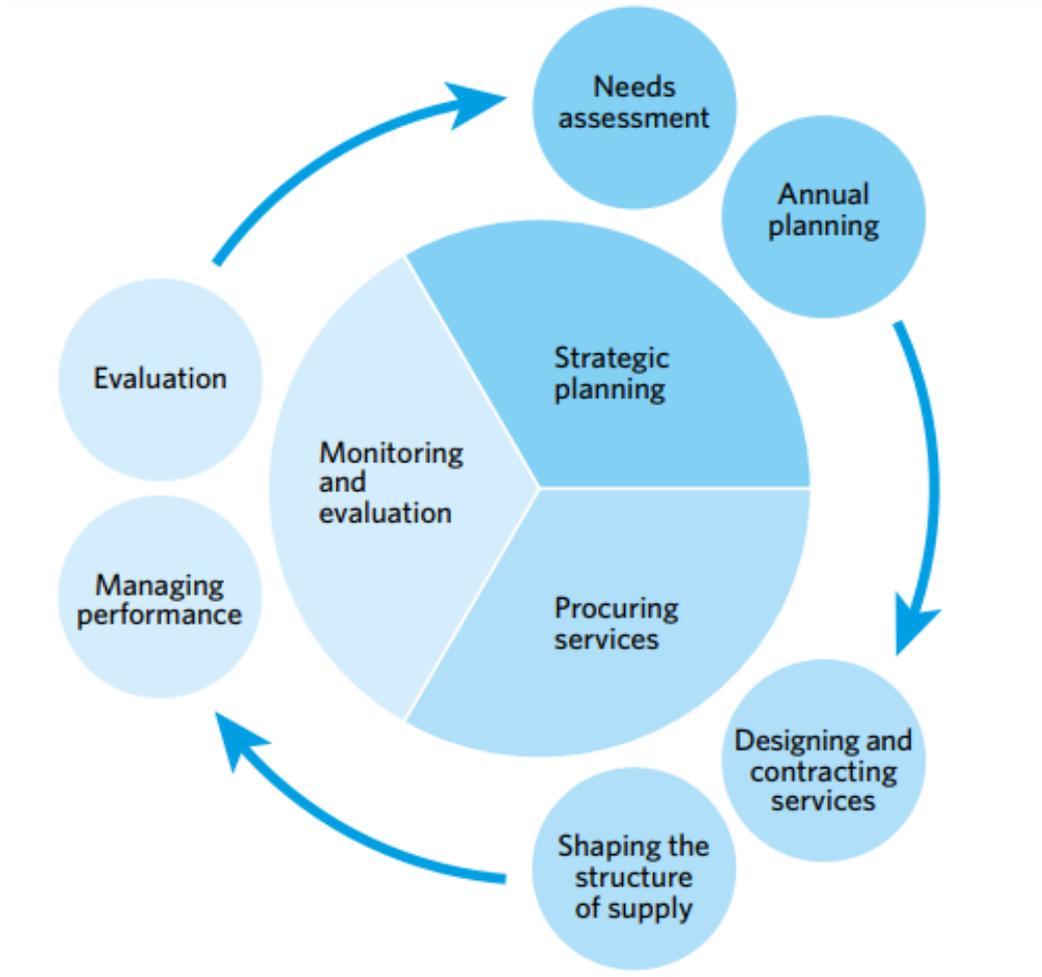


FIGURE 7 WHERE CO-DESIGN CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE TO AN ORGANISATION (ORYGEN)

For more on preparing for and embedding co design in your organisation see

The Social Care Institute for Excellence

<https://www.scie.org.uk/publications/guides/guide17/>

Local Government Information Unit Government International

[www.govint.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/publications/2012\\_Pamphlet/GovInt\\_5\\_steps\\_to\\_making\\_the\\_transformation\\_to\\_co-production.pdf](http://www.govint.org/fileadmin/user_upload/publications/2012_Pamphlet/GovInt_5_steps_to_making_the_transformation_to_co-production.pdf)

## Step 2: Plan it

Spending time planning your co-design process is time well spent. This will ensure that your work is **built soundly on co-design principles and that you have the time, knowledge, skills, connections, resources and support** to see it through.

Exactly how and when you move through the different steps in your plan will depend on the project, the people you are working with and what matters most to them. **It is not always a straight line.** When you begin to understand more about where you are working, for example, you might need to go back and find new people with a particular lived experience. Or when you test ideas, you might learn something new that sends you back to the beginning.

### Focus it

**Be clear about the outcomes you or your organisation wants to achieve.** This will help you stay true to your vision and mission.

While it is great if you find co-designers who think the same way, **not everybody has to share the same vision.** People we talked to told us that successful co-design often comes about when art and culture can be the tool to make outcomes align, rather than match. So, an artist may want to explore new contemporary practice, local residents may want to somewhere nice to sit, youth workers may want a safe place to discuss issues, while businesses may want more footfall and so on.

While still being true to what matters to those involved, a focus can also help you **minimise any activity that does not contribute to outcomes.**

It is also essential to **be specific about what people can and cannot influence**. It's unlikely that an orchestra can or will want to put on a food festival. Your funder may want you to work with people who are a particular age. You may have to spend your budget within a set time.

“Our work does not start with a blank canvas – we set what the parameters are but they design the shape and output – it has to be their own journey.”

YOUNG AT ART

And **not everything has to be co-designed all of the time**. Respecting different people's expertise might mean, for example, that everyone agrees that the museum is in charge of recruiting the curator.

If you don't tell people what they can and can't influence, it will damage any trust you have built, and they may feel that their input is tokenistic and that they have been misled or even coerced.<sup>3</sup> This also means that they are less likely to engage with other cultural organisations or in other co-design processes in the future.

“There is the ego thing that stands between partnership and co-design – you need to be clear about what is and is not open to co-design.”

BELFAST BUILDINGS TRUST

## Resource it

Co-design is **time intensive**. People we spoke to who are already doing good co-design told us they spend at least six months, often years building relationships before a project begins. It can be difficult to get funding to support this type of work as most funders do not recognise relationship building as an outcome.

For frameworks, guides and tick sheets for planning co-design see

Beyond Sticky Notes planner

<https://miro.com/miroverse/co-design-planning-tool/>

<sup>3</sup> Coercion is the bottom run of the ladder of co-production. See [www.thinklocalactpersonal.org.uk/Latest/Co-production-The-ladder-of-co-production](http://www.thinklocalactpersonal.org.uk/Latest/Co-production-The-ladder-of-co-production) or <https://organizingengagement.org/models/ladder-of-citizen-participation> for more information.

Oxfordshire Co-Production Handbook

[www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/file/about-council/CoproHandbook\\_Full.pdf](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/file/about-council/CoproHandbook_Full.pdf)

1,000 lives, NHS Wales

[www.1000livesplus.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/documents/1011/T4I%20%288%29%20Co-production.pdf](http://www.1000livesplus.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/documents/1011/T4I%20%288%29%20Co-production.pdf)

Co-Create Co-design for best practice report

[www.cocreate.training/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/co-design\\_best-practice-report.pdf](http://www.cocreate.training/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/co-design_best-practice-report.pdf)

Orygen The National Centre of Excellence in Youth Mental Health

<https://www.orygen.org.au/Training/Resources/Service-knowledge-and-development/Guidelines/Co-designing-with-young-people-The-fundamentals/Orygen-Co-designing-with-YP-the-fundamentals?ext>

## Step 3: People it

**Getting the correct people together** needs thought and care. Who is going to be affected by the work? Who cares about the outcomes? Who has key information and insight? Who can help take it forward? Who can block it?

Where are they? Do you know how to reach them? Do you know how they like to be communicated with? Do they have the skills and confidence to take part? What can you do to support them to take part?

**Assets mapping can help you understand** a community and the key individuals, resources, networks and groups that could be invited to take part.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, [www.literacymn.org/sites/default/files/asset-building\\_handout.pdf](http://www.literacymn.org/sites/default/files/asset-building_handout.pdf)

## Building partnerships

Partnering with community or support organisations can **help you reach the right people in the right way**. They are likely to already have the trust of the people you want to engage. And they may be able to bring specialist knowledge and support, particularly if you are working with vulnerable people or sensitive issues, so that your staff, artists and practitioners do not have to be experts in these areas. However, people we spoke to who are already doing good co-design cautioned that you **should not assume that organisations can speak for people** so partnering with organisations does not replace participation with people.

## Building relationships

Everyone we spoke to to co-design this framework told us that **building relationships is the most important part of co-design**. It takes time and skill to build trust.

Community groups and young people in particular may have had bad experiences and feel “workshopped” out by previous “box ticking”, which makes it difficult to engage them again.

You can make people feel valued by taking the **time to get to know them and understand their motivations** for wanting to (or not wanting to) take part. This helps to ensure that they are involved when they want to be involved when it matters to them. Some people may be excited to come to a brainstorming workshop once. Someone else may be interested in doing some research that can be put on their CV. Others may have the time and commitment to attend regular formal meetings.

Even for those who do not want to be involved in any formal process, it is a good idea to come up with a communications channel, like a social media page, to **keep them in the loop**.

Of course, people also have families, work, education, hobbies, interests and other commitments – the lived experience that makes them so important to your project can also keep them away. They are people, not boxes, and the time they can give and their motivations for giving it may change throughout the project. You should **continue to check that you are supporting them** to take part in the way they want to take part.

## Gaining perspectives

This is also where you **build in diversity** so that you are welcoming different perspectives.

Make sure all events and communications are **accessible to all**. Mind, a mental health information and support network, recommends:

- Don't make assumptions; it's better to ask questions than think you know what's right for somebody.
- It's OK to ask people what they need and want.
- It's OK to say you don't know.
- It's OK to get things wrong; you won't be expected to know everything. (Mind)

**Language is really important.** Don't use acronyms or jargon. Read everything written with the eyes of an outsider. People we spoke to co-design this framework told us that even the words "arts" and "culture" can be off-putting and "not for me".

**Valuing people, welcoming hospitality and constant communication** can also remove psychological barriers like "I have nothing to offer" or "It's not for the likes of me". Co-design itself is a tool for removing these barriers by getting buy in and commitment from the start.

Increasing access also means making sure **people know what to do and how they can contribute**. Information and training sessions early on with support at different stages to explain the work and people's roles can also be important.

"People in Belfast have strong opinions, it is part our culture and identity! People who get heard are those who shout the loudest. This is a barrier to institutions."

WORKSHOP PARTICIPANT

Some people will want to get involved for their own advancement and may not speak for others. Check that you are **hearing voices that are less loud or less listened to or that are easy to ignore**.

"Our engagement process begins with 'small voices' and runs all the way through with small groups of older people, refugees and asylum seekers."

ARTSEKTA

Belfast City Council is particularly interested in co-designing with **people whose lived experience means that they are also less likely to be involved in funded cultural activity**. A portrait of different groups of people who may be less likely to be involved – and how they might like to be more involved – is included in appendix 4.

## Roles and responsibilities

Organisations already doing good co-design told us it is important that everyone understands **who is responsible for doing what, when**. Some used a partnership agreement or memorandum of understanding between partnering organisations. This also helps respect different expertise. An agreement might set out, for example, that the cultural organisation is responsible for managing the facilitator or that the community organisation is responsible for engaging local people.

## Step 4: Understand it

This stage is about getting a picture of **what things look and feel like now for everyone involved**.

Ask lots of questions. Co-design is an assets-based approach. This means it wants to understand **what is already working well so that it can be built on**. This will also help you uncover any good practice and research that already exists. Ask more questions to seek out the detail and lived experience behind any statistics.

Surveys can give you a snapshot of an entire population. Small-sample qualitative methods like conversation cafes, pop-up democracies (pop-up meetings spaces in the place where people live), mini-publics, focus groups or guided conversations get deep insights. Why do people feel like that? What motivates them to act in that way? Why do they value a particular asset or way of doing things?

There are lots of **creative and participative research processes** that can help you understand people's contexts, wants and needs through words, music, drawings, photographs, meaningful objects and so on. Appendix 4 contains ideas for involving particular groups of people who may be less likely to be involved in funded arts and culture at the moment.

Co-designers can also become **co-researchers, helping you gather ideas from their networks**.

Findings from research should be **shared with and understood by everyone involved**. You might research some more if anyone has an important unanswered question.

Be careful of letting your own assumptions or biases change what you hear. It is always a good idea to **test that you have interpreted what you have heard** in the right way.

At the end of the stage, you should all have a shared understanding of what your project needs to do.

For ways of mapping assets

[www.literacymn.org/sites/default/files/asset-building\\_handout.pdf](http://www.literacymn.org/sites/default/files/asset-building_handout.pdf)

<https://communityscience.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/AssetMappingToolkit.pdf>

For ideas for participative research

<https://www.involve.org.uk/resources/methods>

<https://www.nesta.org.uk/report/compendium-innovation-methods/>

<https://diytoolkit.org>

## Step 5: Imagine it

This stage is about coming up with **ideas about what your project could look like**. Be non-judgmental during this creative phase and accept that **all ideas are potentially useful**.

Give everyone an **equal opportunity to contribute**. You may want to engage others. Co-designers can be co-researchers, helping you gather ideas from their networks.

You can also **seek inspiration from elsewhere**. What have other groups, organisations, sectors and cities done?

Use **creative and participatory approaches** to get people to talk and think and come together. Appendix 4 contains ideas for involving particular groups of people who may be less likely to be involved in funded arts and culture at the moment.

Everyone should have the opportunity to provide feedback on ideas. Use **inclusive decision-making approaches** such as consensus voting, dot voting, citizens' juries and participatory budgeting (with the project budget or Monopoly money) to decide which ideas are taken forward to the next step. Inclusive decision-making processes make sure everyone gets heard and encourages shared responsibility for progress.

For more ways to come up with ideas

<https://innovationlab.net/blog/9-best-exercises-to-spark-creativity-in-ideation/>

<https://www.ideo.com/blogs/inspiration/10-activities-to-generate-better-ideas>

<https://www.involve.org.uk/resources/methods>

<https://www.nesta.org.uk/report/compendium-innovation-methods/>

<https://diytoolkit.org>

For more inclusive decision-making approaches

[www.involve.org.uk/resources/methods?tid=35&vid=8&Methods=Decision-making](http://www.involve.org.uk/resources/methods?tid=35&vid=8&Methods=Decision-making)

[www.seedsforchange.org.uk/consensus](http://www.seedsforchange.org.uk/consensus)

## Step 6: Test it

"When cooking a new recipe I prototype. I try the recipe on myself first, and make small changes as I go along, adding more flavour here and there, and writing in my recipe book what I would change next time. I'd then try the recipe out again with some friends making the changes I'd learnt the first time, and see how they like it.

"I would probably just keep making small changes to recipes until I found the perfect combination of flavours. It is rare that you'd get it right first time." (NESTA and thinkpublic)

This stage is about experimenting with an idea so you can learn **if it works, why it works and what could make it even better still**. It costs less money than a pilot, and it takes less time.

You should **test your idea with the people who will use it in real life**, whether that is people you want to come share your food, use your archive, visit your festival or watch you show.

You can make a **prototype, sample or model** of your idea or a part of your idea. This could be an artist's sketch, a cardboard cut-out, a presentation, a walkthrough, an animation, even Augmented Reality and so on and so on.

Tell people what you are testing and why. This helps to **manage their expectations**. You are learning as you go, and there is no guarantee that the idea will go ahead in this way – or at all.

**Ask people what they think**. You can also **observe how people react**. It is good to be able to redesign and improve your prototype as you test it based on feedback and observations.

At the end of the testing stage, you should **bring what you have learned back to everyone involved** in the project and together make a decision. Do you want to go ahead with the idea? Do you want to make changes to it? Do you need to do more research or testing? Do you need to come up with a different idea?

For more guidance on prototyping

[https://media.nesta.org.uk/documents/prototyping\\_framework.pdf](https://media.nesta.org.uk/documents/prototyping_framework.pdf)

<https://diytoolkit.org/tools/prototype-testing-plan/>

[www.artsandbusinessni.org.uk/news/2018/march/webinar-innovation-on-a-shoestring-budget](http://www.artsandbusinessni.org.uk/news/2018/march/webinar-innovation-on-a-shoestring-budget)

## Step 7: Do it

Congratulations! Together you have selected the strongest idea which you all believe will have the best result. Now it is **time to deliver it**.

If you do this jointly with your co-designers or with other people involved in the delivery, this is called **co-production**.

There are also opportunities to continue to co-design other elements of your project. Who better, for example, to help you design and test your communications plan or marketing messages that the people you want to take part?

For more guidance on co-production

[www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/file/about-council/CoproHandbook\\_Full.pdf](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/file/about-council/CoproHandbook_Full.pdf)

<https://www.scie.org.uk/publications/guides/guide51/>

<https://info.copronet.wales/>

## Step 8: Review it

Learning and improving is a key part of co-design.

The aim is to reflect and evaluate in a way that helps everyone to appreciate **what they have achieved together and individually**. Showing co-designers how their input has made a difference is also an important part of **rewarding everyone's contribution**.

**Participatory evaluation** is an approach that involves participants at all or different stages so that they have ownership of the evaluation and its results. It works well with the ethos of co-design.

Some or all of your evaluation may be co-designed. Co-designers might also undertake some of the research and become co-producers of the evaluation.

Your evaluation should look at two things

1. **the process** – how the work was planned and implemented

This should include evaluation of how you are doing in terms of co-design itself. For example, at regular steps in the process, everyone involved could reflect on progress in line with the principles of co-design. Are you involving everyone who should be involved? Are you working towards outcomes important to everyone involved? Can everyone take part equally? What is the quality of relationships between co-designers, particularly with those who traditionally have the power? Does everyone feel valued and rewarded?

2. **the outcomes** – what happened or changed as a result (your impact)

Outcome evaluation tends to be completed near the end of the work. However, you should raise the idea of outcome evaluation early on in the project. This will help you agree what difference you want to make, who for and how. It will also help you assess and plan for any support co-designers may need to take part fully.

You may want to or need to (so everyone can take part) use **non-verbal, non-numeric or other forms of creative expression** to ask people to share what they think or feel about how the project went or the outcomes it created.

### Tools for assessing your own progress in co-design

#### Codesign Team Reflection Cards

<https://lifhackhq.co/lifhack-resources/co-design-youth-wellbeing-team-discussion-cards/>

#### Public Health Wales/Coproduction Wales short, simple audit

[www.candi.nhs.uk/sites/default/files/Documents/Coproduction%20audit.pdf](http://www.candi.nhs.uk/sites/default/files/Documents/Coproduction%20audit.pdf)

#### Coproduction Network Wales self-assessment tool for organisations

<https://info.copronet.wales/the-self-evaluation-audit-tool/>

#### More on participatory evaluation

<https://evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk/resources/why-bother-involving-people-in-evaluation/>

<https://info.copronet.wales/measuring-what-matters/>

Some creative evaluation tools

[www.artworkscreative.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Creative-Evaluation-Toolkit.pdf](http://www.artworkscreative.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Creative-Evaluation-Toolkit.pdf)

<https://evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk/resources/body-map/>

## Some more toolkits and guides

### Purposeful participation: A field guide and toolkit for cultural intrapreneurs

This is an output of The Future of Cultural Heritage, a year-long collaborative innovation process convened by the New Citizenship Project working with a cohort of twelve individuals from six organisations across the sector. It started with the question, how can cultural institutions work with people to shape cultural heritage?

[www.culturehive.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Purposeful-Participation-A-Field-Guide-and-Toolkit-for-Cultural-Intrapreneurs.pdf](http://www.culturehive.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Purposeful-Participation-A-Field-Guide-and-Toolkit-for-Cultural-Intrapreneurs.pdf)

### Influence and participation toolkit

This comes from Mind and looks at ways of engaging lived experience. Mind describes influence and participation as "The development and promotion of opportunities in order that a diverse range of people, with lived experience of mental health problems, influence and participate in our work. This recognises that people want to take part in a variety of different ways and there is not a 'one size fits all' approach."

It also supports lived experience leadership, which means investing in the development of people involved.

[www.mind.org.uk/workplace/influence-and-participation-toolkit/](http://www.mind.org.uk/workplace/influence-and-participation-toolkit/)

### Oxfordshire co-production handbook

This guide uses plain language, tick sheets and a very practical approach to walk you through co-design.

[www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/file/about-council/CoproHandbook\\_Full.pdf](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/file/about-council/CoproHandbook_Full.pdf)

### Beyond sticky notes

An easy-to-read site for ideas and inspiration. Strong on mindsets and getting your head into the right space to truly co-design.

[www.beyondstickynotes.com](http://www.beyondstickynotes.com)

# Thanks

The following people and organisations gave generously of their time and expertise over Zoom, phone calls and coffee.

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Andersonstown Music School                                       | Emma Whitehead                            |
| ArtsEkta   | Families Against Conflict in the Shankill |
| Barnardo's   | Flax Art Studios                          |
| Belfast Buildings Trust  | Flintshire DO-IT                          |
| Beat Carnival  | Golden Thread Gallery                     |
| Belfast City Council Tourism, Culture,<br>Arts and Heritage Unit | Grand Opera House                         |
| Belfast City Council Parks Department<br>(Woodvale Park)         | HERE NI                                   |
| Belfast Community Circus School                                  | Jake Kane                                 |
| Cahoots  | Kids in Control                           |
| Caroline Redmond   | Mark John-Williams                        |
| Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival                                  | Multi-ethnic sports and cultures NI       |
| Cathie McKimm  | Oh Yeah                                   |
| Ciara Dunne  | Open Arts                                 |
| Craft NI   | OTH Collective                            |
| Daisy Chain Inc.   | Prime Cut Productions                     |
| David Brown  | Queen's Film Theatre                      |
| DU Dance (NI)  | Replay Theatre Company                    |
| Dumbworld Productions  | Rhiann Jeffrey                            |
| East Durham Creates  | Siobhan Brown                             |
|  | Southcity Resource Centre                 |

Steven Pollock

Terra Nova Productions

Terry McCallum

Theatre and Dance NI

thrive

Ulster Architectural and Historical  
Society

Ulster Orchestra

University of Atypical

Versus Arthritis

Wheelworks

Woodvale Community Centre

Young at Art

YouthAction

The YEHA Project

All those people who took part anonymously by completing a survey or being interviewed by a co-design engineer.

And, of course, our wonderful co-design engineers. This would literally not have been possible without your knowledge, generosity and willingness to say yes when first approached with just a twinkle of a mad idea.

# Bibliography

64 Million Artists. "Cultural Democracy in Practice." 2018.

Amadasun, David Osa. "'Black people don't go to galleries' – The reproduction of taste and cultural value." 2013. <https://mediadiversified.org/>.  
<<https://mediadiversified.org/2013/10/21/black-people-dont-go-to-galleries-the-reproduction-of-taste-and-cultural-value/>>.

ARK. *NI Life and Times*. 2019. October 2020.  
<[www.ark.ac.uk/nilt/2019/Minority\\_Ethnic\\_People](http://www.ark.ac.uk/nilt/2019/Minority_Ethnic_People)>.

Art UK. "www.theaudienceagency.org." 2018. *Art UK Audience Broadening Initiative Report*. <<https://www.theaudienceagency.org/asset/1685>>.

Arts Council England. "Equality, Diversity and the Creative Case ." 2019.  
<[www.culturehive.co.uk](http://www.culturehive.co.uk). <[https://www.culturehive.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Diversity\\_report\\_1718\\_hi-resV3-compressed.pdf](https://www.culturehive.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Diversity_report_1718_hi-resV3-compressed.pdf)>.

—. *Let's create*. 2020. July 2021. <[www.artscouncil.org.uk/letscreate](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/letscreate)>.

—. "Webinar: Digging into socio-economic diversity." 2019. *Culture Hive*.  
<<https://www.culturehive.co.uk/resources/webinar-digging-into-socio-economic-diversity/>>.

Arts Council of Northern Ireland. *Headline findings from the 2019/20 Annual funding survey of core arts organisations*. Belfast : Arts Council of Northern Ireland, 2021 .

—. *Headline findings from the 2019/20 Annual Funding Survey of core arts organisations*. Belfast: ACNI, 2021 .

—. "http://artscouncil-ni.org/." 2018. *Annual Progress Report to the Equality Commission 2017/18*. <<http://artscouncil-ni.org/research-and-development/equality/annual-progress-report-to-the-equality-commission>>.

—. "Public Authority Statutory Equality and Good Relations Duties Annual Progress Report 2016-17." 2017. <<http://artscouncil-ni.org/research-and-development/equality/annual-progress-report-to-the-equality-commission>>.

Belfast City Council . *A city imagining*. Belfast , 2019.

—. *A city imagining: Implementation plan* . Belfast , 2019.

—. "Quotation for a framework for cultural co-design and engagement ." March 2021.

Belfast City Council. *A City Imagining: Equality Assessment at a Strategic Level*. Belfast , 2019.

—. *Belfast: Consultation and engagement framework*. November 2020. August 2021. <<https://yoursay.belfastcity.gov.uk/get-involved/widgets/24693/documents>>.

Boiling , Sarah and Clare Thurman. "Mapping and analysis of engagement approaches across the Creative People and Places programme." 2018.

Bradley, Colm, Louise O'Kane and Brendan Murtagh, *A toolkit for co-production in community planning*. Belfast: Carnegie UK. 2021.

Brook, Orian, David O'Brien and Mark Taylor. *Panic! Social Class, Taste and Inequalities in the Creative Industries*. London: Create London, 2018. <<https://createlondon.org/event/panic2018/>>.

Calvo , M and M Sclater . "Creating spaces for collaboration in community co-design." *The international journal of art and design* 40.1 (2019): 232-50.

Co-production Network for Wales. n.d. July 2021. <<https://copronet.wales/>> .

Co-production Oxfordshire. *Co-production Oxfordshire's Working Together Handbook*. Oxfordshire, n.d.

Coutts, Pippa. "The many shades of co-produced evidence." 2019.

Cultural Value . [www.culturalvalue.org.uk/dr-roaa-ali-and-lara-ratnaraja-share-their-responses-from-our-first-covid-19-webinar/](http://www.culturalvalue.org.uk/dr-roaa-ali-and-lara-ratnaraja-share-their-responses-from-our-first-covid-19-webinar/). 2021. 13 May 2021.

- Culture Hive. Covid-19: "The great unequaliser?", <https://www.culturehive.co.uk/CVlresources/webinar-covid-19-the-great-unequaliser/>. 2021. Webinar . 13 May 2021.
- Department for Communities. "Continuous Household Survey Engagement in culture, arts and sport by adults in Northern Ireland, 2019/20." October 2020. Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency. <<https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/experience-culture-and-arts-by-adults-northern-ireland-201920>>.
- . "Continuous Household Survey Engagement in culture, arts and sport by adults in Northern Ireland, by local government districts. 2017. <<https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/engagement-culture-arts-and-leisure-by-adults-northern-irelands-local-government-districts-2017>>.
- . "Engagement in culture, arts and sport by adults in Northern Ireland." May 2020. [www.communities-ni.gov.uk/](http://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/). <<https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/system/files/publications/communities/engagement-culture-arts-and-sport-by-adults-in-northern-ireland-201920.pdf>>.
- . "Engagement in culture, arts and sport by young people in Northern Ireland 2019." July 2020. [www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/](http://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/). <<https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/engagement-culture-arts-and-sport-by-young-people-northern-ireland-2019>>.
- . "Experience of culture and arts by young people in Northern Ireland 2019." October 2020. <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/>. <<https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/system/files/publications/communities/experience-culture-arts-by-young-people-northern-ireland-2019.pdf>>.
- . "Experience of culture and arts by young people in Northern Ireland 2019." 2020. <<https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/system/files/publications/communities/experience-culture-arts-by-young-people-northern-ireland-2019.pdf>>.

- . "Indicator 27." April 2021. [www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk](http://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk).  
<<http://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/indicators/percentage-engaging-arts-cultural-activities>>.
- Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport. 2020. *Gov.Uk*.  
<<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/taking-part-201920-arts/arts-taking-part-survey-201920>>.
- Fun Palaces. "1,000 Tiny Fun Palaces ." n.d. August 2021.  
<<https://funpalaces.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/How-to-Make-a-Tiny-FP-2021.pdf>>.
- Governance International. n.d. July 2021. <[www.govint.org/our-services/co-production/](http://www.govint.org/our-services/co-production/) >.
- Icarus. "Creative People and Places National Evidence Review and Evaluation Report." 2019.
- Ipsos MORI Social Research Institute . "What do the public want from libraries? User and non-user research - full research report." n.d.
- Kercher, Kelly Ann. *Beyond Sticky Notes: Co-design for Real: Mindsets, methods and movements*. n.d. August 2021. <[www.beyondstickynotes.com/tellmemore](http://www.beyondstickynotes.com/tellmemore) >.
- Khan, Coco. "Why is classical music still as white as ever?" 2013.  
<https://mediadiversified.org/>. <<https://mediadiversified.org/2013/10/22/why-is-classical-music-still-as-white-as-ever/>>.
- Kliest, Alissa. "Interview with Ruth Graham on behalf of Household." n.d. July 2021.  
<<http://householdbelfast.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/Household-Interviews-Ruth-Graham.pdf>>.
- Lowe, Harriet. "Creatively minded and young: A selection of arts and mental health projects with, by and for children and young people." 2020.
- Miller, Andrew. "Slump in disabled audiences' confidence presents major problem for the arts sector." July 2020. [www.indigo-ltd.com](http://www.indigo-ltd.com). June 2020.

<<https://www.indigo-ltd.com/blog/act-2-confidence-of-disabled-audiences>>.

Mind. *Influence and participation toolkit: Planning top tips*. n.d. August 2021.

<<https://www.mind.org.uk/workplace/influence-and-participation-toolkit/how/planning/top-tips>>.

National Youth Trends, "Creativity and Gen Z: Digital Curators and Creators".

<<https://beatfreeskyouthtrends.com/reads/creativity-and-gen-z-2/>>.

NESTA and thinkpublic. "Prototyping framework: A guide to prototyping new ideas."

n.d.

New Citizen Project . "A field guide and toolkit for cultural intrapreneurs ." n.d.

Orygen. "Co-designing with young people: The fundamentals." n.d.

Public Health Agency. n.d. August 2021. <<http://engage.hscni.net>>.

Reeves, A. "Neither Class nor Status: Arts Participation and the Social Strata."

*Sociology* 49(4) (2015): 624-642. 28 April 2021.

<<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0038038514547897>>.

Smyth, Emer. *Arts & Cultural Participation Among 17-Year-Olds*. Dublin: The Economic and Social Research Institute, 2020.

—. *Arts and Cultural Participation among Children and Young People: Insights from the Growing Up in Ireland Study*. Dublin: The Arts Council , 2016.

Social Care Institute for Excellence and the Think Local Act Personal partnership .

*Co-production in social care: What it is and how to do it*. n.d. July 2021.

<[www.scie.org.uk/publications/guides/guide51/files/guide51-easyread.pdf](http://www.scie.org.uk/publications/guides/guide51/files/guide51-easyread.pdf) >.

Social Care Institute of Excellence . "The participation of adult service users, including older people, in developing social care." 2007.

The Audience Agency . "Navigating the audience age-gap Briefing and implications." 2017.

- The Audience Agency. "Cultural Participation Monitor: Inequalities through COVID-19." April 2021. [www.theaudienceagency.org](http://www.theaudienceagency.org).  
<<https://www.theaudienceagency.org/bounce-forwards/covid-19-cultural-participation-monitor/inequality-through-covid>>.
- . "Outdoor Arts Audience Report What Audience Finder says about audiences for the Outdoor Arts." 2018.
- The Baring Foundation. "CREATIVELY MINDED AND ETHNICALLY DIVERSE Increasing creative opportunities for people with mental health problems from ethnically diverse backgrounds." n.d.
- The Traveller Movement. "The Last acceptable form of racism? The pervasive discrimination and prejudice experienced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities." 2017.
- Think Local Act Personal. *What makes co-production different* . n.d. July 2021 .  
<[www.thinklocalactpersonal.org.uk/co-production-in-commissioning-tool/co-production/In-more-detail/what-makes-co-production-different/](http://www.thinklocalactpersonal.org.uk/co-production-in-commissioning-tool/co-production/In-more-detail/what-makes-co-production-different/) >.
- thrive . "Audience Snapshot: Outdoor Events in Belfast." n.d.
- . *Beyond the baseline: Audiences for mainstream and cultural cinema in Belfast*. Belfast , 2018.
- . *Cultural lives: Exploring audiences for theatre and dance*. Belfast , 2019.
- . *Key things from baseline study* . Belfast, n.d.
- . "What do NI audiences think about coming back to in person cultural events and activities?" n.d. 2021 July. <<https://wewillthrive.co.uk/audience-insights/audience-snapshots/what-do-people-think-about-coming-back-to-in-person-cultural-events-and-activities>>.
- Torreggiani, Anne. *Bridging the Generation Gap We must anticipate and accommodate the changing needs of younger generations*. April 2017. 7 May 2021.

We Shall Not Be Removed. *Seven Principles to an Inclusive Recovery for the Arts & Creative Sector*. 15 September 2020. August 2021.

<[www.weshallnotberemoved.com/2020/09/15/seven-principles-to-an-inclusive-recovery-for-the-arts-creative-sector/](http://www.weshallnotberemoved.com/2020/09/15/seven-principles-to-an-inclusive-recovery-for-the-arts-creative-sector/)>.

Weston Jerwood. "<https://www.culturehive.co.uk/>." 2019. *Socio-economic diversity and inclusion in the arts: A toolkit for employers*.

<<https://www.culturehive.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Socio-economic-Inclusion-and-Diversity-in-the-Arts-A-Toolkit-for-Employers.pdf>>.

Whicher, Anna and Crick, Tom. "Co-design, evaluation and the Northern Ireland Innovation Lab." *Public Money and Management* 39.4 (2019): 290-9.

Whitaker, Sally. "Hurdles to the participation of children, families and young people in museums: a literature review." 2016.

YouGov. "Public Perceptions of Heritage 2018." 2019.

# Appendix 1: Defining co-design

Unless you are deeply immersed in the theory, “terms like co-production, co-creation and co-design can feel like buzzword bingo and the nuances between them are not necessarily clear or directly relevant.” (Whicher)

In the performing arts, co-production is a film, television programme or theatre production organised by two or more people or organisations, rather than a single person or organisation.

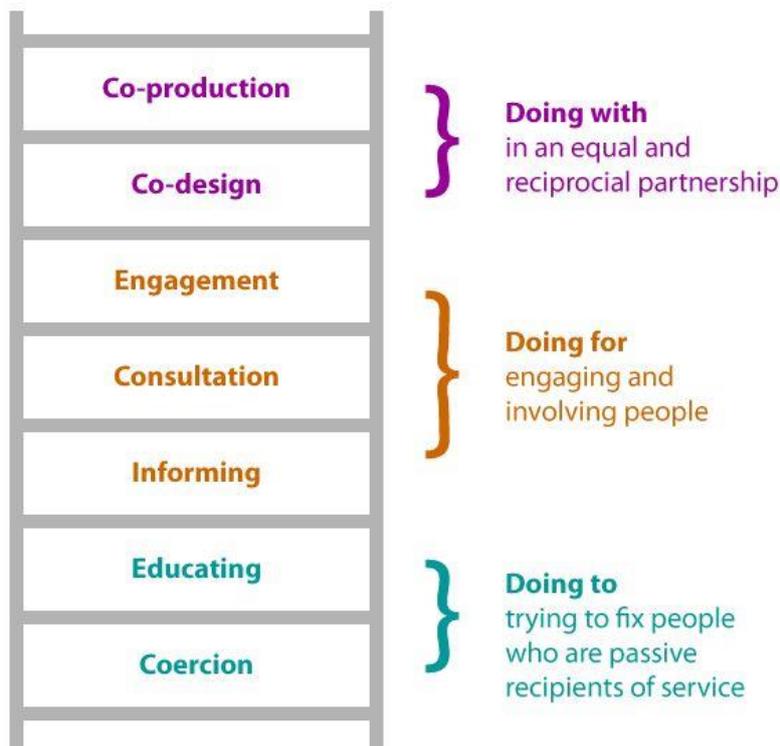
In the design world, co-design, sometimes called participatory design, means creating with stakeholders during the design development process to ensure the results meet their needs and are usable.

In the world of public services, especially the health and social care sector, co-production and co-design have clear definitions that focus on the extent to which decision-making and the creation of services is shared across all stakeholders. In the Department for Health and Public Health Agency, co-design and co-production are both tools to meet a statutory requirement called Personal and Public Involvement, “the active and meaningful involvement of service users, carers and the public in the planning, commissioning, delivery and evaluation of Health and Social Care services, in ways that are relevant to them”. (Public Health Agency)

In community development and also in public and community health and social care, engagement, co-production and co-design have formal definitions. These are explained in the Ladder of Co-production, based on Arnstein's Ladder of citizen participation, which moves from non-participation, through shades of tokenism, to degrees of citizen or stakeholder power.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> For a great graphic and a short video on the Ladder of Co-production, visit [www.thinklocalactpersonal.org.uk/Latest/Co-production-The-ladder-of-co-production](http://www.thinklocalactpersonal.org.uk/Latest/Co-production-The-ladder-of-co-production). To see and explore Sherry Arnstein's 1969 Ladder of Citizen Participation, on which this is based, visit <https://organizingengagement.org/models/ladder-of-citizen-participation>



THE LADDER OF CO-PRODUCTION (THINK LOCAL ACT PERSONAL)

In terms of shaping public services, Governance International says user and community co-production is about “public service organisations and citizens making better use of each other’s assets, resources and contributions to achieve better outcomes or improve efficiency.” (Governance International)

A consortium of community planning partnerships, Community Places, Queen’s University Belfast and Carnegie most recently came up with this definition specific to community planning:

“Co-production means building on the assets of communities of place and interest to deliver better wellbeing outcomes for all by sharing responsibilities and power equally between service users and those who advocate on their behalf, and service providers across all sectors.” (A toolkit for co-production in community planning)

In Wales, the Co-production Network for Wales has this official definition:

“Co-production is an asset-based approach to public services that enables people providing and people receiving services to share power and responsibility, and to work together in equal, reciprocal and caring relationships. It creates opportunities for people to access support when they need it, and to contribute to social change.” (Co-production Network for Wales)

In NI, the Innovation Labs adopted this definition: “Co-design is an approach to problem-solving that starts from an analysis of user needs and involves users in jointly developing and testing solutions at multiple stages of the process”. (Whicher)

Belfast City Council refers to Empowerment (“You do it; we stand back – enabling others to deliver programmes and services”), Collaboration (“We do it jointly – sharing decisions and working together to improve or design services and programmes”) and Involvement (“Involving people – working directly with people to understand needs and aspirations and/or to improve or design services and programmes”) in its consultation and engagement framework. (Belfast City Council)

In Australia, Kelly Ann McKercher of Beyond Sticky Notes says

“Co-design is an approach to designing with, not for, people. While co-design is helpful in many areas, it typically works best where people with lived experience, communities and professionals work together to improve something that they all care about. Overall, the primary role of co-design is elevating the voices and contributions of people with lived experience.” (Kercher)

And working across the UK, the Social Care Institute for Excellence gives this explanation in its easy-read guide.

“Co-production basically means working together to do something. It is also about people with different views and ideas coming together to make things better for everyone. Co-production is about people who use services, carers and people who run services together as equals. Being equals means nobody is more important than anyone else. [...]

“Sometimes people use the word co-production in different ways. This can mean co-production is not always as good as it should be. It means you do not always get the changes you should get with co-production. But it is also important for people to be allowed to do co-production in different ways. This will help people find new ways to do things.” (Social Care Institute for Excellence and the Think Local Act Personal partnership )

## Appendix 2: Understand it: Mapping what’s already strong in co-design in Belfast

During the Understand it stage of the co-design process to develop this framework, we spoke to different people and organisations who were already doing good engagement and co-design in Belfast.

The purpose of this stage was to understand what is already working in the sector and the city so that we could build on it in the co-design framework. Taking a whole-systems approach, our findings are arranged under the four pieces of the “embedding co-design” jigsaw.<sup>6</sup>

Organisations included in this mapping took part in a workshop or were identified by word of mouth or desk research. It does not pretend to be comprehensive.

### Culture

#### Meaningful and ethical

Whether or not they had had formal training in co-design, the people leading good co-design in Belfast are driven by strong ethical principles around cultural democracy, access, inclusion and social justice.

“All our work is *with* the community. We bring the idea, the starting point, and the rest lies with the people and the groups.”

DU DANCE (NI)

---

<sup>6</sup> See Is your organisation onboard?

Collaborative decision-making and power sharing was mentioned time and time again as a critical success factor in our interviews. Organisations were willing to give some things up, to be flexible and adaptable and to meet others where they were, physically, emotionally or culturally.

They also tend to be passionate about how collaboration can enrich and challenge their cultural practice.

“It really enriches your work – it’s not stagnant, it always feels like you are learning and adapting.”

YOUTHACTION NI

### Assets based

“People liked that they got to show a positive side of themselves to the rest of city and themselves.”

BEAT CARNIVAL

People told us that one of their motivations for co-designing with others was to spotlight the good things that are happening behind the headlines, whether that is resilient, civically engaged young people through Covid or community development happening in interface areas “364 days a year”.

### Embedded in the organisation

Principles of co-design, cultural democracy, access, inclusion and social justice were embedded in organisations. This shapes the way they work, the way they manage their staff, the artists and practitioners they employ, the partnerships they build and how they value the people and groups they engage with and involve.

For organisations such as Open Arts and ArtsEkta, these principles also shape the composition of their boards with formal or informal policies specifying that at least half the board should be made up of current or past participants or people from a similar demographic background as their target beneficiaries. Young at Arts is planning a new forum that will have children's voices speak to its board. At YouthAction, young participants from its members forum represent the organisation at formal meetings with funders and other stakeholders.

## Relationships, not transactions

“I would visit them and just let them know what we had to offer. It was just a case of wandering around Ardoyne and Shankill and telling people that we were there.”

GOLDEN THREAD GALLERY/DRAW DOWN THE WALLS OUTREACH MANAGER (KLIEST)

The power and impact of building relationships came through in all our conversations. Hand in hand with time to build trust and relationships, nearly everyone we spoke to felt that this was the most important building block in co-design.

Relationships are often built outside the confines of a project, developed organically rather than bending to the pressures of targets, deadlines or budgets. After it moved in to its new premises, Golden Thread Gallery turned up to meetings run by local community groups, listening lots and saying little, just making people aware that they were there and feel comfortable with their presence. This approach, of course, requires the support of the whole organisation and often a funder with an eye on long-term value rather than quick results.

Personal relationships are just as critical when building partnerships between organisations. Often they start with a meeting of minds – people who share the same ethics or principles – again often explored with no particular project or opportunity in mind (but with “lots of cups of tea”).

Long-term relationships can also create advocacy for arts and co-design in other sectors. Kids in Control, for example, has recently joined the board of one of its long-term partner organisations, Suicide Awareness and Support Group.

## Aligning outcomes

“It is about the way we are as humans making this art”

TERRA NOVA PRODUCTIONS

Some organisations co-designed a shared vision or shared outcomes that everyone worked towards.

Other organisations told us that all partners had their own outcomes which came together in the work they wanted to do. In the Draw Down the Walls consortium, Golden Thread Gallery wanted a wider audience and a big project to provoke discussion about contemporary art while Lower Shankill Community Association and North Belfast Interface Network wanted a reason to consult on peace walls.

Importantly, there were no targets or even expectations that Draw Down the Walls would remove peace walls (although it likely did contribute to this). People we spoke to told us repeatedly that outputs cannot be the focus of co-design work, although everyone involved can work together to agree them later in the process.

### Taking risks and reflecting on learning

“It’s sometimes boring, sometimes exciting. It is not a failsafe mechanism to produce good art.”

TERRA NOVA PRODUCTIONS

Sharing power means being willing to adapt and give some things up in faith that you will get something stronger back in return. However, working with different people and groups, with different capacities, motivations and expectations, in different contexts, over long periods of time, in a creative and evolving process, means best intentions are not always realised.

Several organisations were keen to stress that while they had experience co-designing for years or even decades, they were not “best practice”. Rather they are continually learning and evolving their practice – because of what they continue to learn and because of the changing context of people and place in which they work.

## Structure

### Positions of power

“Imagine you had to pitch in Lagos or Shanghai”

TERRA NOVA PRODUCTIONS

Systems can make access and inclusion difficult. Policymakers, funders, commissioners, employers and other decision-making structures need to be aware

of their positions of power and consider how they can embed the principles of co-design in their processes. This might mean ensuring people making decisions have a good understanding of the principles of co-design or that decision-making panels are designed to be diverse or representative of those they seek to benefit or that all applicants get feedback in return for their submission.

The development of Belfast City Council's A city imagining strategy was generally cited as an example of good co-design. Derry City and Strabane District Council continue to co-design the delivery of their strategy with a co-design group made up of the council and cultural organisations.

Theatre and Dance NI co-designed a bursary with artists and practitioners affected by the Covid pandemic.

Applicants to University of Atypical's new bursary can apply in writing or by audio tape, they can ask to use the amanuensis (transcription) service and there is a captioned "how-to" video guide and one-to-one support.

## Funding

"You worry that you end up exploiting people when you design projects for them in reaction to a funder telling you they are a priority."

GOLDEN THREAD GALLERY/DRAW DOWN THE WALLS OUTREACH MANAGER (KLIEST)

While co-design should be "people-drive, not funder-driven", well-designed funding provides vital resource.

Organisations talked about the usefulness of multi-annual core funding and three-year project funding cycles which could be reapplied to to sustain or develop longer-term relationships and projects. Funders were considered to sometimes be fixated with supporting new activity, rather than building on what is already strong.

Trusts and foundations were described as "intuitively understanding the importance of relationships" and being willing to invest for long-term outcomes.

## The gift of time

"You can have cheap and fast. You can have fast and good. What you can't have is cheap, fast and good."

Organisations we spoke to described how relationships need at least six months and usually up to three years to develop. Others told us that they had sustained relationships for over 10 years, continuing to meet regularly, develop other projects and bid for funding.

Co-design is a commitment to a long-term process and relationship. This is because “of the time – generations even – it takes to change ingrained patterns of behaviour”. (Icarus)

### Core staff

As relationship building takes time and its outputs and outcomes can be difficult to evidence, this work is not easy to fund through project grants.

Grants through trust and foundations, the Lottery and Belfast City Council enabled organisations to employ the core, long-term staff needed to build and sustain relationships. Golden Thread Gallery’s outreach officer worked at least one day a week for 10 years on Draw Down the Walls. Its community partners gave the same. But the community sector has also faced funding cuts and restrictions that have made it harder for those organisations to employ core staff.

### Networks and connections

There are many different organisations and networks that can help cultural organisations link to different people and groups. This includes Belfast City Council’s Equality Consultative Forum, Disability Advisory Panel, Sign Language Advisory Panel, Healthy Ageing Strategic Partnership and Youth Forum.

Thrive’s audience panel is made up of over 700 people representative of the population of Belfast who are already engaged in culture and arts.

The Arts Council of Northern Ireland is setting up a Minority Ethnic Deliberative Forum.

The Northern Ireland Youth Forum has been co-designed by a youth steering group.

There are countless community development, health, disability, BAME, youth, older people and other organisations that support, represent or are made up of the people they seek to serve. NICVA has a useful members' directory.<sup>7</sup>

Ultimately, co-design creates a continuum of practice. Each co-designed activity leaves a legacy of assets and networks – people, communities and organisations – with a greater understanding of what co-design is or isn't. In YouthAction, for example, participants often come back as tutors or youth workers.

“The process of exploring ideas developed self-esteem and confidence and the participants gained a sense of control through recognising their strengths”

KIDS IN CONTROL CASE STUDY PUBLISHED IN CREATIVELY MINDED AND YOUNG (LOWE)

“We've found this approach of engaging the community also changes people's perception and minds about what art is, who can make it and what it can mean to a community. We know that people find the process of shaping and creating the art or event as useful as the event itself. The engagement work is as valuable and as necessary as the final art production.”

BEAT CARNIVAL

## Practice

### Models of practice

A number of Belfast's cultural organisations have developed their own co-design model or tools.

Wheelworks uses “4D” model of Discover, Define, Develop and Deliver.

Terra Nova Productions has developed intercultural practice and has published a checklist of ethical practice.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> [www.nicva.org/members](http://www.nicva.org/members)

<sup>8</sup> [www.terranovaproductions.net/ethical-checklist](http://www.terranovaproductions.net/ethical-checklist)

Kids in Control has a partnership policy and specialised approaches to working with disabled, neurodiverse, vulnerable and home-schooled young people.

Replay Theatre Company and Young at Art have provided training to artists and organisations on engaging with children including disabled children and children with multiple complex needs.

Prime Cut Productions has approaches for working with care-experienced young people and people affected by conflict.

Oh Yeah and OTH Collective have particular approaches to working with older people.

Golden Thread Gallery and its Draw Down the Walls partners have a tried and tested model for working in interface areas.

Many other organisations are doing great work in great ways with different people.

## People powered

People we spoke to frequently engaged a person at the centre of the co-design activity who acted as a facilitator. A good facilitator was considered essential to any success.

People also told us that having the right artist or cultural practitioner could literally make a project – and vice versa.

The personal attributes of the people building the relationships – whether facilitators, artists and practitioners, directors, chief executives, staff and so on – included empathy, positivity, generosity, patience, persistence, resilience, openness, creativity and a commitment to the people, project and principles of co-design.

## Building relationships

“There are many tiny pockets of brilliance happening. Accept that others can have more knowledge than you.”

WORKSHOP PARTICIPANT

Relationships often start with the meeting of like-minded people, someone who gets the power of culture and arts and how this can benefit their community or group.

That person can then act as a champion or advocate. Thereafter, good practice and good experiences create publicity and word of mouth, building momentum to develop new relationships.

At project level, this also takes time. YouthAction schedules an extra half an hour on to classes to make space for “down time” and “random conversations” between participants, youth workers and tutors. “There is the syllabus, but it is not strict. This is not school.”

## Out of silos

“99% of our work is with another organisation and with the people they connect with.”

WHEELWORKS

Cultural organisations told us working with partners from other sectors is key to engaging new people and groups. They partnered with organisations working in community development, youth work, schools, education, employability and training, health, social care, welfare support, advice and justice.

These organisations have the trust of the people they work with. This is vital to connect with groups that don't have the social capital to bridge with other organisations (for many reasons including previous bad experience of cultural partnerships or being “workshopped out”). It is also vital for newcomer communities, refugees and asylum seekers.

These organisations have insight in to what works and doesn't work for the people they work with. (Although some people cautioned that you should never assume that an organisation knows everything about the people they support. Partnering with organisations is not a substitute for engaging people.) They can be allies, critical friends, champions and co-conspirators.

These organisations are also experts in their field. They can provide participants with the support they need to engage comfortably and confidently. They can advise cultural partners on access requirements. This is particularly vital when participants are vulnerable. Kids in Control's partner Suicide Awareness and Support Group provided a skilled person at each workshop with sole job of ensuring “we stayed in

space where young people could speak and explore, but if issues needed more support, the person could bring us back and deal with it so we did not go to unsafe places”.

Partner organisations can also bring staff and resources. This is particularly important as most cultural organisations are small and can be under-resourced, though some organisations told us they found partnerships worked best between organisations of the same size as they were more likely to have a similar mindset. Open Arts, for example, likes to work with other organisations whose staff know their participants by name.

Partner organisations can also support the sustainability and legacy of the work. Cultural organisations are not responsible for or resourced to support the ongoing needs of all the people and groups they engage. But partner organisations can be.

“Our projects have an end, but the partner organisation is the one that keeps the connection with the participants so their experience with us goes into something else.”

DU DANCE (NI)

### Sharing power, roles and responsibilities

“Direction is important – co-design is not a free for all – each brings their own and in this direction is important – artists bring their skills, and young people their experience and ideas and wants – and there is equity of esteem for what each brings.

“We bring the structure of how to work through it, and they fill in the how and the what.”

DU DANCE (NI)

Collaborative decision making and sharing power with everyone involved is central to co-design. But valuing everyone's expertise includes that of cultural organisations and cultural practitioners. This helps ensure that projects have the high production values that everyone involved deserves, so that, according to Open Arts, “it is not patronising or thought of a low budget”.

“Artists bring inspiration to the group. They carry people's ideas to a new place.”

BEAT CARNIVAL

Cultural organisations told us that they really valued what non-cultural organisations could bring to the partnership because it allowed them to concentrate on their area of expertise – creativity, arts and culture.

Some organisations we spoke to develop memorandums of understanding or partnership agreements with partners. These respect each other's expertise and set down each partners role and responsibilities. This means that while a whole project can be co-designed, elements within it may, with agreement, be trusted to the integrity of the expert, whether that is artistic (such as the score), technical (sound), legal (safeguarding) or relational (recruiting participants).

### Building capacity to share power

“In some circumstances young people don't have the information or experience or confidence to go where you could or want to take them – teaching is mutual exchange – you share skills and value what each person brings.”

DU DANCE (NI)

Not everyone you want to share power with is willing or able use it. Organisations we spoke to provided training in confidence building, decision-making, assertiveness, teamwork, communication, hospitality and inclusion but caution it is important that development takes place at a speed led by participants.

And not all organisations and not all people are ready to give power. As well as building trust, regular, frequent meetings set a habit of sharing power and decision making for everyone involved.

### On their terms

“Let some hide and other be vocal. Let them go at their own pace.”

KIDS IN CONTROL

Different people want to engage in different ways. University of Atypical asks artists they work with “How do you want to be communicated with?”. Terra Nova

Productions recommends taking time to understand people's motivations (such as having fun or gaining experience), other commitments (work, family) and preferred behaviours (leaders, followers and so on). This can help everyone plan when and how to take part.

People are smart and know when they are just being used to "tick boxes". Several people we talked to said that previous bad experiences (with other organisations) have stopped some people and groups getting involved in their projects or made it harder to build relationships. Groups that are prioritised by policymakers as "hard-to-reach" can be "workshopped out".

Organisations like Beat Carnival, YouthAction, DU Dance (NI) and Terra Nova have steering groups made up of participants. Others embed reflection in to regular workshops or all activities.

Many organisations talked about how "go and see" or taster activities can help people explore their tastes. Other activity may be broadly cultural – organisations we talked to had organised summer diversionary activity, barbeques, beach trips and football matches. Activity that is fun and relevant builds trust and encourages people to continue.

### Dig where you stand

"It is our neighbourhood. We have a long-term relationship here, and that's an important part of how we work."

BEAT CARNIVAL

"A lot of times it is not until the community comes to you that new ideas can take off or older ones be revived and take off. The ones that really work are the ones that the communities want and know are needed. "

ULSTER ORCHESTRA

The project has to be relevant to the people you want to involve. Arts and culture can be a powerful tool to help people explore their stories, their history, their place, their hopes and fears. This can be a transformational process for both participants and practitioners.

“Arts is a vehicle to open discussion. It made the subject [of suicide and self-harm] accessible and engaging, and using physical theatre that is high energy and fun supported participants to feel comfortable in their bodies and to make the connection between physical and emotional wellbeing.”

KIDS IN CONTROL CASE STUDY PUBLISHED IN CREATIVELY MINDED AND YOUNG (LOWE)

Organisations we spoke to described how music, local heritage and reminiscence can be particularly effective at helping people think, connect and share.

Cultural organisations also saw their role as helping to connect local stories to artists, ideas and practice across the globe.

### A matter of taste

“I have never liked experiencing art when it is too exclusive and just for the people who know about art. I never felt very satisfied with that. Maybe it's because I come from a small community and any cultural events were attended by everybody and, I mean, some people would say, ‘oh that was rubbish, I didn't like that’, but people would still go along and give it a go and they didn't feel excluded.”

GOLDEN THREAD GALLERY/DRAW DOWN THE WALLS OUTREACH MANAGER (KLIEST)

People we talked to cautioned against patronising people involved in work. Golden Thread Gallery did not assume they knew anything about the community including what art they would or would not like.

This is particularly true when working with people who are perceived to be less likely to engage in funded culture and arts, such as older people, disabled people or people from working-class communities.

Many organisations talked about how “go and see” or taster activities could help people explore their tastes.

### Access and inclusion

Access should be rights-based. That means people have requirements, not “needs”. Various venues such as the Grand Opera House and Titanic Belfast have disability

advisory groups. University of Atypical's Arts and Disability Equality Charter<sup>9</sup> is being revised to become the Equality Standards Initiative, piloting with 10 organisations looking at physical and policy adaptations and recruitment processes.

Belfast City Council and thrive have Accessible events guides.<sup>10</sup>

Advice and guidance can also be obtained from a range of support and lobbying organisations such as Versus Arthritis, Disability Action and Age NI.

## Embedding principles

Everyone we spoke to was passionate about the ethos or principles of co-design. As well as believing it and embedding it in their organisational culture, several stressed that it is important to make sure that these are lived at all stages in a project. This means that everyone involved in the project should have a good understanding of co-design and be able to check if it strays from the principles. One way of doing this is to read out the principles at the start of each meeting or session.

## Talking and listening

"Ideas come through conversation. You need space to let ideas go, trust to talk rubbish and confidence and freedom to imagine."

GOLDEN THREAD GALLERY

"You need to just chat with them"

OH YEAH

Ideas come from talking. After trust is established, cultural organisations excel at using various creative methods to have meaningful consultations (but "never underestimate the power of pizza").

Listening is also an underestimated skill. Voices can be amplified, but people in positions of power – whether that is cultural organisations, partner organisations, funders or policymakers – still need to hear, respect and act on what they say.

---

<sup>9</sup> <https://universityofatypical.org/charter/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://wewillthrive.co.uk/resources/toolkits-templates/welcoming-disabled-audiences>

## Rewarding everyone's contribution

“Never underestimate the importance of pizza”

DU DANCE (NI)

In return for sharing their time and expertise, cultural organisations we spoke to provided co-design participants with fun, hospitality (“Always feed participants”), skills, training, paid opportunities, pathways to other projects and opportunities, time to themselves, childcare and respite care.

Wheelworks practice Random Acts of Kindness,<sup>11</sup> giving small amounts of money to organisations they have worked with to do activities with.

The opportunity to showcase what has been done or learned and to celebrate together was considered very important.

## Review

### Reflective mindsets

Formal evaluation, alongside marketing, is the first budget line to be squeezed when resources are tight. Regardless, those we spoke to who practice co-design were both reflective and curious and had deeply considered what works and why. In keeping with co-design, they sought to do this collaboratively when they could, as an away day, a meeting or simply over coffee in the office.

### Depth and quality

Traditional project monitoring, which focuses on outputs, cannot capture depth and quality of engagement. It also does not consider the sensitivities of capturing information from particular groups of people, such as people with dementia. Organisations we spoke preferred to use case studies, narrative and other qualitative evidence. Staff, facilitators, artists and practitioners involved in co-design projects are also often skilled in observation and reflection.

---

<sup>11</sup> [www.randomactsofkindness.org](http://www.randomactsofkindness.org)

## Appendix 3: Understand it: Case studies

### Case study 1: Framework for cultural co-design engineers

Let me tell you one thing I learned and found helpful in life. Learn the subjects or knowledge which gives you money and food on the table. Do your best efforts in learning all these but don't only stop at that. Literature, painting, music, drama, sports, sculpture – make friendship with at least one of these arts. Whatever you learned to earn money and food on table will keep you alive. But friendship with arts will tell you why you want to live.

PU LA DESHPANDE TRANSLATED BY PRADNYA JOSHI

Belfast City Council believes that co-design can help to deliver several priorities in its cultural strategy including active citizenship, civic participation in cultural life and inclusion. In spring 2021, it commissioned Smith and Kent Consulting to create a co-design and engagement framework.

Smith and Kent planned for a launch event with the cultural sector in May. The framework would be developed over the summer months. They would explore barriers to engagement and involvement in arts, heritage and culture; uncover how co-design and other engagement methods were already being used; and work with artists to come up with concepts for three new “catalyst” projects to “kickstart” co-design processes. The results would then be shared back with the sector in August.

To put what they preached in to practice, Smith and Kent wanted to do all this by co-design.

#### Co-designing the co-design framework

In May 2021, the funded cultural sector – that is Belfast City Council's grant recipients together with key partners and support organisations, such as the Arts Council of Northern Ireland and Theatre and Dance NI – were invited to one of two Zoom workshops to explore co-design, hear what was happening elsewhere and learn about this project.

Attendees were then invited to consider joining the project's co-design "engineers" team. This was to be five people from the cultural sector and five Belfast residents – ideally people from less culturally engaged groups. This team would engineer key parts of the co-design framework with Smith and Kent as facilitators. We would meet five Tuesday lunchtimes between June and August.

By June, we had recruited five engineers from the sector and six from different parts of the community in Belfast. They included artists, arts and heritage managers, community workers, policymakers and an actual engineer; men and women; under 30s and over 60s; disabled and non-disabled people; people born here, moved here long ago and moved more recently; people from racially minoritized backgrounds; people who spoke English, Irish, Romanian and Marathi; and people from working class areas and inner-city areas.

### Building relationships

"It was a privilege and a pleasure to work with you all."

CO-DESIGN ENGINEER

Following a drop-in "get to know you" Zoom session, we met six times – the sixth meeting was agreed to provide an opportunity to evaluate and celebrate.

As the team gelled and learned more about one another, members took on clear roles with Smith and Kent providing administration, co-ordination and fact-finding functions and the co-designers coming up with ideas and providing insight in to and links with the sectors and communities they knew well.

Over time, engineers started to exchange invitations to events and share a little more about themselves. They began to interact other than through Smith and Kent as the facilitators. It is likely that this it would have happened faster or more deeply if we had been able to meet regularly in person rather than purely online and over a longer period of time.

### Exploring language, experience and perspectives

"People talked from their experience and at no point did I think, 'Oh, for god's sake'. Usually you think that at 'professional' meetings and

you have to hide what you are thinking. This was something positive and actually quite alive that was happening and that was nice.”

CO-DESIGN ENGINEER

Language was an important in defining our task. Early discussion about people's early, best and worst experiences of “culture” grew into a discussion of what “the arts” includes, what is culture and who defines it.

These discussions fed into the questions in the peer research and briefs for the catalyst project concepts. Most fundamentally, it moved us away from the deficit model that was assumed in the project – that some people lack culture or at least engagement – to focus on assets – the rich cultural lives that people and communities have and do – reminding us that everyone has something to offer.

### Making it accessible for all

“Remember not everyone will understand language you take for granted.”

CO-DESIGN ENGINEER

We tried to use clear language, with everyone asked to challenging acronyms and call out jargon. We took time to discuss what “involved”, “engaged” and “participation” meant as well as “culture” and “arts”.

Although we had to deliver the whole project within a tight timescale, we spent two sessions at the beginning exploring what co-design is (and isn't). The co-design engineers found that very valuable.

By sharing research and presenting back findings, we tried to give everyone a solid foundation of knowledge to work from. But it was difficult to go at a pace that suited everyone. Engineers could – and did – call and email us at any time and ask questions.

We recruited one additional engineer to help support one of the other engineers with language and confidence. This support was invaluable, helping the other engineer take part more equally. They also brought their own unique experience and insight.

## Collaboration and roles

“We worked well and didn’t need to challenge each other. We just kind of collaborated and were on the same page.”

CO-DESIGN ENGINEER

As a group, we agreed a short paper on how we would all work together and how we would respect any information shared.

The outputs for the work were set by the project contract with Belfast City Council. Not all were suited to co-design because of the specific knowledge or skills needed combined with the four-month timeframe. Instead, as facilitators, we carried out the desk research, benchmarking and baselining and brought our findings back to the group. We also took the lead in writing up all our findings in to the report, which volunteers reviewed.

The main co-designed elements were defining the scope of the project, the peer research, the catalyst projects and the end-of-project presentation to the sector.

The engineers felt it was important to consider the expertise and skills of the whole team and how that could best be harnessed throughout the project: not everyone did or has to co-design everything all of the time.

## Listening to lived experience and diverse view points

“Ask who should be in the conversation, who isn’t already”

CO-DESIGN ENGINEER

The peer research was the key element in gathering different perspectives and experiences.

From the start, the team talked about who was not in the room. Were there people missing from communities less seen to be engaged in culture and arts?

The team was particularly concerned that statistics only counted formal engagement in culture, assuming that those who are less able, less interested or felt less welcomed by the dominant culture were inherently uncultured.

The engineers own experience identified barriers for young people transitioning to adulthood; disabled and neurodiverse people and people with long-term health conditions; people with poor mental health; parents of young children; and people from racially minoritized communities, including migrant workers, as having particular barriers.

Each engineer worked with us, one to one, to identify people they could carry out research with and how to word questions to suit each group. We then created a short running order for focus groups and a matching online survey to explore stories behind the statistics (see appendix 5 for research tools).

### What matters for all the people involved

“I think what was really good was the way we did the research on low level [arts] engagement, and then we all brought ideas from our own backgrounds and found the common issues.”

CO-DESIGN ENGINEER

The way the engineers created the three catalyst concepts is an example of seeking out what matters to each individual and then aligning personal and community outcomes with the wider outcomes of the project.

Smith and Kent kept the brief they gave to the engineers team as open as possible.

- We need three ideas or ways to help get people who are currently less involved in funded arts and culture more involved in shaping it
- We need the ideas before the August meeting
- We have £1,800 to invest

After we all talked about it as a group, the engineers went into huddles in breakout rooms and looked at what we knew or had found out so far and explored if there were common reasons across groups of people that kept them from getting involved in culture, and how we could find ideas for projects that could move these barriers or address these needs.

We then pulled together a short paper on how the ideas could be developed and how the task might be explained to an artist. This paper was important to moving ahead. Most engineers had never commissioned art or artists. Others had, but not in

this way. In an ideal world we would have spent time meeting artists and learning about how ideas and commissions are shaped so that the artists could have had more of a co-design role in the overall project.

The engineers picked and re-shaped three questions that they wanted artists to answer. And they split themselves into three groups based on the question that spoke most to them.

1. "Where is my culture?"
2. "How can we use Belfast bandstands for creativity and community?"
3. "Why does 'established' art not speak to me?"

The three groups then worked over the summer to refine their question, adapt the draft artists brief and to identify and approach artists. Smith and Kent were on hand to support them and answer queries or provide ideas at any time.

All did not go to plan, of course. Artists are busy. It was summer. And we didn't have a lot of time. With each group, we re-grouped, re-planned, re-wrote and re-did until we came up with the three concepts in appendix 6.

## Rewarding everyone's contribution

"This is something I believe we done well – your designers feel valued"

CO-DESIGN ENGINEER

Every engineer was given £400 in recognition of their time and expertise. This was paid at the start of the project, so as not to be tied to attendance. The ask was that people meaningfully engaged in a co-design process, rather than turned up to meetings.

While the attendance rate was high, motivated by taking part and representing their peers and communities, inevitably since engineers were recruited because of their life experience, life got in the way. But they continued to co-design alongside doing their day jobs; caring for children and family members; through illness and isolation; and holiday homes and poor internet abroad.

At the end of the project, the co-design team was asked to think about what they got from the work. The responses showed that people found rich rewards other than

the financial: they got new learning about arts, heritage, culture, accessibility and co-design; they discovered new ways of working or had existing methods affirmed; they made new friends, connections with each other and with new organisations within and across sectors; they hope to be able to continue working with each other; and they valued being able to think creatively and being supported to share ideas openly and receptively.

### What we learned about co-design

At an evaluation session at the end of the project, the engineers were asked to share the key advice they would share with others starting a co-design project. This included:

- Don't underestimate the time commitment. Build in lots of time, then add some more.
- Spend more time on prep
- Spend time at the start explaining what co-design is
- Understand and communicate the benefit of the process, even if understanding develops along the way
- Have evolving expectations of co-design – it will be different every time
- Don't have a strict structure (it's not coercion!)
- Meet in person
- People might contribute at different stages – based on their expertise or when they are ready or equipped to do so and so on
- Think about what the project needs and how you can use the expertise of your team
- Have a group contract at the start
- Have a meaningful idea to start that people can gather around
- Have lots of short meetings and provide support one-to-one in between
- Agree a roadmap of steps with your co-designers at the beginning
- Keep an open mind, be fluid
- Make your deadlines flexible
- Be open to not knowing where it is going!
- Remember not everyone will understand language you take for granted
- Ask who should be in the conversation, who isn't already

- Expect people will be more and less committed at different times
- Have fun!
- Make your designers feel valued
- Listen well

## Review it

“I think we set a standard for a way of doing arts and culture, raised expectations and a flag for co-design.”

### FRAMEWORK CO-DESIGNER

The team tested the self-evaluation tool (appendix 9) against their experience of co-design in creating the co-design framework. Discussion during an evaluation session provided further learning and helped to improve the tool further.

| Progress against co-design principles       | Average score (out of 5) |
|---|--------------------------|
| Knowing that everyone has something to give | 4.3                      |
| Making sure everyone can take part          | 4.2                      |
| Welcoming different perspectives            | 4.4                      |
| Blurring roles and share power              | 4.2                      |
| Rewarding everyone's contribution           | 4.6                      |

FIGURE 8 CO-DESIGN TEAM'S AVERAGE SCORES USING THE SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL

The engineers reflected that what they had learned and experienced would change the way they work, and they would be keen to do more co-design. They also felt their work so far may have influenced the way others think and act, for example, Belfast City Council, cultural practitioners and organisations at events and community groups taking part in workshops and focus groups.

Longer-term, they felt that their work had the potential to create meaningful change for individual people, organisations and sectors, including the culture and community sectors. However, they were anxious about the efficacy of their work.

“We have raised expectations – expecting something to happen: what happens now? Don't just put on a shelf.”

## Case study 2: Prime Cut Productions' Ensemble

Prime Cut Productions is an independent theatre company based in Belfast that started in 1992. As a company we are dedicated to making high quality theatre, promoting diversity and inclusivity in making art with our community partners and creating developmental opportunities for independent theatre artists based in NI.

The PARTICIPATE project has been part of our community engagement programme for over 12 years now. And at the heart of PARTICIPATE are the Ensemble Projects through which we've created collaborative projects with around 2,400 people and 70 groups across NI.

Ensemble started in 2013 when we took a strategic look at our community engagement work. Until then it had focused on an annual special production project and the ongoing work of engaging schools and community groups around our live productions. This was incredibly successful, yet we felt there was something more we could be doing or that we could be doing something differently.

### Ownership means starting from what matters to people

What we recognised was that the subject matter of the work – our productions – originated *in* the company. And that if we were describing our work as community engagement, then surely there should be as much ownership from the communities we work with in terms of what the projects were about. Who was in a better position to say what was relevant and meaningful than the people whose lives were actually impacted by these issues?

### Investing in co-design

But shaping work around what matters to people means you can't describe the work in advance and back then, and even now, that can make applications for funding difficult.

Even so, we contacted Belfast City Council and explained how we wanted to approach some groups and create a small workshop project. We explained at this point we did not know who these groups were, what the workshops might explore, what the end result would be. We weren't sure what the outcomes would be and if in fact there would be any outputs. What we could guarantee was that we would

bring together 10 community groups from across Belfast; we would ensure there was a cross-community and intergenerational aspect providing insight into different communities across Belfast as well as different generations within each community; and we would bring the skills set of Prime Cut to the project. The council said yes and with their seed funding we got Ensemble off the ground.

Since then, Ensemble has developed into an annual project, supported by a variety of funders, that has explored a wide range of themes including age (both youth and older people), urban culture, disability, colour, race, tradition culminating in filmed and live performances across Belfast and beyond.

The impact on the people and communities we have engaged with has been highly positive including increased self-confidence, transferable employment skills, greater appreciation of diversity and active engagement with and expression of their own cultures and those of others. And for the past three years, support from the Executive Office's Central Good Relations Fund means we have focused on promoting good relations.

### Long-term relationships

Because we run PARTICIPATE in partnership with community groups, it has allowed us to create fantastic and continuous relationships with communities, groups and charities.

We keep our community connections going all year round. We offer our new opportunities to groups we have worked with before because they will always have new members. We stay in touch, communicate regularly and also seek out new groups to fill and gaps in our community connections.

### Telling their story

As a theatre company, we bring a theme to prompt storytelling. As artists we bring the skills to design the work – but that work responds to the needs and wants of the participants. They decide what they want to tell so others can hear.

For example, the Ensemble project that we had thematically called The Story of Us was influenced over and over again by the teenagers involved who eventually

called the piece *The Secret City* – the place that no adults know about because it is the secret city of teenagers.

Everyone and all communities have their own story and those stories are the core of every Ensemble. Stories from LGBTQ+ kids, young people in care, kids into extreme sport. In that case the piece ended up being a wonderful mix of Parkour and dance arts.

### Authentic voices

In the case of the young people in care, we were working with VOYPIC (Voice of Young People in Care) as partners, and the half dozen or so kids from there really shaped the work and worked with others to tell their story really powerfully. But we then discovered that safeguarding of young people in care meant we could not show them or acknowledge them as the story creators or credit them or in any way at all!

So, we went back to VOYPIC to see what we could do. Working with Reveal artist Fionnuala Kennedy, the young people shared their stories and experiences. She listened and created a script. The young people were a huge part of the writing process, three times sharing their opinions so it would truly reflect their stories. The end result was *Removed*, a professional piece of award-winning theatre that has received critical acclaim at festivals on the island of Ireland, Scotland and Philadelphia.

When you are working with people to help them explore and share real-life issues, it is vitally important to be totally authentic when you present those issues as art. The people at the centre need to have the power to speak through the work. That is where relationships with community partners are so important.

Another example of this is *Scorch*, the award-winning, critically acclaimed play by Stacey Gregg, which we produced for the 2015 Outburst Queer Arts Festival. *Scorch* told the story of Kes, a gender-curious teenager. To make sure the production was as authentic as possible we had the privilege of working with Outburst, AnchorTrans and BOUY. The participants also worked with sound designer Carl Kennedy to produce a recording that was included in the finished performance.

## At your pace

We aim to create access by working at people's own pace, and we discuss with each group the way they want to take part. For example, working on the Ensemble Colours project, we worked with two community organisations who at first were reluctant about performing, but after an ongoing programme of Zoom workshops, developing short films about the issues they felt they wanted to explore. They created a wonderful series of short films that have been publicly showcased several times now.

Overall Ensemble has been a way for our organisation to gather and share stories that matter to many different people. It has given us the chance to work with and form ongoing relationships with people and communities we otherwise may not have, to hear and be inspired by stories we would never have known about and to create work that has had multiple benefits for audiences and participants alike.

For more information

[www.primecutproductions.co.uk](http://www.primecutproductions.co.uk)

Removed

[www.primecutproductions.co.uk/removed-community-page](http://www.primecutproductions.co.uk/removed-community-page)

Scorch

[www.primecutproductions.co.uk/scorch-1](http://www.primecutproductions.co.uk/scorch-1)

Ensemble Colours

<https://ensembleparticipate.com/>

[https://ensembleparticipate.com/?page\\_id=122](https://ensembleparticipate.com/?page_id=122)

## Case study 3: Barnardo's Transition Inclusion Service

### A rights-based approach

Barnardo's works with children, young people and families across NI to promote better outcomes and build better futures. We believe that every child deserves the best possible start in life, and all our work reflects that philosophy.

The UN Convention on The Rights of the Child Article 12 that says young people have the right to be listened to and taken seriously. We've always sought to include young people's voices so co-design and co-production is core to our work and children and young people are at the centre, and we've had a wraparound model for years. This means different services and practitioners and partners work together to support children and young people.

Over the years we have followed different models such as Hart's Ladder of young people's participation.<sup>12</sup> We now use the Lundy model of child participation developed by Laura Lundy at Queens University Belfast. This provides a way of conceptualising a child's right to participation, as laid down in Article 12 of the UN Convention.<sup>13</sup>

Lundy's model has four elements in a rational, chronological order:

- Space: Children must be given safe, inclusive opportunities to form and express their views
- Voice: Children must be facilitated to express their view
- Audience: The view must be listened to
- Influence: The view must be acted upon, as appropriate<sup>14</sup>

### The world closes when you turn eighteen

Our Transition Inclusion Service is part of the Barnardo's Disabled Children and Young People Participation Project. We know that disabled young people face particular

---

<sup>12</sup> [www.myd.govt.nz/documents/engagement/harts-ladder.pdf](http://www.myd.govt.nz/documents/engagement/harts-ladder.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/lundy\\_model\\_of\\_participation.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/lundy_model_of_participation.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/lundy\\_model\\_of\\_participation.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/lundy_model_of_participation.pdf)

barriers to doing what they would like to and to being heard and acknowledged. The Participation Project and the Lundy model help us to find out what the young people want and adapt and create access constantly.

We'd engaged in research with Queen's before around disability and the transition from young person to young adulthood.<sup>15</sup> From this research, from our experience and from what young people tell us, we know that transition is a particular challenge for disabled young people.

For most young people, turning 18 and becoming a young adult means the world opens up to them; for disabled young people it shuts down. They want to go to college and can't. They want to travel but can't. And they lose the support of children's services and move to the complex world of adult services. It can be a very confusing, destabilising and distressing time.

### A person-centred approach

So, this year we worked with a group of young people at the Disabled Children and Young People Participation Project to gather their ideas about what would support them and make a difference for them and other disabled young people as they transition. We worked together to shape these ideas into meaningful actions. Then we went to the Barnardo's funding team and they brought their skills to the team and built the ideas into a funding application.

The project application was checked back and forward with the group and it took shape. When refined and ready we sent it off to the National Lottery Community Fund.

The Lottery liked it. And when the Lottery came out to find out more about the Transition Inclusion Service project, it was the young people they met, and it was the young people who talked to them about the project, and it was the young people who explained why they wanted it.

---

<sup>15</sup> <https://pure.qub.ac.uk/en/publications/dont-box-me-in-disability-identity-and-transitions-to-young-adult>

Covid restrictions held everything back, but the project that young people co-designed is now kicking off. It will run for 3 years with 3 cohorts a year where 12 young people come together for 12 weeks to work on making a good transition for them. It is based on working with partners, so the three social work teams across the Southern Trust will nominate three young people each, and there will be three other young people from within Barnardo's or self-referred.

The content will be organic – based on the needs and hopes of each young person. The whole purpose is to give them more power, more of a say in their future. It is space for them to create new options to get them to their goals, come up with approaches that that don't yet exist because those approaches will be centred on what they personally want to achieve. That means we need to focus on what matters to each person. They'll set their goals at the start and rate where they are at from 0 to 10. There are a handful of outcomes we think that everyone will benefit from – better confidence, communications, independence – but otherwise the young person shapes their own outcomes.

### Building in space, voice, audience and influence

There is a reference group made up of young people who are not taking part in the service but who are 18 to 25 and have made the transition to young adulthood themselves without such support. They'll meet four times a year to hear a report and look at the statistics and information about what's happening with the project, and they will give their assessment of it. They'll be key to understanding what's working and improving it. Some young people who take part in the Transition Project itself could join this group once they complete the project, and that will form a good learning loop.

Someone from the reference group is also on the steering group. This is made up of agencies who need to hear and respond to what is said. They are all decision makers who have influence over service areas. Both Children's and Adult Services are on the steering group, for example. This means we have both our audience and our influencers around the table.

We think that the person from the reference group going to the steering group meetings may rotate – but that will be decided with the reference group. Having

both a reference and a steering group means that young people who have lived experience can shape the overall programme, and people with influence can take away what they learn from the feedback and make changes to their services.

Evaluation will be ongoing and through feedback to and from the reference group and by bringing the three cohorts each (36 young people) each year together with parents and carers to assess what the effects have been and what worked or could be better.

The Transition Inclusion Service is very much what the young people felt would work, and it has space, voice, audience and influence built into its structure.

### An organisational culture

But the way this new service was shaped is not a standalone thing. It reflects and takes forward the culture that Barnardo's is constantly building on.

### Valuing voices

We help young people to meet decisionmakers and bring decisionmakers to them. For example, the Disabled Children and Young People Participation Project group members joined the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership meetings.<sup>16</sup> But we are constantly aware of tokenism. We have turned down invitations to "bring" young people to speak at events where they and we can see no value to the young people. Everyone should get something out of the exchange. The people listening have to hear and be willing to act.

### Giving back

The main resources needed are human – staff time and young people's time. And pizza.

---

<sup>16</sup> The Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership brings together a range of statutory agencies and voluntary and community sector organisations to improve the lives of children and young people in NI.

Disabled young people are particularly isolated, but we are a mixed, integrated group and that means all people get to meet others and learn. And as a minimum there is always pizza as hospitality.

We also make sure of more formal reparation. Young people need something in return for sharing their time and trauma, for reliving their experiences. So, we use fun-days, meals, social days across our other work.

We have a Voice and Influence Department, and it uses cinema or other open gift vouchers to recognise when people have helped us with ensuring we have user voice in our plans and bids. We've also used £20 one-for-all vouchers for those who attend five meetings and found it did deepen motivation, people wanted to give time and keep count of meetings.

Another way we are trying to reciprocate for time children and young people put in to the work is an app we are trialling. Young people use it to record what input they've made when – it could be sharing their experiences at a meeting, helping shape a plan and so on – and they can then download it as a CV that shows how they have been active and engaged. It is formal recognition and could be useful when they apply for courses and work.

Giving back is built into the organisation's culture, it is a regular thing – not yet fixed policy but is more and more used.

### Power-sharing structures

The Transition Inclusion Service is not a one-off example of co-design and real participation. Barnardo's tries to engage young people across all levels in its work. For example, young people are equal members of recruitment panels. They are trained and supported – and have exactly the same say and influence as the other panel members. The ethos in Barnardo's supports all our work to ensure young people not only have a voice and are heard but have real influence and shape what we do.

For more information

[www.barnardos.org.uk/northern-ireland](http://www.barnardos.org.uk/northern-ireland)

## Case study 4: East Durham Creates

### No place to go

East Durham is an area of former mining towns and villages. Around 94,000 people live here. It's a beautiful place full of warm, funny, talented, kind and down to-earth people, who through no fault of their own, face socio-economic challenges and high indices of deprivation. Until this project, it had no cultural venues. Nearly three quarters fall into groups who have low arts engagement.

When it was set up, East Durham Creates was managed by Beamish (a museum) and East Durham Trust working in partnership and supported by Durham County Council through its East Durham Area Action Partnership and Culture and Sport Services.

The reason it was set up was to try out new ways of getting more local people involved in something creative. It got funded as a Creative People and Places project.<sup>17</sup> Creative People and Places was developed by Arts Council England with an initial investment from the National Lottery. It is about more people choosing, creating and taking part in art experiences in the places where they live. We are one of the 33 projects it funds, and in January 2021 we entered our third 3-year phase.

### Learning as we go

Our major commissions strand is a good example of learning about co-design.

In the first three years, the major commissioning strand was delivered by an artists' agency. They were a member of the consortium that made the bid to Arts Council England. They brought in great artists and presented fab quality art – but the artists were not from here and when they left there was not necessarily a resonance or legacy in East Durham from the work they did.

---

<sup>17</sup> [www.artscouncil.org.uk/guidance-and-resources/creative-people-and-places](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/guidance-and-resources/creative-people-and-places)

So, in phase two we decided to totally redesign how we do major commissions. We had three commissions: one for families with young kids; one for the over 55s; and one for young people, including those not in education, employment or training.

For the first one with families, we had some community involvement in the commissioning and the interviewing of the artists.

By the second one, we'd learned a bit and engaged more older people more deeply in the selection of the artists and shaping the work. This time the two artists spent a day or two in the community every week, engaging, talking and listening to older residents over a period of nine months.

The theme of *The magic of everyday life* was designed by 500 older people. Their idea, realised with the artists, was to turn local bus shelters into rooms in the home. And to do it and take it down all in one day! Older people also manned the bus stop installations, and it was *their* lives and voices that were celebrated. It was all about older people telling stories not often heard and giving public recognition to their arts.



PICTURE 1 ITWCT LANGLEY HOUSE PERFORMANCE AND AUDIENCE. CREDIT: RICHARD KENWORTHY

## Intentionally challenging

So, by the time we did our most recent commissioning project with young people, our co-design muscles had grown. We now had a core of young people ready to engage because they had gained skills to connect through a smaller project. We could only move to shift the power in phase 2 because the co-designers were ready for it and. Importantly, they knew it was not tokenistic.

We had developed links with youth groups through another strand of work, and we pulled young people from these groups into a panel to shape the commission. The extent of their engagement with the commissioning process wasn't necessarily planned, but it happened because we had networks and knew the kids and could draw them in.

The young people put the brief out and selected the artists with our support. They pushed those artists out of their comfort zone! Rather than read a ten-page proposal, the teens had artists pitch their ideas in a video. Then the artists had to do a workshop with the young people. We trained the teens in what criteria and scoring were about, and they made the pick. It was intentionally challenging the ways artists are selected because we wanted young people to be co-producers throughout.

The young people picked artist Jamie Holman. The research conducted by Jamie into mining heritage and cultures combined with the input from the youth panel formed the concept for Above, Below, Beyond.

Above represents the current landscape, geography and communities and cultures that exist post-mining. Below represents the heritage and traditions that came from mining and its associated industries. And Beyond is the articulation of the youth panel's desires for their future.<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> See <http://eastdurhamcreates.co.uk/above-below-beyond/> and <https://jamieholman.com/project/above-below-beyond> for more information on Above, Below, Beyond



PICTURE ABOVE, BELOW, BEYOND YOUTH PANEL AND BANNER. CREDIT: ALEX ZAWADZKI

## Resources

The major commission is £50,000, and the selected artist manages this budget. East Durham Creates coordinates the organising and venues and networks, manages the safeguarding and organises the safe taxis to meetings. You need someone local to drive it all forward and keep sight of where it fits in the overall strategy.

You also need a coordinator because co-design takes constant contact. You have to have the human resource to drive it forward. We also have developed local champions, people in the community who help us to engage with the non-engaged.

A most important resource is space. Time and space to try it and see.

## Developing co-design practice

Creative People and Places projects have to have co-design and cultural democracy at the core – so we have the impetus to do it.

## Diversity, experiences and perspectives

We now have set up a community panel of local representatives who help to shape the art by and for their local communities. It includes councillors, teachers, community centre leaders, artists and community activists.

In 2018 the project lead moved from the museum to East Durham Trust, which is an anti-poverty group, and we've found non-art partners bring whole new ways to reach and work with those who are not regular engagers with arts and culture.

We've also supported local community centres to programme cultural events, increasing their offer as a venue as part of a "cultural hubs" approach – so they are also now resources we can use to connect with different people.

But don't just grab your partners. You need to build skills and confidence to engage. When working with non-arts sector community groups you need to take time to learn and adjust because they use a different language and come from a different perspective. For example, what helped one artist get the commission was that when asked by the young people "What are you going to do with our £50,000?", they were the only interviewee who acknowledged that it was a huge amount of money, who saw that it was a fortune to the community commissioners. You need to learn how talk to people from diverse backgrounds. Be aware of where they are at. Be alert to acronyms because people will not ask, they will disconnect.

## Creating access

Because there is no arts infrastructure here we have had to use other spaces – community centres, bus shelters, outdoors. Theatres and galleries can be intimidating, other spaces, familiar spaces remove that barrier.

Our Go and See programme takes people to visit cultural venues. Originally anyone could come just to see, but over time we have made it more targeted and deliberate. For example, we went to the Edinburgh Festival with the clear purpose of people seeing and then deciding what we could do here. We now have a group

that work as buddies. They recruit people in the local community and take them on go and sees (although lockdown has messed up those plans for now).<sup>19</sup>

### Collaborating and sharing power

It has taken us time and practice to move from the ambition to engage people as co-designers to a place where we and the people in the community have the capacity to do it. We now do our smaller commissions with a community panel. They've been together a while and they've become the commissioners – we navigate the day-to-day work with artist and do the donkey work, and they commission and appraise.

With the young people on the larger commission, we had conversations around what is and is not acceptable. We negotiated around the rave culture<sup>20</sup> and our values as an organisation, as artists, our vision, what young people want and how we can include all voices. For example, we did compromise by allowing them to form a band, which wasn't necessarily considered high art but was incredibly important to them as part of the process.

### Something in return

The young people get a buzz, get to make decisions, get to make music.

### Changing the system

We can learn because Arts Council England see this as an action learning project and so give us the space to try and learn. Creative People and Places projects are allowed to fail as long as we learn. This space is vital.

---

<sup>19</sup> <http://eastdurhamcreates.co.uk/go-and-see/>

<sup>20</sup> Participatory workshops included music making and Acid House

What will also help is perceptual change. Arts Council England's new 2020 to 2030 strategy, Let's create, is all about what and where is culture.<sup>21</sup>

This summer young people are engaged in a Let's Create Small Commission that engages with specific groups such as young people with special educational needs, young carers and young men. There is no specification about art form, and the project will focus on young people creating connections with each other and their community.

For more information

<http://eastdurhamcreates.co.uk>

[www.creativepeopleplaces.org.uk/project/east-durham-creates](http://www.creativepeopleplaces.org.uk/project/east-durham-creates)

---

<sup>21</sup> Let's Create seeks to "create a country transformed by culture. It will value the creative potential in each of us, provide communities in every corner of the country with more opportunities to enjoy culture, and celebrate greatness of every kind." (Arts Council England)

## Appendix 4: Understand it: Who are the “uninvolved” and how they might be supported, engaged and involved

“Of all sectors, the arts must be where diversity and inclusion should be taken most seriously. Works that explore, challenge and reflect contemporary society are naturally richer if they are informed by a wider range of social perspectives and experiences.”

(WESTON JERWOOD)

This section provides a portrait of who is less likely to be engaged and involved in funded arts and culture in Belfast.

These are people and groups whose lived experience may make it less easy for them to be involved than other people (such as time for parents of young children), but whose lived experience is also fundamental to understanding how and why they would like to be involved (if, for example, you are running a children's festival).

Barriers include emotional barriers (such as anxiety or discomfort); interest barriers (not relevant, don't know what's available); practical (cost, transport); and societal (racism, ableism).

Each section also considers what works in terms of engaging different people and changing relationships from uninvolved to consumption to collaboration.

### How we carried out the research

There is a lot of research in to who does and doesn't engage in culture, heritage and arts, why and why not.

The main source of statistical information is the Continuous Household Survey. It is used by the NI Statistics and Research Agency to produce official statistics. These are the baselines that are used to measure change in the Programme for government and the Belfast agenda. The most recent statistics are available for NI for 2019/20.

Thrive, the audience development agency, also produced a Belfast-specific baseline in 2016/17, which looked in more detail at different types of culture (such as popular and cultural film) and at motivations.

Rather than be bogged down in statistics, this section focuses instead on the trends the numbers tell us and the stories behind the statistics – from other research we have read and from what our co-design engineers team, their friends, neighbours, colleagues and networks and others involved in the co-design of this framework have told us.

For those who do prefer statistics or would like both, see baselines for population indicators in appendix 9.

### A note on language

It is not always ours, but we have tried to be culturally sensitive, and we may not always get this right. Social grade, socio-economic status, income, occupation, social class and identity are particularly wicked.

The evidence refers to Belfast or NI unless it says otherwise.

(64 MILLION ARTISTS)

## Cross-cutting barriers

This section considers key barriers that affect a range of people and groups from different demographic backgrounds. It is based on what we learned through primary research and desk research.

### The fallacy of “It’s not for me”

In our research, we did not find a single person who did not engage with culture in some way. Sometimes, when we started a conversation by asking people “What does culture, arts and heritage mean to you?”, they said they weren’t interested or it wasn’t for them. But when we showed them pictures of different activities, they had usually engaged a lot.

Our findings agree with more extensive research carried out by thrive in 2016/17 which found that 94 per cent of Belfast residents had engaged in culture and arts some way.<sup>22</sup>

### What matters to everyone involved

“It’s everything from CBeebies to Beethoven. It’s in the eye of the beholder [...] It’s stuff that affects you. A manifestation of creativity that speaks to you as a person.”

ENGINEER

“It’s stuff that may not generally be recognised: Instagram photography, a tattoo artist, design, stuff that you do privately like embroidery or reading a book, Re-imagining paramilitary murals.”

ENGINEER

“My favourite art is the little drawings I treasure from my grandchildren from their first pictures of nanny and the dog to the more accomplished anime style pieces.”

INTERVIEWEE

It is not that there is a lack of interest or that people are not involved. It is that we are asking the wrong questions and have already prescribed the “right” answers.

Those “right answers” are the types of culture defined and funded by policymakers. In our research, people from Protestant and racially minoritized community backgrounds in particular pushed back, rightly, at any idea that they were less engaged and somehow less cultural.

“It is funny that they are thought of as being ‘uninvolved’. The Roma community is famous for its culture. It’s just not culture that you see or count.”

---

<sup>22</sup> The official statistic, which comes from the Continuous Household Survey, is consistently lower. It found, for example, that 87 per cent of NI residents engaged in culture and arts in 2019/20. Both thrive and our research used a slightly different definitions of culture (for example, we included reading for pleasure), and there are likely to be regional variances across the whole of NI.

ENGINEER

“There is a snobbishness as to what arts is [...] Where I live in East Belfast, I see young people rehearsing to play in the [Orange] band every day to such a high standard, but it’s not recognised, like somehow that’s not art.”

INTERVIEWEE

“If you’re not interested in what’s included in that, then de facto you’re not interested in, or even excluded from, ‘culture.’”

(64 MILLION ARTISTS)

Almost everyone we spoke to had engaged in arts and culture in informal or non-arts settings, whether reading a book or watching a film at home or through a class in a community centre. Fewer people had participated in publicly funded arts and culture in formal arts and cultural settings, such as seeing a show in the theatre or an exhibition in a gallery.<sup>23</sup>

This appendix largely considers different people and groups whose life experience can throw up particular barriers to engagement. But this is not the same as saying that particular groups of people are not cultural. Co-design is an assets-based model that recognises that everyone has something to give. People and communities are not “lacking” in culture or in other ways that we can solve if only they would see a show.

“Hard-to-reach, deprived areas all signal ‘you are difficult’ or ‘you are worth less’”

INTERVIEWEE

“We are not harder-to-reach, we know exactly where we are”

ENGINEER

---

<sup>23</sup> According to thrive, 37 per cent of Belfast’s population engages with culture in arts or cultural centres; 41 per cent in the community; 55 per cent in a public space; and 60 per cent in an entertainment venue.

For the dominant culture to recognise that everyone has something to give, we need to change what we count as culture and support what matters to everyone involved.

“By changing the way we think of culture, it becomes inherently diverse, because everyone is already a part of it. Most people participate in activities like listening to music, watching television, going to the cinema, using their local park, gardening, cooking, dancing, singing, expressing a passion or interest in something cultural.”

### Time and money

Among people we spoke to, time was the main barrier cited by people from all backgrounds, closely followed by money.

Thrive's research shows how this changes with age as priorities and pressures change. So cost is the main barrier for both 16- to 24-year-olds and 45- to 54-year-olds. Twenty-five- to 34-year-olds are time-poor because of their social lives, but 35- to 44-year-olds are time-poor because of family and work.

### Bad experiences

If you had had a bad experience of a particular type of activity or a particular venue, you are less likely to go again.

Bad experiences could include it was hard to get to; the cost of food or merchandise was high when you got there; it was cold, uncomfortable or you didn't feel welcome; you couldn't hear what was going on; as well as perceptions of the quality of the content itself. Different people may be more likely to have a poor experience because of their circumstances (living far away from a venue) or the way society expects them to behave or engage (ableist mindsets).

### “Arty farty”

“If the cultural sector expects audiences to change their behaviour we need to change first. [...] If we really want a broad range of

people to engage with the arts we need to communicate in a way that speaks to a broad range of people, not in way that speaks only to other arts professionals, to experts and to critics.”

(ICARUS)

The word “arts” seems to be a barrier which makes people immediately think “It is not for me”. This applies to different art forms as well. When prompted, many people we interviewed realised that they had seen an art exhibition, but in the Ulster Museum or a community setting, not a gallery. Or they had seen a play, just not in a theatre.

### Role modelling

“Cultural workers have attitudes, values and tastes, that are very different from those of the rest of the population [...] attitudes that are the most liberal, most pro-welfare and most left wing of any industry [...] creative industries workers are much more likely to attend arts and cultural activities, and thus have very different tastes from workers in other occupations. In contrast, most other occupations are characterised by not engaging very heavily in formal cultural activities.”

(BROOK, O'BRIEN AND TAYLOR)

“Going into a concert hall, you see an entirely white orchestra, a white audience and a white soloist [...] People need role models. They need to see someone like themselves out there.”

ANDREW LLOYD-WEBER, (KHAN)

65 per cent of staff in management roles in organisations annually funded by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland in 2019/20 were female, and there are consistently more successful female applicants to its Support for Individual Artists Programme.<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup> Although in England, where men are still less likely to engage, men are more likely to sit on boards and be in senior management roles across Arts Council England's National Portfolio and Major Partner Museums.

In 2016/17, there were 160 disabled employees working in annually funded organisations, making up 3 per cent of the workforce.

In 2018/19, around 11 per cent of artists awarded funding through SIAP identified as disabled.

Only 1 per cent of the workforce of annually funded organisations in 2019/20 was from a minority ethnic background.

In England, although the “working class” make up 35 per cent of the working population, they make up only 13 per cent of the publishing industry, 18 per cent of the music, performing and visual arts sectors, 12 per cent of film, TV, video, radio and photography, and 21 per cent of museums, galleries and libraries. (Brook, O'Brien and Taylor)

Having a diverse sector means that people see others “like them” involved and can experience their culture and experience reflected back in activity that is relevant and authentic.

People from minoritized communities are less likely to have the networks or connections that help people get in to and get on in the sector. There may be a lack of awareness of pathways in to careers. There may be unwritten middle-class rules or White codes that assume they have shared experiences. Imposter syndrome and feelings of dissonance or lack of belonging can be heightened. People may feel pressure to assimilate.

## Impact of Covid

Everyone has felt the negative impacts of Covid-19, not everyone has felt them equally.

Cultural engagement in funded activity was unequal before Covid-19, and it is likely that the pandemic may have increased disparity for vulnerable and less engaged groups such as racially minoritized communities, disabled people and people with long-term health conditions. For example, those who are unvaccinated because of health conditions may not be allowed entry in to large events, which they may not feel comfortable attending anyway due to their vulnerability. Disabled people have

expressed concerns that they may have less access to disabled toilets as facilities are used to support social distancing. Lip-readers may struggle to understand as masks continue to be worn. Norms and behaviours have changed for everyone, creating more anxiety for Autistic people. People from racially minoritized backgrounds who are more likely to be in casual or low-paid jobs are more likely to have faced financial hardship during lockdown.

There is a fear that diversity is already falling down the agenda in the cultural sector. The Covid-19 crisis and shrinking budgets may be more likely to make the cultural sector more risk-averse, taking less able to experiment in terms of audiences, programming and workforce.

“The fear is that diverse creatives and contents might be sidestepped in favour of what commissioners think is safe and would bring ‘bums on seats’.”

(CULTURAL VALUE)

## Systemic inequalities

“It is not surprising that inequality exists in the arts as it is made up of people from the same society working within the same systems”

(CULTURE HIVE)

Inequalities exist across society. Certain groups who are less likely to be involved in funded arts and cultural activity, such as people of lower socio-economic status, are also less likely to be engaged in decision making and civic society in general.

## Cross-cutting opportunities

This section looks at some of the approaches and opportunities that have been successful in addressing barriers and a range of people and groups from different demographic backgrounds.

### Co-design

Sharing power and involving people in decision making creates more relevant and engaging culture.

## Partnership

Organisations that exist to support people from different backgrounds are likely to have the trust of the people they serve or represent. They can play a vital role linking people to culture and arts.

## Relational, not transactional

Everyone we spoke to to co-design this framework told us it is essential to build relationships. These should be long-term and ongoing, fostered over coffee and chats, rather than short-term projects and outputs. It takes more effort to build new relationships than it does to sustain existing ones.

## Fun

Have fun!

The offer of fun is a great way to get people engaged. It is also a great way to get people talking, thinking, sharing and imaging.

“Playfulness can reshape the terms of the conversation [...] to some extent, we felt like children playing again, learning free from social constraint.”

(CALVO AND SCLATER )

## “Go sees”

Many people we spoke to talked about the importance “go sees” and taster events as a way of helping people experience new things in small ways. This can expand people’s awareness of what is available and what is possible locally and further afield, so that they can have more confidence and knowledge to make decisions about what they like and don’t like.

Creative People and Places found buddy or ambassador schemes particularly effective as people were brought to new experiences with people “like them”.

## Regular and often

Routines make it easy for people to get into the habit of engaging. Regular, frequent meetings also make it easier for co-designers to get in to the habit of sharing power and making collaborative decisions.

## Outdoor events and spaces

“there are about 40 public parks in Belfast they should also be the venue for activities especially music events – most will have access to a park”

INTERVIEWEE

Research in England has found that outdoor arts audiences tend to be representative of the demographics of the public in their area. However, recent research by thrive in NI has found that this is not the case: outdoor audiences here tend to skew younger and be more “middle class”.<sup>25</sup> This means that there is an opportunity to learn from the diversity of outdoor arts in GB.

People we spoke to also felt that outdoor spaces could be more accessible for all. There are fewer physical barriers, and they are generally free, more familiar and less intimidating. As part of a strategy, they can build longer-term connections, reach into particular communities and provide a variety of cultural opportunities and experiences.

## Alternative spaces

For some people, venues such as galleries, museums and arts centres are a barrier in themselves. “Third” spaces, such as church halls, community centres, schools, cafes, shopping centres and parks can be more accessible. The familiarity of the venue can reduce the anxiety or risk of trying something new. People who would not go to an arts centre will also encounter experiences by surprise.

---

<sup>25</sup> 55 per cent of Belfast residents with children are C2DE (working class and below), but 58 per cent of people with children who attend big outdoor events are ABC1s (middle class and above). That is above average even for arts attendance more generally.

Creative People and Places established many “cultural hubs” or enhanced programmes in local community centres where cultural organisations and practitioners could connect with local people.

“It is self-evident that arts events happening in non-arts spaces are likely to reach non-arts audiences. People can stumble across experiences incidentally [...] and ‘taking the unusual to the usual’ can help residents reimagine their local area in new and surprising ways.”

(ICARUS)

## Digital spaces

“Artuk.org is the online home for over 200,000 digitised artworks from British public collections. Previous research commissioned by Art UK discovered that the site had little engagement from younger and more ethnically diverse audiences. The research reviewed cultural organisations and projects that have a more diverse audience and identified a set of common themes. These were: a commitment to more diverse content; collaborative working with relevant organisations; a focus on supporting schools, colleges and universities in an educational capacity; and, in relation to digital work, an acknowledgement of the importance of working across multiple platforms, rather than simply seeking to drive the audience to your website.”

(ART UK)

The pandemic has seen many cultural organisations adapt their artistic and creative processes to go online. While it can be difficult to build relationships by digital-only means, and digital literacy is not universal, many people we spoke to felt that digital spaces also represented an opportunity to target different groups, such as carers, young people, Autistic people and those without easy access to transport.

## Market the experience

Focus on the experience. Don’t use “arty” language or even the word art. Fun Palaces suggests mixing it up so you could have “The science of dance” or the “The

art of cake". Ulster Architectural and Heritage Society had great success – and great fun – with their Bake-a-building competition,<sup>26</sup> which attracted a younger demographic that is often difficult to engage in heritage.

Pictures can mean more to some people.

Clear, simple language can help people understand what to expect and reduce uncertainty and anxiety.

Think about how communication platforms can reach different people. Ask your co-designers and partner organisations to get the word out through their connections. Word of mouth through trusted people and networks is often the most effective way of starting a relationship.

## People and groups that may be less involved in funded activity

Here we set out some of the stories we uncovered to further understand who is less likely to be engaged or involved in funded culture and arts. It is based on what we learned through primary research and desk research.

### Parents and families

People with children are more likely to attend arts and cultural activity than those without, but they are less likely to participate than those without.

Even parents who think "it's not for me" look for cultural activities to do with their children. Parental influence can also be negative, and the child may also learn this attitude.

The child's influence on their family can also be positive. Children can bring new cultures, creativity and ideas in to the home that they have discovered at school or from peers.

People we spoke to told us schools are "very, very important" for low-income families and "more deprived" areas. They are often the only places where children

---

<sup>26</sup> [www.ulsterarchitecturalheritage.org.uk/bake/](http://www.ulsterarchitecturalheritage.org.uk/bake/)

can get to do any art locally and for free. And activity that includes local schoolchildren can be a huge draw for their families and the wider community. In one area, we heard how “everyone goes” to the school plays. The school has had to move the production in to a bigger church hall and put it on across two nights because of demand – it’s “a big community culture event that people love”.

Major barriers can be time and cost, not just of entrance fees but of transport to get there and back and refreshments when there.

Parents of young children in particular may be less likely to engage in activity that is not targeted at children. One parent described how they had “not even seen a film for grown-up at the cinema for 7, 8, 9 years”. There was a feeling that programmers assume that parents only want to engage with their children, whereas many would welcome the opportunity to have time to themselves, adult company and age-appropriate content. In these circumstances, the availability and cost of childcare is also a barrier.

#### How parents could be supported

People we spoke to told us that engaging parents – with and without their children – is important because it is a life stage experienced by many regardless of ethnicity, religion, class and gender. People from newcomer communities may have less of a family support network, and in more socially conservative cultures, women are expected to take on most or all childcare.

While care should be taken to consider complex identities and compound disadvantages, targeting funded activity at parents may effectively engage people from other backgrounds who are less likely to be involved.

Parents are also key to getting children involved, and early engagement in culture is the main protective factor that helps support life-long engagement. That means a child engaged now is more likely to continue to engage throughout their lives and when they are 65 and older.

There are many cultural organisations in Belfast successfully engaging parents, families and their children. 47 per cent of activity annually funded by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland in 2019/20 targeted children. Thrive found that outdoor

events have the largest attendance of families of all art forms (a third of audiences for outdoor events are families). While many organisations already collaborate with each other, they may welcome structured opportunities to share their practice and learn from each other as well as further research in to the needs, wants and motivations of parents, families and children from different complex backgrounds.

Consideration could also be given to programming simultaneous activity for parents and their children, so the parent could, for example, enjoy “grown-up” film in one room while their child is safely and happily watching an animation in the next.

## Carers and their loved ones

This section is about people who have caring responsibilities for other adults.

People with dependants are more likely to attend arts and cultural activity than those without, but they are less likely to participate than those who have no dependents, although these figures include, and are likely to be dominated by those with caring responsibilities for children.

Time is the main barrier for carers. If a carer is to attend a cultural activity by themselves, they need to find someone else to care for their loved one. Already difficult pre-Covid, day and respite centres can now accommodate fewer people for less time.

When carers do get time to themselves, arts and culture may not be a priority over shopping, messages, bills, haircuts and so on.

When engaging with their loved one, carers are likely to encounter the barriers that also face disabled people and people with long-term health conditions.

### How carers could be supported, engaged and involved

Like being a parent, being a carer is something that cuts across other “categories” regardless of ethnicity, religion, class and gender. People from newcomer communities may have less of a family support network, and in more socially conservative cultures, women are expected to take on this role.

While care should be taken to consider complex identities and compound disadvantages, targeting funded activity at carers may therefore effectively engage people from other backgrounds who are less likely to be involved.

Many organisations offer buddy ticketing schemes so that disabled people can bring a carer. These are a very valuable resource, but they should not require people to “prove” their disability (more people will hide their disability or not use the scheme than abuse it) or that their buddy is their primary carer. Disability support organisations we spoke to were also not aware that these were on offer.

Consideration could be given to programming simultaneous activity for carers and their loved ones so that the carer could enjoy the activity in one room while their loved one is safely having fun nearby.

Zoom has also opened up opportunities for carers. They can engage without leaving their home or their loved one. Although carers tend to be older and may have been unsure of the technology at the start of lockdown, people we spoke to told us that they have adapted well.

Activities that create feeling of relaxation and wellbeing can be popular with carers.

Carers may also welcome events and activity specifically targeted at them and their loved one as something they can do together. This might include supper clubs, dances and date nights.

## Disabled people, neurodiverse people and people with long-term health conditions

Disabled people are much less likely to engage in all arts and culture than non-disabled people. In 2016/17 Thrive found the difference greatest in the following activities, including among the most popular activities for residents generally.

1. Watched a mainstream film on general released: In a cinema or venue
2. Attended Big outdoor event (Culture Night, Maritime Festival, lightshows, fireworks)
3. Visited a museum or historical exhibition (Titanic Belfast, Seamus Heaney Homeplace)

4. Attended rock, pop or country music
5. Visited a National Trust property
6. Read books or eBooks (not newspapers or magazines)
7. Watched a mainstream film on general release: at home or in private
8. Visited any other historic site (castle, ruin, historic church or cathedral)
9. Watched a documentary, foreign language or arthouse film: at home or in private
10. Attended a play or drama

According to the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, disabled audiences are more likely to feel uncomfortable or out of place (10 per cent compared to 2 per cent), lack transport (11 per cent compared to 3 per cent) and have access to the facilities the need at an activity (4 per cent compared to 0.3 per cent).

In Insights from the Growing Up in Ireland Study, parents of young children with disabilities “appear to engage in a greater range of cultural activities with their child than would be expected given their other characteristics”. However, while the Irish study found that engagement declines as activity becomes “more child directed”, the Department for Communities found that participation rates among those young people in mainstream schools who have a disability are higher than among those who do not have a disability.

### How disabled, neurodiverse people and people with long-term health conditions could be supported, engaged and involved

“We do full inclusion – a barrier is often bad experience of inclusion – ‘my autistic kid joined an inclusive group and he was stuck at the back as a tree’”

KIDS IN CONTROL

Inclusion initiatives must be well-designed (or co-designed). It is important that there is a good understanding of what true inclusion looks and feels like. This starts with a rights-based approach to access requirements (not “needs”).

This is not a homogenous group, and cultural organisations and practitioners cannot be expected to know how to include everyone all of the time. Working with partner organisations that are experts brings comfort and safety. Good quality training will

help. This could be co-designed by the organisations we spoke to and their partners who are already leading practice. It is also about a mindset – people and organisations need to be open to learning and making mistakes and not always being right.

Cards for Inclusion<sup>27</sup> is a card game created by Unlimited to help people in the arts sector explore how barriers can be removed and how we all can make whatever we offer more accessible to disabled people.

Practical barriers include steps, poor signage, inaccessible websites and lack of facilities such as parking, lifts, toilets and seating. A “short walk” is a very subjective measure.

Social narratives are simple stories that tell people, often visually, what to expect or do when they are going to a new place or doing something new. They can help people plan for practical barriers and help reduce anxieties. They can also help you think about your customer or audience’s whole journey – from when they leave the house (What time are the busses?) to walking in your door (What makes them feel welcome?) and so on.

These are all simple measures that can benefit many, including older people, young people<sup>28</sup> and parents with toddlers or buggies.

The University of Atypical’s Arts and Disability Equality Charter is to become the Equality Standards Initiative. Piloting with 10 organisations, it will look at physical and policy adaptations alongside recruitment processes. It also welcomes applications for bursaries in writing or by audio tape, amanuensis or transcription service, with guidance notes including a captioned “how-to” video guide.

As well as sharing their knowledge, organisations can also share resources. University of Atypical has, for example, a braille printer, t-loop and mic and its space available for meetings.

---

<sup>27</sup> <https://weareunlimited.org.uk/cards-for-inclusion/>

<sup>28</sup> Not knowing where the toilet is has been found to be a major barrier for young women in particular.

Many organisations offer free tickets so that disabled people can bring a personal assistant. These support equality of access and work well when based on trust. People should not be required to “prove” their disability. It is likely that more people hide their access needs than abuse access schemes. Personal assistant's tickets need to be promoted across disability support organisations.

## Mental health

People with poor mental health may identify as disabled and experience barriers faced by disabled people.

Social anxiety may be a particular barrier to their cultural engagement. That there is a set way to act in a gallery, museum or library is drummed in to people from childhood, usually at school. But rather than knowing exactly what is expected of them, people reported being anxious and unsure how to behave.

Not knowing where the toilets are makes young people and young women in particular especially anxious.

People may also look for the exits so that they can leave if feeling overwhelmed or panicked.

### How people managing their mental health could be supported, engaged and involved

Social narratives are simple stories that tell people, often visually, what to expect or do when they are going to a new place or doing something new.

There should be clear signage, including to entrances, exits and bathrooms.

Having front of house staff offer a genuine (but not over-the-top) welcome made people feel less anxious and more ready to enjoy their experience.

Creating an environment that is tolerant of people's need to move in and out of engaging with activities and to move at their own pace helps reduce stress.

Cultural organisations could work with schools to create more positive attitudes and behaviours to venues that could become perceived as authoritarian and unwelcoming.

## Older people

“The only guarantee is diversity. Whether we define older people as being 50 and upwards, or something older, the age range can be 30, 40 or even 50 years! This is long enough to encompass several different generations and an almost infinite range of interests and experiences. Even if you choose to focus upon the more vulnerable or isolated, for example people living with dementia, or those who are living in financial hardship, the only assumption you can make is that there will be something unique and different about every single group and individual that you work with.”

(THE BARING FOUNDATION)

People tend to engage less with culture and arts as they get older, and those aged 65 and over are least likely to engage. The decline continues as people reach 75 and older. A lot of research identifies older people as the demographic group where there is greatest inequality and that is most difficult to engage.

But older people are more likely to watch a cultural film (arthouse, documentary or foreign language), participate in museums and heritage activity, attend literature events and use public archives than other ages.

Classical music, opera and ballet are also more likely to attract an older audience.

In 2016/17, thrive's Cultural Lives survey found that the ten “oldest” activities were:

1. Textile crafts (sewing, quilting, knitting, felting, crocheting)
2. Attended ballet
3. Attended opera
4. Attended classical music (orchestra, quartet, choral music)
5. Attended literary event (poetry or book readings, storytelling)
6. Visited the public archives at Linen Hall Library or PRONI
7. Visited An exhibition of textiles, pottery, jewellery or other crafts (without intending to buy any)
8. Attended jazz or blues music

9. Attended talks about arts, culture or heritage (with performers, artists, historians)
10. Participated in a history project or group

There are much fewer over 65s at outdoor events than we would expect (thrive found older people make up 9 per cent of outdoor audiences, but 18 per cent of Belfast's population). There may be practical and societal barriers such as ableism – 1 in every 2 people aged over 65 in Belfast has a disability or long-term health condition – and lack of transport or seating.

Older people are happier to engage on their own, while younger visitors are more likely to visit as a group. Other barriers for older people are health, transport and time. However, cost is not a major barrier for older people in general (it is likely to be more of a barrier for people, for example, in receipt of pension credits).

Art in care settings tends to assume what kind of culture residents can cope with and “dumb down” (Culture Hive). There can also be practical barriers, such as a lack of staff time, lack of staff understanding or awareness of the opportunity, other priorities and digital capacity (organisations who wished to continue their relationships with older people in care settings during lockdown found that most homes did not have WIFI or computer equipment).

People we spoke to thought that tastes became more defined over time. As younger people, they may have attended a range of activities and, now knowing what they like and don't like, feel less susceptible to peer pressure making them attend other activity. Older people may also be more likely to have had bad experiences. However, most research agrees that early and ongoing exposure to culture and arts is the primary factor that keeps people engaging when they get older.

Notably, while the co-design engineers team that co-designed this framework included people of different ages, and while we reached out through older people's groups and networks, we were unable to welcome a representative solely because of the duration of their lived experience.

## How older people could be supported, engaged and involved

“Don't patronise or generalise them. See them as different people with different tastes. Move away from things that are associated with older people, so think about David Bowie, the Stones ...”

OH YEAH

Older people are a large potential audience for arts and culture. Just under a fifth of Belfast's residents are aged 65 or over. In the next 20 years, this will increase by 41 per cent or another 21,000 people. A number of people we spoke to mentioned wanting to take up more participatory activity (such as reading, writing, historical research and craft) when they retired.

Cultural organisations and policy are already helping to address the gap with a higher percentage of older people engaging year on year. Organisations may welcome the opportunity to come together with each other and with policy makers to further explore what works and why.

Older people are not a homogenous group. There can literally be generations between “older people”. There is likely to be further inequalities when looking at this group with more granularity. For example, the very elderly, care-experienced older people, people living alone and people in receipt of pension credits. OTH<sup>29</sup> Collective was set up to specifically engage 55- to 65-year-olds as this age bracket is considered “too old for much and too young for other stuff”. Further understanding requires further research and inclusive dialogue.

“Is it really true that we start attending classical concerts, opera performances or mainstream theatre as soon as we hit our fifties? [...] How vital it is that we understand distinctive, inter-generational shifts in tastes and preferences.”

(TORREGGIANI)

Organisations we spoke to identified music, storytelling and reminiscence as powerful engagement tools.

---

<sup>29</sup> “Over the Hill”

The Audience Agency recommends:

- Think multi-generationally. Grandparents are a vital part of family groups.
- Be holistic. Social experiences are important for older audiences. Consider how you can add interactive wraparound experiences or participatory activities.
- Encourage volunteers. Many younger elders have time and experience, so are actively looking for volunteering opportunities. (The Audience Agency )

## Men

Men are less likely than women to take part in culture and arts generally. There are a few areas that thrive found to be a little more popular with men, such as certain types of music (techno/electronic, jazz/Blues and folk/trad/world music), comedy and public archives.

Men we spoke to reflected on the pressures they felt, either from their family, community or wider society, to pursue sports or politics rather than arts because "that is what men do".

### Young men

Generally, young men are slightly less likely to attend culture and arts activity than young women and are much less likely to participate in activities such as reading, singing, playing an instrument or going to drama class.

But young men are much more engaged in some digital culture: namely playing computer games.

Boys are more likely than girls to state that nothing would encourage them to attend as they are just "not interested".

Young men from disadvantaged backgrounds are least likely to be involved overall.

### Older men

Of all demographic "sub-groups", men aged 65 and older are the least likely to be engaged. Men aged 65 and older engage less than both other men (across all other age groups) and older women (65 and over).

### How men could be supported, engaged and involved

Opportunities for older men may be similar to opportunities for older people in general but with a focus on activity known to attract male participants.

Opportunities for younger men may be similar to opportunities for young adults in general but with a focus on activity known to attract male participants.

Men only approaches from elsewhere, such as Men's Sheds, could be both useful models and partners.

Further research and inclusive dialogue are required to fully understand how and why men of different ages are less likely to engage in arts and culture.

## Young adults

Cultural engagement declines with age. Research has identified that the first period of decline is between the ages of 13 and 17, perhaps influenced by peers, competing interests, school priorities and exam pressures.

The engineers who co-designed this framework recognised that people are more likely to disengage at major life junctions, such as leaving education to embark on work and early adulthood.

This may be particularly true for young disabled or care-experienced people as they move from the familiarity of children's services to the complexity of adult services.

"For most young people, turning 18 and becoming a young adult means the world opens up to them; for disabled young people it shuts down."

BARNARDO'S

The main barriers for 16- to 24-year-olds are cost and transport. The main barrier for 25- to 34-year-olds is time, particularly the competing demands of their social lives. Other barriers include not having anyone to go with, distance from venues and lack of awareness of what's on. For some cultures, there is family pressure to pursue sports, politics or science instead.

Young people may be least likely to engage with heritage activities and spaces and are least likely to feel that heritage matters very much.

Outdoor events attract the youngest audience with 16- to 34-year-olds making up nearly half of adults attending.

### How younger people could be supported, engaged and involved

A lot of arts and cultural activity for young people is programmed by older adults. Consultation, engagement and co-design is inconsistent, but young people are best placed to say what they like, don't like and what works for them. People we spoke to felt that there should be more spaces for young adults, particularly for music outside pubs and that were more welcoming for young women.

Just like older people, young people are not a homogenous group. Not all young people have the confidence to engage or share power. Cultural organisations and their co-design partners may have to invest in training young people to fully engage with co-design processes.

Organisations we spoke to provided training in confidence building, decision-making, assertiveness, teamwork, communication, hospitality and inclusion. They told us that it is essential that young people are supported to develop at their own pace. They also need to have both good and bad experiences of culture so that they can evolve a cultural vocabulary to express their wants and tastes.

"We need to arm them with confidence to speak and experience to speak from knowledge. Then they can really say what want."

YOUNG AT ART

"But in some circumstances young people don't have the info or experience or confidence to go where you could or want to take them. Let some hide and other be vocal – let go at own pace."

DU DANCE (NI)

Looking ahead to the next generation of young adults, young people currently in their teens are "Super-visual", "Tech innate", "Hardworking-realists" who "Need a cause". As "Born collaborators" and "Makers not consumers" who have embraced platforms such as YouTube, TikTok and Tumblr, they may also be natural co-designers. (The Audience Agency ) National Youth Trends research has found that

89 per cent of Gen Zs<sup>30</sup> now class themselves as creative people and that “The rise of content consumption and curation online has played a huge role in diversifying interpretations of the word.”

“Embrace new technologies, e.g., there is young talent that has not been made feel welcome in theatres and institutions that are turning their back on them and working through YouTube. Talent is being lost. This is urgent.”

(CULTURE HIVE)

The Audience Agency also recommends:

- More flexible, relaxed visitor experiences including flexible booking, refunds, try-before-you-buy options and social spaces
- Radical changes to loyalty development including freemium content and memberships (The Audience Agency )

In the long-term – generationally – helping young people to bridge their engagement in to adulthood by maintaining relationships will help to protect engagement for to older age.

### Racially minoritized people and communities

“I have seen racism turn a town into an inferno, have seen it kill mentally distressed black people, I have seen it break my heart time after time, I have seen it whitewash the arts world. How much harder do I have to argue that the arts world needs more colour?”

DOLLY SEN (THE BARING FOUNDATION)

In GB, people from White or Mixed ethnic backgrounds are more likely to engage with the arts than people from Black or Asian ethnic backgrounds.

In ROI, research found that young children from immigrant backgrounds read less often with their parents and are less likely to go on educational or cultural outings. This might be because of language barriers. Lower levels of engagement were found among families whose native language was other than English. Mothers'

---

<sup>30</sup> Born between 1997 and 2012

language ability was found to be particularly influential before the age of nine. However, as the child's language skills developed, and they gained more opportunity to direct their own cultural activities outside the home, gaps in engagement between teenagers from migrant families and the rest of the population narrowed until teenagers from migrant families were more likely to read for two hours or more a day than their peers.

Some Asian cultures can prioritise education in science and engineering over arts and culture.

BAME older people are generally considered very hard to reach. People from minority communities we spoke to pointed out that unless the community is well-established in NI (such as the Indian and Chinese communities), the population is likely to be quite young. Parents of migrant workers, for example, will usually live in their country of origin.

Racially minoritized people do not see people like them or their culture reflected in funded culture and arts. Many engage in culture in their own home and own communities through reading, arts and craft, cooking, dance, music and the internet.

This does not mean they are just interested in traditional or folk arts reflective of their own cultures just as many "local" people are not interested in Irish dancing or the bards of Ulster. While their own cultural traditions are vitally important for some, many have interests that could be considered to be "Western".

"Listening to Mozart might seem odd for a young black kid living in an estate, but no more so than listening to a K-Pop star speaking in Korean while he dances like a horse."

(KHAN)

Perception that they are not engaged or involved or somehow not cultural is "ironic" at best. They are literally not seen by the dominant culture and the activity it supports.

"They have a very strong appetite for the arts whether is film, theatre, opera, dance, painting, music [...] They have the music in their blood,

Roma children learn how to sing and play instruments from an early age, without teachers, it's all down to their musical ear and instinct!"

FROM AN INTERVIEWS WITH PEOPLE FROM THE ROMA COMMUNITY

Some feel patronised by funded activity. Organisations can assume that "Migrants don't have any idea of the arts and [...] feel the need to start their engagement at very basic level, which puts people off."

Like the general population, people from racially minoritized communities lack time and have work and family commitments. Women from more socially conservative cultures can be expected to remain in the home and are less likely to try "other" culture. Many don't have an extended family network to help out with childcare.

Cost is also an issue. People from racially minoritized backgrounds are more likely to be unemployed or in low-paid entry-level jobs that have a poor record of labour rights. Irregular or excessive hours make it difficult to plan leisure time.

Some migrant workers see their stay in NI as temporary, which will impact on how involved they become in society.

Other barriers include racism, lack of interculturalism and "a different type of integration" – "they may have `borrowed` the local taboos and prejudices which may prevent them from taking part in local arts and culture manifestations such as St Patrick`s Day and Twelfth of July".

How racially minoritized people and communities could be supported, engaged and involved

"In the same way that spaces can become gendered, they can feel unwelcoming or uninviting for particular communities."

(THE BARING FOUNDATION)

People from racially minoritized backgrounds are not a homogenous group. It is important that diversity between and within "groups" is properly understood.<sup>31</sup> This would require further research and ongoing dialogue with those with lived experience.

Cultural organisations could explore opportunities for child-directed activity. Older people may welcome more social experiences. Intergenerational activity may also work well in terms of cultural transmission and exchange.

Outdoor spaces may be more welcoming for people from visible minorities as they do not need to walk in to a room not knowing if there will be anyone else there "like them". There are also fewer learned social and cultural conventions that govern outdoor spaces.

Cultural sensitivity should be about all aspects of the activity, such as timing, location, food, décor and language used.

Some migrant workers may prefer short-term opportunities that have an immediate impact for them.

There is also a fear that short-term diversity initiatives that seek to increase the outputs can be exploitative of people from racially minoritized backgrounds.

"Schemes to diversify are just "schemes", not mainstreamed, no system change" (Culture Hive)

Ultimately, this requires systemic change such as involving racially minoritized people in the co-design of projects, programmes and funding schemes; including them in decision-making structures; and diversifying boards, leaderships and workforces.

---

<sup>31</sup> For example, people from Roma, Irish Traveller and Muslim backgrounds are among the most discriminated and may face more barriers to engagement and involvement in funded culture. See for example (ARK) and (The Traveller Movement)

“imagine you had to pitch in Lagos or Shanghai”

TERRA NOVA PRODUCTIONS

“Going forward we want to get participants more involved in our organisational and governance processes so they have a say in our direction of travel, are more visible to others, and gain experience in different realms of personal and professional development. This key work is what breaks down the division between us and them, participant and leader. We are all but people after all, and all of our experiences are valid and valuable.”

(THE BARING FOUNDATION)

## Religion or community background

“Arts and culture isn't the political football it's made out to be with engagement amongst both religious communities at similar levels in the low 90s.”

(THRIVE)

It is often thought that people from Protestant backgrounds are less likely to engage with arts and culture, but statistics show Protestants and Catholics engage equally. There are some differences: for example, thrive found Catholics are more likely to attend theatre and dance; and Protestants are more likely to attend big outdoor events; rock/pop and country music; plays, drama and musicals; and band events.

Pupils from a Protestant background were also slightly more likely to have participated in arts activities than those with a Catholic background.

It may be that when complex experiences, multiple identities and compound disadvantages come in to play, there is a more of a difference, for example, young men from working-class Protestant backgrounds, but this would require further exploration.

Overall, people with no religion or of an “other” religion are more likely to have engaged with arts and culture than either Catholics or Protestants.

## How these communities could be supported, engaged and involved

Some people from Protestant community backgrounds expressed a distrust of policymakers and funders. They felt that they did not understand their culture and so would not invest in it. Co-design is an opportunity to build trust and understanding between those who traditionally hold the power (and the purse) and those they seek to support.

“as a Protestant living in Northern Ireland my culture is important to me and something I fervently hang on to in an attempt to live it and pass it on to future generations. [...] I am fearful that our unique culture is being eroded.”

INTERVIEWEE

Further research and inclusive dialogue are required to fully understand how and why people from no or “other” religious backgrounds are more likely to engage in arts and culture.

## Class and income

“If you don’t see people like you involved in the arts, you will automatically think the arts isn’t for you.”

(ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND)

Most research agrees that audiences and participants tend to be from better educated and more affluent backgrounds.

There is often a positive relationship between income and engagement: this means that people with more personal income tend to engage more.

However, some research has found that education is a better determinant of engagement than social status or class in itself.

It is not simply about “highbrow” and “lowbrow” or “arts” vs “entertainment”. Going to mainstream cinema is the most popular activity for all classes, and it is also more popular among middle classes.

Dance and theatre audiences are less likely to be working class. People in occupations regarded as skilled working class and below are most likely to attend

circus arts, carnival parades, pantomime, bands, museums and exhibitions, big outdoor events, bands and techno/electronic and rock/country/pop music.

In 2016/17, thrive found only a small number of activities where social grade didn't make that big a difference, accounting for engagement among between 1 to 16 per cent of the overall population.

1. Attended band events (e.g., brass\silver band, pipe\flute)
2. Textile crafts (sewing, quilting, knitting, felting, crocheting)
3. Attended Techno or electronic music
4. Attended other dance event (e.g. contemporary dance)
5. Attended circus arts (clowning, acrobatics)
6. Written songs or composed music (participation)
7. Recited poetry or storytelling (not bedtime)
8. Wood crafts (turning, carving, furniture making)
9. Acted in a play\drama
10. Stand-up or sketch comedy (participation)
11. Created a game, digital animation or built a world within a game (e.g., Minecraft)
12. Acted or sang in musical theatre
13. Written plays
14. Performed circus, clowning or mime
15. Acted or sang in an opera

In GB, homeowners are more likely to engage in arts than those who rent privately and much more likely than those in social housing.

Engagement is lowest among those who can be classed as state pensioners, casual and lowest grade workers and people who are unemployed.

Young people who are entitled to free school meals have lower engagement rates than those who are not.

In ROI and other parts of the world, research has found middle-class, highly educated and higher income adults are more likely to read to their children, take them on educational visits and cultural outings and encourage them in creative

play. The gap in engagement continues as the children get older and activity is more child-directed. Money, time and awareness may be barriers for families that are less well off.

Some organisations told us that young people from poorer backgrounds have poorer verbal skills, which means that they are not as well equipped to say what they want or think.

Culture and arts is “a graduate-rich sector” (Culture Hive), but jobs are not often well paid, and there can be a prevalence of unpaid work. In England, this means that often only people from backgrounds that can provide financial support can afford to work in the sector.

How people of all classes and income could be supported, engaged and involved

“When middle-class people don’t like something, it’s called taste. When working-class people don’t like something or don’t go to something, we tell them that it’s good for them.”

ENGINEER

People we spoke to from traditionally working-class areas felt that schools had an important role in exposing children to this type of activity at a young age, particularly when families could not afford, for example, the cost of excursions or music lessons. Art in schools should be about learning skills to listen, play, interpret and appreciate, rather than just creative play.

Community transport is essential to help groups experience culture outside their areas, but the cost and logistics for organisers can be prohibitive.

Some families in working-class areas go back generations, extended families can live close to each other, and friends and neighbours form close-knit support networks. Projects that celebrate local people and place can be very effective.

“They saw their grandparents in the photos – so they went, took the kids, showed them the houses they lived in long time ago. If parents, grandparents, kids are in it – if local streets and people you know are

in it – your own culture – people will be noseey and go to look if can afford to get there and in.”

INTERVIEWEE

There was also demand for “higher art” among people we spoke to in traditional working-class areas, including Russian ballet in church halls and classical music in local parks. Food, festivals, world cultures and magic were also suggested.

### Where people live

“We got to understand who was doing what art and that people felt left out. They were glad to have people come and talk to them. It seems that the further up the Shankill, the further from the city centre, the more people felt forgotten.”

BEAT CARNIVAL

People in the north and west of Belfast are less likely to take part than those in the south and east. People in the most deprived areas are less likely to take part than those in the least deprived.<sup>32</sup>

### How people living in different areas could be supported, engaged and involved

“This is exciting. [My ideal festival] would be everywhere – not just city centre or trendy Cathedral Quarters. It would start with a big competition – every community/estate would be invited to take part [...] everyone could take part in or support the community as a whole and individuals could make a display albeit in communal areas or individual gardens or both!! Community groups, youth clubs, schools, old folks' homes, nurseries/play groups, shops, companies, churches will play a vital role in the year leading up to the celebration helping with the planning and preparation.”

INTERVIEWEE

---

<sup>32</sup> And both north and west Belfast have high levels of deprivation.

Locally relevant activity in local venues is important to local engagement. This includes activity in non-arts spaces, such as church halls, community centres, cafes, parks and so on.

Transport is a barrier to experiencing culture outside of a local area, especially for people and communities with low income. Arranging community transport is effective, but the cost and logistics can be prohibitive.

Overall, more research and inclusive dialogue is required to further understand patterns and motivations.

“Are people in North/West Belfast more self-contained in terms of the areas they can/do travel to? How does the flow of people between different parts of the city (particularly the city centre) change? If they are more self-contained, is availability of product specifically within their area a factor?”

(THRIVE)

# Appendix 5: Understand it: Research methods and tools

This short survey was designed to explore how and why people currently engage in culture and what would encourage them to be more engaged or involved.

It could be used in several ways.

- Engineers could use it to carry out a focus group with people in their community or networks
  - Engineers could use it to carry out one-to-one guided conversations with people in their community or networks
  - An online version was promoted through engineers' organisations' social media channels
- 

**1 What does culture, arts and heritage mean to you?**

**2 Do you do any of these things?** showcard (attached)

**2a YES, ask Where do you do these?**

**3 Would you like to do more of these kinds of things? Or try something different?**

**3a NO, explore Why is that the case?**

**3b If YES, ask What would encourage you or make it easier for you to do more or do new things?**

**4 If you were in charge of putting on the best cultural festival Belfast has ever seen, describe what it would be like.**

**4a What would be in it? Where would this happen? Who would you go with? What would you see there? How would it make you feel?**

## Research showcard

Have you done or seen any of these things in the last few years?



Sang to an audience (but not karaoke!)



Saw or took part in a play, musical, pantomime or opera



Played a musical instrument



Saw a film at a cinema or other venue



Written music



Made embroidery, crocheted or knitted



Been to a music performance (pop, rock, classical, trad ...)



Made jewellery



Went to a dance performance or class (but not for exercise)



Made pottery, ceramics or mosaics



**Have you done or seen any of these things in the last few years?**



Any other craft



Painting, drawing, printmaking or sculpture



Photography (as an artistic activity, not family or holiday snaps)



Made films or videos (as an artistic activity, not family or holiday)



Used a computer to create original artworks or animation



Created a video or computer game



Went to an exhibition or collection of art, craft, photography or sculpture



Read for pleasure (not newspapers, magazines or comics)



Written stories, plays or poetry



Went to a poetry reading or storytelling

**Have you done or seen any of these things in the last few years?**



Learned or practised circus skills



Went to the circus or carnival



Went to an arts festival or a community festival



Saw street arts (such as art in parks, streets, shopping centres)



Visited a museum, like the Ulster Museum, Folk and Transport Museum or Somme Heritage Centre



Visited a historic building like the Linen Hall Library, Castle Ward or Mount Stewart



No, none of these

**????**

Other – something else.....

# Appendix 6: Imagine it: Catalyst projects for co-design and involvement

## Catalyst project 1: Reanimating Belfast's bandstands through co-design: A proposal for Woodvale bandstand

The following proposal was developed by a subgroup of the co-design engineers working with artist Ciara Dunne.

The proposal demonstrates the enthusiasm of neighbourhood residents to co-design the reanimation of the Woodvale bandstand. But it is not an "on-the-shelf" project, but a range of concepts that we recommend bringing back to the community to further test and refine using participatory and democratic research methods. These could include, for example, a pop-up conversation cafe in the bandstand, a citizen's jury or participatory budgeting.

### Introduction

The term of 'reanimating Belfast's bandstands' is one which provides many various concepts including community activities and visual creations for the space. In this proposal I put forward ideas of how reanimation of Woodvale Bandstand in the Greater Shankill neighbourhood can be achieved. The proposal is a culmination of my own artistic ideas as well as research I have conducted directly with members of the community local to Woodvale Park.

### Co-design with community takes time

The bandstand as a unit is a great weatherproof structure which is currently underused. By utilising it as an area to explore arts and culture, we can hopefully engage with those who don't usually find themselves in places that display this. Perhaps those who don't engage choose not to because they don't wish to travel far from their local area; if this is the case, then using the bandstand to demonstrate arts and culture would be of great benefit to the local community. I have been working closely with David Boyd of local community group Beat Carnival, to conduct research and make contacts with people in the area to get their opinions

on the project. It takes time to gather research, time to facilitate potential workshops within the space and time to build any structures proposed which may be relevant. This proposal contains initial research but I suggest more time is needed to gain an insightful look at the idea in order to present a fully researched concept. This project will as a whole, take a great deal of time to deliver.

### Artistic development and use

Initially one of my first artistic thoughts for the space, is to create a permanent backdrop for the bandstand (Image 1 & 2), which can provide local community groups, such as amateur theatre collectives or choirs, a fun and inviting space to practice in outdoors, particularly in these times during the pandemic when outdoor space is being more and more sought after. The backdrop in itself, could be a manifestation of community efforts wherein it is painted together, led by an Artist who can provide a series of workshops to guide this. Alternatively, the backdrop could be designed by an Artist working on ideas with people from the neighbourhood and manufactured by a local company. A recommendation of metal cutting in Argyle Business Centre was provided by a resident in the area. This would be a great way to co-design the space together, using local businesses and recommendations from people in the area. The content of the backdrop would be decided on research from what local residents would like to see reflected in their park.

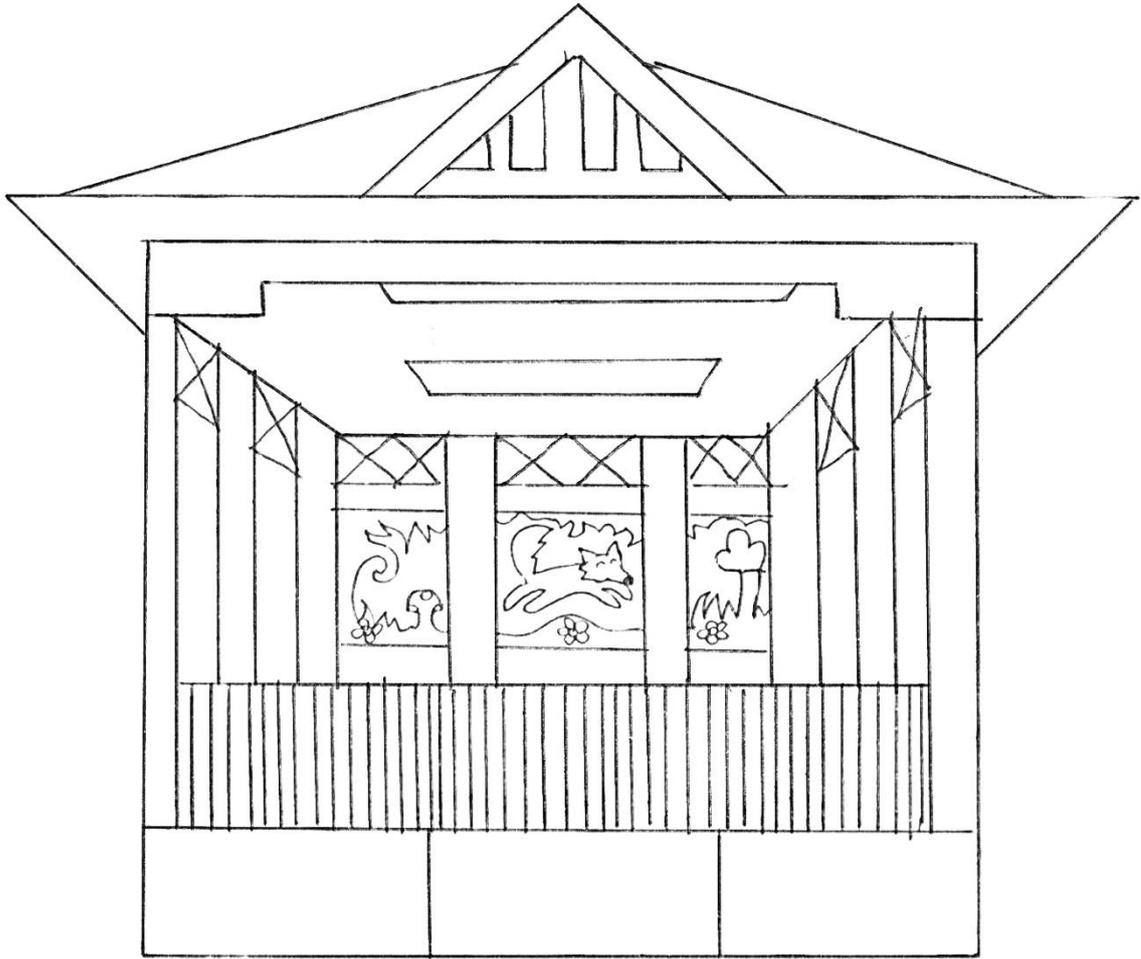
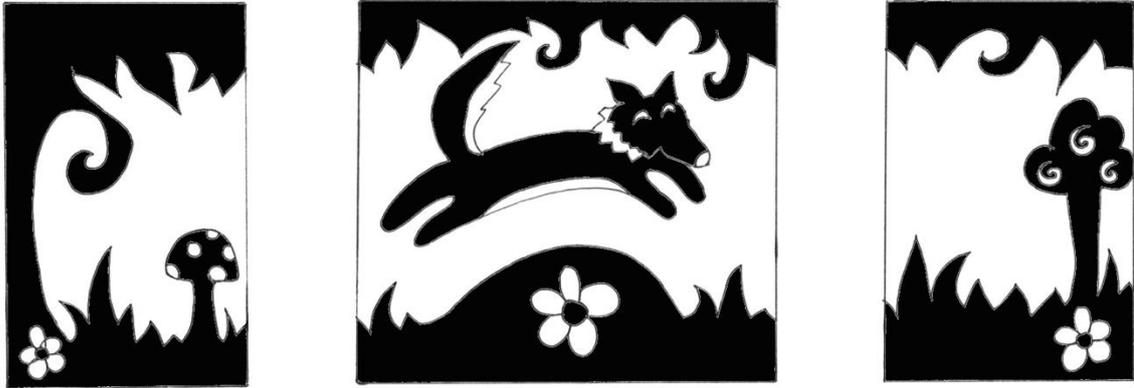


Image 1



I have undertaken initial research into this by asking park goers for their opinions on visual design; one suggestion was to reflect the natural aspects of the park such as the wildlife that lives there. From chatting to people in the park, I have learned that there are red squirrels, foxes and badgers living in the park.

Moreover, I was chatting with local residents in the park who are part of a walking group run through the Shankill Women's Centre. They said they would like to be able to use the bandstand as an end point to their walks and be able to sit as a group within the bandstand and share picnics in the space together. Seating would be most advantageous to facilitate this. Movable seating could also be a useful creation to help people engage more and to spend the time watching whatever performance is happening in the bandstand. Indeed, from chatting to local residents in the park, this is one thing which was repeatedly mentioned, particularly amongst the older age group. Disability access for the likes of wheelchairs would also be of great benefit to the bandstand as currently there are only steps into it. Access for all is an important feature missing from the bandstand which needs to be updated. We want our proposal to be as inclusive as possible and would aim to ensure disability access to the bandstand by the inclusion of ramp access, as currently there are steps into it.

Another idea suggested by a park user was to use the bandstand as a focal point for an event. This could be in the form of a Halloween event for example, wherein the bandstand is dressed for Halloween activities, such as a person telling ghost stories inside it. There could be an organised ghost hunt throughout the park which would encourage people to walk around the whole of the park and end up at the bandstand. There would be similar activities at other festive periods in the annual calendar, such as Easter/Spring and Christmas.

### The proposal applies to other city bandstand, parks and public spaces

To extend this idea of the backdrop, this proposal can be applied to other existing bandstands – and a mobile unit could be created to present a movable bandstand for areas in the city where there are no bandstand structures. A mobile facility could be in the form of one larger stand, similar to a parade float - or a series of small boards with wheels and a small frame suitable to fit one person. This idea is relevant in current pandemic times, facilitating arts activity and performance while practicing social distancing. Each person can have their own individual moving board which acts as their own stage. These little stages can line up together to create one performance. The basic framed structures can be decorated with 2D flats similar to those used in the theatre. Image 3 below helps to give more of an understanding on this concept.

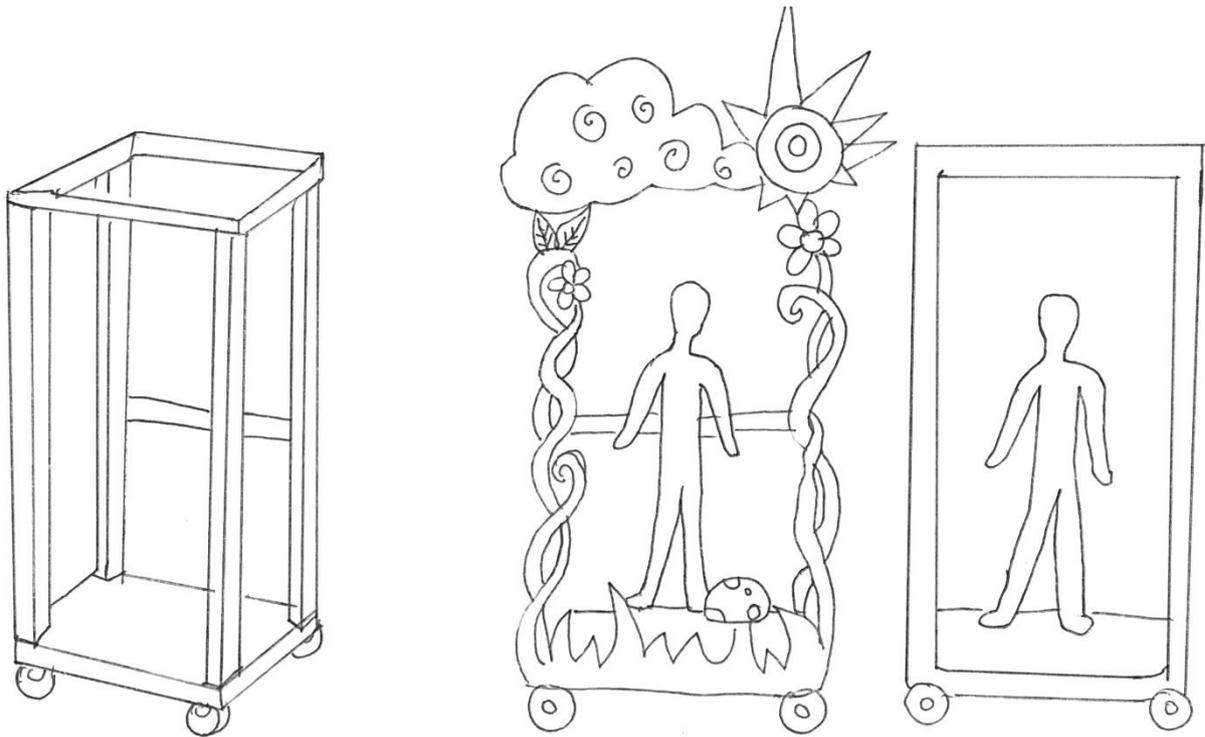


Image 3

Another idea I am presenting is to bring sound back to the space which was once used for bands to play. I thought of doing this by creating a series of hanging wind chimes to decorate the space, with one large central chime chandelier as the focal point, surrounded by a type of wind chime bunting for the outside edge (Image 4).

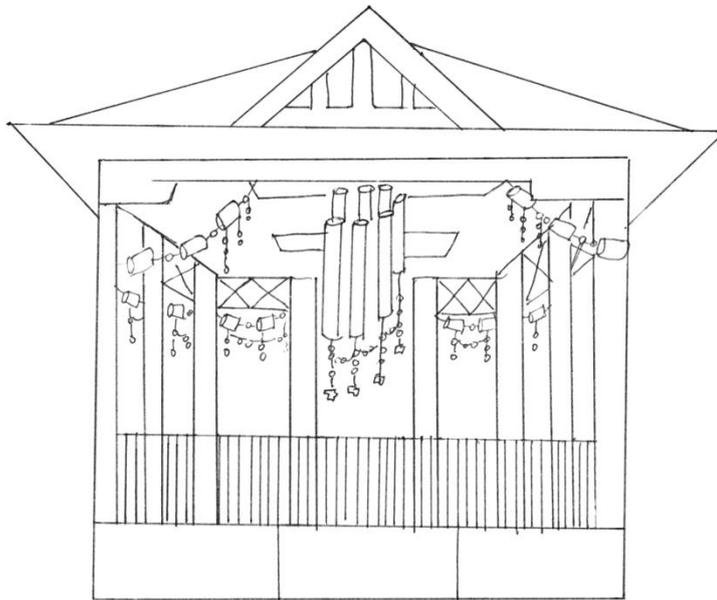
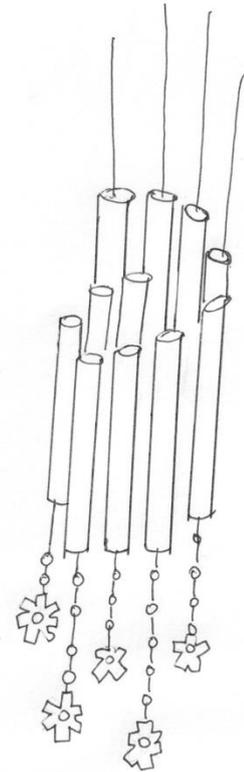


Image 4



CENTREPIECE CLOSE-UP

This could be made from recyclable materials such as tin cans and cardboard tubes. Members of the community can create this artwork and learn how to do so through a series of facilitated workshops by an Artist. There could also be some interactive instruments created for the space, which would invite interaction from passers-by. The aesthetic of this idea is inspired by American Artist, 'Shrine', who works with communities to create beautiful decorative spaces using things that people are otherwise throwing away (see Image 5 & 6).



Image 5 - Shrine ©



Image 6 - Shrine ©

Sound could also be brought back into the space by going back to its traditional use and making the space suitable for bands to play in. Facilities may need to be improved for this to happen, such as safe electrical outputs for power supply. For bands who do not need power, they could use the space for storing their instruments and play outside of the bandstand with the temporary movable seating (as previously mentioned) set up around them. The backdrop will then provide a focal point behind the band and the seating will make use of the space and invite people to come closer to sit and enjoy the performance. A festival of activities could be created around the bandstand, with it as the epicentre.

Another visual idea for the space could be to create permanent Perspex fixtures similar to poster boards, wherein art work can be placed inside and displayed for all to see (Image 7). Local school children could take it in turn to make artwork for the bandstand and have it displayed for a set period of time. This will create a draw of park visitors, as the children and their families will want to come and see their artwork publicly displayed. This idea could be transferred to areas where there are no bandstands, in the form of display cubes made of Perspex similar to exhibition stands. These can be designed with a natural element if they are to be displayed in parks with no bandstands, such as having artificial branches emerging from the centre of the display box (Image 8).

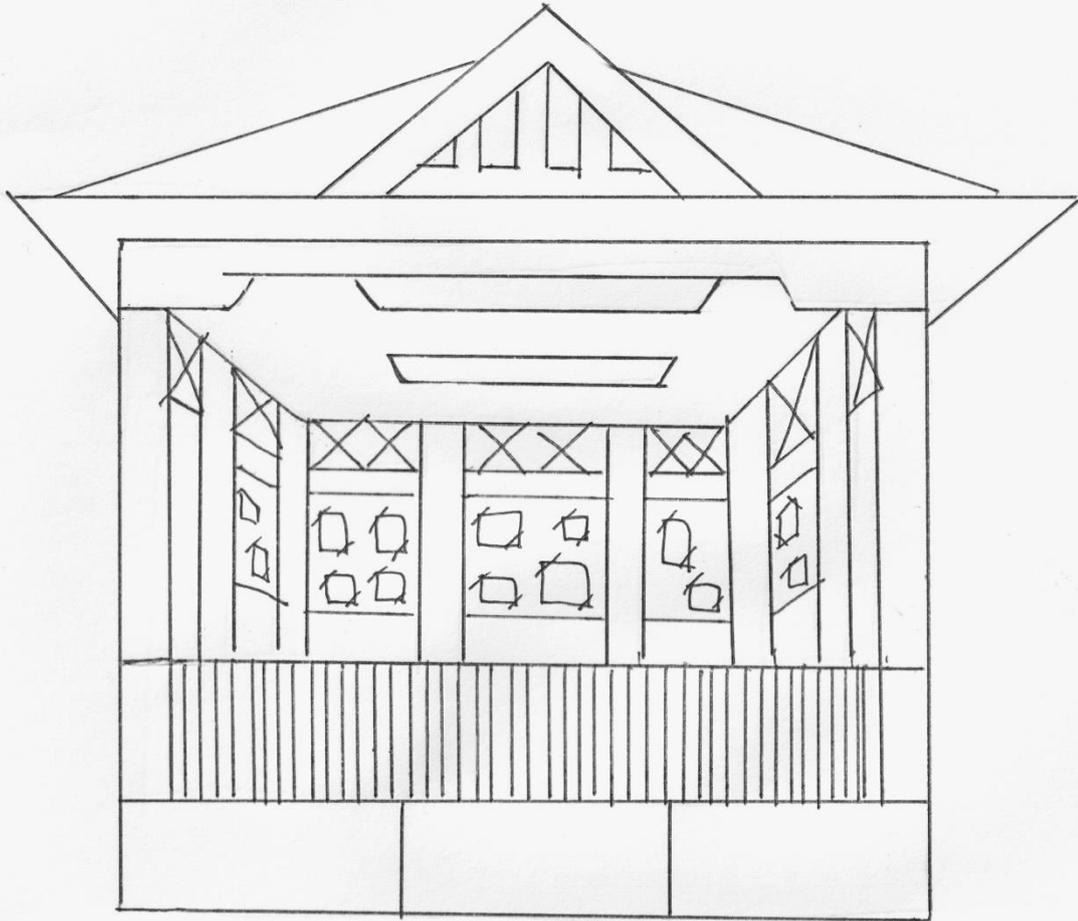


Image 7

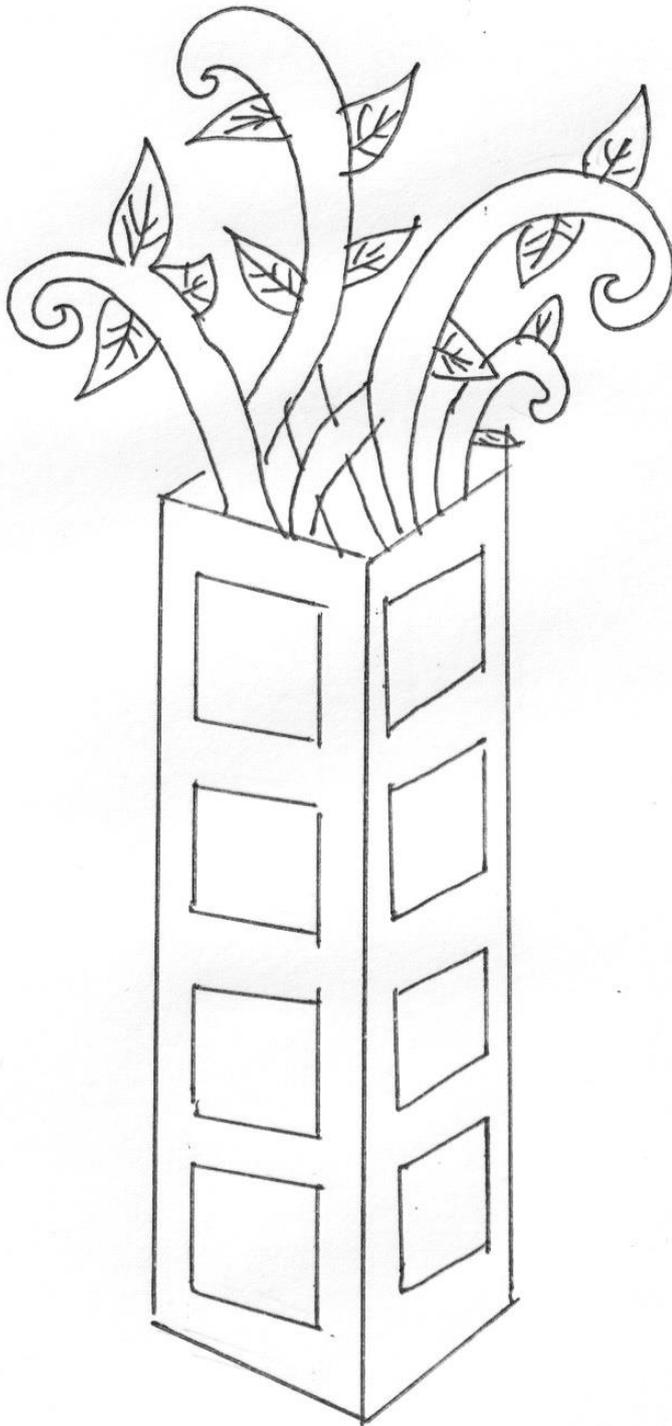


Image 8

## Indicative costs for backdrop development

The approximate costing of the backdrop proposal would be around £1,100. This is based on the breakdown of materials costs (£680) and artist facilitation/production fees (£420). More time would be needed to gain cost quotations from people who may be involved in the project from a practical perspective, such as a carpenter for example who may be needed to create the backdrop structure or metal cutting for the backdrop. Festivals, workshop programmes and other arts and cultural activities following on from this project, would be subject to further costs, as would installation of services such as electrical supply.

## Summary

As mentioned at the beginning of this proposal, a co-design approach requires and benefits from research and development time. I recommend further research into what local residents would like to see and do in the bandstand. When spending time talking with people in the park, there was a general excitement that the bandstand could potentially be brought back to life again. Everyone I spoke to wanted it to be used rather than locked up and cut off from park users - they felt that having it locked up was encouraging anti-social behaviour towards it. One lady said she would like to see it all repainted in bright, bold colours so that it felt more of an inviting space. If one of the artistic ideas in this proposal was to be realised, it would act as an investment in the area, as it would be a permanent structure that could be utilised time and time again by local residents and community groups as a whole. It could change their opinion on the accessibility and availability of arts and culture and make people feel included in an area where they perhaps didn't before. This mentality would spread throughout the community with more people becoming involved in arts and cultural projects as creative co-designers, as participants and as audience.

## About Ciara Dunne

I am a visual artist with experience in community arts facilitation. I like to create artwork that is thought provoking and interactive. Using recyclable materials is important to me, as these are both highly accessible to all and also environmentally

friendly. Through community engagement, I believe collective artwork can bring people together and provide a sense of achievement and wellbeing.

## Catalyst project 2: Where is my culture, Belfast?

There are people living in Belfast who do not see themselves within the culture of the city's main communities.

They feel outside the culture of the city where they live. They meet with reactions that tell them they are different. They experience little acts of bias, of being made to feel other. They may not feel properly home.

Where is my culture, Belfast? uses public conversations to set the framework for a series of arts-based workshops to engage people in exploring their culture and Belfast's response to it and to express how they feel.

This project programme was inspired by One Love, a performance piece by David and Siobhan Brown which addresses issues of cultures, fitting in, love, hate and finding a way through. It was built on real-life experiences and presented through the voice and views of a young black woman who was born in NI and a man who was sentenced to life for paramilitary activity.

### The public conversation phase

Public Conversations Project Dialogue (PCP Dialogue)<sup>33</sup> is a tool for exploring issues rooted in deeply personal aspects of identity, values and worldviews that can impact on interaction within a wider community.

Public conversations can be used as part of a wider process – for example to engender constructive communication in the early stages of a participatory process or as part of a capacity-building workshop.

Public conversations are focused on shifting relationships or communication rather than necessarily reaching agreement. Following a preparation stage and the development of ground rules, the exercise enables a structured process for speaking, listening and reflecting, with equal opportunity for all to participate and an opportunity to explore doubts as well as certainties.

---

<sup>33</sup> <http://civicinnovationni.org/tools-directory/Public-Conversations-Project-Dialogue>

Where is my culture, Belfast? will start with a series of public conversations across the city. These will bring together two groups of people: people from communities who do not see much of their culture in the city or in the arts of Belfast (for example, people from minoritized ethnic backgrounds or from disability, neurodiverse or other cultures); and people from the city's formal culture and arts sector.

The sessions will be facilitated by a person skilled in PCP Dialogue observed by the project artist or artists and supported, as needed, by a language interpreter.

There will be three conversation sessions for each group engaged, allowing space for all to settle, speak, listen and reflect. These conversations will, in themselves, be useful in initiating relationships between the sector and those engaged. They will also inform the second phase of art workshops.

After the third session, the artist–observer will create a proposal for the shape of the arts workshops, tailored to fit the aspirations of that particular culture or group of people. The artist will present this to a separate gathering of the public conversation participants to hear feedback and hone the proposal to ensure it is accessible to and centred on outcomes that are important to their particular community or culture.

This approach is relatively new and will require resources for training in PCP Dialogue and in co-design for all prior to commencement.

The artist engaged should reflect the culture of the community engaged. The number of artists from minoritized ethnic backgrounds who have extensive experience in community arts and co-design may be limited. This means that resources need to be available to provide support as required by artists so that they can grow their capacity while on the project.

### The arts co-design workshops

The arts workshops will comprise a series of sessions covering settling in, exploring us, what it's about, what culture and arts are, words, feelings and music.

The participants will include people from the public conversations phase and others that they may invite from their circle of family and friends. They may also involve the arts organisations that took part in the public conversations phase.

The exact shape of the workshops will be framed by the artist in response to what came out of the public conversations phase and the interests of the people taking part. The following is an example of how we envisage the workshops could work.

### Me and my culture in Belfast – multi-art video

The workshops will facilitate people to ask themselves individually and as a group:

- “What is my culture?”
- “How do I see Belfast and its culture?”
- “Am I and my culture at home in Belfast?”
- “How does Belfast see me and my culture?”
- “How does that impact on how I see myself?”

The people engaged in the workshops will capture the essence of their answers using words, poems, stills, mini-performances and images as best fits the group. These will be fused and distilled into a video that presents the group's experience of their culture, of bias towards it, of being outside and of finding or not finding their culture and themselves at home, here in Belfast.

### Music

As well as their visual, verbal and literary art being captured in their video, the workshop groups will also create its soundtrack.

In a soundtrack-to-life workshop, the group will reflect on music that has meaning for them.

Revisiting their answers to the questions about how their own culture is received in Belfast, and how that response makes them feel, the group will look at music and emotion.

They will be guided to reminisce about music that brings back the memory and emotions they felt during different parts of their experience of living in Belfast.

The emotions and the path they follow will depend on the people taking part and what they explored and unearthed in the earlier workshops. Their emotions might cover a path of feelings from being outside to confusion, hate, hiding or fleeing, discovering and awakening, finding so safety, freedom or feeling at home, belonging, unity or love. Each person will select music that encapsulates the emotional phases most relevant to them. Music they heard at that time or that captures the feelings they had or reminds them of people important to them.

In this way the group will bring a lot of music with stories to the table for all the people there to hear and discover. From this they will work together with the artist to select their shortlist for the sound track to their video. They may also opt to compose their own piece.

### Presentation and longevity

To celebrate creativity and create visibility, the completed video and soundtrack, along with any visual art, poetry or other artworks from the workshops should be showcased across the city in central, mainstream and community locations. The people who created it will, in this way, share through arts their own experience of their own culture (and finding it or not) in Belfast with the people they want to hear it or who need to see and hear it.

These presentations may become springboards for further work by the participants in shaping the arts and culture they want to find in the city.

The project will result in there being a pool of artists from minoritized community background who have experience in co-design. A programme of placements in the sector, residencies, career development grants and so on, as identified by and co-designed with the intended beneficiaries, would ensure that their expertise is used and built upon so that it becomes an integral part of the formal arts sector – a legacy that, in time, would make it more likely for all people to find their culture in Belfast.

## Catalyst project 3: Co-designing “established arts”

Theatre director Rhian Jeffrey carried out focus groups with three community groups in order to begin to shape some ideas for the City of Culture celebration in 2023/4 looking at how artforms like ballet, opera and theatre could become more inclusive and representative of everyone.

The original question or provocation was “Why do established arts (like ballet, opera and Shakespeare) not appeal to me?” However, the team working on this provocation quickly realised that this was patronising, and the question could be a barrier in itself. Group discussions were rather structured around three questions:

1. Do you feel disengaged with some forms of arts and heritage?
2. What might they be and why? and
3. Going forward, what might make this change?

During the focus groups, Rhian shared a number of examples of work to stimulate discussions:

- [MA.MOYO, Cerys Matthews, Hidden Orchestra – Flame Lily](#)
- [Ibiza Classics live @ The O2 Arena London \(Pete tong, Heritage Orchestra, Wiley, Becky Hill, AU/RA\)](#)
- [Chicane - Offshore \(Played by The Ulster Orchestra\)](#)
- [Edinburgh Showcase 2019: “Hard To Be Soft – A Belfast Prayer” Oona Doherty and Prime Cut Productions](#)
- [Short Film: A-Z of Northern Ireland – BBC](#)

### Focus group 1: Families Beyond Conflict

#### Level of engagement with arts and culture

Very little engagement. Some participants had only seen school nativity plays with their grandchildren. Others had seen a couple of pantomimes in the Grand Opera House, and one member was in a Spanner in the Works community production.

#### Reasons for lack of engagement

Lack of projects/productions/events in their area (North Belfast).

They don't want to travel to city centre, and they cannot afford ticket prices.

Not many of them have access to computers or smart phones and therefore are unaware of projects happening as they are not on any advertising lists and such like.

### What can be improved/what they would like to see

Projects and events taking place across the city and in their area – they suggested a more exciting programme of events in the Spectrum and in local parks including free events for all ages.

Thematically, they would like to see productions and events that have a positive message, that are funny, light and that represent them. Belfast voices – particularly North Belfast stories. One idea that came up was using stories of the past and anecdotes – funny memories such as putting money in the meter, reusing nappies for babies, the scullery and how their grandchildren have no idea about any of these things. They didn't know how lucky they were – now it's all about TikTok and "the Facebook".

They want to be entertained and have a form of escapism – nothing to do with Covid or the Troubles. They want to have joyful experiences.

### Focus group 2: YEHA

#### Level of engagement with arts and culture

Group of 12- to 17-year-olds interested in art – drawing, painting and murals. Some of the other girls were really interested in musicals and had been to see a few, mainly in Grand Opera House through school trips and Christmas pantomimes. The young boys were heavily interested in gaming.

They watch a lot of films and read book through school but aren't exposed to much theatre. They have never been to see ballet or opera.

#### Reasons for lack of engagement

Affordability of tickets

Projects and events mainly in city centre

Not aware of what is going on in the city

## What can be improved/ what they would like to see

Events in their area

Free events

Thematically, they were really interested in art that addresses “the other” or “the different, strange” and celebrates people for being different. They love having individual identities. They would love to be involved in a project that leaves their mark on the city – for example, they want their own murals to sit beside the murals of the past.

They were a hugely engaging group with a lot of creativity – they just need the right outlet.

## Focus group 3: Here NI

### Level of engagement with arts and culture

Very engaged with culture, heritage and arts events, projects and programmes. They attend shows, theatre, dance pieces and museums regularly but would like to see things spread over more of the city – not just in the Cathedral Quarter. They are very involved in projects and events that focus on LGBTQA+, such as Outburst Festival and feminist festivals and events and the 343 venue.

### Reasons for lack of engagement

Some of them expressed a dislike of traditional theatre because they can see the “overacting”. They also are mainly interested in projects and productions that they feel represent them or that they can relate to, so this limits their programmes.

### What can be improved/what they would like to see

They would like to see more international work – not just stories from the past and about Belfast. They would like more diversity on stages and in audiences.

They wanted to see a recent opera but could not afford the £45 tickets.

They were particularly interested in Trans rights, feminist issues and LGBTQA+ stories being told and shared.

## Conclusions

- There is demand for a citywide programme comprising a variety of cultural events.
- De-centralisation is key. People do not want to have to travel far and wide to see good cultural offer. They will, but it would be more effective if excellent cultural offer is available across the city and, in fact, could attract audiences to parts of the city they wouldn't usually visit.
- Inclusive affordability is also key, not just financially, but events that appeal to a diverse range of people, not just one particular demographic. It should also be actually affordable to the majority, not just the minority.
- Thematically, positivity is key. Traditionally, a lot of cultural events and offerings look to the past. This project should look to the future – a celebration of the diversity of who we are and who and what Belfast is, laying the foundations of new traditions here.
- Legacy is key. Belfast is filled with cultural markers of the past. Younger participants in particular want to leave a brighter, more forward-thinking and-looking set of cultural iconographies.

## What could make this happen?

- Commissioning a citywide dance or music festival that celebrates and showcases dance or music traditions from all over the world both at a small- and large-scale level culminating in a large-scale free event in the city centre
- Commissioning a large-scale theatre/performing arts event that includes community choirs/ensembles from across the city – like Greek choruses but in a completely contemporary context
- A city-wide "People's Proms" event, not necessarily just music but rather a season of various cultural events and artforms representing and engaging all communities, cultures and ethnicities in Belfast<sup>34</sup>

---

<sup>34</sup> For a quick history of Proms, see [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Proms](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Proms). These were outdoor summer seasons of promenade concerts in open-air spaces where audiences could stroll around as entertainment played.

# Appendix 7: Nurture it: Recommendations for Belfast City Council

**The framework should be used by Belfast City Council, the cultural sector and individual artists and practitioners to develop their co-design practice.**

The following recommendations are **in addition to the framework** to help embed co-design in the council itself, as well as the sector and the city, so that it becomes an engine for change and contributes to A City Imagining and Belfast Agenda strategic outcomes.

## Culture

### Sharing power

Belfast City Council is in a position of power and could consider how co-design can help **democratise decision-making about what cultural activity it organises or funds**. This could include, for example, bringing together **inclusive co-design panels to plan new or evaluate existing funding or diversifying decision-making panels when awarding funding**.

The council should also explore ways to **help cultural organisations diversify their leadership and governance and support artists and practitioners from minority communities**.

### Hearts and minds

**Co-design is a mindset as much as a set of processes. Both are underpinned by “soft” skills**, whether this is putting people at ease, listening, facilitation or facilitative or dispersed leadership.

Sharing power may, understandably, be a difficult mindset for artists and practitioners who have trained and worked hard to become experts in their field, and for funders and policymakers who are used to having the authority to make decisions.

The council should **work with its staff and the sector to identify what skills and what mindsets could flourish with what support**.

## What counts for everyone

The A City Imagining strategy says

Culture is a complicated word. Not everyone agrees what it means. For some people it's art; for some people it's sport. For some people it's the buildings around us, the music we enjoy, the food we eat or the languages we use to communicate with each other.

In our research we found that **many people did not think of themselves as people who do “arts” or “culture”**, but on further exploration, they identified as dancers, doodlers, knitters, giggers, readers, watchers, wanderers and so on.

Thrive also found that **94 per cent of Belfast people are engaged in arts and culture** in formal (such as museums or arts centres) and predominantly informal (the home, the community centre and so on) settings.

**Placing people at the heart of the co-design process will continue to shift definitions of what counts as culture, where when and why. This must in turn shift what is funded** by Belfast City Council and others, **and how it is counted** by the council, thrive and the Department for Communities, among others.

While patterns of engagement among different groups of people are similar in thrive's research and the Continuous Household Survey (for example, both identify that older people and disabled people underrepresented in culture), the top-down definition ignores forms of expression and opportunities to support what matters to everyone involved. This may be particularly true for minority communities. It also risks stereotyping and coercive approaches to engagement when “they” are seen to be engaging with “our” culture.

## Defining quality

What is “great art” or “quality culture”? It is often defined by the policymakers, artists or cultural organisation. And it is usually defined by the dominant culture, which is particularly problematic for people from minoritized backgrounds.

Co-design is concerned with the process, rather than the output, but in so doing, advocates agree that it often results in better quality results.

The council should **explore how definitions and measures of quality can be co-designed** with artists, organisations, audiences and participants to include, for example, people's captivation, stimulation and perceptions of relevance or authenticity.

### Valuing our assets

In developing this co-design framework, 11 people from different backgrounds became immersed in co-design. Some work in health, business, engineering, the youth sector or community sector. Some are artists or work in theatres, galleries, museums and events. They are all ages, religions, colours, opinions and passions. They are all now experts in co-design.

We also uncovered lots of good co-design when we developed the baseline of engagement practice (appendix 4).

The council should continue to **involve these people and organisations in the delivery of co-design.**

## Structure

### Blurring roles

The council should also create **a co-design panel to support the A City Imagining strategy**, blurring roles and **sharing power with cultural organisations, artists and practitioners and representative individuals, particularly welcoming individuals who may understand particular barriers to involvement** (such as older people, disabled people, people with long-term health conditions, neurodiverse people, people from racially minoritized backgrounds, parents, carers and so on).

The council should also **create panels around particular projects or activities where there is opportunity to co-design.**

The council should ensure that panels address barriers that could prevent different people and organisations from taking part equally, whether it is time, cost, confidence and so on.

## Networks

Belfast City Council should support **communities of practice for cultural organisations that share a desire to develop their co-design or engagement practice**. These should be safe spaces where people can openly discuss challenges and risks and reflect that success and failure are not absolutes, but opportunities to learn and build.

**How they form, what they do, who is involved (for example, within or across artforms, practices or sectors), when and where can all be co-designed**. It may be useful to have different models and formats running at the same time.

Through its Community Development, Good Relations, Community Safety, Sports Development, other departments, community planning structures and other partners, the council can also play an important **role in helping cultural organisations network and engage with different sectors, communities and people**.

As Belfast City Council is in a position of power, it needs to work hard to share power when working with the sector. Whether within or additional to organisations' communities of practice, it should continue to **build relationships with and the trust of the cultural sector** so that they can feel empowered to take risks, learn lessons and push the boundaries of engagement and co-design.

**The council should also build its own community of practice with other trusts, foundations and funders** that have a shared desire to develop their co-design practice and funding for co-design.

## Involving those who are less involved

**Thrive's audience panel is a valuable resource that should be maintained.**

By definition, the audience panel is made up of people who are already engaged in culture. The council should consider how this could be **added to or supplemented to include people who have little interest or involvement in the type of work it funds**. **This could take the form of, for example, a citizens' panel which the council and cultural organisations could use as a sounding board and network to build deep, long-term relationship with different groups and communities.**

## Project funding for outcomes

The council should co-design a **grant scheme** to support co-design, prioritising the process and learning over outputs and “success” so that **working and learning together are the outcomes of the grant**. This could be, for example, small pots of money simply to develop relationships without expectations, or larger, staged, multi-year project grants to allow relationships to progress through design, planning, delivery and review.

The council should make funding and guidance **available in different languages and formats**.

## Core funding for relationships

Everyone agrees that the first step in good design is building trust and relationships. It can take years before people are even ready to start talking about what they want to do together. It might involve lots of gatherings, chats, coffee, scones, travel expenses, away days (did we mention pizza?) – costs that are often deemed ineligible or unnecessary – for little tangible result. This means **relationship building cannot be easily funded through standard project grants**.

Chasing and administering project funding is also time spent away from developing relationships.

**The council should continue multi-year programme funding and advocate its benefits to other funders and policymakers.**

The council should make funding and guidance **available in different languages and formats**.

## Supporting social enterprise

A number of organisations we talked to develop the framework would welcome **support to develop, package and market their successful engagement practices or co-design models**. This could help other organisations develop their processes while providing a valuable income source to the organisation and, ideally, their co-design partners.

## Practice

### Catalyst projects

**The catalyst concepts have been designed through a co-design process. These can now be used to test the co-design framework, and learning from the projects can be shared with the sector.**

### “We made this”

The council should further explore **best practice in relation to the commissioning and copyright of co-designed intellectual property.**

Current barriers include concerns that those involved in co-design processes will be excluded from commissioning to ensure procurement is transparent and fair. One tried and tested approach, recently used by the Department for Communities, is to ensure that all co-design records are made public so that knowledge is shared equally among all potential bidders.

A number of people also raised concerns about intellectual property rights. It is likely that this can be managed through trust-building and co-design mindsets combined with contractual rigour.

### Catalyst programmes

Projects are great for finding out whether and how new ideas work and how they can be improved, adapted or scaled up. However, they should be supported with **longer-term programmes of work so that co-design becomes not an add-on, a department or an outreach function, but a core part of the council and the sector’s business as usual.**

### *“WHERE IS MY CULTURE, BELFAST?”*

**The council is developing a BAME and culture action plan. This should be co-designed by artists, practitioners and people from racially minoritized backgrounds.**

“Where is my culture, Belfast?”, the provocation co-designed as part of the development of this framework, could become the challenge for the action plan and could include delivery of the “Where is my culture, Belfast?” catalyst project as proof of concept.

#### *DISABILITY ACTION PLAN*

**The council is also producing a disability and culture action plan. This should also consider people with long-term health conditions and neurodiverse people. It should be developed by co-design.**

**Equitable access for disabled people is a human right.** The council should require all grantees to ask and support access requirements for their audiences and participants and provide additional funding where feasible.

The council should also **build on existing assets**, such as the Arts and Disability Equality Charter, its own Accessible Events Guide and local cultural organisations that are already leading the field in terms of inclusion.

#### *LGBTQ+ ACTION PLAN*

**The council is also producing an LGBTQ+ and culture action plan. This should be developed by co-design.**

#### *2023/4*

Belfast City Council is currently planning its 2023/4 year of culture. It is vital to have people from minoritized communities meaningfully and visibly involved from the start, including through co-design.

#### *OTHER INCLUSIVE ACTION PLANS*

The council should consider **people-first action plans relating to other demographics that this project has shown may be less likely to benefit from the types of work that the council funds. This could include, for, example, parents of young children and young adults.**

Supporting children and young people's engagement with arts and culture across key stages of their lives is the best tactic to encourage life-long engagement which should mean that, generationally, more older people continue to engage. However, there could also be an **action plan to address immediate and medium-term barriers for older people.**

The council could look to countries that have more positive attitudes to different demographics, such as south-east Asia, where older people are valued and respected, or Scandinavian countries, where children are supported to play.

## SPACE AND PLACE

### **Open-air spaces and places can be more welcoming for different types of people.**

There may be fewer physical barriers, like doors or ramps. There may be less expectation to sit still or be quiet or clap at a certain time. There is no moment of anxiety walking in to a room wondering if there will be anyone “like me” there.

Particularly as we emerge from the pandemic, the council should consider how it can **support making open-air spaces more welcoming and accessible for all.**

## PART AND PARCEL

The council should consider how the different action plans come together and support the A City Imagining strategy and implementation plan so that they are not simply talking across different groups but ensuring that they **have a central role at the heart of delivery.**

### Mind your language

Throughout our research, the words “culture”, “heritage” and “arts” in particular proved problematic. Many people did not think it included them. This is a very immediate barrier to engagement and co-design.

The council should **consider the language it uses to market and promote its cultural activities** using market testing or ideally, of course, co-design.

## Review

### Proving and improving

The council should **evaluate its own co-design practice** (see self-evaluation tool in appendix 9) **and the overall impact of co-design.**

**Data to track changes in equity of engagement need to be further developed.** (This is a population outcome in the evaluation framework: see appendix 9). The Continuous Household Survey does provide information about engagement by deprivation, gender, dependants, age and disability, but it does not provide data in relation to ethnic background or social or occupational class or status. Ideally, this data would be made available at Local Government level in a timely manner.

Thrive's 2016/17 Cultural Lives survey collected data for Belfast including on deprivation, gender, dependants, age, disability, ethnic background and social grade. Repeating this on an annual or bi-annual basis would provide the data needed to track changes in cultural engagement in the city.

There is no single source of data that **tracks changes in who governs the sector**. (This is a population outcome in the evaluation framework: see appendix 9). However, both Belfast City Council and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland gather information from funded organisations on the make-up of boards. This provides a good basis for data development.

The council should also consider how it could monitor the make-up of senior management roles and the workforce in general.

**The council should also support cultural organisations in their self-evaluation** (see the self-evaluation template in appendix 9).

**Statistics should be supplemented by stories** at, for example, an annual event sharing and celebrating good co-design in the city.

Finally, Belfast City Council should reflect on and **review the co-design framework at least annually with its co-design panel**, making it better still based on everyone's experience.

# Appendix 8: Communications plan

## Accessible formats

The council should make the co-design framework **available in different languages and formats** including EasyRead.

## Sharing the learning

The **body of the framework** (About co-design; Believe it!; Do it!; and Some other guides and toolkits) have been designed to be used as standalone documents. These should be **disseminated widely** throughout the cultural sector, the community sector and other interested organisations. The council could carry out a stakeholder mapping exercise to identify relevant organisations and the best way to reach them.

Cultural organisations can play a key role in getting the framework to their community partners.

The **appendices Mapping what is already strong and Who are the “uninvolved”** are likely to also be of interest and use as a body of new research based on and coming from the sector and the people of Belfast. The council should consider how these can be best shared, with whom.

The **evaluation framework** | appendix 9 is aimed at the council and its funded clients. Further training may be required to aid its adoption.

The council should **meet and share its learning with the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, the Department for Communities, National Museums NI and other funders and policymakers. This should involve members of the co-design team or other champions from the sector.**

## Appendix 9: Review it: The evaluation framework

The following framework is designed to help Belfast City Council evaluate the difference that co-design makes as way to increase participation and influence in culture, arts and heritage activity.

The council wants to do this so more and different people can benefit from culture. Arts, culture and heritage bring benefits to individuals and communities, to our health, education and economy, and everyone and every community should have equitable access to them.

To do this, people need to find involvement relevant and rewarding so that they are encouraged to do more.

### How do we think that co-design will help?

Isolating and demonstrating the difference over time made by a particular process such as co-design is challenging outside of a laboratory and when the subjects are people. We cannot use control group comparison to see if results differ between comparable projects where one used co-design and one did not.

However, we can identify whether or not co-design is producing the short- to medium-term effects expected. And in the longer-term, we can see if the creation of these runs parallel to improvements in bigger outcomes around who gets involved in arts, culture and heritage. That means we can see if the differences made for the people directly engaged in co-design appear to contribute in some way to changing trends across bigger outcomes.

### Outcomes-based Accountability

Outcomes-based Accountability (OBA) is a particular methodology of planning and measuring impact adopted by central and local government. It uses specific terms such as outcomes, indicators and performance measures. Under OBA, the connection between the immediate impact of a particular project or activity

(known as performance measures) and long-term outcomes benefiting the whole population is one of reasonable assumption, rather than proven causality.

### Population outcomes

Outcomes are defined as conditions of wellbeing for whole populations, whether or not they have engaged in a specific programme or project.

No single programme, organisation or department can create or be accountable for an outcome. For example, for all people in Belfast to have equitable access to arts, culture and heritage requires different agencies working together over a long period of time to change the social, economic, environmental and other factors that influence tendencies to engage in arts, culture and heritage.

### Indicators

Because outcomes such as “citizens are active agents of change and co-creators of cultural activity” are complex, they cannot be measured directly. Rather, progress towards an outcome is observed by mapping the change in a small number of key indicators over time. They are signs that movement is happening in the right direction. Indicators are always quantitative.

### Performance measures

The contribution made to outcomes by individual activities or projects is measured by performance measures. These are results directly attributable to the work, and individual agencies and people are held accountable for performance measures.

Performance measures are always made up of three interlinked questions presented as a report card.

|        | Quantity   | Quality   |
|--------|--|---|
| Effort | <b>How much did we do?</b><br><i>Always a number</i> | <b>How well did we do it?</b><br><i>Always a percentage</i> |
| Effect | <b>Is anybody better off?</b>                        |   |
|        | <i>Always a number</i>                               | <i>Always a percentage</i>                                  |

PERFORMANCE MEASURES IN OBA

The “Is anybody better off?” measures often measure the quality and the quantity of the same effect, and so the two bottom cells are often collapsed together. Sometimes referred to as customer or performance outcomes, these measures are generally considered the most important.

The following table shows frequently used performance measures.

| <u>How much did we do?</u>   | <u>How well did we do it?</u>   |
|--|---|
| <p><b># Customers served</b><br/>(by customer characteristic)</p> <p><b># Activities</b><br/>(by type of activity)</p>   | <p><b>% Common measures</b><br/>Workload ratio, staff turnover rate, staff morale, percent of staff fully trained, worker safety, unit cost, customer satisfaction: <i>Did we treat you well?</i></p> <p><b>% Activity-specific measures</b><br/>Percent of actions timely and correct, percent customers completing activity, percent of actions meeting standards</p> |
| <u>Is anyone better off?</u>   |   |
| <p>#</p> <p>#</p> <p>#</p> <p>#</p> <div data-bbox="502 1120 766 1232" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 10px auto; width: fit-content;">           Point in time vs. Two point comparison measures         </div> | <p><b>% Skills / Knowledge</b><br/>(e.g. parenting skills)</p> <p><b>% Attitude / Opinion</b><br/>including customer satisfaction: <i>Did we help you with your problems?</i></p> <p><b>% Behavior</b><br/>(e.g. school attendance)</p> <p><b>% Circumstance</b><br/>(e.g. working, in stable housing)</p>  |

FIGURE 9 SOME COMMON OBA PERFORMANCE MEASURES

## What effects might co-design create?

Before we can start to consider performance measures, we need some idea of what are the outcomes of co-design.

There is little research in to the effect of co-design in arts, heritage and culture. There is some in the world of health and social care, but it mainly relates to the factors surrounding the introduction and operation of co-design, rather than establishing and measuring its link to desired population outcomes.

However, we can use what is known to present a broad rationale for why and how co-design might help cultural organisations.

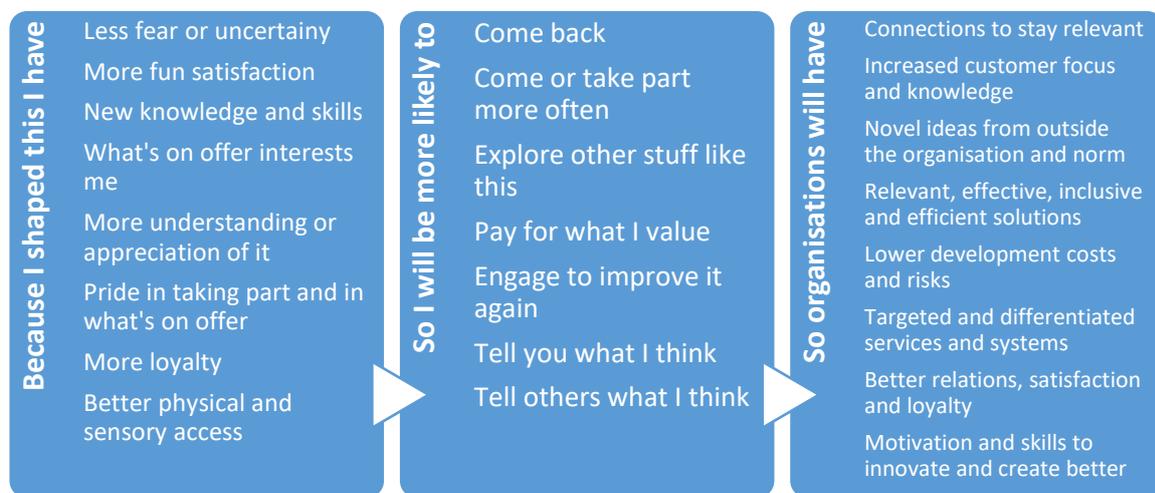


FIGURE 10 BROAD RATIONALE FOR CO-DESIGN'S IMPACT

## A city imagining outcomes

Belfast City Council's strategy implementation plan sets two goals associated with long-term impacts that may be affected by co-design.

- Goal C1: Strengthening our regional cultural network and building the cultural capacity of our citizens and of our cultural sector
  - Diverse and deeper cultural networks across the widest possible range of communities
  - Strengthened capacity of citizens across demographic groups to engage and participate in contemporary cultural activity at local, regional and international level
  - A stronger and more sustainable cultural sector
- Goal S1: Contributing to social cohesion and connectivity through cultural interventions
  - An autonomous cultural sector that develops the capacity of the sector and facilitates citizen engagement
  - A positive contribution to social inclusion through opportunities for greater social and economic engagement across all demographic groups. (Belfast City Council )

## The Belfast agenda outcomes

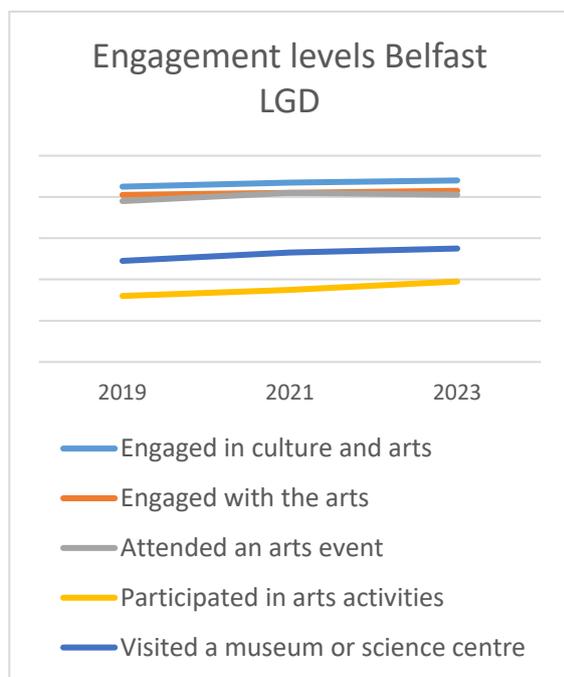
One of the outcomes of the Belfast agenda, Belfast's community plan, is that "Everyone in Belfast fulfils their potential". Its indicators include:

- Participation in arts activities
- Volunteering
- Self-efficacy

Engagement in culture and arts activities is also an indicator of the outcome "Belfast is a vibrant, attractive, connected and environmentally sustainable city".

## Population level outcomes and indicators

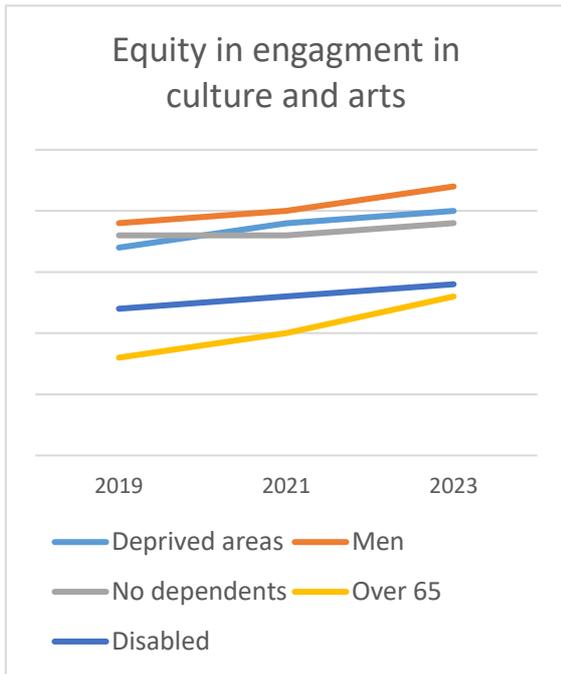
From the strategic outcomes, above, we suggest that there are two overarching outcomes to which co-design might contribute.



FOR ILLUSTRATION PURPOSES ONLY

### Outcome 1: Citizens are active agents of change and co-creators of cultural activity

- Change in levels of engagement in culture and arts across Belfast drawn from the Continuous Household Survey
- Change in percentage of NI residents who are "not really interested" in attending arts events from the Continuous Household Survey
- Increase in the number of arts and culture organisations using co-design



FOR ILLUSTRATION PURPOSES ONLY

## Outcome 2: Social cohesion and connectivity

- Greater equity in engagement in arts and culture
- Number and diversity of board members in funded organisations

## Baselines for population indicators

87 per cent of adults in NI took part in culture and arts in 2019/20. These figures have not changed significantly in the past year and have varied little over a decade or more. ( (Department for Communities) and (Department for Communities))

The Continuous Household Survey shows that in 2019/20 across NI 9 per cent of adults said “I’m not really interested” was barrier to attending arts events.

the following people are less likely to engage in arts and culture than average.

|                    |             |  |     |   |                     |  |
|--------------------|-------------|--|-----|---|---------------------|--|
| Adults 2019/20 (%) | Whole of NI | People who live in the most deprived areas <sup>35</sup> | Men | People who do not have dependents <sup>36</sup> | People aged over 65 | People who have a disability or long-term health condition |
|--------------------|-------------|--|-----|---|---------------------|--|

<sup>35</sup> Specifically, the three most deprived quintiles defined by the Multiple Deprivation Index

<sup>36</sup> Includes individuals who have responsibility for the care of a child(ren); a person with a disability; and/or a dependant elderly person.

|                                    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|------------------------------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Engaged in culture and arts        | 87 | 82 | 84 | 83 | 73 | 77 |
| Engaged with the arts              | 84 | 78 | 81 | 81 | 68 | 73 |
| Attended an arts event             | 80 | 76 | 77 | 77 | 62 | 68 |
| Participated in arts activities    | 33 | 26 | 30 | 35 | 31 | 32 |
| Visited a museum or science centre | 37 | 32 | 34 | 29 | 24 | 29 |

FIGURE 11 ENGAGEMENT WITH CULTURE AND ARTS IN 2019/20 (DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES) AND (DEPARTMENT FOR DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA & SPORT)

The most recently available data at a local government district level shows that engagement in the Belfast local government district is one or two percentage points lower than the regional average in all aspects other than visits to museums or science centres.

| Adults 2016/17 (%)                 | NI | Belfast |
|------------------------------------|----|---------|
| Engaged in culture and arts        | 86 | 85      |
| Engaged with the arts              | 82 | 81      |
| Attended an arts event             | 79 | 78      |
| Participated in arts activities    | 34 | 32      |
| Visited a museum or science centre | 47 | 49      |

FIGURE 12 PER CENT OF ADULTS ENGAGING WITH CULTURE AND ARTS (DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES)

There is currently no regularly published local government or NI data relating to the ethnic background, social status or class or occupation of those engaging in culture and arts.

## Performance measures

Performance measures track change in what is being delivered and to what effect. Consolidated performance measures give a picture of what is happening at service level across the city. Performance measures are not targets.

If the extent and effect of co-design in Belfast increases and, a little later on, there follows a positive change in the population indicators, then we may assume that co-design is contributing to strategic, population outcomes.

Below are simple performance measures by which Belfast City Council might track the development of co-design practice across the funded arts and culture sector. These figures, along with a narrative of the story behind the development of co-design practice, would provide the context for the council's reporting on changes in population outcome indicators.

| How much?  | How well?   |
|--|---|
| Number of distinct and deliberate co-design initiatives underway this year   | Proportion of co-designers from less engaged demographics |
| Number of co-designers involved  |   |
| Is anybody better off?   |   |
| Number and proportion of organisations developing their co-design capacity and practice using the self-assessment tool |   |
| Number and proportion of organisations reporting progress in their co-design based on the self-assessment tool         |   |

FIGURE 13 SIMPLE PERFORMANCE MEASURES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF CO-DESIGN IN BELFAST

## A co-design self-assessment tool

There are a number of ways to gather information about the development of co-design capacity and practice.

This tool is a guide and an aid to help Belfast City Council and its funded organisations reflect on their co-design practice.

Each of the five co-design principles are considered separately.

There are two sets of statements under each principle

1. Five are for your organisation to consider. You can use these for thinking ahead and planning even if you do not have any current co-design work.
2. Five are for use by your co-designers, who might be participants, staff, community members, people from partner groups and so on. You will not be able to use these individual co-designer statements unless you have an active co-design project.

You may need to adapt the language to suit your context, while keeping the meaning of the statements. You may need to translate it into another language or EasyRead or other format.

You should choose a scale that works for your co-designers. For example, you could use a scale from 1 to 5 to score each principle.

- 1 Little or no action
- 2 We've made a start
- 3 Some progress
- 4 Good progress
- 5 Consistent progress

Or you could score each line using a scale of 0 to 3.

- 0 No, not really
- 1 Yes, a bit
- 2 Yes, pretty much

You can use the results to prompt discussion. When you repeat this exercise over time, you can reflect on what has and has not changed and use the findings to help develop your co-design practice.

### Principle 1: Knowing that everyone has something to give

| Organisations  | Individual co-designers   |
|--|---|
| We recognise and value what each co-designer can bring   | Everyone recognises and values what I can bring   |
| We create a place where people feel they can ask questions   | I feel comfortable asking questions of other people involved in this work   |
| We create an environment where people feel comfortable challenging what is said  | I feel comfortable challenging what they say  |
| We listen patiently and do not ignore anyone   | They listen and do not rush or ignore me  |
| We <i>do not</i> treat anyone poorly because of their ethnicity, cultural background, language, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability or age | They <i>do not</i> treat me poorly because of my ethnicity, cultural background, language, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability or age |

## Principle 2: Welcoming different perspectives

| Organisations   | Individual co-designers   |
|---|---|
| We regularly review who needs to be involved and check this as we go along                | We all discussed who needed to be involved in this work                               |
| We regularly get and use information from all the different communities we want to engage | We got information about the different people or communities who would be involved    |
| We directly include people from all the different communities who need to be involved     | The group includes people from all the different communities we wanted to be involved |
| We have conversations about the change individuals and communities want to see            | We discuss what matters to me and to the other people on the group                    |
| We shape our evaluation with people to ensure it reflects their priorities                | We talked about evaluation and how to measure the difference this work makes          |

## Principle 3: Making sure everyone can take part

| Organisations  | Individual co-designers   |
|--|---|
| We make our meetings and materials fully accessible and check people find not barriers         | I have the support I need to get to the meetings, read notes and to take part fully       |
| We think about the skills people might need and provide support as needed                      | I feel I have all the skills I need to work with others on this                           |
| We think about the knowledge people might need and provide it as needed                        | I know enough about the topic to play a full part in this work                            |
| We make sure that everyone knows who to contact if they have questions or need support         | I know where to go to get support if I need to ask questions or learn more about the work |
| We create a supportive ethos and seek to build everyone's confidence and capacity to take part | The people I work with on this are supportive of each other and build my confidence       |

#### Principle 4: Blurring roles and share power

| Organisations  | Individual co-designers   |
|--|---|
| We change the way we approach work in response to what people tell us        | I know my involvement changed the way we approached some of the work          |
| We have better outcomes because we involve people                            | I know that my involvement changed the end result for the better              |
| We share responsibility for the results of the work with the people involved | I feel an equal share of the responsibility for how well this work goes /went |
| We collaborate and help each other to grow and create change that matters    | I feel we collaborated and helped each other to grow and create change        |
| We have new and different people on our decision-making bodies               | I would like to do more work where I get to make a difference to what happens |

#### Principle 5: Rewarding everyone's contribution

| Organisations  | Individual co-designers   |
|--|---|
| We make co-design enjoyable  | I look forward to this work and enjoy it                              |
| We offer personal satisfaction in the work                             | I get personal satisfaction from this work                            |
| We help people feel proud of their contribution to the work            | I am proud of what I have contributed to this work                    |
| We thank people both informally and formally for their co-design input | I have been thanked by the organisation for what I put into this work |
| We make gifts or payments in recognition of co-designers' work         | I have been given gifts or payments that recognise my work on this    |

# Appendix 10: Definitions from the Continuous Household Survey

## Engaged in culture, arts and leisure

Have done at least one of the following in the 12 months prior to the CHS:

- Participated in sport
- Engaged in the arts
- Used the public library service
- Visited a museum or science centre
- Visited PRONI

## Engaged in culture and arts

Have done at least one of the following in the 12 months prior to the CHS:

- Engaged in the arts
- Used the public library service
- Visited a museum or science centre
- Visited PRONI

## Participated in arts activities

Participated in at least one of the following arts activities in the 12 months prior to the CHS:

- Ballet
- Other dance (not for fitness)
- Sang to an audience or rehearsed for a performance (not karaoke)
- Played a musical instrument to an audience or rehearse for a performance
- Played a musical instrument for own pleasure
- Written music
- Rehearsed or performed in play/drama
- Rehearsed or performed in opera/operetta
- Painting, drawing, printmaking or sculpture
- Photography as an artistic activity (not family or holiday snaps)
- Made films or videos as an artistic activity (not family or holiday)

- Used a computer to create original artworks or animation
- Textile crafts such as embroidery, crocheting or knitting
- Wood crafts such as wood turning, carving or furniture making
- Other crafts such as calligraphy, pottery or jewellery making
- Written any stories or plays
- Written any poetry

### Attended arts events

Attended at least one of the following arts events in the 12 months prior to the CHS:

- Film at a cinema or other venue
- Exhibition or collection of art, photography or sculpture
- Craft exhibition (not a crafts market)
- Event connected with books or writing (such as poetry reading or storytelling)
- Circus
- Carnival
- An arts festival
- A community festival
- Play or drama
- Other theatre performance (such as a musical or pantomime)
- Opera/operetta
- Classical music performance
- Rock or pop music performance
- Jazz performance
- Folk, or traditional or world music performance
- Other live music event
- Ballet
- An Irish dance performance
- Other dance event
- A museum

### Visited a museum or science centre

Visited one of the following museums or science centres in the 12 months prior to the CHS:

- Ulster Museum
- Ulster Folk & Transport Museum
- Ulster American Folk Park
- W5, Odyssey Centre
- Armagh County Museum
- Andrew Jackson & US Rangers Centre
- Ardress House
- Argory
- Armagh Planetarium
- Armagh Public Library
- Ballycastle Museum
- Ballymoney Museum
  
- Barn Museum
- Carrickfergus Museum
- Castle Ward
- Coleraine Museum
- Craigavon Museum
- Down County Museum
  
- Downpatrick & County Down Railway Museum
- FE McWilliam Gallery and Studio
- Fermanagh County Museum
- Flame - the Gasworks Museum of Ireland
- Florencecourt
  
- Green Lane Museum
- Hezlett House
- Irish Linen Centre & Lisburn Museum
- Larne Museum
- Mid Antrim Museum, The Braid
- Milford House Museum
- Mount Stewart
- Naughton Gallery, Queen's University
- Newry & Mourne Museum
- North Down Museum
- Police Museum
- Railway Preservation Society of Ireland
- Royal Irish Fusiliers Museum
- Royal Ulster Rifles Museum
- Sentry Hill House
- Somme Heritage Centre
- Springhill
- Strabane District Council Museum Service
- The Inniskillings Museum
  
- The Northern Ireland War Memorial
- Tower Museum
- Some other museum not mentioned