

**Right
Up
Our
Street**

2015

**interim evaluation of the
first two years 2013-15**

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Executive summary

Right Up Our Street is a three year arts programme in Doncaster, funded by Arts Council England's Creative People and Places fund (CP&P). This report reviews the first two years of the programme in relation to both the national aims of Arts Council England and the local aims of delivery partners in Doncaster.

The programme is managed by a consortium of arts (Doncaster Community Arts), Doncaster Voluntary Arts Network (DVAN), Doncaster Culture & Leisure Trust (DCLT) and Cast (the town's new performing arts venue). A critical friend also sits on the consortium to ensure that findings from the Action Research inform the development of the programme. The learning to date is summarised in this report.

RUOS' vision is to create and deliver a "programme of imaginative, inspiring art coupled with focused community engagement" (Darts et al., 2013 pg 5) through 3 strands of activity, which together form the building blocks for life, or the DNA of the arts in Doncaster.

D strand has delivered 2 main stage productions, for Cast's main auditorium, combining professional and community performers, familiarity and challenge. This has reached approximately 9,000 people of which 48% were new to the arts.

N strand has made 29 commissions of new work involving the community in decision making and employing artists and companies both local and new to the town. This has reached approximately 12,000 individuals, participating 23,500 times of which 58% were new to the arts

A strand has placed 5 Arts Supporters in local communities working at depth for the three years of the programme, to build local community capacity and create community advocates for the arts. This has involved 50 people in decision making about the arts in their communities and engaged 9,000 individuals participating 16,500 times of which 77% were new to the arts.

Across all three strands activities have employed 150 artists, reaching 30,000 people, who participated 49,000 times of which 61% were new to the arts.

A website and mailing list have also been developed to improve information and raise awareness about arts activity across Doncaster. The website has to date attracted 19000 visitors and 7,500 people have joined the mailing list.

RUOS has therefore achieved its aim of getting more people to experience and be inspired by the arts through providing a range of activities.

Excellence of engagement has also been delivered through a programme of opportunities for 200 volunteers and 6 paid internships developing skills in the community. All the interns have found pathways into working in the arts. In addition participatory decision making has been at the core of RUOS - 2 community members were involved in the selection interview with Arts Council England, a panel of community members were involved in the recruitment of Arts Supporters, 100 people

attended early consultation meetings and 50 people have been involved in programming decisions for RUOS.

Excellence in art has been achieved by working with 150 local and national artists and providing opportunities for 50 amateur artists to work alongside them. Professional facilitation of activities and community decision making alongside networking and development opportunities for artists has ensured that RUOS is “celebrating and elevating” artistic practice across Doncaster. This has resulted in high levels of satisfaction at events, positive feedback from local people, press and peer review. Where there has been negative feedback this has also been used to inform learning throughout the programme. However the planned team of community reviewers has not been fully developed and **more needs to be done to get a wider range of voices heard in year 3**

Key learning

The process of community engagement in the 5 communities took longer to get going than anticipated with some frustrations in year one about the effect this had on the delivery of arts activity, There were differences of opinion within the team about the balance of large scale spectacle that could inspire a mass audience and participatory work that could develop skills and ownership in the work.

But by the end of year two RUOS has established 3 community networks of 10-15 people in each, which are operating well, meeting regularly, programming activity, and commissioning artists both within their communities and across N stand. Many are also volunteering to support delivery of artistic programmes. However in 2 communities the networks were not successful and instead programmes of arts activities have been developed to create an appetite for the arts.

Arts Supporters have identified that the greatest momentum of community activism exists where people can see evidence of their voices being heard. Conversely when people do not feel their voices are heard enthusiasm wanes. To this end it is vital that the community feel involved in all aspects of the programme, from programming to delivery and evaluation. Where this was successful it was described as a “journey together, which is very rewarding” and a learning experience for the professional as much as for their team.

However there remain challenges in keeping the community teams open to new members to ensure that they become advocates within and not gatekeepers for the arts in their communities. This is crucial if the programme moves forward in phase 2 and community decision making is embedded more widely in arts practice

A key learning is the time it takes to build a community team from scratch but the value it has in creating advocates for the arts in communities. However it also highlights the necessity to build in arts activity for people to respond to at an early stage. A challenge will be to sustain this without professional facilitation once the programme is finished.

Work has been programmed in a variety of locations including: traditional arts venues and non-arts venues; work indoors and outdoors; and across a range of art

forms, including participatory and non-participatory activity. This has demonstrated the importance that space and context have in influencing who takes part.

A strand has delivered activities in community libraries, working men's clubs, pubs and cafes as well as more traditional community centres. This has had demonstrable impact, attracting participants who would not visit an arts venue with the highest numbers of people new to the arts taking place in local communities. A strand has also supported a fragile local community infrastructure. As a result Balby library has increased footfall on the day of RUOS activities by anything from 30-60% and is now the highest performing community library in Doncaster. RUOS has also reinvigorated The Concertina Club in Mexborough and developed a creative hub for a range of arts activities, including rehearsal spaces, exhibitions, regular cinema nights. A number of community arts groups have also based themselves there.

A key learning from the programme is the value of placing arts activities in non-arts venues. This not only reaches new audiences, but with the growth of community asset transfers happening across the country such a model also increases the sustainability of the wider community infrastructure.

N strand has delivered activity in pop up venues and outdoors. This has had the benefit of spreading work around Doncaster and reaching people who may have barriers to any fixed space. This has included market places, shopping centres, heritage buildings, working men's clubs and exhibiting work on street hoardings. This has proved effective in grabbing people's attention while they are doing everyday activity. Such activities create the element of surprise for an audience, rather than requiring them to make the decision to attend, thereby challenging perceptions of the arts.

The challenge for year three is to explore how such activity can be made sustainable and to measure whether new audiences crossover to attend other arts events, or just engage in a one off experience.

In year one commissions were restricted to local artists, to build local capacity and ensure that the wider artistic community felt involved in RUOS. This was extended to artists outside Doncaster in year two. This was seen as vital in raising artistic ambitions.

D strand also identified the need to bring in artists from outside Doncaster to raise standards and so produced work based on local stories, but with national profiles, on the main stage at Cast, and through free outdoor activity raised the visibility of the new building. Each piece involved an ensemble of actors with amateurs working alongside professional performers. The aim was to create enthusiasm for the arts and the venue, provide high quality production standards, as well give more people a voice in the new theatre. Although it was originally planned that the ensemble would be permanent, a more flexible approach has enabled different participants to be involved each year.

There were differences of opinion about the benefits of temporary ensemble members, reaching more people as against a permanent ensemble influencing the venue's development. However the venue has tried where possible to maintain

relationships built with community members with some now working or volunteering in the venue.

The challenge for year three is to explore how the venue can continue to produce new work beyond the life of RUOS and how community decision making is embedded in their practice.

N and D strand have also identified that despite the perception that there was not much happening in Doncaster there were already 150 arts groups active in the town at the start of the programme. They have therefore worked to develop the local arts infrastructure by developing networking and training opportunities for arts practitioners. They have identified a number of artists through this process and a number of collaborations were nurtured and matured over the 2 years. Confidence in being involved in RUOS activities also rose as a result with applications for commissions rising from 16 in year one, of which 4 were successful, to 68 in year two, of which 48 were short list-able and 5 commissioned. They have also focused more on drawing people into the town centre to ensure that RUOS has an impact beyond the five communities. N strand has also provided showcase opportunities for local artists and the opportunity to engage large audiences (DNweekeND attracted between 4-8000 people). ***This has made the town a more attractive place to live and work.***

Across all strands a key learning is the importance of a professional interventionist approach both with community activities and professional commissions. While community members need support in developing their artistic knowledge, artists also need help in understanding participants starting points. By so doing it is possible to push artistic boundaries to ensure excellence in delivery. As a result all the town's venues say that audiences have developed for their activities.

Across all strands "familiarity" whether in the place where the work is sited or the content of the piece was found to be crucial to reach audiences who are new to the arts, from Cast choosing to tell local stories, to the use of everyday arts and crafts activities to hook people in - in community settings, to the use of public houses and public spaces as a venue for new commissions. But there was consensus across the team that artistic vision was necessary to not only celebrate but also to elevate the ideas of the community and raise artistic ambition. Working in this way had not compromised artistic quality. ***It gave artists and audiences the confidence to take risk and added an unusual twist to the familiar.***

Key challenges

Despite a member of voluntary arts sitting on the RUOS consortium, involvement from the many local groups has been limited. There were differences of opinion whether this was a failing of the programme to engage them or a lack of willingness on the part of voluntary arts groups to try something new. ***Further research in year 3 will explore how they may be encouraged to collaborate.***

Lack of collaboration and crossover between the three strands in RUOS was also a key challenge. While it is recognised that there is real value as Action Research in testing 3 different approaches to increase participation it also seems that if ***RUOS is***

to meet its aspiration to create a better connected arts infrastructure in Doncaster it is a priority in year three to explore how learning from RUOS can be embedded more widely across the arts in the town

Another contested area has been the extent to which marketing of RUOS should focus on building the RUOS brand as a sustainable one stop shop for all activities in Doncaster and to what extent it should focus on marketing individual activities within the programme.

With 19,680 individuals having viewed the website and 95,569 page hits there is clearly an appetite for information on the arts in Doncaster but there is no evidence of it being used by other arts providers in town. Instead the marketing focus has shifted from years one to two from brand marketing to marketing activities for individual activities. While this was effective in achieving numbers there were concerns that this may be less effective in delivering a sustainable legacy.

The aim to build an arts gateway for Doncaster has therefore been successful in part, with a website and mailing list established but the one stop shop for the arts needs to be reviewed in year 3.

Conclusion

There was already a wealth of untapped creative talent in Doncaster before Right Up Our Street started but under investment and poor infrastructure had led to a lack of opportunity. The establishment of creative networks of artists and community activists, through RUOS, has therefore created a more secure foundation from which the arts might flourish.

The programme has offered a combination of challenging work, and work that responds to the everyday participation people are comfortable with. This was seen as key to the success of reaching those new to the arts. However the involvement of professional artists across all strands was crucial in elevating artistic ambitions. The challenge going forward is having whetted the appetite, to ensure that enthusiasm is maintained.

There remain concerns about the extent to which community involvement is embedded within the arts and the extent to which quality can be maintained unless investment is sustained. The findings, in this report, demonstrate the value of increased investment in a town such as Doncaster. But it also highlights the risk of short term investment in raising awareness and interest in the arts, if this does not lead to long term investment to maintain activity particularly in areas of low income and low capacity.

The learning from this evaluation will inform the final year of delivery of RUOS and has influenced the development of the application for phase two. The final evaluation in year 3 will focus on the ***5 key themes identified in this research***

Beacon projects – an examination of whether and how mass participation and/or large performances pieces build new and repeat participation in the arts. This will

focus on mass participation events in communities and main stage productions at Cast.

Using non arts spaces – an examination of the effect of linking the arts to other leisure venues on audiences. This will focus on both pop up venues and the creation of more permanent arts bases to assess whether this offers a more sustainable model of arts and community infrastructure.

Outdoor/street events - an examination of whether and how taking the arts outside build new audiences in the arts and whether these transfer to other arts activities. This will focus on work in market places in the communities as well as large showcase opportunities in the town centre.

Building local arts infrastructure – an examination of how RUOS has developed the local arts scene and how this has impacted on participation. This will review the impact on and journeys of a number of local artists and arts organisations, as well as the sustainability of practice beyond RUOS.

Building capacity of and decision making with local people – an examination of how RUOS and the wider arts sector in Doncaster has been influenced by local people and/or businesses. This will consider the extent to which this is embedded in future practice.

Introduction

Right Up Our Street is a three year arts programme in Doncaster, funded by Arts Council England's Creative People and Places fund (CP&P). This report reviews the first two years of the programme in relation to both the national aims of Arts Council England and the local aims of delivery partners in Doncaster.

CP&P was developed in response to emerging data from the Active People survey which demonstrated inequalities in rates of engagement in the arts across different parts of England (Sport England, n.d.). Some of the perceptions of why such inequalities exist may be found in other research undertaken since the millennium. These include public value surveys, which questioned the content and relevance of the professional arts offer to many people's lives (Opinion Leader, 2007), psychological barriers to the traditional arts infrastructure (Bunting et al., 2008), issues about access and proximity to arts activity (Brook, 2013) and issues around decision making (Fennell et al., 2009).

From 2013-2016, Arts Council England decided to target £37 million to some of the locations which fell in the lowest 20% of arts engagement in the country, to examine the levers and barriers to taking part. The aim was to "encourage long term collaborations between local communities and arts organisations" (Arts Council England, 2012), using action research to test out new approaches in programming, marketing and decision making. It asks applicants to evaluate

- how more people from places of least engagement can experience and be inspired by the arts?
- the extent that aspiration for excellence of art and excellence of the process of engaging communities is achieved?
- which approaches are successful and what are the lessons learned?

(Arts Council England, 2012)

Doncaster came 347th out of 354 local authorities in this survey. A consortium of interested parties in the town therefore formed, to bid to be one of the locations in receipt of this investment. The consortium was from the beginning, and remains today, made up of Darts (Doncaster Community Arts), Doncaster Voluntary Arts Network (DVAN), Doncaster Culture & Leisure Trust (DCLT) and Cast (the town's new performing arts venue). Together these partners form Right Up Our Street (RUOS)

Right Up Our Street (RUOS) – original aims and targets

RUOS' vision is to create and deliver a **“programme of imaginative, inspiring art coupled with focused community engagement”** (Darts et al., 2013 pg 5). The original application and business plan set out that this would be achieved through 3 strands of activity, which together would form the building blocks for life, or the DNA of the arts in Doncaster. In the spirit of Action Research the focus for each of the three strands was different, and can be summarised as follows:

D - 3 new productions, for Cast's main auditorium, combining professional and community performers, with the aim to introduce new audiences to the theatre, through challenging work, **“drawn from local stories, memories, folklore and characters, and translated into contemporary and joyous performances, these will become the shared collective memories, the fireworks that bring people together and inspire a collective sense of ownership”** (Darts et al., 2013 pg 12). Key to this strand therefore was the desire to test whether new audiences could be developed for the arts through work that offered both familiarity and challenge.

N – 50 new commissions for artists and companies both local and new to the town with the aim to build the local arts infrastructure **“driven by what we discover local communities and artists want”** (Darts et al., 2013 pg 12). Key to this strand was support for and the development of the local arts infrastructure, alongside experimentation with community programming.

A – 5 Arts Supporters based in local communities for the three years of the programme, to build local community capacity in the arts; **“artists working alongside local volunteers to engage people; to develop confidence and enthusiasm for the arts; to discover more about what's preventing engagement; and to help overcome those barriers”** (Darts et al., 2013 pg 12). Key to this strand was the concept of long term investment at a hyper local level to build local capacity and create community advocates for the arts.

In addition a marketing and audience development strategy was planned, in order to increase awareness of the arts, raise the profile of individual activities and make connections across the three strands. This was planned to leave a lasting legacy for the programme, by providing **“a ‘what's on guide’, box office and community hub for the town”** (Darts et al., 2013 pg 14), thus improving information about arts activity across Doncaster.

Finally, a programme of skills development was planned to provide opportunities for volunteers and paid internships and leave a lasting legacy through **capacity building of a team of individuals.**

Targets were set to measure the success for each activity which included numbers for individuals taking part and number of participations. The aim of measuring individuals was to ensure that the programme was reaching new people and those not already engaged in the arts, rather than just putting on more activity for those already engaged. On the other hand the targets for participations aimed to measure whether engagement was leading to repeat and regular engagement in the arts, rather than the novelty of a one off experience.

In summary, the target was for **45,000 people (or 20 % of Doncaster) to participate in RUOS at least once over the three years, with 109,000 participations by repeat attenders. Approximately a third of these should be those currently unengaged in the arts.**

If achieved the levels of participation would equate to **£27 investment per participation**. While the consortium acknowledged that this puts the programme at the higher end of Arts Council spend per head (range of £4.52-£35.13) this is not surprising in the light of a variety of factors in Doncaster

- **previous under investment in the town and low levels of existing infrastructure**
- **position against multiple deprivation indices (poor health, below average education, low income, as well as arts participation)**
- **the experimental nature and action research requirements of the programme.**

Background to RUOS and early consultation

“It is common, when people talk of the arts in Doncaster, to hear about a place where the arts have no value; no place in people’s lives... this is not a place we recognise. The Doncaster we know is full of artists, musicians, writers and performers; full of people who think creatively and value imagination; full of choirs, bands, theatre companies and galleries. Time after time, we have seen that when local people have the chance to engage with great art they respond with enthusiasm, imagination and pleasure” (Darts et al., 2013 pg 5)

From the outset it was clear that for those who worked in Doncaster the low levels of arts engagement, identified in the active people survey, related to a lack of opportunity to take part, and lack of recognition for the everyday cultural practices people already engaged with. This chimes with much current research which has identified that part of the perceived participation problem relates to definitions of the arts and the need to move from a supply led process of pushing culture onto people, to a demand led approach that reflects what the public might want to engage with (Belfiore et al., 2011, Jancovich, 2014, Bunting, 2006). Responding to community definitions of arts and culture is also identified as one of the areas that CP&P aims to explore.

From the beginning RUOS embraced this concept; involving two community members in the selection interview with the Arts Council which helped Doncaster win the award for CP&P. Once funding was awarded meetings were held with community groups and stakeholders in the designated five communities. During the recruitment process for Arts Supporters, to be based in these communities, a group of local people were invited to experience delivery from the applicants. Their comments strongly influenced final decisions. A local artist was also involved in the selection of the Creative Producer. The aim was to ensure that consultation helped set the agenda for the programme. Once recruited the staff team, across all strands, also came together in different forums to explore shared and different values.

There were also 5 meetings held in darts' base at the Point, which involved voluntary arts groups, local artists and community members. Over 100 people were involved at this stage giving their input into the plans.

The public and staff exploration of the Arts Council's three core questions led to a variety of responses which informed the programme as follows

a) How do we know more people are experiencing and inspired by art?

Many people felt that the public either did not have access to or were not aware of the range of arts activities in Doncaster. The concept of a website, as a one stop shop for the arts in Doncaster, was seen as a priority to raise awareness of the activity that already took place, but had low visibility, as well as to promote the new theatre venue, Cast. The website was also an opportunity to build crossovers and collaboration between different arts providers in the town, including but not constrained to the members of the RUOS consortium.

Through the consultation it was also clear that some members of the public felt that arts initiatives tended to programme activities aimed at attracting existing audiences, to get them to engage more often, rather than attracting new people. Some also said there was too much focus on activities in the town centre. This was aggravated by negative local press coverage, prior to the opening of Cast, about the cost of the building. This informed the strategy of offering different strands of activity, with the ambition to create a two way flow of participation between outlying communities and the town centre.

A priority for RUOS has been to measure not just how many, but who is taking part in the programme and whether awareness of and receptiveness to the arts increased during the life of the programme.

Many felt that it was important that the programme involved a variety of different types of work, in order to attract diverse audiences and some felt that cross art form work and outdoor arts were most engaging for people who did not have pre-existing knowledge of a particular art form. Outdoor arts were also seen to act as good publicity, as audiences could "trip over it", rather than having to make the decision to attend. The community were also said to be passionate about their industrial past and wanted stories and experiences that reflected this.

A and N strand therefore programmed work in a variety of locations including: traditional arts venues and non-arts venues; work indoors and outdoors; and across a range of art forms, including participatory and non-participatory activity. D strand produced two main stage productions at Cast which seek to tell stories relevant to the town's history and both pieces had an outdoor element before taking the audience inside.

b) How will we know the extent that the aspiration for excellence of art and excellence of the process of engaging communities has been achieved?

Many members of the public felt that notions of excellence in art were a matter of taste and could not be measured. Some felt that the Arts Council's focus on

excellence and quality in the arts could put people off. One member of the public said that “art is about expression not being perfect” and another said the arts should “release the child not the judge”. There was therefore some resistance to measuring excellence.

However some staff in RUOS described Doncaster as parochial, with people unwilling to leave their local areas and try something new. The programme therefore needed to move people outside their comfort zone, encouraging willingness to take risks. To this end the programme aimed for a balanced approach of “**celebrating but elevating**” by responding to community voice through ambitious programming, while building capacity of both local artists and members of the community. It further aimed to take into account a range of views in assessing excellence, from within the arts and within the community.

Excellence therefore is defined through this programme as shifting the willingness to engage and take risks in what people in Doncaster see, and high satisfaction levels with the work from a range of different perspectives, including arts practitioners, those regularly engaged in the arts and those new to the arts.

c) Lessons learned

Staff and members of the public were asked what they believed the levers and barriers were to engagement, at the start of the programme. These were used to identify early propositions to test through the programme. Responses include

The choice of space and context within which the work is shown influences who takes part

The three strands of the programme sort to test context for work, placing it in traditional and non-traditional arts venues, indoors and outdoors, on people’s doorsteps and in the centre of town. The analysis of data on who is taking part seeks to consider whether audiences are different in the different spaces and whether it is possible to increase crossover between each.

The need to capture depth of experience and breadth of numbers

A key challenge throughout the programme revolved around where the programme should focus on deep engagement with a small number of community activists and local artists, to build their capacity and the sustainability of the activity, against the need to reach a large number of people to increase rates of participation across the district. Some activities therefore had large target numbers and some depth of engagement. The analysis seeks to consider how the different approaches effect repeat engagement, rather than just one off attendance.

When should artists use the familiar and when should they surprise?

Many people expressed the view that the arts needed to have relevance to people’s lives to engage them, but that by starting with something familiar it was then possible

to push and challenge people's expectations. This was tested through qualitative analysis of different artistic approaches, some community led, some artist led.

As a result of this process RUOS identified four objectives which were related but additional to those of the Arts Council and the staff team reviewed what success might look like under each one, which are summarised below.

What might success look like?

Objective 1: Engage a wider range of voices in decision making in the arts in Doncaster

- establishment of an active creative community network
- interested and enthusiastic volunteer 'creative champions' active in each community
- more people have a voice in the development of the artistic community, through influencing commissioning, programming etc.

Objective 2 – Raise the artistic ambition of the artists, participants and communities of Doncaster

- a diverse programme reaching a diverse audience, removing barriers, so people are more confident to attend cultural events
- a stronger, more confident, more collaborative artistic community, including voluntary arts, living and working in Doncaster

Objective 3: Achieve awareness through advocacy of the arts in Doncaster

- become established as a “trusted friend” by providing a gateway to the arts where more people access information
- dynamic flow of activity and information between the centre of town and outlying communities
- improved good news stories about the arts in Doncaster in different media

Objective 4: Develop and implement a legacy strategy for Right Up Our street 2016-2023

- significant increase in the number of people taking part in arts activities in Doncaster at the end of the project.
- work developed in 2013-2016 is sustained beyond the life of the project
- maintained or increased investment in the arts in Doncaster

The cost and experimental nature of CP&P, particularly at a time of reductions in public investment in the arts, inevitably mean that it is the focus of more scrutiny than much arts investment. The following report therefore examines the findings from the first two years of the RUOS programme in Doncaster, on how the targets and objectives described above are being met, alongside learning of what this has uncovered about levers and barriers to arts engagement in Doncaster.

It is hoped that these findings will be shared beyond the town, to other CP&P areas and to the wider arts sector. However it should be noted that this is an interim report, with the final evaluation due in 2016, at the end of the third year of the programme. This report is being written now to identify learning so far, and to inform the delivery of the final year of the current programme and the development of a second phase of the programme which it is hoped will run from 2016-19.

Methodology

Dr Leila Jancovich from Leeds Beckett University was contracted to set up an evaluation framework at the start of the programme, and to then work as a critical friend and evaluator, advising the project team and analysing data captured by them. Her point of contact within the consortium was Elaine Hirst as action research lead.

To assess how successful the programme is in achieving its targets and objectives a combination of statistical data, self-assessment, and peer review and community voice has been captured. The purpose of this is to move beyond the tendency in arts research to focus on the views of professional practitioners, by engaging a wider range of voices in the evaluation process. This supports a growing trend in evaluation across the public sector, and is reflected in the Arts Council's pilot evaluation matrix, which was developed during this period (Knell and Bunting, 2014).

In addition as a critical friend Leila met with staff at RUOS on a monthly basis, running training sessions on participatory decision making in year one and reviewing the data capture at every stage. The aim of this was to ensure that learning from the Action Research fed directly into the delivery of the programme, rather than merely providing a finished evaluation report. This led to a shift in methodology for staff from writing reflective reports in year one to deeper reflection interviews in year two in which processes were not just reported but challenged.

Data was captured throughout the programme from a range of different perspectives through a variety of qualitative and quantitative methods. Each has been triangulated to robustly test the findings against one another. The aim is to analyse **breadth** of who is taking part, alongside **depth** of experience for those participating.

Methods used include

- **Desk Research** – including analysis of other relevant research on arts participation, and comparison with other CP&P programmes through Leila's role on the national CP&P steering committee
- **Quantitative data** captured at all events, to test how many and who is participating. This includes box office data, registers at workshops, headcounts and sampling via post cards or survey
- **Qualitative quarterly reports** from the Arts Supporters (A strand) and creative producer (N strand) to track activities that are happening and identify challenges and learning from delivery of the programme
- **Annual reports** from the director of D strand to track activities that are happening, identify challenges and learning from delivery of the programme

- **Artists' diaries and/or case study** reports submitted by all commissions to provide self-evaluation and reflection
- **Participant feedback** from a sample of new and repeat attenders, including activists in the community teams and members of the community ensemble to capture personal journeys to participation
- **Community team meetings** to collect public feedback and evaluation on the RUOS programme delivery
- **Peer observation** at a sample number of arts activities, project meetings and community consultations to reflect on each other's working practices
- **Community reviews** at a sample number of arts activities to assess the work from the viewpoint of the recipient, not deliverer
- **Minutes of meetings** from staff meetings, consortium and community teams
- **Creative responses** – in the form of commissioned films, photography and other artistic responses, to provide creative expression and documentation

Street surveys were initially planned across town, to test awareness of and attitudes towards RUOS and the arts from a sample of the general public, but these proved difficult for the RUOS team to administer. As a result it is recognised that while this evaluation is able to report on the experience of RUOS from a range of participants involved in the programme it is unable to test whether this has led to changing perceptions of the arts across Doncaster, nor barriers to engagement from those not involved. It is believed that this is a limitation in this evaluation that is common to most arts research and highlights the difficulty of locally based evaluation programmes doing large scale population surveys.

In the original RUOS plan there was the aspiration to create an arts loyalty card which could be swiped to incentivise and record engagement. But on testing the feasibility of this when developing the IT strategy it was abandoned. It was felt that it was not appropriate for first time attenders and might be difficult to ensure repeat attenders remembered to carry it with them to events. However its absence did make it more challenging to collect quantitative data on individuals at each event, and repeat attendance between events. With the exception of work at Cast, which went through the box office system, lack of staff on site to collect data, as well as the nature of the activities, meant that some data is therefore based on estimates or samples of those attending. As much work was free and outdoors, without a point of entry to collect data, headcounts were used to get numbers of individuals taking part, but it is not easy to extrapolate whether these were new or repeat attenders from another event. Postcards were therefore also used to get a sample of how many were new to the arts.

The quantitative data that was captured was collated and analysed through Upshot, a CRM system, which allows for reporting on total numbers, numbers new to the arts, as well as comparisons between different activities. It can also map data against geographic and demographic profiles down to neighbourhood level. In addition the CP&P national evaluation commissioned post code analysis of those registered on Upshot, which provide comparison between types of audience taking part in RUOS in comparison with "normal arts attenders". However this report has not analysed to this level. Depth analysis of quantitative data will inform the final evaluation report.

Although this report is confident about the robustness of the data capture described above it is recommended that a loyalty card would be worthy of further investigation to test its effectiveness nationally.

Qualitative data was initially collated in written form, from reports and reflections. However the first annual review of 2013-14 identified that much of the reporting was descriptive and not sufficiently reflective. To this end the written reports from the staff teams were replaced with face to face recorded interviews in 2014-15. These allowed for reflective points to be drawn out better and assumptions to be tested and challenged. This ensured greater depth to the qualitative data in year 2 which was analysed for thematic analysis, using Nvivo software.

It should be noted that at the time of submitting this second year report, the majority of reflections are based on self and peer assessment, with more limited feedback from the public. ***It is a priority to try and increase public responses before the final report at the end of year three by collecting more case studies of participant journeys, and more community feedback for the final report.*** In addition the creative evaluations designed in year one and completed in year two will inform the year 3 report. These include the commission of a film, photography and setting up and training a team of community reviewers.

An assistant researcher was proposed in the initial evaluation framework, but the RUOS team initially felt that data collection could be managed in house. However, the requirement for staff to collect data, as well as plan and deliver activities was too onerous, leading to the need to increase the research team during the first two years. An assistant researcher was recruited at the end of year one to help record quantitative data on upshot and a second assistant researcher was recruited at the end of year two to collect additional qualitative data. The time and effort to collect data on the scale necessary for this programme requires adequate resourcing and dedicated research staff.

The following section provides analysis of the evidence collected from 2013-2015. It explores the issues and concerns of those involved in programme delivery in order to make recommendations for the final year of this programme.

Findings to date

The aim behind RUOS was not only to put on arts activity, which of itself would provide opportunities to participate, but to ensure that this brought about changes in behaviour, leading to sustained engagement and a stronger arts infrastructure. The following reviews the number and range of activities, the number and types of people engaged, along with the learning and challenges of delivering against the objectives set by RUOS, which directly relate to the Arts Council's three main questions.

Objective 1: Engaging a wider range of voices in decision making

In line with the aims of both the Arts Council and RUOS community decision making lies at the heart of the programme, as such this objectives **relates to the Arts Council's desire to see excellence in the process of engaging communities.**

As stated above consultation started in the planning stages and continued through delivery and into this evaluation. Success was measured against 3 deliverables, discussed below:

- establishment of an active creative community network
- active, interested and enthusiastic volunteer 'creative champions'
- more people have a voice in the development of the artistic community, through influencing commissioning, programming etc.

Has RUOS established an active creative community network?

To see a change in arts engagement in Doncaster in just three years it was believed that it was vital to build creative networks of individuals and non-arts venues within specific communities, while also working across the district and building creative networks of local artists. Through the consultation stage it was therefore agreed that strand A would work in five designated local areas and the D and N strand would work with audiences and artists across the district.

The five residential communities were identified on the basis of recommendations from the DMBC Area officers on the basis that there existed some community enthusiasm or activism on which to build. The communities selected were one for each of the 5 designated areas of the borough

Balby – the newly established community library could potentially function as an Arts Hub

Bentley – the potential to tie into new interest and resources generated through Heritage Lottery funding

Mexborough – a separate and distinct town with its own identity, often ignored

Rossington – a discrete “village” community where there was potentially the development of the market

The East – an unwillingness on the part of the Area Officer to select a specific community necessitated a more flexible, mobile approach

An Arts Supporter was recruited to be based in each area. They were chosen on the basis of having facilitation skills for working within the community, alongside artistic skills to inspire audiences. Their first task, rather than programming activity *for* the community, was to develop community networks, who would be involved in making decisions about the nature of the artistic programme in each area. The community teams that developed were defined differently in each area, with different challenges.

In Balby, Rossington and Mexborough the community teams had become established by the end of year one and consisted of 10-15 active individuals in each place. Members did not represent wider groups, nor have a specific interest in the arts or a desire to build artistic careers, but rather chose to be involved from an interest in what the programme could do for their community. The review of year one identified some frustrations about the time it took to establish the networks but by the end of year two these ***networks are established and operating well, meeting regularly, programming activity, commissioning artists and volunteering to support delivery of artistic programmes in their community.***

A number of individuals have become active creative individuals as discussed below. Some have in fact decided to make careers out of the arts; others are acting as excellent advocates for the arts in their communities. Strong creative networks have therefore been established and the ***priority for year three is to ensure community programming can be sustainable beyond the current life of RUOS.***

In Bentley, in contrast, the community team consisted of members of existing community groups – indeed the usual gate-keepers - who saw themselves as speaking for the wider community. While this was initially seen as a more representative team, it quickly became clear that existing working practices became a barrier, rather than a lever, to wider community engagement. Lack of cooperation between community groups and vested interest led to calls for funds to be diverted to existing activities, limiting the ability to develop new creative networks in Bentley. The Arts Supporter said that in hindsight “it might have been easier to have built a team from scratch rather than inherit a group who were almost paid to be there”.

RUOS was quick to respond to this problem and at the end of year one the Arts Supporter’s role was terminated and the community team disbanded. In year two a new approach, based on programming a wide range of new activity, has been developed to reignite enthusiasm for the programme. Bentley offers an excellent example of the benefits of using an action research approach that is able to respond quickly to learning throughout the programme and make adjustments as necessary. By the end of year two this is bearing fruit with a number of highly successful arts events attracting good audiences. Spilt Milk’s VE Day party attracted 762 people of which 146 actively took part. The Bentley Shed has been created as a pop up touring arts venue to present work and promote the RUOS brand. It’s launch attracted over 100 participants, as did a timeline activity and the making of Bentley Library chair. This demonstrates that there is a ready audience for the arts, however it should be noted that without strong creative networks it is a challenge to see how the work would become sustainable. ***This demonstrates the challenge for CP&P in whetting the appetite for arts activity if funding cannot be found to support its continuation.***

In the east the community team was made up of a mixture of voluntary arts organisations, an arts enthusiast and a community activist. There was a lot of vested interest amongst the group and as in Bentley the Arts Supporter found it difficult to get them to work together. As the most dispersed of the five areas it was also impossible to identify a community hub for the whole area. Individuals consulted with tended to identify themselves with smaller areas such as Thorne and Moorends.

Using the Arts Supporter’s own skills in music promotion he therefore set up a network of Open Mic nights across the area, with the aim to develop a team of local venues and promoters. The aim was to build capacity so activity would operate sustainably once the programme was finished but the Arts Supporter left half way through year two to take up another job. Despite the RUOS team initially trying to keep the network going interest tailed off from the community team. However a local not for profit music promoter was newly identified at this stage and it was decided to test what would happen if he were supported with money to underwrite more ambitious programming, than he would normally do. This will be reviewed in the

final evaluation in year 3.

The community teams all took longer than anticipated to develop. This did cause some issues, as some feedback suggests people felt the programme was slow to get going. However by year two it has seen real benefits in terms of depth of engagement. In all cases the local creative networks have informed the programmes in their own areas. They have advised on what activity should be developed in their communities and commissioned and worked with professional artists. They have developed their appreciation and understanding of the arts, building their capacity as community programmers and brought in new audiences who were not previously engaged in the arts.

A key learning from all areas is the time it takes to build a community team from scratch but the value it has in creating advocates for the arts in communities. A challenge will be to sustain this without professional facilitation once the programme is finished.

Each of the Arts Supporters has delivered work in non-arts venues in their communities, including libraries, community centres, pubs and cafes. Thus A strand has not only built creative networks through the community teams but also in the local community infrastructure. In Balby the team meets in the community library, which has also become an arts base for workshop and other small scale activity. This was shown, through interviews and through the case study undertaken by ECORYS to have demonstrable impact, attracting participants who would not visit an arts venue.

At the same time the library, which had recently gone into community ownership, had been struggling until RUOS started. Two years on, being a base for arts activities has helped them increase footfall to the library, on the day of RUOS activities by anything from 30-60%. It has also been claimed that it is now the highest performing community library in Doncaster. They have expressed a commitment to sustain arts activity beyond the life of the project and will become a new community consortium member if phase two of RUOS goes ahead.

In Mexborough the Concertina Club had a long history as a focal point for entertainment activity in the town, but had declined over recent years. By using it as a meeting place it has now seen an uptake in people enquiring about its use for a range of arts activities. These include rehearsal spaces and exhibitions. It also hosts regular cinema nights and a number of community arts groups including the Pitman Poets have based themselves there, reinvigorating the venue and giving the community back a creative hub.

A key learning from the programme is the value of placing arts activities in non-arts venues. This not only reaches new audiences, but with the growth of community asset transfers happening across the country such a model also increases the sustainability of the wider community infrastructure.

In Rossington, Bentley and the East activity has been presented on a more pop up basis, working across a variety of venues and outdoors. This has had the benefit of spreading work around Doncaster and reaching people who may have barriers to

any fixed space. In Rossington and Mexborough activity has used the market place, to grab people's attention while they are doing everyday activity. Similarly public art in Bentley and Open Mics in pubs in the East have focused on placing art where people go every day.

This has also been true with many of the commissions for N strand. Two Pints of Lager and a Piece of Contemporary Dance involved two contemporary dancers visiting 16 pubs and working men's clubs to put on a surprise performance. DNweekeND, a festival involving national artists while also functioning as a showcase for local artists, attracted thousands of people in year one. Based around the town's shopping centre, it animated indoor and outdoor spaces. Such activities create the element of surprise for an audience, rather than requiring them to make the decision to attend, thereby challenging perceptions of the arts.

The priority for year three is to explore how such activity can be made sustainable and whether new audiences crossover to attend other arts events, or just engage in a one off experience.

In addition to the work done, to build creative networks in communities, N and D strand have developed networks for arts practitioners. This is seen as crucial if RUOS is to leave a legacy of a more active and dynamic arts community and raise the artistic ambitions of the town.

In year one N strand undertook an audit of arts practitioners in Doncaster to measure the size and capacity of the local arts infrastructure. This identified that 150 arts groups were active in the town. This is less than the 400 identified in the Say Yes to Arts list, which predated RUOS, but it is believed that this offers a more accurate figure of those operating at the time. ***It therefore provides a useful benchmark from which to measure the impact of RUOS in the longer term.***

It was clear from undertaking the audit that most groups were not networked either with each other, or with external agencies. There were also issues about their lack of visibility both to local audiences and within the wider arts sector. At the start of RUOS the art scene in Doncaster was therefore defined as having "the potential if not the capacity" to deliver a dynamic programme of activity for the town.

To build their capacity and increase networking between artists, Friday Hangouts were organised at Cast in collaboration between D and N strand. These ran monthly in years one and two, regularly attracting 30-50 people. One local artist said that this resulted in "creative connections, creating a ripple effect" which was building the capacity and confidence of the local arts scene. Cast identified a number of artists through this process and a number of collaborations were nurtured and matured over the 2 years. For example, Terry Chipp, a local visual artist, created a new exhibition of work, a series of box paintings of artists he met at the hangout. The exhibition has subsequently toured regionally and nationally. Terry has also been into rehearsal of several shows at Cast with his drawings capturing key moments and being shared with the public through programme notes. Jow Bedford, for example, is a physical theatre artist, who made contact through the network, took part in the research phase for the production of Kes and is now involved in the third RUOS project at

Cast, Dancehall. She is also planned to be involved in the final commission in Bentley, providing crossover between activity strands.

As a result of increased networking between artists, the applications to be involved in RUOS activities rose between years 1 and 2. For the Open Call commissions applications went from 16 in year one, of which 4 were successful, to 68 in year two, of which 48 were short listable and 5 commissioned. Participation in the second DNweekeND also saw increases in applications from artists, from 52 applications (36 selected commissions and 7 direct-approach commissions) for the 2014 pilot festival to 115 applications (51 selected commissions, 2 Open Call commissions and 4 direct-approach commissions) for the 2015 festival. In addition D and N strand both experienced increased interest from artists based outside Doncaster, suggesting that ***the town was becoming a more attractive place to work.***

During year two however the numbers attending the Friday Hangouts dropped. It was therefore decided that the informal but regular structure of them “had run their course”. Instead future networking is planned to be delivered as targeted activities such as the training days on writing a grant application or marketing your activities which have proved popular. ***Both D and N strand staff said the networking had succeeded in their aim of increasing collaborative practice, but for this to be maintained and for new artists to make their own connections it is crucial that these targeted networking opportunities continue.***

N strand also commissioned Doncopolitan, a magazine “for artists, talking to an audience of other artists and those interested in the arts” in the town. With a distribution of 5000 it is intended to encourage knowledge exchange within the arts community as well as anyone interested in using the arts to make Doncaster a more vibrant place to live and work. However there is to date no evidence of how many copies are being picked up and how widely it is being read, although anecdotally it was said to be both visible and popular in cafes and bars around town. Further research on this would be valuable in year three.

There were differences of opinion amongst the RUOS team about the editorial approach. Most of the artistic team felt it offered the town a much needed high quality product with intelligent content that raised the ambition of the arts in Doncaster. But some consortium members felt that, by only catering to an existing arts audience, there was a missed opportunity in creating a magazine to raise interest in the arts from a wider general public. ***A review of the impact of Doncopolitan and the artists audit needs to be done in year three but everyone felt that a combination of opportunities offered through RUOS, the audit and networking opportunities had built creative networks in the town.***

Has the programme developed active, interested and enthusiastic volunteer 'creative champions'?

As demonstrated above, all three strands built creative networks while also building the capacity of key individuals. In A strand the community teams ***have involved around 200 in volunteering and 50 in decision making.*** Individuals have also been on a real journey, becoming creative champions and advocates for the arts.

In Rossington Dawn initially got involved because she ran the local café where the community team met. She saw the arts as a way of putting activity into her café and attracting more customers. Two years on she is active chasing the local press to review arts activities across Rossington. Felicity was a school lunchtime coordinator, and Chelsea a local mum, who by first attending a workshop, then shadowing the artist have now become workshop leaders in Rossington and Balby. Both are planning on setting up as freelance workshop leaders and continuing arts activities beyond the life of the RUOS programme.

Sharon was a local choir leader in Rossington who wanted to push her group outside its comfort zone. RUOS provided the opportunity for them to work with internationally renowned Beatboxer Jason Singh. As a result Sharon now hopes to become a professional musician and she is currently writing a musical.

Maureen in Mexborough had been reclusive, depressed and totally unengaged in both the arts and her community before she got involved. She is now treasurer of the Ted Hughes Trail and was described as “quite a flamboyant character”.

Pete Sullivan already had an interest in putting on events through his own company, Thorne Charity Events, but through RUOS he is being supported to do ambitious arts programming in the East. All started with limited experience in the arts but are now a key part of ensuring the sustainability of arts activities in their communities.

N and D strand have also ***engaged with around 150 local and national artists***, building their visibility. They have been provided with mentoring, training and skills development in art form practice but also in marketing, event management and fundraising to build their capacity and confidence. In addition locally based Rationale Productions had a year long residency at Cast supported by RUOS. Through this they were able to develop creative thinking around a brand new piece of performance work exploring ways of seeing and visual impairment. The residency culminated in an intensive three-day R&D process facilitated by Andrew Loretto and guest dramaturg Kaite O'Reilly and a final 'Audience with Rationale' event at Cast.

In addition D stand has provided ***opportunities for 50 amateurs through the community ensemble, to perform alongside professionals***, building their skills in the arts and bringing in new audiences to see their peers on stage. As a result one member, Michael Lynch was successful in getting an agent, and Will Drury has gone on from The Glee Club to tour with a professional company,

Six unemployed young people have also been employed as paid interns by RUOS for a period of 6 months each, two of whom were from Doncaster. This has developed a group of active, skilled individuals all of whom have gone on to employment in the arts/cultural industries since their internships finished. Four of them are still working in Doncaster and one in nearby Sheffield.

A team of ***20 individuals have also undergone media training*** to become radio presenters for Sine FM or community reviewers. Sine FM ran a two year programme for RUOS, the first year an arts bulletin, the second a review programme. However they found it hard to recruit volunteers during the first year (discussed in more detail

below) and despite RUOS proactively organising media workshops with the explicit aim of attracting new volunteers in year 2 Sine FM proved unable to retain them. The activity is therefore not continuing in year 3.

The RUOS core team also provided some opportunities to go and see work for review purposes, both to support the website and this evaluation. But despite the value of this being recognised across the team, coordination of this has shifted from the Arts Supporters to the marketing team, then with a change of marketing personnel from marketing to PR and finally to Action Research Lead. Reviews in years one and two have therefore been disappointing. This has been a missed opportunity in terms of getting a wider range of voices to inform the writing of this report but more importantly in terms of feeding back to the RUOS team to inform the action research and supporting the marketing of the programme. However feedback has been captured via social media and used to inform the programme and ***there is the opportunity in year 3 for a more proactive approach to increase community reviews and public knowledge of a wider arts offer.***

In addition to the benefits to individuals described above RUOS has built a ***database of people enthusiastic to be kept informed about the arts.*** At the end of year two this had nearly 7,500 names on it compared with 2,000 that had been on the Say Yes to Art mailing list which predated RUOS. ***61% said they had not been involved in the art previously.*** This demonstrates that RUOS are reaching new audiences, and increasing enthusiasm in the arts. But more work is needed to increase the total numbers further.

Do more people have a voice in the development of the artistic community, through influencing commissioning, programming etc.?

As highlighted above the focus on building community teams and active creative champions was based around the principles of participatory decision making. Building enthusiasm in the community was reliant on people feeling they were given a voice in deciding what the arts activities were that were delivered in Doncaster. One of the key aims of A strand therefore was to widen the range of voices involved in decision making about the arts and build the capacity of those involved so that in time they could influence the wider arts sector in the district, including the D and N strands of RUOS.

In year one there was a challenge noted, in striking a balance between building the capacity of individuals through continuity within the community teams, while keeping the door open to other community members to provide “an expanding sense of who the community are or might be [to avoid] risk of excluding other voices”. To address this, the Arts Supporters ran open access meetings where anyone could turn up and they actively encouraged new members. But it was acknowledged that a group of activists established themselves as regulars in each place.

Several Arts Supporters said that giving people a role, not only in consultation, but in decision making and in delivery, was crucial to keep them involved. In Mexborough using the community team as volunteers to run events gave them a strong sense of ownership which increased attendance at meetings. In Balby the Arts Supporter

noticed that attendance dropped at meetings where there were no decisions to make. She therefore worked hard to ensure all meetings had one agenda item that required a decision and she also provided opportunities to be active creatively which also increased engagement. In Rossington volunteers were given ownership of activities, whether running a workshop or an activity area at an event.

Conversely in Bentley in year one, where people did not see enough positive outcomes from the programme, engagement dropped, making it hard to get people to attend meetings. In Rossington the Arts Supporter also said that it was getting harder to maintain commitment the closer the programme was coming to an end, as people were not confident that activity could or would be sustained without the input from an Arts Supporter. This may in part be due to the way the Arts Supporter operated in Rossington or the nature of the community team, who are more reliant on her, than in Mexborough and Balby. But it also highlights ***the risk of short term investment in raising awareness and interest in the arts, if this does not lead to long term investment to maintain activity particularly in areas of low income and low capacity.***

A key learning is that the greatest momentum of community activism exists where people can see evidence of their voices being heard. Conversely when people do not feel their voices are heard enthusiasm wanes.

Engagement was not restricted to community teams. Arts Supporters had a physical street presence to increase their visibility within their communities. They talked about chatting to people at doctor's surgeries, or the local market to engage them, or making links with local groups such as the history club or schools. However it was the community teams which worked with the Arts Supporters to programme arts activities and each was given a budget to commission a new piece of work in year one. To do this they not only shortlisted artists but wrote the original brief to be advertised and followed the commissions from each step from ideas generation, to selection to delivery. While there were variances in the qualities of commissions which will be discussed below, ***it provided the first opportunity for members to not only commission a piece of work but play a role in the organisation, the planning, the delivery and the evaluation of this work. This activity significantly increased the confidence and skills of the community networks.***

All community team members were also given the opportunity to participate in the selection process for N commissions. In year one 5 community team members attended the selection meeting for the first round of Open Call commissions for local artists. Although there was no voting mechanism for decisions, the Creative Producer did say that their opinions played a crucial role in the final outcomes.

In year two their involvement in the N Open Call commissions was extended. This time community representatives helped write the criteria for commissions and took applications to the community team meetings for discussion by the whole group. They helped design a voting mechanism and representatives then fed back the results from their area at a shared meeting with the Creative Producer. There were differences of opinion about how useful it was for the community teams to be involved in the budgeting process. While one Arts Supporter felt this was crucial to ensure that the process was fully understood, the Creative Producer felt it was not

appropriate as it closed down creative discussion.

Significantly, in terms of embedding such practice across the arts, the Creative Producer said that as well as building the capacity of the community members, it also **changed his attitude to participatory decision making and built his confidence in engaging with the public.** Similarly all the Arts Supporters described the process as a “journey together, which is very rewarding” and a learning experience for them as much as for their team.

Despite this beyond the commission stage there was more limited ongoing relationship between N strand and the community networks. While the Arts Supporters felt that both D and N strand were keen to have the input from the community teams on the marketing of their activity they were said to be less receptive to community involvement in the programming of the commissioned activities. One example of this was DNweekeND which despite offering a vehicle where the community could have influenced the programming this did not happen, although individual community team members did choose to volunteer to help out at the event. The Creative Producer said that there were links with and involvement of community reps in developing content and format of a number of the commissions but some Arts Supporters did not feel this was done to make full use of their knowledge and networks. There were also some frustrations expressed by community team members who had voted for specific commissions on the basis that they would visit their communities when this did not happen. ***This may demonstrate the complexity of involving participatory decision making across the district as against working locally but this is a key challenge if plans for district wide activity in phase 2 goes ahead.***

In terms of D strand Cast saw the community teams as a potential vehicle to engage with, both to promote work happening in the venue and from which to recruit members for the community ensemble. In year 1 The Glee Club toured to a number of the A areas. In addition some of the Arts Supporters organised go and see trips for their community teams to Cast. For many visiting, it was their first time in a theatre. This not only gave them a good experience, but also provided an opportunity for valuable feedback for the venue. Despite this however in both years one and two it was acknowledged that opportunities for crossover between A and D strand were disappointing and opportunities to inform decision making limited.

The programming of D strand was said to be “defined less by the community influencing the programme and more in terms of using a curated programme to open a dialogue with the audience post event”, but the Director at Cast said the programme was informed by consultation at the business planning stage, before the venue opened its doors to the public. Through this the venue decided on a programme of 3 new productions, the first an existing play, the second a new adaptation of a well known novel ‘Kestrel for a Knave’ and the third a brand new dance show created for Doncaster based on an original French production call Le Bal. The Glee Club was chosen because it was written by a successful Doncaster playwright and set in Edlington, a local mining village. Kes is again a local story and the film of the original novel was made in Barnsley and had its world premiere in Doncaster.

Both had national profiles through the West End run of the first and the film of the second and so were seen as a “homecoming for national treasures”. As described above each piece involved an ensemble of actors where amateurs working alongside professionals. The aim was to create enthusiasm for the arts and the venue, provide a high quality production, as well give more people a voice in the new theatre.

Relationships with members of the community ensemble were maintained in year one with some of the ensemble from The Glee Club also performing in the Christmas panto. But the initial idea of a permanent ensemble was replaced with a more fluid approach, resulting in shorter intensive periods. This was driven largely by financial restraints. Where possible a sustained relationship with artists and community has been pursued across the two productions and by using the Panto as an additional platform. The more flexible approach has enabled different participants to be involved each year. There were differences of opinion about the benefits of temporary ensemble members. Some felt this was able to reach a wider number of people than at first envisaged by a permanent ensemble and was more responsive to the needs of the production and the community. However others felt it reduced opportunities for the ensemble to influence the venue’s development. The relationships built with community members has also meant that some of these individuals have continued a relationship with the venue, coming forward for volunteering and placement opportunities, applying for permanent and casual positions across the venue.

Some people also expressed concern that at the end of year one the restructure of the Arts Supporters did not involve the community teams. This suggests that there are limits to participatory decision making within the governance of RUOS itself. It also demonstrates the tension between the need for leadership informed by learning from the Action Research programme and the need for the community involvement to feel authentic and not token.

A review of objective 1 does demonstrate that RUOS has engaged a wider range of voices in decision making in the arts in Doncaster, however a question mark currently remains about how embedded and sustainable this is beyond the life of the project.

If the concept of involving a wider range of voices is to be embedded long term it is recommended that, in line with the principles of participatory decision making, engagement should be from commission to delivery to evaluation.

As RUOS has developed networks, built the capacity of individuals and given the public a voice in decision making it is crucial that year three ensures the sustainability of this. There also remain challenges in balancing the need for continuity with the need to extend the offer to a wider range of people, but the next section will consider how this process has impacted on artistic practice in Doncaster.

Objective 2: Raising the artistic ambition of artists, participants and communities

While objective one focused on **excellence of engagement** the second objective is about not just celebrating the communities' starting point but elevating the artistic ambitions of the town. As such the following **addresses the Arts Council's aspiration for excellence of art** throughout the programme. In addition by measuring how many and who has taken part this objective **examines the Arts Council's question about how more people from places of least engagement can experience and be inspired by the arts.**

Success was measured against 2 deliverables which will be discussed below

- a diverse programme reaching a diverse audience, removing barriers, so people are more confident to attend cultural events
- a stronger, more confident, more collaborative artistic community, including voluntary arts, living and working in Doncaster

As identified above it took longer to involve the public in decision making than anticipated by the RUOS team. This was felt, at times, to create a hiatus and delay in the delivery of arts activity. A key question underlying the whole programme has therefore been the benefits and drawbacks of commissioning in a responsive way to the community versus a pro-active curated programme led by arts professionals. While there were clear differences of opinion on this across the team there was a shared belief that the more diverse the programme, the more diverse an audience would be engaged.

Has RUOS provided a diverse programme for a diverse audience removing barriers, so unengaged people are more confident to attend 'cultural' events?

The targets set at the start of the programme were for D strand to deliver 3 productions across 3 years, for N strand to commission 50 new artworks in Doncaster and for A strand to produce a menu of opportunities in their local areas. This was to engage 45,000 individuals, with participations of over 100,000, with a priority to attract at least 1/3 of people who are new to the arts. However it should be noted that the RUOS team saw these targets as speculative, based on a theoretical model of increasing participation to a rate closer to the national average, rather than anything grounded in practice. The following table shows progress so far, followed by narrative to evaluate activities in detail.

Activities	Target by year 3	Actual by year 2	Variance	%	Actual sessions
D	3 (projects)	2	-1	66%	Not supplied
N	50 (projects)	29	-21	58%	838
A	500 (sessions)	670	+170	134%	670
Individuals*	Target by year 2	Actual by Year 2	Variance	%	New to the arts**

D	7,310	8,737	+1427	120%	48%
N	8,772	11,943	+3171	136%	58%
A	13,093	9,126	-3,967	70%	77%
Total	29,175	29,806	+631	102%	61%
	*figures based on a combination of box office and registers for ticketed events and headcounts for free events ** figures based on postcard responses, sample size of 4,720				
Participations	Target by year 2	Actual by year 2	Variance	% of target to date	
D	17,663	9,279	-8348	53%	
N	21,196	23,457	+2261	111%	
A	30,442	16,530	-13,912	54%	
Total	69,302	49,266	-15,937	71%	

The table above shows variance in success against the targets, with activities and numbers of individuals engaging at or above expectations, but total numbers of participations below target. However the over achievement of targets to attract people new to the arts across all strands does suggest that the programme is achieving its primary objective of engaging the unengaged, but that this may be a slower process than achieving large numbers of participation from those already engaged.

Variances between strands show that the N strand, of new commissions is exceeding all targets. D strand is ahead of its targets for individuals but below on repeat participation. However it was thought that the data received from Cast so far was incomplete and it is expected to reach target once this is received. While A strand is exceeding numbers of activities offered, it is below target on both individuals and participations. Several felt that A strand's focus on depth of experience, over breadth of numbers, had resulted in the lower than anticipated numbers. The formation of community teams took longer than anticipated and community programming was said to be a slow process, as staff balanced the need to respond to the wishes of the community representatives, while also pushing their boundaries.

There were differences of opinion within the team about whether it would have been better to programme some more large scale spectacle in the early stages. Some argued that this would have built awareness of and an appetite for the arts quicker. But others questioned whether such work would lead to sustained attendance or attract those new to the arts; "you could do an event in every part of [Doncaster] and you could theoretically hit every individual person once but where's the legacy and sustainability of that? Or you could really build something that has the legacy and sustainability for a small amount of people that may be meaningful and have long term knock on effects".

Significantly figures show that A strand has the highest rate of engagement from those new to the arts, at over three quarters of those taking part. This was twice the target, which several people argue was the result of taking time to build trust in communities. Some Arts Supporters also criticised the targets for overall numbers.

At times it was said that there was a danger that the programme became “too much about the numbers and not enough about the work”. The progress against targets was therefore only seen as part of the picture in terms of achieving excellence in art and engagement and in terms of getting more people to experience and be inspired by art.

A key learning is that whilst working at breadth may raise awareness of the arts, working at depth is also necessary to remove the barriers to participation.

The following therefore discusses the various processes employed to ensure excellence and build people’s confidence in the arts.

In most areas A strand activity started with workshops. In Rossington art classes were held in a café in the market to get people talking. In Balby Upcycling workshops were started in the library. In Mexborough a writers’ group and craft group were formed at a community centre. These were all said to have attracted a broad range of local people. In Mexborough for example the new writers’ group, Write On Mexborough, includes a published writer and someone who has never written anything before. Through a process of shadowing between community members and professional workshop leaders many of these workshops have developed into sustainable groups by the end of year 2. While many Arts Supporters said that most community teams started as people “more interested in being facilitators rather than creative themselves” by the end of year 2 many had also become more creative and more confident in both doing as well as seeing art.

The growth of local amateur art groups offers a model of sustainable community development, skills sharing and local activity.

In all cases the workshops also got the Arts Supporter known and provided an opportunity for conversation about what arts activity people wanted to see in their community, which fed into a series of community commissions of new work from professional artists for a public viewing, which took place in year one.

In Rossington this resulted in a new composition of a Song for Rossington, which involved internationally acclaimed beat boxer Jason Singh working with a local choir, thereby combining professional performance and amateur participation. This was performed as part of a larger, Proms in the Park, event, which despite appalling weather involved over 700 people on the day. In year two the community again wanted an event that they could participate in creatively as well as present to a large audience. This led to the Phileas Fogg Feast, where the Arts Supporter took a more hands off approach, without a professional artist input, to really empower the community team’s capacity to design a concept and deliver. However peer review suggested that this did limit the artistic potential of the day as well as the audience experience, so in year 3 the Arts Supporter will retain a more interventionist approach with the Fun Place and the Handmade Parade, which are natural developments from the work in the first two years in order to push the boundaries of the community team.

In Mexborough the community commission in year one involved local film company Handheld Cine Club making a piece about, with and for the people of Mexborough.

The aim was to raise ambition while supporting local interest in cinema. The piece was planned to be shown locally as well as touring internationally but at time of writing this report the final cut has not been done and this has caused some frustration within the community. The interest in cinema led to the creation of a number of open air performative events, which saw streets closed and decorated and involved open air cinema, spoken word performances and workshops. These events were described as transformative by a number of people and reached over 1000 people.

The events in Mexborough led to the formation of a monthly cinema club run by an independently constituted group. With the help of the Arts Supporter they successfully raised funds from Film Hub North to keep running for the next two years and research by Sheffield University suggests the group is attracting a more diverse audience than traditional film clubs through the inclusion of other arts activities alongside the films (Corbett et al., 2014).

Challenges in the community commissions processes in year one led to all community teams deciding that they wanted to take a more proactive approach to commissioning work in years 2 and 3. They decided to research and directly approach artists and companies that they wanted to work closely with, rather than responding to pitches from artists to an open call. As a result the concept of smaller community commissions was abandoned and teams were given permission to pool the smaller budgets and design whatever type and size of events they wanted to.

However while one Arts Supporter acknowledged that their “community team are really good at coming up with big ideas” others felt they needed “very tangible offers” to respond to and a breadth of knowledge because “I don’t think you can push and challenge taste if you’re not accessing other experiences”.

To build the critical faculties of community programmers a budget was therefore allocated for go and see trips to encourage Arts Supporters to take people out of their areas. In Rossington community members went to Cast and also further afield. For many of them it was said to be the first time they had been to the theatre and response were very positive, building their confidence to visit again and on their own. Trips to Manchester Fun Palace and Hebden Bridge Handmade Parade also directly informed programming for year three.

In the other areas the approach to go and sees was more responsive to audience ideas, taking people on research trips related to the programmes once they had been decided on. In Mexborough the cinema club decided to show the film of KES as well as visit Cast to see their production, to reflect on the similarities and differences. This inspired one to write a review of it, which was published in Doncopolitan. This also prompted a number of local people to join the workshop on media training and two have become community reviewers. In Balby three members of the community team used funding to go to the Sheffield Fairground archive to do research for a large scale street festival they plan for year 3. However the budget was underspent at the end of year two.

It is recommended that go and see trips are developed in year three to raise the artistic ambition of the community teams and support them in

programming decisions.

In many areas the Arts Supporters also used their own artistic skills to create mass participation projects which led to large installations. In Balby the Poppies Project commemorated World War 1 by asking over 200 participants to create a poppy, which the Arts Supporter then transformed into a large scale installation installed outside the Library. Despite initial fears that this would be stolen or vandalised it was not and feedback from the library suggests that it increased pride in the community as well as footfall at the library. The success of the project was defined, through peer observation, as related to the fact that the Arts Supporter maintained artistic control of the final piece thereby exceeding the expectations of those viewing it.

In Rossington a community quilt was also created through a combination of mass participation and artist led interpretation, from photographing and embroidering scars of 139 local residents to commemorate World War 1. This not only engaged people in the making and was shown in Rossington but has since toured to Doncaster Art Gallery, Cast and the local hospital extending its audience reach. In Bentley the Arts Supporter engaged 400 people in writing their dreams for the area, which were incorporated into The Wishes Mural as a piece of permanent public art that has anecdotally been said to have been received well in the community.

A key learning is that participatory activity can build skills in the community and engage new audiences in the arts but professional interventions are needed to encourage but manage risk

As stated above in the East the main activity revolved around developing a circuit for Open Mic nights, working with local pubs that had not previously put on performances. There is evidence of growing attendance at these, going from 30-40 average in year one to over 100 for some in year two. While the departure of the Arts Supporter limited the potential for this to develop into a sustainable circuit the Open Mic model has been adopted in Balby and Mexborough and it is hoped that some of the activity will be sustainable beyond RUOS.

There were differences of opinion about whether the events should buy in quality performers from outside Doncaster or keep to the principle of Open Mics being uncurated. The Arts Supporter in the East booked and paid for some professional acts from South Yorkshire to guarantee a level of quality on the night while also giving local artists something to aim for. This is a practice being continued in the new model as it was said there was evidence that the quality of artists wanting to perform developed significantly between years one and two. A combination of raising aspirations, and giving artists a showcase, in front of a local audience, where both they and the audience were more willing to take risks, because of a sense of shared ownership were said to be vital.

Key learning that quality of work by local artist and willingness of audiences to take risk, may increase over time, through repeated showcase opportunities.

The feedback on all A strand activity is based on peer assessment and audience responses. The most common words used to describe the programmes from audience feedback were “inspiration, great turn out, good for the community,

diversity of people and talent, bringing people together". What seemed to matter most to the audiences was that the Arts Supporters were bringing activity to people at a local level. However there were concerns within the RUOS team that enough was not being done to connect audiences to the town centre venues, including Cast. This was said to be a joint responsibility of all strands that was not being achieved.

A priority at the end of year 1 which remains for year 3 is to build crossovers between strands

D and N strand in contrast focussed more on drawing people into the town centre. As well as their professional commissions they jointly delivered masterclasses and workshop activity, providing opportunities for active participation. Activities include SCRIPTED writers' workshops which attracted a range of participants from published writers to complete newcomers. This led to over 60 submissions for the first script slam in year one, shortlisted into 6 rehearsed play readings performed to over 80 people. This not only developed and showcased artistic talent, but also began the process of building an audience for new writing which it is hoped will lead to a new writing festival post RUOS. Feedback praised the high quality of scripts developed and the "latent talent" that this uncovered in the town.

The N strand also developed the DNweekeND in response to a perceived need for local individual artists of all art forms, professional and amateur, to have a showcase for their work. They were "struggling with the project management side of things, just drumming up awareness, which made me think that we needed a vehicle for a lot of activities....a critical mass". This offered a festival experience in the town centre over a weekend in summer 2014 (with a second planned for summer 2015), with outdoor stages, art in empty shops and street animation.

For the first event peer observations suggested that it was varied in quality and in its ability to engage with the large numbers who attended. The Creative Producer also felt that it was too spread out to achieve the critical mass aimed for. 8000 participations were recorded through tally sheets in venues, and headcounts at stages. It is recognised that as people were moving between venues and stages the actual numbers of individuals may have been much less (one estimate placed it at closer to 4000). However in either case the event clearly reached large numbers but due to reliance on headcounts, it is not possible to determine what percentage were new to the arts and many were regular arts attenders.

Everyone felt that this provided an invaluable starting point from which to organise a repeat event in 2015, which would focus on improving quality by pushing the artistic ambition of those presenting. The planned programme for the next DN weekend therefore includes tighter curation of who is taking part, clearer zoning of activity in a more focussed town centre and some high impact professional work, including No Fit State Circus to create a wow effect. This will be reviewed in the final evaluation but it is planned that, subject to funding, this will become an annual feature in Doncaster's calendar.

Key learning that Town Centre events can provide showcase opportunities for local artists and engage large numbers, but care is needed to ensure a continuity of quality experience throughout

The first production for D strand was always contingent on the opening of Cast the venue. The Glee Club was presented in September 2013 as part of their opening weekend. But community engagement started even before the venue opened, with 5 community participants being recruited to perform alongside the professional company of 6 actors. In addition CAST OF THOUSANDS, a free outdoor launch event produced by Slung Low, took place before the first performance of The Glee Club and engaged further community performers as well as a range of artists who performed. In addition a series of artworks were created mapping the key routes into the town and to the public square outside Cast. The second production, KES was presented in September 2014, with a community team of 35 with the show starting outside and taking audiences into the main theatre. The principle of a community ensemble, set out in D strand was followed through into Cast's Christmas panto embedding the practice of the ensemble in the venue's day to day practice.

The outdoor launch event and the weekend open house were key in making the venue a visible entity and created a celebratory feel which created good publicity and a sense of ownership from the community invited to a free event.

Cast also provided outreach activity in the form of performances of the songs from The Glee Club in community venues, workshops for Kes in local schools and workshops for Dance Hall in community settings, as part of the research and development strands of the work. It was acknowledged that attendance, apart from Rossington, in the tour of The Glee Club was disappointing, but workshops were more popular. It is unclear whether this is to do with the timing of activities (the tour of The Glee Club was before the community teams were established) or because of the nature of the activity.

There was a perception in early consultation that town centre activity only attracts those already engaged in the arts. However both N and D strand did exceed their targets of reaching those not already engaged (58% for N strand and 48% for D strand). While this is considerably lower than for work in the community (77%) this **demonstrates the value of outdoor arts in breaking down barriers to attendance.**

In terms of the reception to the work in D strand, feedback was gained from local community participants, regular arts audiences via social media and local and national press reviews. It was clear from responses that many local people enjoyed both productions at Cast. Community members, who had never been to the theatre before, reported having a good experience, being welcomed by the venue and enjoying the play on stage. Common words were "inspiring, entertaining, exciting, and accessible". Members of the community ensemble described the experience as inspirational and life changing with one saying "this is a company that treasures every individual and it shines through everything they do". On line there was much excitement from arts enthusiasts both within Doncaster and elsewhere in Yorkshire for work that told Yorkshire stories in a fresh and dynamic way, with references to the importance of the local stories, accents and context. "Fantastic" was a commonly used word.

National press coverage however was more mixed with reviews rating the work 3 to 5 stars. While praising the work for its northern sensibilities and ensemble style “speaking direct to the audience”, the Guardian also criticised KES as “not the most theatrically innovative staging”. This may merely demonstrate differences of taste, and therefore the difficulty in assessing quality for any work, but it may also demonstrate the difference between a local, regional and national perspective. What’s on Stage describe the “genuine sense of community” as both “the production’s strength, but also its limitation”. As the venue’s ambition is to not only engage audiences from Doncaster but also from elsewhere the **balance between accessibility and innovation remains a challenge.**

The N strand commissions were originally conceived to have been programmed within the RUOS team, recruiting freelance producers on an ad-hoc basis to support the programme as it was commissioned. The first two commissions aimed to raise awareness of RUOS at the start of the programme.

Right on Our Radio, worked with Sine FM/Higher Rhythm, to deliver a regular arts programme on the local community radio. The radio station suggested that nearly 19,000 people tuned in although this is not counted in the participations above as it has been impossible to test the robustness of this data. But the station struggled to recruit community volunteers to present the show. After a first year of weekly programmes the creation of a new post of Creative Producer within RUOS allowed for a renewed effort to recruit volunteer reports and presenters to support a refined monthly review programme. This approach was trialed for six months. However SINE FM continued to struggle to retain volunteers and the creative results were said to be variable so it was decided not to continue with the project, although Higher Rhythm had been commissioned simultaneously to do another project called Music Bomb which completed.

On the basis of the potential this offered to reach a wider audience, and as one of three of Doncaster’s regularly funded Arts Council clients, it will be important to undertake a review in year three about why this project was not successful and whether Music Bomb was better able to achieve the aims of increasing collaboration between Doncaster’s main arts organisations

Bradford based artists Steve Manthorp and Shanaz Gulzar of ADEPT were also commissioned early in the programme to create The Big Rumour, an interactive game to engage local people and spread the word about the programme. This had aimed to raise awareness of the programme although its target was only to directly engage 400 people. In the end it involved 65 participants and reached about 500 people. In terms of quality the artists acknowledged that they struggled to determine how much artistic control to maintain and how much to give away to the community through the creative process. Peer review suggested that as a result both the art and engagement were affected detrimentally. Despite concerns however some of the participants involved in it have gone on to form a new theatre company and applied for Grants for the Arts.

A key learning is that artists working in community contexts need to be confident in understanding participants starting points but also in pushing artistic boundaries.

Both these commissions were also said to be costly, financially, due to the need to hand over all management costs to the deliverers. A review of the structure for N strand in the light of capacity within the consortium led to the creation of the post of Creative Producer half way through year one. This allowed for a larger number of small commissions. These included a similar mix of success and challenges.

Unpacking a Potted History involved 2 ceramic artists setting up a market stall from which they ran workshops and did demonstrations of their work. This engaged passers-by and the artists became high profile in Mexborough. The project was extended in year two, with the artists developing an “art car” which could tour the activities around Doncaster.

In contrast Poet Street was devised as a creative writing project, where a writer planned to collect stories from 4 specific streets in Mexborough named after famous poets. Despite door to door leafleting of every house in the area there was no take up from residents. While the artist was said to be very experienced and therefore surprised by the hostility he met with in the community, he accepted that the concept had been flawed and felt he learnt valuable lessons from the project. Instead of adapting his working method the artist decided to stop the project. The Arts Supporter for the community however felt that there had been an opportunity to change the concept half way through but the artist was resistant and he therefore felt that this was a missed opportunity for the area - and caused some disappointment. It was also argued that doing a similar activity now, when the Arts Supporter has been active in the area may have had different outcomes.

In response to the early commissions the Creative Producer recognised the need for more intervention not just with community members but with artists to ensure excellence in delivery.

As a result he took on the role of providing artistic mentoring and support where needed. An Inspiration programme was developed, to provide workshops and masterclasses for local artists. For unsuccessful applicants surgeries were also provided to ensure that they had the opportunity to build their capacity to reapply in future. It is believed that this has played a crucial role in raising artistic ambition and community engagement as well as reducing resentment from artists not selected.

In year two commissions included Aspirations, a photography project which captured 1200 portraits of local people and through conversations with the subjects investigating local aspirations. The work was exhibited in the gallery at the Point and over 1200 people came to see it. It was also used as a test-bed for alternative exhibition sites: resulting in the pilot use of Advertising billboards in Doncaster town centre and building site hoardings in the Civic redevelopment area of town. The artist was also encouraged by the Creative Producer to identify national exhibition opportunities for Aspirations – and this resulted in offers to show the work in Cambridge and Glasgow.

Work offered on a smaller more intimate scale includes Two Pints of Lager and a Piece of Contemporary Dance, which toured 2 dancers around 16 of Doncaster’s pubs and working men’s clubs. A truly pop up performance, pub goers were not

informed what was about to happen until it started before them. The artists then chatted to the audience afterwards and encouraged them to feedback their responses on beer mats. Whilst most said it was not something they would normally go and see the responses showed a high level of engagement in the work. This provides further evidence of the value of using venues that people are familiar with in reaching those who would not normally engage in the arts.

As the artists are not from Doncaster and the event was a pop up both the artists and the Creative Producer acknowledged that it was important to explore the legacy of the work. There are therefore discussions taking place about working with the artists again in year 3 and some of the pub landlords have asked for further involvement in RUOS.

Feedback on most of these commissions was based on self-assessment or peer observation. There was little feedback from participants beyond satisfaction surveys. These suggest that people at the event enjoyed their experiences and wanted more. There was also a shared sense that the work took risks and pushed artistic ambition in the town, while also reaching new audiences.

Across all 3 strands therefore this report finds that the programme activity was varied, pushing boundaries in many cases while remaining accessible. Overall the programme is exceeding targets on the number of people involved and those not previously engaged in the arts. This suggests that the aspirations for excellence and the targets for engagement have been achieved.

Is there a stronger, more confident, more collaborative artistic community, including voluntary arts, living and working in Doncaster?

The audit of artists in the town, mentioned above presents a benchmark for the type and range of activity that predated RUOS. This identified that there were a range of groups including 28 music, 24 arts and craft, 18 dance, 11 theatre, 5 film or photography, and 4 literature groups active in Doncaster. This supported the case for D and N to build on “latent talent” and develop the artistic community in Doncaster. Networking events and workshops, for local artists, have encouraged collaboration. They have also built the artistic and management skills of those participating. In addition the town’s venues, including those run by the consortium (Cast, the Point and the Museum and Art Gallery) say that audiences have developed for their activities. Although with Cast, as a new entity it is difficult to ascertain how much the growth in attendances is a natural development as the venue becomes more established or a direct result of RUOS activity.

Doncopolitan, the new arts magazine for Doncaster was also said to have played a role in strengthening the arts scene. Each of the 8 editions in the first two years has provided a place to share information within the artistic community and arts attenders. In year 3 a review is planned to consider the impact this has had on the arts scene in Doncaster.

In year one the first round of Open Call commissions were restricted to local artists,

to build local capacity and ensure that the wider artistic community, beyond the consortium, felt involved in RUOS. It was said that this “gave the community a sense of ownership [and] helped in the marketing of the events”. At the same time Cast in particular identified gaps in the traditional arts infrastructure (e.g. there were limited technical and production based crew available locally, no costume supervisors, wardrobe staff or dressers and little or no understanding of what these roles were. Hence difficulty in finding people in the town to employ in the first production). They also argued that a lack of ambition meant it was important to develop new relationships with artists outside of Doncaster. In year one therefore they brought together a professional production team from outside of town to work on The Glee Club and commissioned the Yorkshire based Slung Low, to develop CAST OF THOUSANDS. Following consultation with the consortium and the community teams, the Open Call for year two commissions was extended to artists outside Doncaster. Half of those commissioned came from the town and half were new to Doncaster.

In addition, as stated earlier, applications for the Open Call commissions rose considerably, from artists, both based in and outside Doncaster, between years one and two and Cast said there was an increase in interest from artists wanting to perform in Doncaster. While this is clearly also attributable to the year round programme of work at Cast, it was argued that RUOS had contributed to the venue’s national profile.

The Arts Supporters for A strand also reported an increase in requests from local artists who they hadn’t previously heard of. This was attributed to raising awareness of showcase opportunities (particularly for visual artists) in cafes and community venues. The community commissions also provided opportunities for collaboration with artists from elsewhere, such as Jason Singh working with community in Rossington, or Ivan Liotchev, a large scale visual artist working in Balby and Bentley.

This demonstrates RUOS’ success in increasing the number of artists working in Doncaster.

Within the community bases ***there has also been increase in voluntary arts***: with five new voluntary arts organisations having formed in the town (Mex Craft, Ted Hughes Project, Cosy Cinema , Write On Mexborough, Upcycling Balby). All are meeting regularly and sustainable without RUOS’ input, through active facilitation by community members. This has been made possible through opportunities for community members to visit other amateur groups (e.g. Rossington Revamp and Reuse went to visit Mexcraft) and shadow the Arts Supporters leading workshops over the two years to date.

There has however been limited involvement from the pre-existing voluntary arts sector, despite them being a member of the consortium. Some saw this as a failing of the programme, to maximise engagement from a group with an existing commitment to the arts. Others felt there was a lack of willingness on the part of voluntary arts groups to try something new. Many were described as closed groups who neither wanted nor needed to broaden what they did. However as a key component of the artistic community in the town ***new dedicated research on the***

difficulty of engaging the voluntary arts sector is planned in year 3 to explore how they may be strengthened and encouraged to collaborate.

Lack of collaboration between the three strands in RUOS was a key challenge identified in the year one review of the programme. While everyone felt this had improved in year two there was still a sense that there was a lack of shared values and working methods were too disparate for fuller collaboration. Some argued that this was the result of the way the Doncaster consortium was formed, in response to the availability of a pot of money through CP&P rather than from a pre-existing desire to collaborate or a shared vision. This is in line with preliminary findings from governance research being conducted as part of the national evaluation of CP&P. The physical proximity of A and N strand, both based at the Point and line-managed by the same person meant there was weekly contact between them which led to more shared values and working methods. But there was limited evidence of increased collaboration between members of the consortium outside of meetings.

Parts of the cultural infrastructure not represented on the consortium, such as the Museum and Art Gallery and Higher Rhythm had some engagement with the programme through specific commissions of work, but there was no evidence that this was developing longer term collaborations. Indeed there were some concerns that the failure of the Sine FN initiative with Higher Rhythm may have made collaboration even less likely because the different organisations have discovered such different working practice and drives.

If RUOS is to meet its aspiration to create a better connected arts infrastructure in Doncaster it is a priority in year three to explore how learning from RUOS can be embedded more widely across the arts in the town

There was however significant collaboration with non-arts venues, such as libraries and communities venues. This has been a ***demonstrable success in building new audiences for the arts and supporting a fragile community infrastructure.*** This provides a potential low cost mechanism to support a sustainable stronger arts community. An application for a second phase of RUOS is planned to develop this further potentially as an urban touring fringe.

This evidence above supports the claims in the original business plan that there was already art happening in Doncaster but that much of this was “untapped talent, untold stories and creative potential which if only nurtured and given a platform and spaces to shine could lead the whole town towards a more vibrant and exciting future”. ***RUOS is successfully raising the profile and capacity of this work, the challenge is to ensure it sustained.***

Objective 3 - Increase awareness of the arts in Doncaster

The findings above demonstrate RUOS’ successes to date in relation to **excellence of art and engagement**, in building the capacity of local residents and the artistic community. It also reported on achievements against targets to get **more people to engage with the arts**. However in order to fully address the aspiration to get **more people inspired by the arts** across the whole of Doncaster a key objective is to raise awareness of the arts more broadly. Success of this is measured against the

programmes ability to:

- become established as a “trusted friend” by providing a gateway to the arts where more people access information
- create a dynamic flow of activity and information between the centre of town and outlying communities
- generate improved good news stories about the arts in Doncaster in different media

As the aim of RUOS itself was to increase participation it was acknowledged that “the whole programme is about raising awareness” whether that’s the Arts Supporters building awareness locally or Cast as a new venue making its mark, or N strand putting on pop up events. At the same time the key to delivering against this objective was the development of a marketing strategy that would be delivered across all three strands, rather than as a separate strategy for each, while also ensuring that all activities had their own discrete marketing plans in order to reach the target audiences specific to each programme.

Is RUOS established as a “trusted friend” providing a gateway into the arts where more people access information?

The RUOS website was set up in year one to house information on all RUOS activity. The intention was that, over time, it would become a self-sustaining site that would house information about all arts activities in Doncaster, including work by non-consortium members and the voluntary arts sector. With only one full time marketing member of staff and one temporary intern, this was reliant on RUOS staff and other arts organisations being proactive in developing and uploading content for the website. However delays in the recruitment of the marketing team was said to hamper the delivery of content for the website in year one.

As a result in year one there were concerns that the website did not offer a dynamic and changing interface that would attract people to visit it again and again, as the What’s On Guide that had been planned. There was also no evidence by the end of year two of a proactive approach to getting other arts providers to upload their data, although the content from within RUOS was said to have greatly improved. There were also differences of opinion about how effective the website design was. While the marketing team described it as a user friendly interface for the public trying to source information, others felt it lacked interactivity, including the capacity for the public themselves to upload information and reviews, as is increasingly common for consumer facing websites and is part of the ethos of RUOS. As such many felt that the websites effectiveness as a “gateway” is limited so far. Despite this to date 19,680 individuals have viewed the website, with 95,569 page hits. Development work will take place on the website in year 3.

This does suggest that despite any limitations there is strong awareness of the website.

In addition to the website a range of other traditional marketing tools were used including postcards, to develop a mailing list, from which people would be kept

informed of arts activities in Doncaster. The success of “barterers” in the free art giveaway in Bentley and Mexbrough, in return for the person signing up to the mailing list inspired similar in other areas; a stick of rock for Balby By The Sea, a bag of popcorn for cinema, a space ship and science fact for Fun Place. As a result 7,500 people had signed up to the mailing list by the end of year 2. This represents an almost fourfold increase on the 2,000 names previously on the Say Yes to Art website but this still only represents 5% of the total population of the town.

While the mailing list shows increasing interest in the arts in Doncaster more work is needed to increase numbers further.

There were also plans to do “low cost print run to distribute round town, banners to put up at other events, book marks to put in school bags” to raise awareness of the brand. But only the banners materialised. Generic leaflets were replaced with individual print for specific events. There were differences of opinion about this. While most delivers felt this was effective in increasing audiences at their events, some people felt this limited the strategic marketing potential of RUOS in creating the one stop shop for the arts which would outlive the programme.

The intention was that a monthly e-newsletter would be collated and distributed to the list, with information about the full range of arts activities on offer in Doncaster. As with the website this relied on content being supplied by those delivering work, which was not easily achieved in year one. There were therefore concerns that people might lose interest if newsletters were sent without a sufficiently exciting menu of opportunities. But it was equally feared that failure to send regular newsletters as promised might demotivate those who had chosen to sign up. In year 2 the restructure of the marketing team allowed for greater focus on the newsletter which along with the increased activity led to greater success in generating interesting content. Twelve (monthly) newsletters were therefore sent to the whole mailing list and 31 e-flyers went to segmentations of the mailing list in year 2. There has also been phone box and outdoor advertising, including displaying artworks on billboards to grab passers-by and RUOS sponsored a beer at the Doncaster Beer Festival to increase general awareness of the project.

RUOS also planned to have an active social media presence, but by year two there were differences of opinion about how effective this was being. While some felt that social media was working, others said the broader RUOS social media presence was limited. More discrete marketing by individual strands, with each member of staff taking responsibility for sharing information about their own activities, through their own accounts proved much more effective – supplemented by occasional postings from the RUOS account. While social media provides a useful tool to gather feedback both for the programme and this evaluation it was felt by some that social media only engaged those already engaged in the arts.

Some Arts Supporters questioned the focus on both the newsletter and social media, claiming that about half of the people signing up for the mailing list did not even have email addresses let alone social media accounts.

There were also differences of opinion about the extent to which the marketing strategy should focus on creating a recognisable and sustainable RUOS brand and

to what extent the focus should be on increasing participation in individual activities, regardless of whether people knew what they were engaging in. Dedicated marketing per strand was often seen to be more effective in achieving numbers and became an increasing focus in year two, with the marketing team restructured accordingly. This resulted in more promotion of individual activities and creative marketing tools as described below. However there were concerns that this may be less effective in delivering a sustainable legacy.

In Balby public involvement in mass participation activities was used to promote activities. In year one, awareness of the programme was increased through the large scale installation of 200 poppies created by the community, outside Balby Library and in year two 25 five foot tall ice creams were laser cut and handed out to groups to decorate and 1000 canvas bags were printed with details of the big summer event, Balby by Sea. In this way the community would publicize the event every time they used the bag. Anecdotally it was said that this had already built momentum and “virtually anyone you speak to in Balby has heard of Balby by the Sea”. The impact this has on attendance will be reviewed in year 3.

In Rossington awareness of the programme was initially raised through Paper Bag Man, a character dressed in a paper bag who roamed the streets making people stop and stare. This was used as the starting point for a conversation about art and there was clear evidence of discussion about it on social media. Handmade banners were also designed and displayed locally to raise awareness of specific activities.

In Mexborough (followed by Bentley) a “free art collective” was set up, which exchanged a piece of art for a conversation about the arts. The aim was to build relationships with people that would encourage participation. This resulted in some conversations with people who had not been reached through other means, such as homeless people. In Mexborough the Arts Supporter has used themed characters to promote the outdoor cinema event, sending volunteers in costume into the town centre and encouraging people to have a selfie with the character. There were also large letters made spelling Mexborough in the style of the Hollywood sign and placed in the town centre. Again people were keen to have photographs with them which were shared on social media, promoting the event.

In the East the community team went door to door to spread word of mouth about activities, and as highlighted above N and D strand used open air interventions and outreach workshops to promote activity over and above the more traditional marketing routes.

In all cases these activities provided a higher profile for the arts activity. While it is hard to assess a direct correlation between these activities and the rates of participation it was acknowledged that walk up bookings for ticketed events is “like nothing I have ever encountered...but the offer has got to be right and the message has to be clear, simple and appealing”. Traditional marketing was therefore considered to be less effective in Doncaster.

The aim to build an arts gateway for Doncaster has therefore been successful in part, with a website and mailing list established but the need for bespoke tools to engage with new audiences has also been highlighted.

Is there dynamic flow between the centre of Doncaster and outlying communities?

The range of activity across all three strands demonstrates a commitment to creating activity both in the town centre and periphery. This has clearly had an impact both in terms of visibility of the arts, active participation in creative activity and audience engagement.

There is evidence of active engagement in the arts, on the streets and in non-arts venues within communities. The programme has also left a legacy of pieces of permanent public art, such as the Wishes Mural in Bentley and a more sustainable community infrastructure such as Balby Library and the Concertina Club in Mexborough.

Increased knowledge about the various communities across the town was seen as a key success. It was also believed that this was crucial to the long term development of the arts offer for Doncaster. Although there remain concerns that the programme has not fully exploited opportunities for crossover between strands or collaborations between arts providers, beyond the life of the project, there is also evidence that there has been increased engagement in the established arts venues in the town centre, with a number of venues reporting increased attendance.

Some successful crossover activities have also been noted. N strand commissions have taken place both in the centre and within communities. These include The Shed and Art Car which provide pop up arts venues that can tour to anywhere in the borough. The Rossington Quilt was created in the community but has since toured to Cast, the art gallery and the local hospital. Rationale were resident at Cast but also performed at Bentley Bonanza and in Rossington. Spiltmilk devised a show in Bentley and then took it on to Thorne. Cast undertook research in Bentley to inform their new production of DANCEHALL to be staged in year 3. "meeting on their home-turf first and taking the whole acting company...we were able to grow a relationship", but there was disappointment from those at Cast that this had not happened in the other communities.

Familiarity is a key concept underpinning much of the work delivered through RUOS, from Cast choosing to tell local stories, to the use of everyday arts and crafts activities to hook people in, in community settings, to the use of public houses and public spaces as a venue for new commissions. There was consensus across the team that working in this way had not compromised artistic quality. ***It gave artists and audiences the confidence to take risk and add an unusual twist to the familiar***

Are there improved good news stories about the arts in Doncaster in different media?

As highlighted throughout this report, feedback throughout the first two years of the programme has been overwhelmingly positive, both from community reviews and

post show feedback. This has included informal conversations with audiences, satisfaction surveys on the back of beer mats and luggage tags, themed in line with activities, as well as through unsolicited comments on social media. These include repeated references from people engaging in the arts for the first time and praise for new activity. As one person said “I spent 15 years living [here] nice to see someone adding to the area”. **Many people also said that RUOS had created a buzz;** “I talk about it, my customers talk about it, my son’s friends talk about it, it’s positive news to print in the local newspaper or chat on the local radio, even quizzed at the local market about it”.

Despite funding for the Sine FM arts programme stopping they have continued to feature RUOS projects occasionally on its regular programmes although there were some frustrations that they did not do more. Likewise although Doncaster Free Press were seen as negative about RUOS in year one the marketing team have now negotiated a monthly column with the Star and a less regular slot in the Free Press.

Although RUOS does not have a media monitoring programme in place to capture all of the press coverage it was felt that generally the local press in both print and broadcast are supportive and cover what is sent to them. Local BBC coverage in particular was said to be improving.

The Creative Producer explained how “I have quotes that people put in the Doncaster Free Press when we announced the project. I take great joy showing the before and after” as they are now so positive. Cast also said that despite some bad press before they opened, about the cost of the new building, this had been quickly dispersed. This in part was attributed to good community relations. Cast cited “a woman [who] came in to complain before we opened, we persuaded her to reserve judgement and encouraged her to actively participate and get involved with the opening events and she became part of the community choir and eventually ended being part of the community ensemble in Kes. She’s now a regular attender and one of our biggest supporters”.

The creation of Doncopolitan, as an arts magazine for the town has also ensured the regular provision of new stories about the arts in Doncaster. As it becomes established it is hoped that this could feed other media to raise the profile of the arts in Doncaster.

Perhaps unsurprisingly only the main house productions at Cast have been able to attract national press. While this was not considered an issue in terms of increasing participation within Doncaster, this was seen as a challenge in terms of raising the profile of RUOS externally to inform advocacy about the need for investment in the town.

Furthermore while feedback has been positive, as identified in the methodology the range of feedback used for this report was limited. A priority for year three is to collect a wider range of voices to inform the final report

Objective 4: Leave a legacy for 2016-2023

Objective 1-3 demonstrate what RUOS has achieved in the first two years but it is important to note that this represents only 2 years of a 3 year funded programme, which has a ten year ambition for the arts. Legacy is therefore at the core of the programme. To assess its success in this area the programme aimed to measure

- significant increases in the number of people taking part in arts activities in Doncaster at the end of the project.
- Whether work developed in 2013-2016 is sustained beyond the life of the project
- And finally if there is maintained or increased investment in the arts in Doncaster

To fully address the achievements against this objective therefore clearly requires a longitudinal study of the programme. All that can be attempted in this interim report is to review some of the short terms strategies that have been employed to increase the chances of new activities and increased rates of participation being sustained.

A key issue throughout the programme has been the need find a balance between building local capacity against bringing in work from elsewhere to inspire. While a number of touring shows were pitched for commissions to N strand, the Creative Producer took the decision, in consultation with the consortium and community teams, that all work should provide something developmental for Doncaster. No Fit State Circus for example brought their touring show but also supported 8 workshops in the community and 4 performances at DNweekeND.

A range of professional development opportunities were also developed for local artists, from creative skills workshops to mentoring programmes, to business development. This has already resulted in some successes of artists aiming to sustain activity beyond RUOS. The spin off from Adept in year one, Rhea Productions have been featured in Scripted and are applying for grants for the arts funding from the Arts Council. Doncopolitan also plans a grant for the arts bid.

The capacity of a number of members of the community teams have also grown, with individuals developing into not only active creative champions, but confident programmers and facilitators of work in the areas.

Community infrastructure has also been supported, both within community settings where libraries, cafes, pubs and community centres have all been venues for arts activities, and in the town centre where shopping centres and public squares have also been used. This has the potential as a sustainable resource, with the arts animating these spaces and them providing support for the arts. Discussions are already underway with Frenchgate and Waterdale shopping centres to sponsor arts activity in the town, such as the DNweekeND and there is an interest from them in commissioning new public art works. For the forthcoming DNweekeND Waterdale commissioned the restoration and installation of The Lovers statue – unseen in Doncaster since the 1980s and the Frenchgate Centre has dedicated a large atrium space to displaying visual art from local artists and is commissioning an arts piano. In year 3 a number of local activities are also investigating opportunities of sponsorship from more local businesses.

In response to the successes in developing community programmers and venues, alongside a policy shift in DCLT towards more multi-use community and leisure spaces, a phase two CP&P application for RUOS is currently being made to the Arts Council to maintain and develop the role of the community programmers and venues.

Time will tell if this application is successful but it is encouraging to see that Cast has already been successful in generating increased investment from the Arts Council in the last review of regularly funded organisations, despite their need to cut the overall budget nationally. This may indicate a commitment to increased funding in Doncaster. It is believed that the success of the programme demonstrates the value of ongoing investment.

A key priority in year three is to evaluate how all of this will be sustained beyond 2016.

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