Creative Lives On Air

(formerly Up for Arts)

National Roll-Out Evaluation Phase Two Report

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NEA
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BBC RADIO   Creative Lives

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Front cover image: Ann Nicholls - 'Embrace'
for New Beginnings - an Exhibition by the People of East Anglia

1. Introduction

This report outlines the ongoing progress of a long-term public creative engagement project supported by the BBC and delivered by Creative Lives (formerly Voluntary Arts). The project, which is primarily funded by Oak Foundation until March 2023, is a partnership between BBC local radio stations and BBC Wales, and Creative Lives, a registered charitable organisation that champions community and volunteer-led creative activity across the UK.

The report follows a review of literature and an evaluation of the first phase of the national roll-out of the project between January 2018 and April 2020.[1] The literature review established the relevant policy context and set out a logic model highlighting the impact of local radio-linked creative engagement on the health and wellbeing of older people. It was published in a summary version in Public Health,[2] a journal of the Royal Society for Public Health. The first phase evaluation demonstrated consistently positive effects on the wellbeing of participants, pointed to the case for engagement in creativity to be seen as part of healthy living and healthy ageing, and highlighted strengths and challenges relating to strategic and logistical operations.

1.1 Origins

The project's pilot initiative began at BBC Radio Merseyside in 2009 under the brand Up for Arts (UfA). It was conceived as a means of extending public participation in the arts in the aftermath of the Liverpool's year as European Capital of Culture in 2008. It then developed organically through a partnership between Voluntary Arts and a group of BBC local radio stations in the North of England, acting as an innovative way of linking local radio broadcasting to increasing levels of public engagement in the creative arts. From 2017 onwards, with support from Oak Foundation, a strategic move was made to extend the UfA approach across a wider range of BBC local radio stations around the UK.

The goal envisioned for the project was to:

... enact 'social action', by bringing together local community networks, new and established creative groups and local agencies through the medium of the BBC. It aims to provide novel services in hard-to-reach communities and 'cold spot' locations, where numbers active in the arts are relatively low, to ensure that key messages are amplified and creative engagement is enhanced.[1]

BBC local radio was a natural partner for this project because of its public service ethos and its unparalleled reach into people's homes. As Terry Goodwin, Acting Executive Editor BBC CWR, puts it:

The BBC is in a unique position, telling stories of people who live right here, and local radio has a unique relationship with its audience. We're close to where people live, and listeners have a very personal relationship with our presenters and shows. A significant proportion of our local radio audiences don't use any other BBC services, so it's important we make relevant content for these listeners and showcase stories from our local areas on a national scale. Working with Creative Lives enables us to reach further into these communities, celebrating their creativity and discover new voices.

According to published BBC data:
- BBC Local Radio reaches 15.5 per cent of adults in England (6.7 million)
- 2.3 million people tune into BBC Local Radio, but no other BBC station (34% of listeners)

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[1] www.artshealthresources.org.uk/docs/voluntary-arts-and-bbc-local-radio-up-for-arts-national-roll-out-evaluation-phase-one-report/

[2] www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0033350621002250

- BBC Local Radio plays an important role in reaching 1.1 million listeners who consume no other radio at all (16% of listeners)
- 47% of BBC Local Radio listeners are from demographic groups C2DE.[3]

Both the pilot / development stage and Phase One of the national roll-out involved an expanding network of BBC local radio stations, each hosting an UfA Producer.

The remit of the Producers was to stimulate creative engagement among individuals and local community groups, and to produce on-air content for broadcast, while addressing the following organisational priorities:
- Building strong connections and relationships to support participation in creative cultural activity;
- Demonstrating how taking part in creative cultural activity improves social connectedness;
- Opening up more public spaces for creative cultural activity.

By the end of Phase One of the national roll-out in April 2020, ten BBC local radio stations had taken part in the Up for Arts project: BBC Radio Merseyside; BBC Radio Lancashire; BBC Radio York; BBC Radio Cumbria; BBC Radio Stoke; BBC Radio London; BBC Radio Humberside; BBC Radio Devon; BBC Coventry and Warwickshire Radio (CWR); and BBC Radio Leeds. In addition, BBC Radio Wales / BBC Radio Cymru joined the project under the brand Get Creative. Following on a positive evaluation, the project moved into a second phase of national roll-out in April 2020.

1.2 Change of Identity

In the summer of 2021, for its 30th anniversary, and against the backdrop of the ongoing pandemic, Voluntary Arts launched a new visual identity and changed its name to Creative Lives. This change reaffirmed the organisation's 'strong commitment to championing creativity in everyday lives' and its aspiration to 'better respond to the cultural and creative sector's needs and trends.'[4]

Fig 1. Creative Lives' Phased Approach diagram

The change has brought with it an extension of services for creative groups across the UK and the Republic of Ireland, including a new format for creative network conversations, a new system for peer-learning and professional advice, and the continued development of the Up for Arts project, under the new name **Creative Lives On Air** (CLOA), which became more closely integrated into the day-to-day working of the charity.[5]

1.3 Moving Forward

NEA's independent evaluations of Phase One of the project's national roll-out highlighted health and wellbeing benefits for individual participants, particularly older people, and wider social benefits including enhanced civic pride, community cohesion and social capital. These outcomes and impacts were captured in a Logic Model. The principal anticipated goal of the Phase Two evaluation was to further test and develop the Logic Model as the roll-out proceeded.

[3] www.bbc.co.uk/commissioning/radio/local-radio/

[4] www.creative-lives.org/news/voluntary-arts-is-now-creative-lives

[5] www.creative-lives.org

In the event, at the outset of Phase Two the COVID-19 pandemic took hold, and led to lockdowns which severely curtailed public gatherings, and resulted in a significant recasting of the project. As part of this recasting, the target demographic for the project shifted from older people to all ages. This shift reflects:

- The impact of the pandemic, and particularly the increased relevance of activities in the home and the natural environment to the general population;
- A widening of the target audience for BBC local radio and an increasing emphasis on new audiences not engaged by current provision;
- The rising prominence of UK policies that promote health and wellbeing across the entire life course, with the aim of minimising the risks of ill health in older age by setting a pattern of healthy living from birth onwards;[6]
- The imperative for local operational models to evolve in response to changing local circumstances and funding models, which mitigates against a single overarching approach across different locales.

In the light of these factors, and given the complexity and diversity of disparate CLOA models, the need for a fresh approach to the conceptualisation of the project is set out in Topic 9 (Evaluation Challenges).
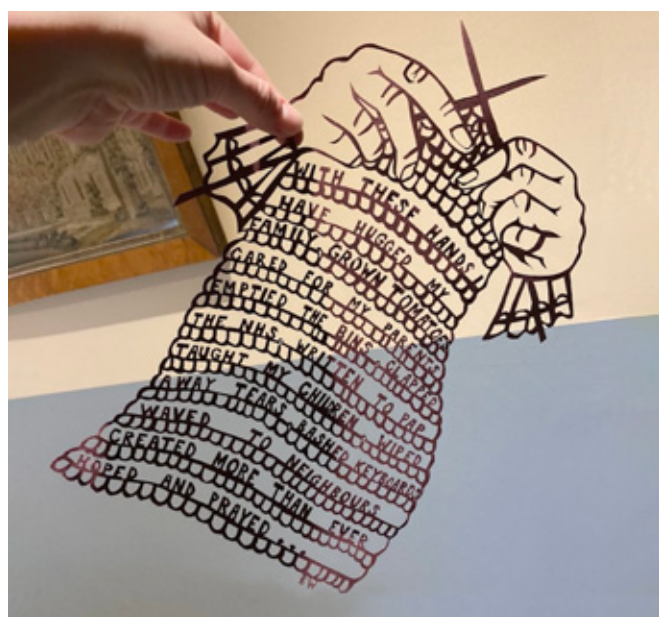
1.4 Evaluation Methods

This report considers CLOA activities from April 2020 to the end of March 2022. Radio stations taking part in the project during this Phase Two period were: BBC Radio Leeds, BBC Radio Cumbria, BBC CWR, BBC Radio Merseyside, BBC Radio Wales / BBC Radio Cymru, BBC Radio Lincolnshire, BBC Radio Sheffield, BBC Radio Devon, and BBC Radio Norfolk / BBC Radio Suffolk.

The evaluation tools employed were:
- scoping and analysis of relevant literature;
- fieldwork including face-to-face and online semi-structured interviews with CLOA and BBC personnel and stakeholders;
- attendance at CLOA events;
- thematic analysis of interviews and broadcast content.

The investigation revealed nine significant topics, each of which is illustrated by one or more case studies in the form of stories from the Phase Two CLOA areas.

The case studies represent a small sample of many projects and initiatives delivered by CLOA Producers and their colleagues and partners over the evaluation period.

Key findings in respect of each topic are discussed, and observations are made, including suggestions for future action.

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[6] www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-matters-life-course-approach-to-prevention/health-matters-prevention-a-life-course-approach

2. CLOA Phase Two Findings
- Nine Topics and 15 Case Studies

Topic 1. Stories of Change

> *'The brain is hard-wired to process stories in a most fundamental way, indicating the evolutionary priority that storytelling has had in human development, and the importance it has in forging a future humanity.'* [7]

Stories and storytelling are central to human experience. They sustain communities by evoking emotion, making meaning of and validating histories, cultures, lived experiences, values, reason and knowledge, and they shape, frame and transform social norms.

The Stories of Change project (funded by the AHRC and Connected Communities), explains that stories:
> *'… offer a popular and engaging route into thinking about the past and present and imagining possible futures … stories, narratives and narration are concepts that everybody can gather around. History, digital storytelling, fictional narratives, and scenarios of the future all communicate different ideas about the consequences of change for everyday life, and explain different perspectives and attitudes towards change.'* [8]

All activities underpinned by CLOA centre on the telling of stories in the broadest sense. As media professionals, CLOA Producers are typically steeped in narrative journalism. They seek novel, interesting and insightful stories that emanate from grass-roots environments. When these stories are broadcast with integrity in the form of on-air content, the story-providers are given a voice with which to tell their truths publicly. This process is pivotal to all CLOA activities as people's stories are unearthed, creatively interpreted through sound and other media, and widely disseminated.

Case study 1. Holding Time

Holding Time is a multi-media, multi-channel project by visual artist Lisa Creagh, designed to overturn the cultural barriers to breastfeeding through storytelling, photography, video and animation. The project was conceived as a co-created group portrait, where mothers sat for photographic portraits and shared their breastfeeding journeys in interviews. Working with Rachel New, CLOA Producer at BBC CWR, mothers were then given the additional option to participate in a series of storytelling workshops aimed creating original works for on-air broadcast and live events.

Rachel New said:
> *'It's been really lovely and interesting working with these women who are desperate to tell their stories, where there's nowhere to share. They found a sort of kinship by getting together. I delivered a series of six workshops on story telling. The cohort from Coventry weren't a creative group but they became a creative writing group. It's really difficult when you're breastfeeding babies and on Zoom. There's a stream of toddlers climbing over them and being fed biscuits and CBBC on in the background while they're writing haikus. So, it's been really great that they can take part.'*

www.youtube.com/c/holdingtime

Roz's story
> *'…I scoop you up to my breast. You knew what to do. I hold you closely, skin on skin, my eyes transfixed when you first latch on. As you were placed on my chest, I looked at you and I* **knew** *you. What a journey we'd been on to finally rest together. … You open your mouth to call for me in the only way you knew how. I looked into your eyes barely believing you were mine but at the same time knowing we could never be apart.'*

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[7] *Le Hunte B. & Golembiewski J. (2014) Stories have the power to save us: A neurological framework for the imperative to tell stories. Arts and Social Sciences Journal, 5,2: 731-4.*

[8] *https://storiesofchange.ac.uk/about*

Lily's story

A gentle ode to milk and motherhood this is not.
This is my call to arms.
My cry of war, my primal scream.
I have no appetite for gentleness
Because gentleness leaves me vulnerable and vulnerable leaves me weak.
And weakness has brought me to my knees too many times
Except with you.
Each feed time is an opportunity to clutch your little body to mine.
To feed you.

Full audio segment
www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/p09g27bg

The rest of Roz's, Lily's and other mothers' writings can be heard at
https://holdingtime.org/art_meets_health/coventry

Case study 2. An Unexpected Delivery

At BBC Radio Devon, CLOA Producer Abby Davies put out a call for everyday stories of lockdown. This elicited an outpouring of creative responses across the county. In partnership with artist Francisco Fonseca, people's lockdown stories were captured and broadcast before being archived on the People of Devon website alongside audio versions of the stories in the writers' own words, and a selection of images. See: https://peopleofdevonproject.com/

"The lockdown had started. Lou was very close. During the sweep the midwife had said that the baby would probably come during the weekend. We went home and had a pretty normal evening. I did a bit of gardening, had tea and went to bed. I'm not going to lie, I was a bit worried about not being able to attend the delivery because of this whole Covid thing. At around 12AM Lou nudged me, 'I'm having contractions …"

Full audio segment
https://youtu.be/8vzjSg9l36o

Top: Lisa Creagh - Hannah and Marlowe
Above: Andrew, barrel

Case study 3. Hidden Depths

CLOA Producer Jennifer Vernon Edwards interviewed photographer Laura Page on BBC Radio Sheffield, about her photography exhibition, Hidden Depths. The exhibition, which shows photographs of people aged between 60 and 100 and their associated stories, is part of a project that challenges negativity around the concept of ageing by exploring the theme of ageing well.

The idea for the exhibition grew as Page ran photographic projects in communities including with older people and people living with dementia. She was struck by their life stories and how much they continue to achieve and offer their communities. This contrasts with the common portrayal in the media of older people diminishing and declining.

Laura Page said:

'If we only ever see certain versions of ourselves, we start to buy into that story. We start saying, "We're too old for this and too old for that". So, I thought it would be nice to capture some older people and show the richness and depths of their lives and characters.'

Commenting on the stories behind the photographs, one exhibition visitor said:

'The ones that really appeal to me are where people have, at quite an old age, discovered something completely new that they're massively into and quite often it's something very, very challenging. They've got incredible zest for life basically. It's amazing to read the stories.'

Another said, *'I've found it absolutely inspirational. I'm going to go away and up my game!'*

The Hidden Depths project exemplifies the way that CLOA reflects the Creative Lives Phased Approach (see Fig 1).

Overall, the CLOA approach delivers all four domains under which all CL activities are conceptualised, with particular emphasis on Inspire and Enquiry, given the public engagement focus of the project.

Maria Fernanda Latif, 85 years
'I'm old but I'm still learning every day.'

From the age of 17, Maria has been making bold creations - jewellery, clothes, bags and sculptures, mostly from pieces she picks up at charity shops.

Analysis of the Hidden Depths project reveals that it addresses the four domains of the Phased Approach in the following ways:

Inspire: Inspiring older people to tell their stories creatively, and to see themselves more positively. Inspiring others to do the same and to change their behaviours for the better. Raising awareness of the value of older people by publicly sharing their achievements and positive life stories.

Enquire: Responding to the changing policy environment in respect of healthy ageing. Tackling negative portrayals of older people in the media and societal normalisation of decline in older age.

Support: Helping to engage older people in creative processes and providing them with a voice to tell their stories and challenge damaging concepts of ageing.

Champion: Working with Sheffield Hallam University's Lab4Living to help re-envision ageing and to inform policymakers.

Betsy Field, 82 years

Observation 1

Stories are an effective way of bringing about positive social change. They are at their most powerful when they are authentic, multi-modal and creative. CLOA is an exemplary storytelling platform as it unearths, frames and amplifies the experiences of many people whose voices would otherwise not be heard.

With its phased approach of inspire, enquire, support and champion, CL is well positioned to centralise the concept of Stories of Change in the planning, delivery and dissemination of CLOA and its other operations.

Topic 2. Navigating the Pandemic Lockdowns

"We have one thing in common: when crises like the COVID-19 pandemic occur, we often turn to creativity to help us grow, give back, and get distracted." [9]

The first Covid-19 pandemic lockdown in March 2020 brought considerable challenges to almost all public-facing services, and CLOA was no exception. The predominant challenge for CLOA was in dealing with restrictions in face-to-face meetings (affecting both project planning and group activities), which led to almost all local projects being postponed, cancelled, or substantially altered. Over time, some activities were transferred to online platforms such as Zoom and, in some cases, open-air spaces were used for events, but these options were limited and brought their own challenges.

Given the fundamental human contact aspect of many group creative activities, and the well-established links between connecting to others and mental wellbeing, the restrictions on social activities undoubtedly had, or threatened to have, a profoundly negative effect on many people. Alongside many public service and commercial providers, CLOA Producers worked hard to mitigate these difficulties by finding innovative ways of keeping people connected through being and becoming creative.

The recent report, *Boundless Creativity*,[10] which resulted from a partnership between the AHRC and DCMS, shows that the creative sector in many cases enjoyed a surge of interest in home-based cultural activities. It refers to:

'... the extraordinary ingenuity and imagination that have marked our cultural life during the pandemic … the pandemic has affirmed that engagement with culture makes for healthy and flourishing lives. New evidence is emerging of the buffering effects of creative and cultural activity on loneliness, anxiety and depression, including for the most vulnerable parts of the population.'

Speaking at the Launch of the Boundless Creativity initiative, Dame Mary Beard said:

'One day, we will look back to these dark and cloudy times as the moment when we really did harness technology to open up the best of what arts and culture have to offer on a wider and grander scale'.[11]

In the recommendations of the Boundless Creativity report, AHRC and DCMS commit themselves to identifying the local assets partnerships and delivery mechanisms best suited to a national roll-out of arts-and-culture-based policy to redress the health inequalities that have been amplified by the pandemic.

The *Culture During Covid* report, commissioned by Creative Lives[12] also highlighted positive factors that presented new opportunities and important learning that emerged during lockdown.

However, if, as The Audience Agency suggests in a recent report,[13] uptake of creative activities by disadvantaged groups remained disproportionately low during lockdown, the importance of extending creative engagement to the most vulnerable parts of the population is becoming increasingly significant in a public health context. This includes challenging the language of barriers to access (see Topic 5).

The following illustrative case studies show how two CLOA Producers harnessed the lack of opportunity to travel and the power of radio as an easy-access medium to draw people together in meaningful creative projects. The first shows how one Producer planned and activated a large-scale, multi-agency project during the pandemic restrictions. The second highlights a method of enabling collective creative output at a distance.

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[9] *COVID-19 Lockdown and Creativity: Exploring the Role of Emotions and Motivation on Creative Activities From the Chinese and German Perspectives* www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.617967/full

[10] www.gov.uk/government/publications/boundless-creativity-report/boundless-creativity-report

[11] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5uviT2MCnP0&ab_channel=ahrcpress

[12] www.creative-lives.org/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=57b3e4d8-9b03-45db-8d31-a33adf5874dd

[13] www.theaudienceagency.org/asset/2544

Case study 4. The Sound of Cov

As part of the Coventry City of Culture summer 2021 programme, Rachel New, CLOA Producer for BBC CWR, organised and managed a collaborative programme, The Sound of Cov On Air, which involved eight community radio stations. Through online meetings via Zoom she developed the necessary network, delivered training for the community radio presenters, and organised a large-scale, live music, open-air launch event at the Assembly Festival Garden Coventry, with simultaneous hour-long broadcasts on CWR and all eight community stations.

The lineup

Hillz FM - Meet the people of Hillfields who tell the stories of how they came to Coventry from all over the world, and how important community in this corner of the city has become to them.

Radio Abbey - In this hour we learn about Kenilworth's epic covid-19 response, meet the woman who's keeping literature and live music going in the town and enjoy a light-hearted radio play.

Radio Panj - We go on a culinary tour of India with a cooking special, and meet singing sensation Shinda Sureela, hearing all about his journey to Coventry and how his career took off.

Block Radio - This is a musical history of Coventry told by Block Radio's passionate DJ's and well-known names from the Ska days, with plenty of banging beats to get you moving.

Radio Plus - We hear about Radio Plus's youth project from ex-gang member Izekiel King, meet Coventry's women's football team and enjoy words of wisdom from Allesley's gin drinking vicar Lizzie.

Vanny Radio - Coventry rapper Icey Stanley shares his journey from performing at school to having his own studio, and we take to the streets of Coventry to meet the people keeping the city buzzing.

Raw 1251 AM - Lifting the lid on student life at Warwick University, it's not all partying but we do learn about the campus beer festival! We find out about student societies, the importance of Warwick Arts Centre and hear about the impact of Covid on students.

Coventry Hospital Radio - In this hour we meet the volunteers behind the radio station, learn about the air ambulance and hear from one the consultants what it was like to be on the front line at UHCW during the Pandemic.

Speaking of the success of the Sound of Cov project despite lockdown-related challenges, Rachel New said:

'It's been different… a lot of [community radio stations] operate all the time, with lots of different people. It was quite difficult to penetrate and because of Covid, I couldn't just rock up at the station. At the time it felt hard … that intangibility of being able to actually go and speak to people or invite them into the BBC.'

'When it came together in the end … there was a day of live music, which all of the stations programmed between themselves. We had a beautiful sunny day at the Festival Garden with lots of performance areas by City of Culture, so we had this wonderful collaborative coming together.'

An account of the national Community Radio Conference that led on from the Sound of Cov project is given in Section 6 (The Changing Media Environment).

Extract from Sound of Cov website, listing partner community radio stations

Case Study 5. Lincolnshire's Biggest Choir

"Because home is wherever, I'm with you.
And I'll stay there forever, as long as you stay too
I'm never gonna leave, it's what I am, it's where I'm from
I found home, it's you and it's all, it's all that I want."
From 'Home' by Scouting for Girls

As a major part of the celebrations for BBC Radio Lincolnshire's 40th birthday, CLOA Producer Becky Watkins worked with over 100 singers from 20 choirs based all around the county, the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra, and members of the chart-topping band Scouting for Girls. The participants made a specially adapted version of the song Home by Scouting for Girls.

The participants recorded their parts in isolation and the piece was edited to create a complete ensemble. The final performance, an emotional celebration of the county, shows images of singers recording their contributions combined with iconic Lincolnshire scenes.

It can be viewed at: www.bbc.co.uk/ programmes/p08sz2gf

Detailed understanding is currently lacking as to the impacts of: (a) recording individual singing at home for a group performance (such as for this project); and (b) live online group singing at home. However, research undertaken during lockdown shows that live online group singing at home can improve participants' mental, psychological and social wellbeing[14]. For people with difficulty in accessing face-to-face activities (e.g., due to ill-health, mobility or transport issues, home or care-giving commitments, and during lockdowns) both (a) and (b) can present opportunities for people to feel connected to their communities and to share in a co-creation process.

However, studies also reveal a number of factors that prevents people from experiencing satisfying group activities during lockdown:
- Lack of internet access and recording equipment, particularly for people from economically disadvantaged groups and some older people;
- The physical remoteness of the facilitator and other participants;
- Technical difficulties, sound distortion and time delays associated with being online.[15]

Observation 2

The pandemic led to very significant challenges for CLOA Producers in planning and delivering creative community activities. Working around COVID-19 restrictions spurred the emergence of engagement opportunities that illuminated:

- New ways of reaching out to community members who might traditionally have been inhibited from participating in face-to-face activities.

- New possibilities for collaborating with a wider range of stakeholders in delivering multi-agency projects. This includes contributing to building up resilience to isolation and social breakdown within local communities (see also Observation 9).

CLOA appears equipped to support the research agenda articulated in the Boundless Creativity report recommendations. CL and the BBC have an opportunity jointly to engage in discussions with the AHRC and DCMS with a view to playing a significant role in the drive to cement the link between culture and health and wellbeing for future resilience planning.

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[14] Philip K, Lewis A, Jeffery E. et al. (2020) Moving singing for lung health online in response to COVID-19: experience from a randomised controlled trial. BMJ Open Respiratory Research, 7:e000737. doi:10.1136/bmjresp- 2020-000737

[15] For example, Daffern H, Balmer K & Brereton J. (2021) Singing Together, Yet Apart: The Experience of UK Choir Members and Facilitators During the Covid-19 Pandemic. Front. Psychol. 12:624474. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2021.624474
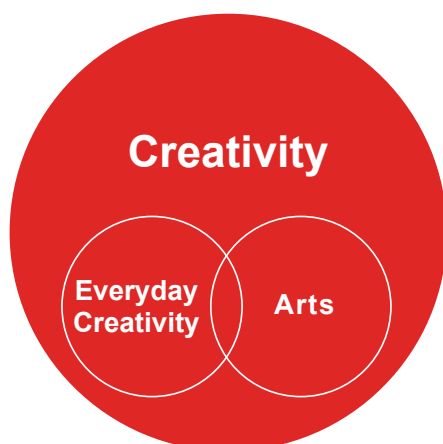
Topic 3. Everyday Creativity

Figure 2. Model of Creativity (NEA)

The powerful impulse experienced by many people during lockdown to engage in creative activities and share creative outputs was seen as a positive factor in both the AHRC's Boundless Creativity and Creative Lives' Culture During Covid reports. As a well-documented phenomenon, the outflowing of creativity in lockdown reinforces Arts Council England's first strategic outcome in its 2020 – 2030 Strategy[16] – that by 2030, "everyone can develop and express creativity throughout their life".

The wide range of creative processes explored by members of the public links to a growing number of compelling commentaries that critique narrow definitions of the arts as ignoring, downplaying or marginalising what has been termed, 'everyday creativity' (EC).

EC is characterised by day-to-day actions that are often understood in terms of little 'c' and mini 'c' creativity; the former focusing on observable creative actions and products, and the latter on more fleeting interpretive and transformative aspects of thought.[17] The boundaries of EC stretch well beyond traditional artforms to include a diverse range of immersive creative activities that millions of people engage in across the UK, both individually and in groups, in the home, online and in local community settings. Such activities can include cooking, crafting, 'dressing' the home, gardening, podcasting, creative citizen science[18] and journaling[19]. They are often removed from established hierarchies, economic models and notions of excellence. Two key aspects of everyday creativity are that it operates outside the market (although it can be mediated and supported by paid professionals), and that the creative process is at least as significant to the participant as the resulting product.

Figure 2 (left) illustrates NEA's conceptualisation of the inter-relationship between:

- Creativity: human imaginative thought and its applications in the real world;
- Everyday Creativity: as defined above;
- Arts: formalised modes of creative expression, typified by the western canon.

A recent conceptual review[20] in which NEA was involved examined 2482 published accounts of adults engaged in home-based creativity activity. The review resulted in the identification of four key domains under which EC is conceptualised:

- **Self-actualisation** - encompassing individualism (autonomy, innovation and originality, creative freedom, and personal expression) and transformation (imagination, escapism, metaphysical experience, change and personal development).
- **Time, immersion and flow** - the end product is of lesser importance than immersion in the creative process of the everyday. The ability to commit time to creative processes is an important aspect. Flow states can arise which have important implications for wellbeing.
- **Relationship building and connecting** - social connection and human relationships, the construction of the self as a social-cultural entity; and connecting with the non-human environment.
- **Learning and development** - beneficial cognitive and physical processes including learning, discovery, knowledge and different ways of knowing, adaptation, and personal development.

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[16] https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/publication/our-strategy-2020-2030

[17] Kaufman, J. C., & Beghetto, R. A. (2009). Beyond big and little: The Four C model of creativity. Review of General Psychology, 13, 1-12.

[18] https://blogs.bl.uk/science/bbc/

[19] https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/z3hshcw

[20] Mansfield, L. et al: Conceptualising Everyday Creativity in Home Based Arts: a Qualitative Evidence Synthesis in https://www.ahsw.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/CHW21-Conference-Research-Proceedings-June-2021-PDF.pdf p98

Case Study 6. Art for Wellbeing Group

The following analysis of a 5-minute segment of content, produced by BBC Radio Sheffield CLOA Producer Jennifer Vernon Edwards, highlights the effects of a creative art class on a group of women from a Sheffield community neighbourhood. The analysis links the women's participation to the four EC domains. The level of cross-referencing demonstrates the holistic effects of a complex creative intervention.

The audio segment can be accessed here: creative-lives.org/bbc-radio-sheffield

Table 1. Art for Wellbeing Group: participants' comments links to EC domains:

Comment	Impact relating to sub-domains	Key domains*
PARTICIPANT: LOIS *'I've never really done any art before. I never thought I was any good at art. I'm not very dextrous.*	Autonomy, change and personal development. Discovery, process over product	SA, TIF
'I came here and started painting and just loved it!' *'I think about what sort of picture I might want to do. I like that. It's very relaxing. I've never really given myself time, or that sort of place to be like that.'*	Committing time, creative freedom, innovation. Immersion, imagination, escapism. Different ways of knowing, discovery, personal development, connecting with non-human environment	TIF, SA, RBC, LD
'Lockdown, you know, and wanting to do something with people. Real life. That's why I first came'.	Social/human connection	RBC
PARTICIPANTS: JANICE AND CAROL *'I came with my neighbour because we both lost our partners last year, and it's given us something to talk about, to come out for.'* *'Painting's not something I've really done. [Now] I've done water colours and all sorts of things. It's different. It's given me something else to think about.'*	Social/human connection. Change and personal development Committing time, imagination, creative freedom, personal development, knowledge, escapism	RBC, SA SA, TIF
'It has helped coming here. I mean, I wasn't into any kind of painting. When I first came it was weird. It was like ''what am I doing?'' I had no idea how to mix paints. But it does focus your mind.'	Change and personal development, discovery, knowledge, escapism	
PARTICIPANT: ANONYMOUS *'I've been quite ill and couldn't come. I made a big effort to come this morning because I love it. I don't think about anything else because it's so relaxing.*	Change and personal development, escapism. Committing time. Flow state.	SA, TIF, RBC
'I love the friendship here.'	Social/human connection	

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SA	*Self-actualisation*
TIF	*Time, immersion and flow*
RBC	*Relationship building and connecting*
LD	*learning and development*

The commentary indicates that the four domains of EC may help equip people with the resilience they need to navigate life changes, from emergence from lockdown to learning to live with bereavement. One participant spoke of prior art activities easing her recovery from alcohol addiction – a story of transformational change mediated by creative processes.

Artist and teacher, Ali Bird, spoke of the personal benefits she experienced as the facilitator of the Sheffield project:

'I was unemployed and just needed to do something for my sanity, so I stated it on a voluntary basis. I threw it out to the community and hoped that somebody would come and keep me company. People came and wanted to keep coming.'

Ali Bird also spoke of the privilege she felt in helping people discover their creativity and her belief that every person has innate creative skills. For her, when enabled, creativity can make a positive change at an individual and community level. This notion sits centrally within the concept of EC and national initiatives such as 64 Million Artists[21], the aims of which reflect those of CLOA - to unearth existing creativity in people and communities and to enable more people to connect with their creative selves.

Observation 3

The creative output shared on BBC local radio and many other platforms during the pandemic has newly highlighted the breadth of creative activities in which people already engage, which do not necessarily fit into traditionally conceived arts hierarchies.

The emerging research evidence on the domains under which everyday creativity is conceptualised (illustrated by the case study above) is significant, and suggests the beginnings of a framework for assessment. Within such a framework, notions of value can be related to issues such as engagement in process and its relationship to changes to wellbeing. Further investigation into the operationalisation of EC calls for a multi-agency approach, and CLOA may have a part to play in future action research.

Jennifer Vernon Edwards interviewed participants in the Sheffield Art for Wellbeing group

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[21] www.64millionartists.com

Topic 4. The Home and Nature as Sites for Creativity

Home and the natural environment have always been important places for the practice and promulgation of the arts and everyday creativity. Historically though UK cultural policy has tended to overlook the significance of home and nature as creative sites, focusing more on supporting the establishment and sustaining of public spaces for the presentation of professional work in a range of artforms, such as theatres, art galleries and concert halls. Supporting shared and mixed-use public facilities where communities can come together to learn and engage in social and creative activities is another linked arm of policy.

The Warwick Commission on the Future of Cultural Value[22] (2015) and the AHRC's Cultural Value Project[23] (2016) advanced the concept of a cultural ecology or ecosystem, including a recognition that engagement takes place in cultural buildings, mixed-use spaces and "most commonly in the home and the virtual spaces of the internet."

Professor Geoff Crossick, Director of the AHRC's Cultural Value Project, said at an event organised by Creative Lives in 2021: "We do far too little to understand what makes that ecosystem work. It's become a slogan we talk about, rather than something we can really evidence the connections within."

As people were confined to their homes, gardens and nearby outdoor spaces during lockdowns, the significance of these domestic and hyper-local places was increasingly recognised. Far from being constrained by a lack of space and social interaction, many people found that the lockdown presented new and fruitful ways to engage creatively.[24, 25, 26] As a trusted media outlet broadcasting directly into people's homes, CLOA, through BBC Local Radio, is unusually well positioned to reach people in their private domestic environments. By extension, CLOA plays a role in strengthening the cultural eco-system at its most fundamental and hyper-local level.

One BBC news feature observed, '..as millions became accustomed to their newly-shrunken worlds, many decided it was time to revamp or rethink their living spaces.'[27] As DIY shops and garden centres remained open as providers of essential goods, millions of people set about creatively enhancing their homes and gardens. As well as the appeal of private gardens, natural outside spaces took on special significance. Mollie Davidson, CLOA Producer for the Contains Strong Language Festival said:

> 'Most Contains Strong Language events were planned to go outside, walking and poetry events and workshops outside, using the natural environment. For the River Sherbourne project, [walking the length of the culverted Sherbourne in Coventry] we marked out specific locations along the river for poetry readings.'

A report by the Office of National Statistics, stated that '...lockdown rules have heightened our appreciation for local parks and green spaces.'[28] Natural England reported that such spaces, which were used for solace, relaxation, exercise, or wildlife-watching, saw a surge in the number of people visiting during the pandemic:

> 'In May 2020, 36% of people responding to the People and Nature Survey by Natural England said they were spending more time outside during the pandemic than before. This rose to 46% in July 2020.'

Arts Council England's 2020-2030 'Let's Create' strategy looks towards "a blossoming of creativity across the country," arguing that "the surest way to fill the future with every variety of flower is to recognise that we can all be gardeners".

Extending the metaphor, in order for us all to become gardeners, we need access to gardens, seeds and seedlings, expert advice and encouragement, and the tools with which to garden. Nurturing story-telling and story-sharing in the context of the home and nature, as creative assets within the reach of the majority of the population, is a good place to start.

[22] Enriching Britain: Culture, Creativity and Growth https://warwick.ac.uk/research/warwickcommission/futureculture/

[23] Understanding the value of arts and culture https://www.ukri.org/publications/ahrc-cultural-value-project-report/

[24] Hoffrieter S, Zhou X, Tang M. et al. (2021) COVID-19 Lockdown and Creativity: Exploring the Role of Emotions and Motivation on Creative Activities from the Chinese and German Perspectives. Front. Psychol. October 2021 https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.617967

[25] Sophie Ellis-Bextor's Kitchen Disco on BBC Sounds https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/brand/m000tsg9

[26] www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.626263/full

[27] www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-essex-54874445

[28] www.ons.gov.uk/economy/environmentalaccounts/articles/howhaslockdownchangedourrelationshipwithnature/2021-04-26

Short Story: Raven

A visit from Cornish sprites. Written by Mike Zaremba, read by Andrew Edwards.

Case Study 7. The Raven

Jane Chesworth, CLOA Producer for BBC Radio Leeds, invited local people to submit their own short stories, which were then selected for on-air broadcast. Mike Zaremba's 6-minute story The Raven was one of the chosen stories. It captures the deep interplay between nature and creativity that many people were able to explore in stiller moments brought about by the temporary pause in the normal functioning of 21st century life due to the pandemic.

In the story, Macy has reluctantly come on holiday to "some godforsaken Cornish backwater wilderness" with her parents, and meets Brannock, Raven in Old Cornish, who persuades her to help prepare for the mid-summer festival. She goes into the forest to collect firewood from the bonfire, and is about to return when:

> "… a sound, carried on the light breeze, muffled a little by the rustling of the woodland canopy, caught her attention. She realised that what she could hear was singing … a voice light and pure that tinkled like crushed ice cascading through a crystal chandelier; the soaring soprano notes, sung in a lilting language that Macy had never heard before, were complemented by a woodwind accompaniment, teasing the singer of the song in playful challenge, the ensuing competition pushing both the instrument and the voice to even greater levels of melodious perfection. In a small clearing, water bubbled from a spring …"

The rest of the story of Macy's cleansing, transcendent experience of immersion in nature can be heard here:
https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/p08sfh9c

Case study 8. Sound and Listening

The holistic benefits of EC in our local environment are also demonstrated through on-air commentary from BBC Radio Leeds Mid-Morning presenter, Gayle Lofthouse. During the pandemic lockdowns, Lofthouse's programme featured Up for Arts Thursday, which was produced by CLOA Producer Jane Chesworth. This weekly slot promoted creative activities taking place in local communities and showcased on-air a wide range of creative activities for listeners to undertake in their homes and local environments.

Leeds-based company the Art Doctors aim to playfully break down barriers to participation in art and culture, and explore the positive role of creativity in all our lives. During lockdown, co-founder of Art Doctors, Alison McIntyre, facilitated an on-air community soundscape project across the Radio Leeds area. Members of the public, and Lofthouse herself, recorded sounds from their usual home, garden and outside environments. The aim was to raise consciousness of the everyday sounds that people are used to living with but have become desensitised to, such as a spinning washing machine, the clunk of a car door closing, or singing birds. The process brought a new and focused sensory dimension to day-to-day events.

Listening back to her own recording of her journey to work, Lofthouse said:

> 'It's quite freeing. Even just listening to my sounds in a focused way, it makes one feel more creative. I feel, if I wanted to, I could write a story or paint a picture. I could do a lot with the experience.'

Lofthouse's brief comments reflect the EC domains of self-actualisation (individualism and transformation); time, immersion and flow (committing time, immersion in process over product); relationships and connecting (construction of self as a social entity, connecting to non-human environment); and learning and development (discovery, different ways of knowing).

Gayle Lofthouse, Mid-Morning Presenter, BBC Radio Leeds.

Observation 4

The pandemic has highlighted the significance of the home and the natural environment as places where everyday creativity can flourish. As a result, and as part of expanding conceptualisations of the UK's creative ecology, cultural policymakers are paying increasing attention to the significance of the home and nature as sites for creativity.

With its unparalleled reach into people's homes through BBC local radio, CLOA is able to extend and share public understandings of the importance of creative engagement in the home and nature.

CL can reflect this shift by broadening its objective of "opening up more public spaces for creative cultural activity" to embrace support for creativity in the home and in nature.

Topic 5. Challenging the Language of Barriers

As evidence and awareness of the benefits of creative engagement to people's health and wellbeing continue to increase, the perceived challenge of overcoming barriers to access to positive creative activities becomes more pressing. Behaviours for healthy living start at a very early age and continue through the life course. With its focus on all-age creativity, CLOA can have an important role to play in promoting creative engagement as a health behaviour.

The last decade has seen considerable work on addressing the barriers to access to the arts [29, 30] and there have been some recent encouraging policy shifts.[31] There is clear evidence, however, that many of the most vulnerable groups in society, who typically face more severe health challenges and experience lower levels of wellbeing than the average, tend to be among the most marginalised from current publicly-funded arts and cultural provision. This suggests that current arts and cultural policy may be contributing to worsening health inequalities.

An important contributor to this policy challenge is perceptions of elitism and barriers to entry to the mainstream arts; these perceptions tend to be exacerbated by hierarchical social structures[32].

From the outset, Up for Arts, the forerunner of CLOA, was targeted at *'hard-to-reach communities and cold spot locations, where numbers active in the arts are relatively low.'* The change from the brand Up for Arts to Creative Lives On Air during the course of this project is, however, significant as it reflects a shift of emphasis from 'art' as an outcome to 'creativity' as a process.

CLOA's embrace of the concept of everyday creativity (EC) is equally significant, as it is rooted in the premise that creativity is a defining human behaviour, common to all people. EC processes therefore start with the individual and the first-person experience, recognising, validating and celebrating the creativity inherent in each of us. Thus, EC positions itself beyond the perceived barriers to access, on the side of the democratisation of culture, the rejection of hierarchies, and the inclusion of the marginalised.

In Wales this approach is being enacted by CL through a project entitled Unearthing Creativity, which sets out to "surface" and celebrate the diverse but under-recognised creative activities that take place in communities across Wales, sourcing and sharing existing creative models from communities and groups that do not see themselves as part of the arts sector or define their work as art.

Rhiannon Imiolczyk, CLOA Producer at BBC Wales, contributes to this project by producing content for broadcast about "underground" activities such as a voluntary writing group from Rhondda Cynon Taf, and a Greek musician organising world music events in Cardiff.

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[29] www.creative-lives.org/breaking-down-barriers

[30] *Fancourt D, Mak HW (2020) What barriers do people experience to engaging in the arts? Structural equation modelling of the relationship between individual characteristics and capabilities, opportunities, and motivations to engage. PLoS ONE 15(3): e0230487. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0230487*

[31] *For example, Arts Council England's ten year strategy (2020-30) Let's Create envisions that by 2030 "England will be a country in which the creativity of each of us is valued and given the chance to flourish." https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/strategy-2020-2030/our-vision*

[32] *See for example: Culture is bad for you: Inequality in the cultural and creative industries. Orian Brook, Dave O'Brien and Mark Taylor https://manchesteruniversitypress.co.uk/9781526144164/*

Case Study 9. Coffee 'n' Laughs

The winner of the Celebrating Diversity category in the national 2021 Creative Lives Awards was a friendship group for older women "of all faiths and none" in the ethnically diverse area of Maindee, Newport in South Wales. The group began as a way of helping women who had no recourse to public funds.

During the pandemic, the group met on Zoom, and through a WhatsApp group. These sessions combined creative activities, such as weaving, photography and poetry, with speakers on topics designed to help vulnerable members, including hate crime, dementia in the BAME community, and diabetes. The group is based at Community House, a long-established safe space in Maindee:

> "All communities need a centre, A place of meeting, And supposing it were a centre of compassion, A centre of understanding, A refuge of comfort, A centre of happiness. A place where people are always treated as people."[33]

Rhiannon Imiolczyk made an audio piece about the group which was broadcast on BBC Radio Wales. In the piece, participant Raqual says: "I love coming here because of the friendship – the atmosphere here is so nice. Everyone is very friendly and welcoming."
Founder of Coffee 'n' Laughs, Marilyn Pridee, recalls that at the outset:

> "… the important thing was helping them to learn English. Round the table, we were conscious that people were not quick with their English, so we were careful, and from the beginning we were doing crafts. The first craft was rag rug making … we stitch and share. We share our background stories. We're a completely safe space. We don't really think about it as something unusual, but other people tell us that it is. It's truly warm. It's a really warm gang and we're really fond of each other."

Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/Coffee-and-Laughs-126233567826073/

Above: Coffee 'n' Laughs team at 2021 Creative Lives Awards

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[33] https://communityhousemaindee.org/

Case Study 10. New Beginnings

"Anyone can pick up a camera and just go get creative."
Participant Kerry Curl

At BBC Radio Norfolk and BBC Radio Suffolk CLOA Producer Rosa Torr works closely with the long-established BBC Voices team. This radio production unit focuses on diversity of lived experience and bringing diverse voices to air through 11 hours of content per week. BBC Voices is led by Amy Nomvula, who has counselled and mentored Rosa Torr and helped her to develop broadcasting and outreach skills.

In early 2022, with hopes rising that the New Year would bring an easing of the pandemic, Rosa Torr invited listeners to send in photographs on the theme of New Beginnings. Some 170 photographs were submitted from across the two counties, from people aged from 10 to 80 years old, and all conveying personal stories of change and renewal. A digital exhibition of the work was organised and a launch event was held at BBC Radio Norfolk's base at The Forum, Norwich.

The digital exhibition and a 3 minute video about the project can be viewed at: https://www.creative-lives. org/newbeginnings-eastanglia

I wanted to learn a new skill during the lockdowns, so I pursued something I never had any training in - producing music! Inspired by the likes of Avicii & Martin Garrix, I dedicated all of my time to creating tracks that mean something, under my artist alias name 'Vekkan'. Two years on, and we've been played on BBC Radio multiple times, as well as countless press coverage and thousands of streams around the world! A technical look behind the scenes of the early days of my makeshift 'studio' - in my parents house.

Above: George Mattock, Suffolk - 'Inspired' Selected as part of the New Beginnings Exhibition

Observation 5

The existence of powerful cultural norms relating to the categorisation of the arts can tend to invalidate and marginalise creative practice in vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, leading to the perception that such groups experience barriers to access to culture and creativity.

The non-hierarchical and non-judgemental surfacing, nurturing and celebration of everyday creative processes can help to circumvent these perceived barriers to access.

Such an approach can complement the provision of affordable and accessible gateways to new and existing creative cultural experiences.

As awareness of the importance of creative engagement for healthy living grows, and as the Government's levelling-up agenda aims to reduce systemic inequalities, CL has an important role to play in helping to develop inclusive policies, drawing on CLOA's approach of engaging people on their own terms, hearing and validating their voices and their stories.

Top: Bozena Thompson, King's Lynn - 'A Lantern of Hope'
Above: Chris Silvester, Ipswich - 'New Beginning in Reflection'

Topic 6. The Changing Media Environment

"We are in the age of the Facebook community group and the WhatsApp neighbourhood chat. We must adapt to better reflect how people live their lives, how they get their news and what content they want."
Helen Thomas, Director, BBC England, July 2021

In a process that has been accelerated by the pandemic lockdowns, BBC local radio has been modernising its offer to audiences by making digital, online and other forms of communication beyond traditional radio central to its output. The intention is to become more agile and more in touch with communities, and to reflect the public's increasing use of media such as YouTube, Instagram and TikTok to self-produce creative output.

CLOA has supported this shift of focus in a variety of ways, including through the introduction of innovative podcast training, first by Producer John Offord with BBC Radio London and Thrive London in 2019/2020, and more recently at BBC Radio Merseyside and BBC Radio Leeds.

Case Study 11. Podcast Training

During his time as Up for Arts Producer at BBC Radio London during Phase One of the roll-out, John Offord built a positive relationship with Thrive London, the citywide movement to improve the mental health and wellbeing of all Londoners. With Thrive funding, Offord recruited a group of young Londoners and trained them to use podcasting to address issues which emerged from the World Mental Health Day Festival. Topics included inequality, the challenges of social media, and the positive impact of participating in live music and cultural activities. The podcast series opened up conversations on breaking down barriers, building resilience and the importance of a sense of community.

John Offord recalls:

"After we met colleagues at Thrive London through the Windrush project, we did interviews with them on BBC Radio London and then we pitched ideas to do some podcasts. Up For Arts introduced the clear objective that being creative is good for your wellbeing and that tied in with Thrive London's agenda. I was wanting to further my career as a storyteller and I realised that there's an opportunity here to work with young people, to create podcasts and also then to create content for the BBC in London.

We produced a 6-piece podcast series called Act On![34] with Thrive London, working with Katie Thistleton, a high-profile BBC Radio One presenter, and that was a great opportunity for the young people who were signposted from Thrive London and it was a great opportunity for BBC Radio London because we got the young people talking about the podcast series with Vanessa Feltz on the BBC Breakfast show. It was a great example of different parts of the BBC working together and recognising that podcasts are a way to reach a new younger audience."

The London podcasts can be heard at:
https://thriveldn.co.uk/core-activities/act-on-podcast-series/

The podcasting training project continued in Phase Two in Liverpool and in Leeds. For the "Are We OK?" project Offord worked with young people on topics such as mental health, the power of music and the Black Lives Matter movement. The series was launched on BBC Merseyside on World Mental Health Day in October 2020. These podcasts can be accessed at:
www.creative-lives.org/community-podcast-making-projects

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[34] *https://thriveldn.co.uk/core-activities/act-on-podcast-series/*

Case Study 12.
The Community Radio Conference

The Sound of Cov project (see page 11) was followed up in October 2021 by the national Community Radio Conference, an all-day event held at the Coventry Transport Museum, attended by around 100 community radio activists from all over the UK. CLOA Producer Rachel New chaired the event and Rebecca Frank, Content Director at Kiss FM, gave the keynote address, where she told the audience:

"Radio skills are life skills: communications, agility, moving people to do something. It's hard to emotionally connect with people on Zoom. Authenticity is key – we know this from our young audiences. The sea of choice is paralysing for them. There's a place for slow, meaningful content for young people – that's why podcasts and long-form content is blossoming."

A Senior Broadcast Journalist at BBC CWR who works closely with Rachel New welcomed the opportunity for BBC CWR to support community radio groups in extending their skills and know-how, saying:

'The impact Rachel has had at CWR on a weekly basis has been huge, bringing rich stories to the station. The Creative Lives ethos is brilliant – community encouragement and training, embracing skills that are out there in the community that we can shine a light on. Through events like the conference, we can give our local community radio stations more skills and help them take next steps. Without CLOA we wouldn't have the capacity to work with community groups over a long period of time. Normally we need to focus on outputs and we have to dip in and out. The difference is that Rachel is grassroots up.'

Observation 6

Creative processes and outputs, opportunities to develop creative skills, and messaging about creativity are extending over multiple platforms as part of the democratisation of mass communication media through new technology.

However, the risks of digital harms and other potentially negative impacts are increasingly being recognised, particularly in respect of the mental health of younger people. These harms can arise, for example, from over-immersion in the digital world and in social media echo chambers.

This is a complex field and careful planning and policy work may be needed for CLOA to continue to navigate it safely and effectively while maximising positive outcomes.

Above: CLOA Producer Rachel New chairing the national Community Radio Conference
Left: Conference lunch break

Topic 7. Staff Support

The pandemic caused considerable disruption to the working lives of most of the UK population, and CLOA Producers were no exception. Problems arose particularly from the lack of face-to-face contact with colleagues, which tended to have a detrimental effect on CLOA staff's abilities to build relationships with BBC and CL colleagues.

Good levels of resilience were found where Producers were well embedded and supported in local stations, but in a small number of cases challenges were reported, including a sense of isolation and communication difficulties. One CLOA Producer said:

"I was already a freelancer at the BBC, with a real love for the arts and creativity. I was recruited in February 2020, just before the first lockdown. Then [my CLOA line manager] retired and [my BBC lead] at the radio station left due to an illness. My BBC colleagues had no real idea what the project entailed and I was left just making it up as I went along. There was a big gap in communication – it was really hard to get the radio station invested. I did what I could but it was really hard to push the CLOA brand. Then when [the new CLOA manager] started, she made quick in-roads, having long discussions with the Executive Editor and the Deputy Editor. Soon we were meeting together and sharing ideas – they were a lot more available."

In another example from lockdown, a CLOA Producer was recruited in June 2020 to work alongside BBC staff on a national festival being led by the BBC. The Producer's role was to support the festival in expanding its links to specific local communities. The post was funded and partnered by a complex web of stakeholders, many of whom had somewhat differing expectations as to outcomes. The Producer reported perceived conflicts within the role, exacerbated by pandemic restrictions, and stated that having multiple supervisors contributed to a sense of uncertainty about how much emphasis should be placed on outputs for each organisation. Despite these challenges the core planned outcomes of the project were achieved.

Top: Rosa Torr, CLOA Producer, Norfolk and Suffolk
Above: CLOA Producer John Offord with interviewee

Case Study 13. Career Progression

Freelance Producer John Offord spoke positively of the long-term interrelationship between his career progression within the BBC and his work with UfA and CLOA:

'[When I started with Up for Arts in York in 2017] it was a new way of working in terms of a charity having that partnership with BBC local radio, and that was interesting. You are not constantly chasing daily deadlines, as most journalists are in local radio, and therefore I was able to meet various cultural organisations and suggest and pitch ideas to BBC local radio in a way that broadcast journalists just wouldn't have the time to do in-house. We were able to work with grassroots organisations and often introduced the BBC to people they were not aware of previously.'

Offord outlined his sense of a sea-change at the BBC, as it opens up to become more accessible to content makers and to presenters, allowing it to be more reflective of the population:

[For the Windrush 50th anniversary at BBC Radio London] we had to change the way that we were doing things. We had an advisory panel at City Hall and the Windrush Foundation was there, and also colleagues from Thrive London. So, the conversation began about creativity and mental health, and that led to Thrive funding the podcast training. Now it's really interesting to see how the BBC in Salford are nurturing talent in the North and that's such a good thing in terms of creativity, and that will have a knock-on effect because if you have producers working in the BBC from different backgrounds, you're going to produce content that is more relatable to different audiences and that will open up creativity in so many different ways. But the BBC is a big machine and these things take time.'

'I definitely think Creative Lives has played a big part of my career development. I'm producing my third Pick of the Week for BBC Radio 4 this week and I'm really enjoying it. They've now offered me a freelance contract with the BBC to the end of March working across Radio 4 and BBC World Service radio, so it's been a good end to the year.'

Observation 7

CLOA Producers are at the heart of the project and critical to its success. Their networks, people skills, broadcasting expertise and story-telling skills are major factors in delivering effective outcomes.

The pandemic lockdowns, coupled with BBC and CL management changes, at times left some Producers feeling confused and isolated, leading to operational difficulties.

Complicated partnership and funding arrangements may also at times have inhibited communications and contributed to a lack of clarity.

Maturity and flexibility were seen to be important skills for Producers in maximising success in challenging times.

Where newly recruited Producers have limited BBC broadcasting experience, strong, ongoing, in-house mentoring is an essential element of support.

Well-defined and supportive career development pathways are a positive factor for Producers, for CLOA, and for the BBC.

Topic 8. Funding and Legacy

The current CLOA model is premised on the local funding proposition expressed by David Holdsworth, then Controller, BBC English Regions, in a 2015 letter that set out the basis for collaboration as follows:

> *"That [CL] will work to secure the additional funding necessary to initiate the new posts … it may well prove possible to attract local funding from a range of sources to maintain each officer post on ongoing basis."*

Oak Foundation has supported this proposition by investing the funding required to pump-prime an expansion process in a rolling series of locations, in the expectation that sustainable local funding arrangements will be reached in each case. Typically, an initial 6-month project is put in place.

There have been examples where this model has been successful for a time, but securing local funding has not been straightforward. Typically, it takes a considerable period of time to build up the relationships required to prepare the ground for successful local funding bids.

The diversity of funding avenues for CLOA producers, and the precarity of short-term funding, is illustrated by Rachel New's experience at BBC CWR:

> *"I've had different funding. Initially I was funded by Oak Foundation for the first year. Then I was funded by Coventry City of Culture from March to September [2021] for the Sounds of Cov project and now [at the time of the interview] I am funded by another project which is about heritage crafts, which is funded by Coventry City Council."*

A colleague at BBC CWR helped secure the Big Lottery funding, recalling: *"Rachel New's funding was running out and I was worried we would lose her – I could see there was an opportunity to keep her on."*

Even with some longer initial periods of pump-priming of up to 12 months, local funding has been proving harder to access, particularly at smaller stations and in less affluent areas, and in the context of the pandemic. Local community and arts groups have found themselves under increasing financial pressure as earned income has fallen, with the result that there

is often intense competition for decreasing funds. One respondent suggested that the perception could sometimes arise that CLOA is an external, national initiative, arriving on the local scene and taking advantage of high-profile BBC and political links to corral funding urgently required for grassroots local initiatives.

In previous NEA reports it has been observed that the partnership between CL and the BBC brings unique added value, particularly through the quasi-independence of the CLOA projects and CLOA's ability to work more deeply in communities over longer timescales. The role of CLOA in brokering genuine sustainable creative partnerships between the BBC and the local community is undoubtedly highly valued, but an examination of some long-standing models, such as BBC Voices at BBC Radio Norfolk, suggests that in principle it would be possible for the BBC to deliver CLOA-type projects in-house, although in that scenario securing external funding would not be possible.

Amy Nomvula, BBC Radio Norfolk Producer, at the launch of the New Beginnings Exhibition. She has mentored CLOA Producer Rosa Torr.

Case Study 14. The Leeds Model

CL Media Partnerships Director Jess Plant leads on the CLOA programme and is responsible for ensuring that CLOA connects effectively to the wider work of Creative Lives. Here, she reflects on the BBC Radio Leeds model, where CLOA Producer Jane Chesworth worked with supportive colleagues to spread and embed the CLOA approach across the station:

"It is great to see how BBC Radio Leeds has continued to embed the CLOA approach after the lockdown. Even after the CLOA Producer moved on to a different project the station has continued to find innovative ways to promote creativity to their listeners via the established Up for Arts weekly slot, which is still ongoing, being led by a BBC employee. This presenter has really embraced the ideas and this is very positive and something we'd like to see replicated at other stations so we can continue to have impact in areas after we have moved on."

This model highlights a potential alterative to the local funding model outlined above which is proving challenging to deliver. In the current funding climate, it may represent a more viable route to sustainability. Critical to the success of such an approach are the skills required from the CLOA Producer to inspire BBC staff at various levels within each local station to take ownership of the creativity agenda.

Observation 8

The balance of evidence from the national roll-out of CLOA to date suggests that the strategy of generating sustainable local funding has become increasingly problematic. Short term pilots (sometimes as little as 6 months in duration) can make planning and fundraising challenging, and on occasions resulted in start-up projects not being renewed.

The concept of a wider strategic national roll-out of CLOA based on the established funding model is questionable in the current funding environment, requiring, as it would, a substantially increased fundraising and support infrastructure.

An alternative model may be for CLOA to remain tactical, closely aligned to CL's wider goals, and taking advantage of distinctive local circumstances, such as Coventry's UK City of Culture year.

Given the emerging role of everyday creativity in addressing health inequalities, place-based commissioning in priority areas may also represent an opportunity for the continuation or expansion of local CLOA projects.

Sustainable success may also result from seeding within BBC local radio stations the CLOA approach of encouraging and highlighting creativity in the community, offering training, and embracing skills, so that when projects come to a natural end, the ethos of CLOA lives on.

Topic 9. Evaluation Challenges

CLOA sits at the intersection of the arts, creativity and public health, and local projects are often required to demonstrate value to a range of stakeholders drawn from disparate fields. Managers, practitioners and researchers have frequently found that policymakers and health service commissioners tend to undervalue process-based and reflective methods of evaluation. Daykin et al. comment:

'As well as being frustrating for service providers, this makes it difficult for commissioners to understand how arts can fit within a complex landscape of services that could potentially be supported … Unequal power relationships may also account for the low usage of arts-based methodologies, despite widespread acknowledgement of the richness that they can bring.'[35]

Historically there has been a tendency for researchers and evaluators to adopt quantitative methods, such as written questionnaires and numerical scales, to fit in with the language of commissioners, accountants and policy-makers. These methods, however, rarely provide enough depth of information to gain understanding of effect processes and changes to behaviour. Indeed, alongside their caution against research that takes on a persuasive advocacy focus, Daykin et al. urge stakeholders to continue to critically examine stories that highlight a breadth of processes, including issues of challenge and risk.

"Complex intervention" is a term commonly used in the health and social care services, public health practice, and other areas of social and economic policy for professionally-mediated processes that have consequences for health. In NEA's analysis, CLOA sits within this concept. The notion of complexity relates to the challenge of planning, delivering and evaluating sophisticated processes that are enacted in ways that reflect the multiple factors that impact on individual and group health and wellbeing. Complexity may arise in: the properties of the intervention itself, such as the number of components involved; the range of behaviours targeted; the expertise and skills required by those delivering and receiving the intervention; the number of groups, settings, or levels targeted; or the permitted level of flexibility of the intervention or its components. CLOA demonstrates all these dimensions of complexity.

In 2021 the Medical Research Council (MRC) and the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) launched a new framework for evaluating the impact of complex interventions.[36] This new framework emphasises the need for greater attention on understanding how and under what circumstances interventions bring about change. The framework challenges the view that unbiased estimates of effectiveness are the cardinal goal of evaluation, or, indeed, are even possible.

Stories as Research

Just as stories and storytelling are fundamental to human experience, so too are they the foundation for all research. Scientific enquiry starts with an intuition or a hypothesis; a proposition based on observed occurrences. According to Lewis and Hildebrandt, this leads to a meaningful story, which is explored, relayed to other people, re-explored, and then retold, in an iterative cycle.[37] For example, the Most Significant Change (MSC) model of evaluation sits alongside other qualitative methodologies, such as phenomenological and hermeneutical processes,[38] in which storytelling and narrative are interpreted as communication for social change.

Researchers using these methods are interested in shedding light on complex questions, rather than seeking precise, unbiased answers to narrow questions. The methods allow researchers to drill down to better understand people's nuanced beliefs, values, views, perceptions and behaviours and to develop logic models and theories of change.

[35] Daykin, N., Gray, K., McCree, M. & Willis, J. (2016) Creative and credible evaluation for arts, health and well-being: opportunities and challenges of coproduction, International Journal of Arts & Health (p.11) doi: 10.1080/17533015.2016.1206948

[36] https://www.bmj.com/content/374/bmj.n2061

[37] Lewis P & Hildebrandt K. (2019) Story Telling as Research in Atkinson P, Delamont, S, Cernat A et al. Research Methods Foundations. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

[38] Dart J. Davies R. (2003) A dialogical story-based evaluation tool: the most significant change technique, American Journal of Evaluation. June 2003 DOI: 10.1177/109821400302400202 p.5

Throughout NEA's evaluation of CLOA activities, stories have been gathered and analysed as part of a process of building a nuanced web of information covering lived experiences, changing understandings, intended and unintended effects and impacts, evolving processes, correlations and potentially causal mechanisms, and contextual situations.

This information has been synthesised in order to support the identification of what has worked well and not so well, to provide CL and key stakeholders with feedback on effectiveness, and to shape future planning in order to maximise positive operational and effect outcomes.

In accordance with the new MRC and NIHR framework, we will continue to seek to improve theories and understandings as to how CLOA's creative interventions and processes contribute to change, including through developing knowledge of how they interact with their immediate context and with wider dynamic systems.

Case Study 15. Coventry Creates

During Coventry's year as UK City of Culture (2021), CLOA Producer Rachel New initiated a partnership with Heritage Crafts to celebrate Coventry's historical and current relationship with the processes of making, from industrial weaving to individual craft trades, from manufacturing to family-based skills.

The Making of Coventry project involved a series of demonstrations and workshops in old and new crafting methods, such a weaving, embroidery, leather work and African beading. A celebration event, which included a keynote speech by Patrick Grant from the Great British Sewing Bee, was held in March 2022 at Drapers Hall, Coventry, as part of Heritage Crafts' annual conference.

The Making of Coventry project has been featured extensively on Coventry Creates, an ongoing 60-minute weekly radio programme, produced and presented by Rachel New.

An analysis of the coverage of the Making of Coventry project on the Coventry Creates radio programme helps shed light on the complexity of CLOA creative interventions. It connects to a number of the topics highlighted in this report, as shown

below. It can therefore stand as a model for future holistic exploration:

Legacy: The coverage is a sustainable organic extension of an innovative heritage crafts project which 'celebrates and shouts about the wonderful things being created in Coventry and Warwickshire'. New says, *'It celebrates what makes us healthy, happy and engaged with the social world around us.'*

Exploring Everyday Creativity: The programme features conversations with people engaging in creative activities, some for the first time. Comments made on-air demonstrate links with the EC conceptual domains. For example, women engaging in a Ghanaian Waist Bead workshop enjoyed the autonomy and individualism of choosing colours to represent their state of mind and body on the day of the workshop. The colour of the beads symbolised a range of wellbeing assets:

- red - mental strength;
- orange - culture and identity;
- yellow - wisdom;
- green - health;
- pink - love of self / other people;
- white - honesty / clarity.

The women spoke of flow, immersion, learning, confidence, and the social aspects of group creativity.

Ghanaian Waist Bead workshop - photo by Sally Reay

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Challenging the Language of Barriers and Stories of Change: Comments from men taking part for the first time in Men's Shed[41] leather belt-making and precious metal-threading projects indicate an association with wellbeing assets including: resilience; social connections and cohesion; motivation; achievement and pride; and positive transformative behaviour change, for example:

'It's fantastic. I've never done anything like this before. Really funny, things going wrong and things going right, and working as a team. I used to drink a lot. I don't drink any more. It's a way of getting out during the day and talking to people and making new friends. I'm so proud on this.'
Men's Shed participant

Left, and over: Coventy Creates Projects

Observation 9

The increasingly complex, diverse and responsive nature of CLOA activities and approaches is a strength of the project. However, it has meant that the goal of identifying a standardised operational model across the various CLOA locales is no longer appropriate.

For the final stage of the Phase Two evaluation NEA will work with CLOA participants, broadcasters, public health professionals and other stakeholders, including by drawing on Most Significant Change methodology, to improve theories and understandings as to how CLOA interventions contribute to change, given their context and interactions with wider dynamic systems.

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[41] *https://menssheds.org.uk/2021/08/16/how-coventry-mens-sheds-creativity-is-impacting-the-community/*

3. Digest of Observations

1. Stories of Change

Stories are an effective way of bringing about positive social change. They are at their most powerful when they are authentic, multi-modal and creative. CLOA is an exemplary storytelling platform as it unearths, frames and amplifies the experiences of many people whose voices would otherwise not be heard.

With its phased approach of inspire, enquire, support and champion, CL is well positioned to centralise the concept of Stories of Change in the planning, delivery and dissemination of CLOA and its other operations.

3. Everyday Creativity (EC)

The creative output shared on BBC local radio and many other platforms during the pandemic has newly highlighted the breadth of creative activities in which people already engage, which do not necessarily fit into traditionally conceived arts hierarchies.

The emerging research evidence on the domains under which everyday creativity is conceptualised (illustrated by the case study above) is significant, and suggests the beginnings of a framework for assessment. Within such a framework, notions of value can be related to issues such as engagement in process and its relationship to changes to wellbeing. Further investigation into the operationalisation of EC calls for a multi-agency approach, and CLOA may have a part to play in future action research.

2. Navigating Lockdowns

The pandemic led to very significant challenges for CLOA Producers in planning and delivering creative community activities. Working around COVID-19 restrictions spurred the emergence of engagement opportunities that illuminated:

- New ways of reaching out to community members who might traditionally have been inhibited from participating in face-to-face activities.
- New possibilities for collaborating with a wider range of stakeholders in delivering multi-agency projects. This includes contributing to building up resilience to isolation and social breakdown within local communities.

CLOA appears equipped to support the research agenda articulated
in the Boundless Creativity report recommendations. CL and the BBC have an opportunity jointly to engage in discussions with the AHRC and DCMS with a view to playing a significant role in the drive to cement the link between culture and health and wellbeing for future resilience planning.

4. Home and Nature

The pandemic has highlighted the significance of the home and the natural environment as places where everyday creativity can flourish. As a result, and as part of expanding conceptualisations of the UK's creative ecology, cultural policymakers are paying increasing attention to the significance of the home and nature as sites for creativity.

With its unparalleled reach into people's homes through BBC local radio, CLOA is able to extend and share public understandings of the importance of creative engagement in the home and nature.

CL can reflect this shift by broadening its objective of "opening up more public spaces for creative cultural activity" to embrace support for creativity in the home and in nature.

5. Challenging Barriers

The existence of powerful cultural norms relating to the categorisation of the arts can tend to invalidate and marginalise creative practice in vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, leading to the perception that such groups experience barriers to access to culture and creativity.

The non-hierarchical and non-judgemental surfacing, nurturing and celebration of everyday creative processes can help to circumvent these perceived barriers to access.

Such an approach can complement the provision of affordable and accessible gateways to new and existing creative cultural experiences.

As awareness of the importance of creative engagement for healthy living grows, and as the Government's levelling-up agenda aims to reduce systemic inequalities, CL has an important role to play in helping to develop inclusive policies, drawing on CLOA's approach of engaging people on their own terms, hearing and validating their voices and their stories.

3. Digest of Observations (Continued)

6. Media Environment

Creative processes and outputs, opportunities to develop creative skills, and messaging about creativity are extending over multiple platforms as part of the democratisation of mass communication media through new technology.

However, the risks of digital harms and other potentially negative impacts are increasingly being recognised, particularly in respect of the mental health of younger people. These harms can arise, for example, from over-immersion in the digital world and in social media echo chambers.

This is a complex field and careful planning and policy work may be needed for CLOA to continue to navigate it safely and effectively while maximising positive outcomes.

8. Funding and Legacy

The balance of evidence from the national roll-out of CLOA to date suggests that the strategy of generating sustainable local funding has become increasingly problematic. Short term pilots (sometimes as little as 6 months in duration) can make planning and fundraising challenging, and on occasions resulted in start-up projects not being renewed.

The concept of a wider strategic national roll-out of CLOA based on the established funding model is questionable in the current funding environment, requiring, as it would, a substantially increased fundraising and support infrastructure.

An alternative model may be for CLOA to remain tactical, closely aligned to CL's wider goals, and taking advantage of distinctive local circumstances, such as Coventry's UK City of Culture year.

Given the emerging role of everyday creativity in addressing health inequalities, place-based commissioning in priority areas may also represent an opportunity for the continuation or expansion of local CLOA projects.

Sustainable success may also result from seeding within BBC local radio stations the CLOA approach of encouraging and highlighting creativity in the community, offering training, and embracing skills, so that when projects come to a natural end, the ethos of CLOA lives on.

7. Staff Support

CLOA Producers are at the heart of the project and critical to
its success. Their networks, people skills, broadcasting expertise and story-telling skills are major factors in delivering effective outcomes.

The pandemic lockdowns, coupled with BBC and CL management changes, at times left some Producers feeling confused and isolated, leading to operational difficulties.

Complicated partnership and funding arrangements may also at times have inhibited communications and contributed to a lack
of clarity.

Maturity and flexibility were seen to be important skills for Producers in maximising success in challenging times.

Where newly recruited Producers have limited BBC broadcasting experience, strong, ongoing, in-house mentoring is an essential element of support.

Well-defined and supportive career development pathways are a positive factor for Producers, for CLOA, and for the BBC.

9. Evaluation Challenges

The increasingly complex, diverse and responsive nature of CLOA activities and approaches is a strength of the project. However, it has meant that the goal of identifying a standardised operational model across the various CLOA locales is no longer appropriate.

For the final stage of the Phase Two evaluation NEA will work with CLOA participants, broadcasters, public health professionals and other stakeholders, including by drawing on Most Significant Change methodology, to improve theories and understandings as to how CLOA interventions contribute to change, given their context and interactions with wider dynamic systems.

4. Recommendations

The following recommendations in respect of the Creative Lives On Air (CLOA) project are addressed to Creative Lives (CL).

Recommendation 1: That CLOA is aligned more closely with local health and wellbeing planning.

CLOA should be conceptualised as a series of complex, multi-faceted, and often nuanced, creative interventions that are *frequently effective* in supporting delivery of improved health and wellbeing outcomes among target groups, and *effective at times* at an area population level. The project has demonstrated *good ability* to reach into isolated people's homes through BBC local radio. Through surfacing and supporting everyday creativity, CLOA *may have a role to play* in helping to reduce health inequalities.

NEA **recommends** that CLOA is aligned more closely with area-based health and wellbeing planning, through partnerships with public health and social prescribing teams, and through links with levelling-up initiatives.

CL should continue to work with strategic partners to advance research on the role of everyday creativity in improving health and wellbeing outcomes, including through developing a 'theory of change'.

Recommendation 2: That CL creates a repository of CLOA Stories of Change

This report highlights the significance of stories of change in capturing and communicating qualitative data arising from CLOA interventions.

NEA **recommends** that CL creates a publicly accessible online repository of authentic stories of change collected in the course of CLOA projects and other related activities. Content should be in a combination of written, audio and visual formats.

CL should invest resources in developing, maintaining, analysing (through descriptive and thematic tagging) and promoting the repository, making it freely available.

Recommendation 3: That CL adopt a new operational model for CLOA

As CLOA reaches the end of its five-year Oak Foundation funding period, and moves into a new phase from April 2023 onwards, a new operational model is required. This should build on the changes to the model already identified in the report.

NEA **recommends** that a new operational model is adopted as follows:

- Projects targeted at BBC local radio stations in areas of high socio-economic need and/or low public engagement in established cultural forms.
- CLOA Producers, typically with broadcast experience, engaged on a part-time, fixed-term basis, and embedded within local BBC radio stations.
- Collaboration with local CL Development Officers to map and catalyse local creative groups.
- Integration into CL's Strategic Framework and BBC local radio priorities.
- Initial project duration 18 months. Project duration no more than 36 months, unless special circumstances apply.
- Based on local need, projects will surface, initiate and celebrate creative activities in isolated groups through radio broadcast and digital output.
- Outreach and workshops with target groups will deliver longer-form broadcast / digital content, providing a platform for new voices and hidden activity.
- Where appropriate, projects integrated into BBC or national initiatives (including through health and wellbeing planning, see Recommendation 1).
- Effective evaluation processes to capture evidence of impact, including through authentic stories of change (as per Recommendation 2).
- A legacy of: wellbeing and creativity agendas promulgated among BBC local staff and community groups; grassroots creativity contacts / networks; and innovative broadcast content.