



West of England Music and Arts' Cultural Education Hub

Impact Report 2024-26 Full Report

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Executive Summary

Purpose, Context and Approach

This report presents an independent review of the impact of West of England Music and Arts' (WEMA) [Cultural Education Hub](#) during its first two years of operation (2024–2026). Funded by the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority (WEMCA) and Arts Council England, the Cultural Education Hub was established to strengthen connections between schools, creative practitioners and cultural organisations, with the aim of increasing access to high-quality cultural education for children and young people aged 5–18, regardless of their background or where they live. Its approach was to coordinate a range of programmes, including schemes to partner creative practitioners with schools, deliver continuing professional development opportunities and provide creative careers events.

Drawing on engagement data and thematic analysis of stakeholder feedback, practitioner reports, commissioned research, project films, testimonials and interviews, the report explores and illustrates the changes and outcomes associated with the Hub's activity across the region.

Reach and Beneficiaries

During its first two years, the Cultural Education Hub has demonstrated significant regional reach, enabling activity across four counties in the West of England: Bath and North East Somerset, Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire. Across this region the Cultural Education Hub has enabled 9,570 children and young people to participate in creative and cultural experiences, supported 300 teachers to access creative professional development, engaged 185 schools in creative activity and networks, and worked with 31 creative practitioners to develop and deliver activity in education settings. The Hub's programmes have facilitated 384 creative events, workshops and sessions and enabled 430 young people to participate in Creative Careers activities.

Key Impact

Analysis of the evidence provided identified four interconnected areas of impact that appear consistently across the Cultural Education Hub's programmes and beneficiary groups.

Enhanced Creative Skills, Confidence and Capability

Participation in activity supported by the Cultural Education Hub has strengthened creative skills, confidence and self-expression amongst children and young people, whilst also

increasing the confidence of teachers and creative practitioners to embed creative approaches within educational settings.

Increased Access and Participation in Cultural Activity and the Creative Arts

The work of the Cultural Education Hub has increased access to creative experiences, cultural organisations, creative environments and professional learning opportunities, enabling children and young people, teachers and practitioners to engage with opportunities that may not otherwise have been available to them.

Strengthened Regional Infrastructure and Capacity for Cultural and Creative Education

Through a combination of funding, mentoring, professional development, brokerage and collaborative programme design, the Cultural Education Hub has strengthened practitioner capability, supported schools to sustain creative activity, and developed a more coordinated and collaborative approach to cultural education across the West of England.

Improved Connections, Pathways and Creative Futures

The Hub has acted as a regional connector, bringing together schools, creative practitioners, cultural organisations and communities to create new opportunities, pathways and partnerships. This has increased awareness of creative careers, supported aspirations amongst young people, strengthened professional networks, and enabled schools to build meaningful connections with local cultural assets and communities.

Conclusions

Collectively, the evidence suggests that the Cultural Education Hub has generated impact at multiple levels: supporting individual children and young people, strengthening professional practice, enhancing school capacity, and contributing to the development of a more connected and sustainable cultural education ecosystem across the West of England. The findings also indicate that the Hub has established a credible and effective model for coordinating cultural education activity, partnerships and resources to respond to local needs and maximise regional impact.

1. Introduction and Context

1.1 Purpose

West of England Music and Arts (WEMA) commissioned the University of the West of England to conduct a broad review of the impact of the work of its [Cultural Education Hub](#) during the period 2024-2026.

This review was conducted through analysis of a wide range of documentation and evidence collated by WEMA across the two-year period. This included feedback from teachers, creative practitioners, and children and young people; end of project reports from creative practitioners, commissioned research reports and case studies, attendance and engagement data, and project films. This data was supplemented by some additional collection of testimonials from stakeholders and an interview with WEMA's Cultural Education Hub Programme Lead.

This report aims to offer WEMA and relevant Funders, Commissioners, Professionals and Stakeholders an understanding of the nature and scope of the impact of the Cultural Education Hub's work, illustrating key changes and outcomes identified through this data, and highlighting the primary beneficiaries. It should be noted however, that it does not provide a formal evaluation of the Cultural Education Hub.

1.2 The Cultural Education Hub

The Cultural Education Hub represents a major initiative across the West of England region, supported by £310,000 of initial funding from the West of England Mayoral Authority (WEMCA) and Arts Council England. Its primary aim is to 'build connections between schools and creative practitioners to offer young people quality cultural education opportunities in the West of England'.

The Cultural Education Hub model facilitates creative connections and networks, to provide a catalyst for the introduction of new activities and opportunities, and to use this to offer quality enhancement for cultural education across the region. It does this through playing a key practical and strategic role, aiming to target resource to maximise impact by delivering and coordinating carefully planned programmes which embed key elements including mentoring, professional development, evaluation and network development.

To achieve its aims, the Cultural Education Hub has coordinated a range of programmes across the region, with a focus on children aged 5-18 in formal education settings, including:

- **Creatives in Schools:** A grant-funded programme supporting freelance creatives to develop and deliver workshops in schools, combining funded delivery with training, mentoring, and professional development.

- **Creative Residencies:** A research-led programme placing creatives in schools for longer-term projects that respond to school priorities and generate insights into impactful cultural education practice.
- **Creatives CPD:** A series of subsidised professional development opportunities for teachers, delivered with cultural partners, to enhance creative teaching practice.
- **Creative Careers:** A strand of activity connecting young people and educators with creative career pathways through events, partnerships, workshops, and exploratory coordination of regional opportunities.
- **Creative Events:** A programme of collaborative events and initiatives designed to inspire participation in arts and culture and showcase creative work.

Across these programmes the hub has facilitated and coordinated activities to engage children and young people in a wide variety of art forms including: storytelling, film-making, script-writing, poetry, drama, dance, music and art-making.

2. Methodology and Approach

This review aimed to understand and illustrate the impact of the Cultural Education Hub primarily through thematic analysis of secondary data provided by WEMA, with some additional primary data collection through collation of stakeholder testimonials and an interview with the Programme Lead.

2.1 Documentation

For the purposes of this review, WEMA provided anonymised files for analysis, which were grouped by activity/project and included:

- Collated stakeholder engagement and attendance data
- 70 Student Feedback forms from Creative Opportunities Career Events
- 20 End of Project Reports from Creative Practitioners involved in Creatives in Schools
- 2 Detailed Research reports from the Creative Residencies programme
- 7 Project Films
- 8 Quarterly Funder Reports

- 40 Feedback Records from across the Programmes in varying formats, for example emails from teachers and testimonial capture (including some children and young people comments)

In addition, at the start of the project, the research team conducted a 90-minute semi-structured interview with the Programme Lead, which was recorded, transcribed and analysed. Finally, following initial analysis of the above documentation, the research team worked with WEMA to collate a sample of 10 testimonials from stakeholders by sending out a short form, which asked specific questions about any changes or outcomes associated with their engagement with the Cultural Education Hub.

2.2 Analysis Approach

The research team conducted the analysis for this report using a thematic approach. Following initial familiarisation with the dataset, we undertook an iterative process of thematic coding of key sources which led to the generation and ongoing refinement of four key impact themes (see section 4). This analysis process was framed by WEMA's understanding of the vision and purpose of the Cultural Education Hub and by a focus on identifying evidence of specific change and outcomes. We then categorised all of the documentary evidence against these themes to review the volume of information relating to each, to identify and refine impact themes/statements and to identify key examples to support with illustrating these.

Alongside this, we analysed the engagement and participation data provided by WEMA to identify key metrics and developed a visual impact map, using the impact themes to illustrate the nature of impact on each key beneficiary group (see 3.1 and 3.2).

3. Engagement Numbers and Impact Map

3.1 Cultural Education Hub in Numbers

In order to offer an understanding of the scope and scale of the work of the Cultural Education Hub, and to provide an overview of its key direct beneficiaries, Figure 1 captures some of the key numbers relating to engagement and Figure 2 illustrates the spread of programmes and workshops across the West of England region. These numbers are based on records which identify direct attendance/engagement within a session, workshop or programme.

Cultural Education Hub Impact Dashboard

West of England | 2024–2026

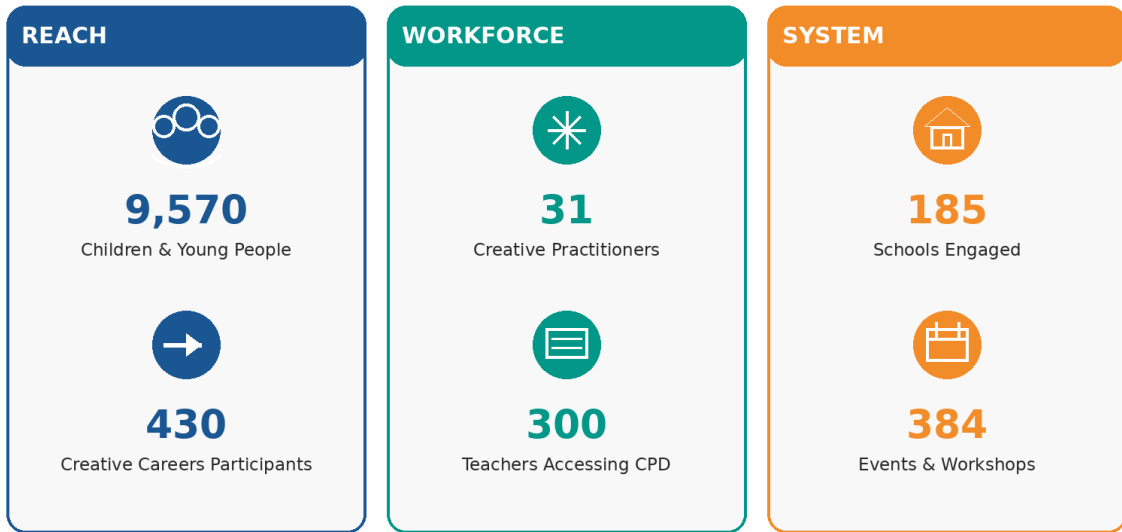


Figure 1. Cultural Education Hub Impact Dashboard

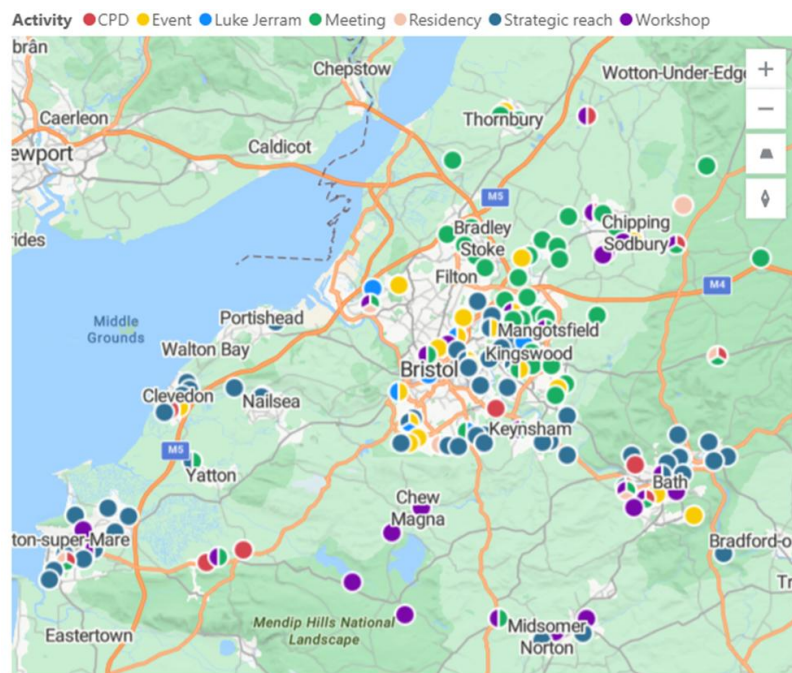


Figure 2. Map of the Cultural Education Hub's work across the West of England region

The engagement and attendance data demonstrates that through the Cultural Education Hub, significant numbers of children, young people and creative practitioners have engaged in creative and cultural education opportunities across the region. This includes direct work with 185 schools across four different counties. It should also be noted that whilst some of this engagement relates to individual sessions, in many cases beneficiaries have had opportunities to be involved in sustained or repeated opportunities. For example, 461

children and young people benefited from longer term creative residencies in their schools and many schools and teachers were involved in more than one programme of work.

3.2 Visual Impact Map

Building on the engagement data presented above, we developed a visual impact map to illustrate how the Cultural Education Hub's work has generated impact across its key beneficiary groups. Drawing on the four impact themes identified through our thematic analysis (see section 4), the map highlights how different forms of impact are experienced by children and young people, teachers, creative practitioners, as primary beneficiaries, and through schools, organisations and the wider regional ecosystem.

Rather than presenting impact as a series of discrete outcomes, the map reflects the interconnected and cumulative nature of the hub's work. It shows how outcomes such as increased confidence and creative capability, expanded access to opportunities, strengthened professional capacity, and the development of new connections and pathways are closely related and mutually reinforcing. In doing so, it provides an overview of both the breadth and depth of impact across the region.

The map is therefore intended to act as a bridge between the scale of engagement outlined in Section 3.1 and the more detailed qualitative evidence explored in Section 4, where each theme is explored in more depth.

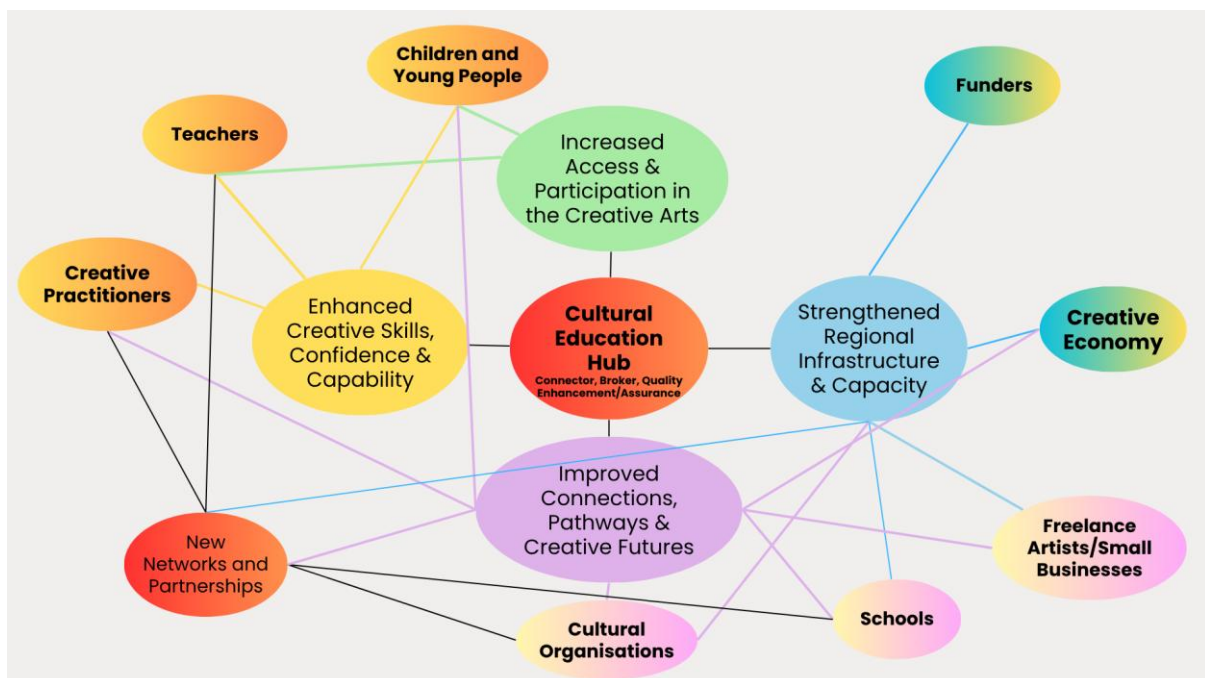


Figure 3. Cultural Education Hub Impact Map

4. Areas of Impact

Through our analysis of the data collected by WEMA we identified four key areas where the Cultural Education Hub appears to have had significant impact across the West of England region, these are captured in Table 1. The report then explores each area in further detail, with examples of feedback and engagement data used to illustrate their scope and nature.

Impact	Primary Beneficiaries
Enhanced Creative Skills, Confidence and Capability	Children and Young People Teachers and Educators Creative Practitioners
Increased Access and Participation in the Creative Arts	Children and Young People Teachers and Educators
Strengthened Regional Infrastructure and Capacity for Cultural and Creative Education Activity	Schools Funders and Creative Economy Creative Practitioners
Enhanced Connections, Pathways and Creative Futures	Children and Young People Creative Economy Creative Practitioners

Table 1. Impact Areas and Beneficiaries

4.1 Enhanced Creative Skills, Confidence and Capability

Evidence gathered across the Cultural Education Hub's programmes suggests that this initiative has enhanced the creative skills, confidence and capabilities of children and young people, teachers and creative practitioners who have participated across the region. This impact is evident across a range of activities, including Creative Residencies, Creatives in Schools, Creative Careers and associated professional development opportunities.

Across the evidence base, stakeholders described increased confidence, the acquisition of new creative skills, and greater willingness to engage in creative activity and creative learning. These outcomes appear to have been generated through high-quality creative experiences, opportunities to work alongside professional artists and practitioners, and sustained engagement with creative processes.

This theme is reflected in four interrelated areas of impact: increased confidence in creative expression and performance amongst children and young people; development of creative and technical skills; increased confidence amongst teachers to use creative approaches in their practice; and enhanced confidence amongst creative practitioners to work within educational settings. Together, these outcomes highlight the Hub's contribution to developing both individual capability and the confidence needed to engage meaningfully with creative and cultural education.

“this kind of project can give children a lot of confidence in themselves and autonomy over their own learning and inspiration and imagination...”

Creative Practitioner – Creative Residencies

"I enjoyed the animation things we got to do. I learnt about model making, stop motion and drama."

Young Person – Creative Residencies

4.1.1 Increased confidence in creative expression and performance among children and young people

Across the programmes, feedback from children, teachers, and creative practitioners consistently indicated that participation in creative opportunities enhanced confidence in creative expression, performance and participation. Participation in the creative programmes strengthened children's and young peoples' ability to engage in creative performance with greater assurance.

The analysis of feedback from children and young people indicates that the creative opportunities and events significantly increased their confidence.

"It made me more confident, because I was picked to do something in front of the whole class. I didn't think I would ever do that."

Young Person - Creative Careers

Teachers' reflections on the Creatives in Schools programmes further emphasised how these activities nurtured children's confidence, enabling even initially reluctant children to participate more fully. Teachers noted the positive changes in children's confidence. Their observations illustrate how structured support and accessible creative tasks can dismantle barriers to engagement by enabling hesitant children to perform well in art.

"Many children didn't consider themselves arty, but the simplicity of the workshop and all the scaffolding that supported it enabled those less confident to do a lovely piece of work."

Teacher - Creative Residencies

This suggests that carefully designed creative activities can play an important role in reducing barriers to participation and building confidence amongst children who may not typically engage with the arts.

Teachers also noted that creative sessions provided children with meaningful opportunities to use their imaginations across multiple modes of expression, contributing to deeper engagement and enjoyment:

"Children thoroughly enjoyed the experience and were engaged throughout. They relished the opportunity to use their imaginations through acting, oracy and literacy."

Teacher - Creatives in Schools

Creative practitioners echoed these findings, acknowledging that the creative residences contributed to a noticeable rise in children's confidence, particularly in their willingness to use art as a means of expression. Their reflections highlight how sustained creative engagement can empower children to take ownership of their learning:

"I think this kind of project can give children a lot of, yeah, confidence in themselves and autonomy over their own learning and inspiration and imagination that they can then apply to their playtime play, their learning in class, their general well-being, and how well they interact with the adults they're working with as well. It has such a positive impact and has a big reach to all children and removes those barriers."

Creative Practitioner- Creative Residencies

Collectively, this evidence suggests that the Cultural Education Hub is helping children and young people develop the confidence to participate more fully in creative opportunities, providing an important foundation for later engagement, skills development and creative aspirations.

4.1.2 Development of creative and technical skills among children and young people

Evidence from children, young people, teachers, and creative practitioners demonstrates that participation in the Creative Opportunities events and Creatives in Schools programme significantly enhanced children's and young people's creative skills, supporting both technical skill acquisition and broader creative thinking.

Children and young people described how the creative opportunities events enabled them to develop new creative techniques and deepen their understanding of artistic processes. They reported that hands-on activities introduced them to unfamiliar creative practices and expanded their skillsets:

"I enjoyed the animation things we got to do. I learnt about model making, stop motion and drama."

"I learnt about creativity in the designing and drama."

Young Person - Creative Opportunities Events

Children and young people also recognised that the events strengthened their awareness of safety considerations when engaging in creative performance, demonstrating the programme's contribution to responsible and informed creative practice:

"I liked acrobatics and theatre because they are something that I enjoy...doing handstands...learnt some safety tips in acrobatics."

Young Person - Creative Opportunities Events

This feedback suggests that participation not only developed creative and technical skills, but also supported children and young people to engage with creative activity in a safe and informed way.

Teachers' reflections on the Creatives in Schools programmes further highlighted how the creative sessions expanded children's practical and conceptual skills. Their accounts emphasised the value of hands-on, exploratory learning in deepening understanding and fostering creative thinking:

"The session gave students opportunities to gain new creative skills and experiences. The river workshop encouraged them to explore rivers through practical, hands-on activities, loosely linked to early human history. Students experimented with materials, developed creative ideas and worked collaboratively to produce outcomes inspired by how people may have interacted with rivers in the past. This supported creative thinking and exploration, while making broad connections to historical contexts."

Teacher - Creatives in Schools

Teacher feedback indicates that the practical and exploratory nature of these activities enabled children and young people to develop both technical skills and wider creative thinking, whilst making connections across different curriculum areas.

Creative practitioners also highlighted the importance of embedding creative opportunities within the mainstream curriculum to enrich children's artistic skills development and broaden their approaches to learning. Reflecting on the creative residencies programme, one practitioner noted:

"It's, it just opens up such a world of opportunities to enable people to approach the curriculum in a more creative way. It's been such a privilege to gain kind of insight into different ways of doing things and to see what, what has actually been produced by the children."

Creative Practitioner - Creative Residencies

Collectively, this evidence suggests that the Cultural Education Hub has supported the development of a broad range of creative and technical skills, whilst encouraging more creative approaches to learning, problem-solving and self-expression.

4.1.3 Increased confidence in using creative arts among teachers

Analysis of teacher reflections indicates that the creative programmes significantly increased teachers' confidence in using creative arts within their own practice. The workshops and residencies acted as professional learning opportunities, equipping teachers with transferable creative strategies that could be embedded across the curriculum.

Teachers reported that the practical, exploratory nature of the workshops enabled them to develop creative skills that were directly applicable to classroom teaching. Their reflections highlighted how hands-on, open-ended activities supported both pedagogical innovation and deeper engagement with subject content.

“The practical, hands-on approach was particularly useful and could be easily adapted for classroom teaching. Using creative activities to explore rivers helped deepen understanding and engagement, and the emphasis on discussion, collaboration and exploration would work well across the curriculum. The workshop also provided ideas for using open-ended tasks to encourage curiosity and creativity, which I would incorporate into future lessons.”

Teacher - Creatives in Schools

This feedback illustrates how creatives programmes can strengthen teachers' confidence by offering concrete, adaptable methods that enrich learning experiences and promote enquiry-based approaches in their everyday practice. In doing so, the Cultural Education Hub is helping to build teachers' capacity to embed creative approaches more consistently as part of a broad and balanced curriculum, extending the impact of activity beyond individual workshops and projects.

4.1.4 Increased confidence among creative practitioners to apply and develop their artistic practice within educational settings

Analysis of practitioner reflections indicates that the creative residencies strengthened creative practitioners' confidence in their own creative capacities and pedagogical approaches. The programme enabled practitioners to develop greater assurance in applying creative practices within educational contexts.

Creative practitioners described how participating in the programme enhanced their confidence in their artistic skillset and their ability to adapt creative processes in real-life contexts. Their reflections highlight the importance of working collaboratively in school environments to strengthen their professional practice.

“I think it's given me a lot of confidence in my own, I suppose, skill base that may be other work because it's obviously we did have, there was a proof that having been able to kind of create that on the go has been really wonderful and also to be really reflective in my own process.”

Creative Practitioner – Creatives in Schools

Across the programmes, evidence suggests that the Cultural Education Hub is helping creative practitioners to apply their artistic expertise more confidently within educational settings, whilst supporting ongoing reflection, adaptation and professional growth.

4.2 Increased Access and Participation in Cultural Activity and the Creative Arts

Lack of access to cultural activity and the creative arts for children and young people is a well-documented and continuing concern in England, with the gap in participation between disadvantaged children and young people and their peers now a stated national priority. The reasons behind the lack of access and participation amongst some groups include location (e.g. living far from venues), cost (e.g. for schools and for families) and social considerations (e.g. children, young people and families not feeling welcome in cultural spaces). The Cultural Education Hub programmes were designed to address these challenges of access and participation.

The Culture Education Hub has worked, both directly and indirectly, to bring a positive impact on teachers' awareness and appreciation of the benefits to learning and teaching, and to children and young people's development and well-being, of engaging with creative arts and cultural activities. This was achieved directly through CPD opportunities with regional cultural organisations and freelance creative practitioners. Indirectly, teachers and head teachers who worked with, or experienced, a creative practitioner embedded in their school, reported on their learning from witnessing the ways of working used by creative practitioners and their intention to adopt or adapt what they had learned.

This theme is reflected across five interrelated areas of impact: increased access to creative spaces and experiences for children and young people; greater exposure to creative industries and environments amongst educators; enhanced participation in professional learning opportunities; improved access and widening participation; and increased engagement of creative practitioners within educational contexts. Together, these outcomes highlight the Hub's contribution to broadening participation in cultural education across the West of England.

“Opportunities for these sorts of things are really, really important in actually giving young people in this area, in such an area of disadvantage, an opportunity to express themselves through theatre, through drama, through the arts.”

School Senior Leader – Creative Residencies

4.2.1 Increased access to creative spaces among children and young people

The evidence indicates that increased access was achieved in a variety of ways, while the common thread was each creative practitioner worked in a collaborative way with education professionals, children and young people to tailor the activities to each context.

One creative residency was co-created between a rural primary school and a performance artist to offer an extended opportunity for children to engage in art forms from an unfamiliar cultural context. The access offered by this residency was reflected on in the following terms:

“I think the biggest point for us which will influence a lot of the direction of the school moving forward is the authentic voice. [Creative Practitioner] has come in as an authentic voice. It's about his own culture. It's not one of us teaching about African culture, I think that's been really important because it's made it... a lot more honest.”

School Senior Leader - Creative Residencies

In another school, access to a creative residency meant the opportunity to engage in curriculum areas which may not, normally, be seen as straightforward in that school, as expressed below:

“Our children, they can be quite challenging to engage and in those slightly more unstructured activities like drama, music, those sorts of things, can lose it quite quickly and then you know that that you have those problems. But I think that there was a very clear ability for [CP] to build those relationships really quickly with the children. And I think the greatest and the most successful work we ever do with any outside person coming in to work with us is around their ability to establish those relationships really quickly and get the best out of the children”

School Senior Leader - Creative Residencies

Creative Careers events also provided secondary-aged pupils with opportunities to experience creative activities and engage with potential future pathways.

“We got to use our own ideas and design. It was fun making stuff out of clay.”

Young Person – Creative Careers

Across the evidence, it is clear that arts activities may not be regular or even routine parts of children and young people's school days. Teachers frequently highlighted the importance of creative opportunities for pupils who might not typically view themselves as creative, suggesting that carefully structured activities can help broaden engagement and reduce barriers to participation.

“Many children didn't consider themselves arty, but the simplicity of the workshop and all the scaffolding that supported it enabled those less confident to do a lovely piece of work.”

Teaching Assistant - Creatives in Schools

4.2.2 Increased exposure to creative industries and direct engagement with creative environments among teachers

Evidence suggests that the Cultural Education Hub increased teachers' exposure to creative industries, cultural organisations and creative practitioners through both dedicated professional development opportunities and the embedding of creative practitioners within schools. Through the Creative and Cultural Teacher Encounter programme, teachers engaged directly with creative freelancers, cultural organisations and creative learning

environments, providing opportunities to develop their understanding of creative career pathways and the wider creative sector.

“Today has given me a broad insight into the vast array of careers available to our young people. I am keenly inspired and eager to share it with all my students.”

Teacher – Creative Careers

Teachers’ exposure to creative practitioners in their schools was very positively evaluated as is shown here:

“Something I really think is worth saying from a school's perspective is the idea of doing a big project like this. It was so lovely to have professional people who know what they're doing.”

Teacher - Creative Residencies

The feedback suggests that teachers benefited from witnessing creative practitioners bringing their expertise into school and working with the children who teachers know well. Teachers noted that the impact of working with a creative practitioner can be felt after the residency comes to an end and that the residencies can inspire future direction for development of schools’ creative approach to curriculum:

“The vision is to enable the constraints of the National Curriculum to be taught in the most inclusive and creative way possible. I think for us it was a vision initially, and it's becoming more of a reality. I think there's obviously still room for growth... thinking what other things we can be taking outdoors and teaching in a creative way. It's given a really, really good basis for that progression.”

School Senior Leader - Creative Residencies

Collectively, the evidence suggests that the Cultural Education Hub has increased teachers' exposure to creative practice, cultural organisations and creative career pathways, whilst also supporting new ideas and approaches that can inform future curriculum development and classroom practice.

4.2.3 Enhanced participation in professional training and development programmes among teachers and creative practitioners

Evidence suggests that participation in Cultural Education Hub activity increased engagement with professional learning and development opportunities amongst both teachers and creative practitioners. Through observations of creative practice, mentoring, networking, training and reflective activities, participants reported developing new skills, knowledge and confidence that informed their professional practice.

“it's enabling teachers to be more creative practitioners and that has changed the level of engagement of the adults as well. The team feels very strong and very together and that's such a nice feeling because this is what you want, isn't it?”

School Senior Leader - Creative Residencies

For creative practitioners also, professional development for being an artist working in schools, was a key part of the WEMA programmes on offer. Different formats for professional development included online learning on education-specific topics, such as safeguarding and inclusive practice, as well as opportunities to network and reflect on practice and to be mentored.

The impacts of each professional development format offered were positively evaluated by creative practitioners as shown below:

“I reflected on and refined my teaching practice throughout the project – I kept a creative journal throughout the project this helped me connect by thinking more deeply about what I’m doing”

Creative Practitioner - Creatives in Schools

“Working with WEMA, the mentor and the school collaboratively has given me more confidence to know what I’m capable of.”

Creative Practitioner - Creative Residencies

“Being part of this programme has been a really positive experience. Having the space and support to develop an idea into a full workshop has been invaluable.”

Creative Practitioner - Creative Residencies

“One of the real highlights was meeting the other artists and creatives. Hearing about their ideas and practices was inspiring, and it helped broaden my thinking about my own work.”

Creative Practitioner - Creative Residencies

This evidence suggests that the Cultural Education Hub has increased participation in professional learning opportunities across the region, supporting educators and creative practitioners to develop their skills, confidence, networks and professional practice.

4.2.4 Improved access and widening participation for children and young people

The Cultural Education Hub has contributed to widening participation in cultural and creative activity by adopting place-based and inclusive approaches tailored to the needs of different communities, schools and children. The impact of this place-based approach was seen in terms of inclusivity in all its forms, including social class and ability and disability.

For example, role modelling played a part in the success of one creative residency in a secondary school in an urban area. The reflection below sets out the importance of young people seeing their own lived experience reflected in the lives of creative practitioners who engage with them. A creative practitioner from a working-class background recognised the importance of being a role-model for the young people in the residency school:

“Most people that young people from working class communities engage with as creatives are not from that lived experience. And that's problematic if there's never ever any representation. So, I feel like that's a lot to do with why this was successful.”

Creative Practitioner - Creative Residencies

Social disadvantage and the importance of access to arts experiences were strongly connected in the following reflection from a primary school headteacher whose school hosted a drama and creative writing residency:

“Opportunities for these sorts of things are really, really important in actually giving young people in this area, in such an area of disadvantage, an opportunity to express themselves through theatre, through drama, through the arts.”

School Senior Leader - Creative Residencies

Access to creative forms, such as dance, was seen as having a valuable impact on young people in a special school with their class teacher noting impacts beyond the sessions with the creative practitioner:

“One last thing that was really amazing as well was the communication ... teachers kept thinking and saying, ‘how come they can focus for that long? And they are so interested in all of these stories and the books and the videos... They were all super engaged and they could talk about that. So when [CP] is gone ... they keep talking about this stuff with the teachers, what they saw, what they felt, or the music, and how did it make them feel, or things like that. And that was for me the best part of it, because that's really hard for our cohort.”

Special School Teacher – Creative Residencies

This evidence suggests that the Cultural Education Hub's place-based and responsive approach has helped widen participation in cultural and creative activity by reaching children and young people with diverse needs, experiences and backgrounds.

4.2.5 Increased engagement of creative artists in educational environments

Feedback indicates that creative practitioners' work with WEMA has increased their engagement in educational environments. This refers to the way in which creative practitioners worked in schools, in ways that broke away from what may be the norm whereby a practitioner is “parachuted in” and then leaves. Creative practitioners reflected on how the projects positively influenced their ways of engaging with children and young people in schools, supported by the approach brokered by WEMA.

“This grant gave me the rare chance to lead as an artist, not just as an educator, I could shape the sessions around creativity and curiosity, not fixed learning outcomes.”

Creative Practitioner - Creatives in Schools.

“[The residency] meant that I can explore particular methods of art making in a really in-depth way because it's not a one off. So for example, like the storytelling element of the sessions, because it wasn't a one-off performance I could actually engage with the children because I knew them. So there was much more of an exchange with the children.”

Creative Practitioner - Creative Residencies

Across the themes in 4.2, evidence suggests that the Cultural Education Hub has made an important contribution to widening access and participation in cultural education across the West of England. By creating opportunities for engagement with creative practitioners, cultural organisations, professional learning and creative environments, the Hub has helped children and young people, teachers and creative professionals access experiences that may not otherwise have been available to them.

4.3 Strengthened Regional Infrastructure and Capacity for Cultural and Creative Education Activity

The evidence indicates that the Cultural Education Hub is beginning to strengthen the regional infrastructure for cultural and creative education across the West of England. This is reflected in data which points to increases in workforce capacity, school-level provision, and the prioritisation of creative activity within education settings.

This impact has been achieved through three interrelated mechanisms. First, the Hub has expanded the regional workforce by supporting creative practitioners to develop and deliver structured, school-facing offers. Second, it has increased schools' capacity to plan and prioritise creative provision, particularly where activity is aligned to identified school needs. Third, it has generated a growing body of resources, practice insight and guidance, creating the foundations for sustained and scalable activity beyond the lifetime of individual programmes.

A particularly significant feature of the hub model is its emphasis on responsive, co-produced approaches—most notably within the Creative Residencies programme. By placing school priorities at the heart of decision-making and fostering collaboration between educators and practitioners, the Hub has established a delivery model that not only enhances immediate outcomes, but also strengthens the conditions for longer-term engagement, improved value for money, and sustained benefit for children and young people.

“Delivering workshops... has enabled us to bring together our creatives and school children across the region, bridging the divide...”

Creative Practitioner – Creatives in Schools and Teacher CPD

“This time last year we didn’t have a cohort large enough to run a Performing Arts of Drama BTEC and just by running this one project we now have a class of 30. So yeah, I think what it does for us is it brings back the performing arts.”

School Senior Leader – Creative Residencies

4.3.1 Development of a hub model which ensures efficient and effective distribution of resources/funding, responsive to schools’ feedback, priorities and needs

The Cultural Education Hub has developed - and begun to evidence - a more coordinated and responsive model for distributing cultural education resource across the region. This represents a shift from fragmented or ad hoc provision towards a more collaborative system in which funding, expertise and opportunities are more strategically aligned with school needs and local context.

Evidence from stakeholders indicates that this model has reduced key structural barriers within the system—particularly those relating to access, coordination and confidence. For creative practitioners, the Hub has simplified engagement with schools by providing a clear entry point and reducing administrative and communication challenges. For schools, it has increased confidence in both the quality and relevance of provision, enabling them to engage more readily with external partners.

“As a solo creative educator, it is almost impossible to make initial contact with new schools and thereby broaden the range of young people and educational establishments with whom I work. The Creatives in Schools programme gave me exactly that.”

Creative Practitioners – Creatives in Schools and Teacher CPD

Crucially, the impact of this model extends beyond the allocation of funding alone. By integrating resource distribution with training, mentoring, teacher CPD and ongoing evaluation, the Hub has created a more coherent system through which activities are designed, delivered and refined. This has enabled more targeted use of limited resource, improved alignment with school priorities, and strengthened the quality and consistency of provision across the region.

As a result, the Hub is not only facilitating individual projects, but demonstrating a potentially scalable model for how funding, brokerage, coordination and quality assurance can be combined to improve efficiency and maximise impact within cultural education systems.

“I have been able to participate in an extended in-depth collaboration with two classes over a period of months, which would not have been affordable to the school.”

Creative Practitioner – Creatives Residencies and Creatives in Schools

4.3.2 Increased capacity for creative and cultural education through providing opportunities for freelance creative practitioners to access funding and professional development

The Cultural Education Hub has strengthened regional capacity for cultural and creative education by enabling freelance practitioners to develop sustainable, school-facing practice. Through a combination of grant funding, mentoring and professional development, practitioners were supported not only to deliver funded activity, but to build the skills, confidence and resources required to continue working in education settings beyond the lifetime of individual projects.

Across the programme, this has included support for 31 creative practitioners, the allocation of £119,000 in funding and commissions, and the delivery of 13 professional development sessions. These inputs have contributed to evidence which indicates an increase in workforce capacity across the region.

End of project reports from the Creatives in Schools programme highlight that practitioners were able to develop new workshops and offers specifically tailored to school contexts, alongside an improved understanding of curriculum, pedagogy and engagement with children and young people. Importantly, whilst feedback indicates that access to resource continues to present significant challenges, there is some evidence that this input has translated into sustained activity beyond initial funding periods. Many practitioners shared that they continue to deliver work in schools including adapting provision for new age groups and using resources developed through the programme to extend their reach.

"I have since delivered 16 more workshops, adjusting the plan to suit younger year groups. I have also been able to use the resources again for these additional workshops."

Creative Practitioner – Creatives in Schools Programme

This evidence highlights the cumulative nature of the Hub's approach. Funding has enabled practitioners to invest in materials and develop high-quality provision, while mentoring and professional development have strengthened their ability to design and deliver impactful work. Together, these elements have contributed to a more skilled, confident and adaptable creative workforce, with an increased likelihood of sustained engagement in cultural education.

"The project gave me considerable experience working with art departments in schools which I have now rolled out more widely across the UK."

Creative Practitioner – Creatives in Schools

"Going forward, I am hoping to deliver more of these sessions. I will be applying for other grants in the hope of continuing this work."

Creative Practitioner – Creatives in Schools

4.3.3 Enhanced organisational capacity for schools to sustain creative activity

The Cultural Education Hub appears to have strengthened organisational capacity within partner schools, increasing their ability to sustain and embed creative and cultural education within and beyond individual programmes. Evidence indicates that engagement with the Hub has not only enabled one-off activity, but in many cases has influenced how schools prioritise, plan and deliver creative provision over time.

This impact is particularly evident in the way schools have expanded and sustained their engagement with creative opportunities. Feedback indicates that some schools have actively sought to increase the number and range of creative experiences available to pupils, often building on initial engagement with the Hub to secure further provision or embed repeat activity for subsequent cohorts.

“We have striven for an increased number of sessions from different creative professionals having seen the impact of live music in school...”

Teacher – Creative Residencies

In some cases, this has translated into more significant structural changes to provision. Schools involved with longer term residencies report examples including introducing new courses, strengthening curriculum offer, and ensuring continuity of experience for future year groups, demonstrating a shift from short-term engagement to longer-term planning and delivery.

“We are offering a KS4 course for the first time in 8 years.”

Teacher – Creative Residencies

The Hub’s contribution to teacher development has also played a key role in sustaining this activity. Through access to artist-led CPD and collaborative working, teachers have developed new skills and approaches that are now embedded within everyday practice, supporting ongoing creative provision without continued external input.

“We now use cyanotypes routinely in Photography & Art lessons... this has allowed some of our students to achieve higher grades.”

Teacher – Creatives in Schools / CPD

Taken together, this evidence suggests that the Cultural Education Hub has not only increased access to creative activity but has strengthened the internal capacity of schools to maintain and build upon this provision over time.

4.3.4 Improved quality and consistency of creative provision for schools through curation, mentoring and design

A key function of the Cultural Education Hub has been the improvement in the quality and consistency of creative provision available to schools, driven by its emphasis on curation,

mentoring and intentional programme design. Rather than supporting isolated or ad hoc activity, the Hub has developed a more structured approach in which creative work is carefully planned, supported and refined in collaboration with schools.

Evidence from across the programmes highlights the central role of mentoring and professional dialogue in strengthening the design and delivery of creative activity. Creative practitioners consistently report that structured support enabled them to clarify the purpose of their work, align it more closely with educational contexts, and develop more coherent and impactful workshop models.

“The mentoring sessions were the best – they really helped me understand and revise the aim of my workshop, followed by a great collaborative scaffolding session, putting together all of our ideas and making them flow.”

Creative Practitioner – Creatives in Schools

This emphasis on co-design and iterative development has contributed to greater consistency in the quality of provision across the region. Activities are more likely to be aligned with school priorities, appropriately structured for different age groups, and delivered with a clearer understanding of learning outcomes and engagement strategies.

“My confidence in working with schools grew significantly throughout the project. Having the support of my mentor was a key part of this process... helping me to think more strategically and refine my practice.”

Creative Practitioner – Creatives in Schools

Taken together, this suggests that the Cultural Education Hub is not only increasing the volume of creative activity, but also improving its overall quality and effectiveness. By embedding curation, mentoring and collaborative design within its model, the Hub is helping to ensure that creative provision is more intentional, consistent and impactful across different settings.

“The research illuminates the central role of the West of England Music and Arts’ Cultural Education Hub in bringing about meaningful, impactful change for and with young people, schools, creative practitioners, cultural organisations and communities in inclusive and cost-effective ways, and the importance of strategically targeting limited resources and funding for maximum impact”

Dr Ally Daubney – WEMA Research Report Author

4.4 Improved Connections, Pathways and Creative Futures

Through targeted and coordinated activity, the Cultural Education Hub has strengthened connections between schools, creative practitioners, cultural organisations and young

people across the region. Evidence suggests that these connections have increased awareness of creative opportunities and career pathways, improved access to creative experiences and professional networks, and helped support aspirations relating to creative futures.

The Hub's role as a broker and connector appears particularly significant within this theme. By bringing together schools, creative practitioners, employers and cultural organisations, it has created new routes through which children and young people can encounter creative careers, while also enabling schools and practitioners to access new networks and opportunities.

"Overall, being involved in the programme was a brilliant experience. Meeting and connecting with other creative practitioners was extremely valuable and helped me feel part of a wider creative community."

Creative Practitioner – Creatives in Schools

"It allowed me to find out about creative industries and opportunities I didn't know existed, (such as) the Circus BTEC."

Young Person – Creative Careers

"the hub kind of plays that role in terms of pulling all of those threads together a little bit and being a connector... the joiner between artists and cultural organisations and schools and children and young people."

Cultural Education Hub Programme Lead (2024-2026)

4.4.1 Increased awareness and visibility of creative careers/economy and pathways among children and young people

Through the Creative Careers programme, the Cultural Education Hub has increased awareness and visibility of creative career pathways amongst children and young people across the region. Working with 20 cultural organisations and engaging over 430 children and young people through workshops, encounters and careers events, the programme has provided direct access to information, experiences and professionals from across the creative and cultural sector.

For many young people, opportunities to engage directly with creative practitioners, cultural organisations and creative employers can be limited. By acting as a regional connector between schools, practitioners and cultural organisations, the Hub has helped to broaden awareness of the diversity of opportunities available within the creative economy and improve access to information about future pathways.

Feedback from participating young people indicates that the programme increased awareness of qualifications, training routes and employment opportunities that they had not previously encountered. Many participants reported discovering new creative pathways

and developing a clearer understanding of how their existing interests and subjects could link to future study or employment.

“I’ve not had opportunities to explore stop motion before and I really enjoyed it, so that could be something I look at.”

“(I learned) there are many different jobs... for example in theatre there isn’t only acting, there is design, lighting and costumes.”

Young People – Creative Careers Event

Evidence also suggests that the programme has influenced the knowledge and awareness of teachers. Alongside activity for young people, the Hub delivered a dedicated Teacher Encounter programme, enabling teachers to engage directly with creative practitioners, cultural organisations and creative career pathways. Teacher feedback indicates that this increased their understanding of the breadth of opportunities available and strengthened their confidence to support young people's exploration of creative futures.

“I’m leaving inspired and eager to share it all with my students.”

Teacher – Creative Careers Teacher Encounter

Taken together, this evidence suggests that the Cultural Education Hub has not only increased young people's awareness of creative careers, but has also strengthened schools' capacity to signpost and support future creative pathways. This provides an important foundation for longer-term aspirations, participation and progression within the creative and cultural sectors

4.4.2 Enhanced interests and aspirations amongst children and young people in relation to creative futures

Evidence suggests that participation in Hub-supported activity has not only increased awareness of creative pathways, but has also contributed to enhanced interest in, and aspiration towards, creative futures amongst children and young people. Across multiple programmes, participants described being inspired by creative experiences, developing new interests, and beginning to consider how their existing passions could connect to future opportunities.

This was particularly evident where young people had opportunities to work directly with creative practitioners, experience professional creative environments, or engage in activities that encouraged them to reflect on their own interests and ambitions. Feedback indicates that these experiences often moved beyond increasing knowledge of available pathways, helping young people to see creative activity as something that could play a more significant role in their future education or employment choices.

“It helped me consider my love for acting.”

"I want to go into a creative career, it helped me think about how I can use my music GCSE in future."

Young People – Creative Careers Programme

Teacher feedback also suggests that these experiences generated enthusiasm for further engagement with creative activity, with participants continuing discussions beyond the events themselves and encouraging future involvement.

"Students had a fab day, they have been buzzing at school about it and all had different highlights of the day."

"Several of the students recommended to me that I take a group next year as well."

Teachers – Creative Careers Event

Taken together, this evidence suggests that the Cultural Education Hub is helping young people not only to understand the range of creative opportunities available to them, but also to develop greater interest, enthusiasm and aspiration in relation to creative futures. While longer-term research would be required to understand the influence on future career decisions, there is evidence that these experiences are encouraging young people to consider new possibilities and pathways for themselves.

4.4.3 Strengthened connections between schools, creative practitioners, and cultural organisations

A significant aspect of the Cultural Education Hub's impact has been its role in strengthening connections between schools, creative practitioners and cultural organisations across the region. Evidence suggests that the Hub has acted as an effective broker and connector, helping to address barriers that previously limited collaboration and creating opportunities for new partnerships, relationships and professional networks to develop.

These strengthened connections are evident across multiple levels of the cultural education ecosystem. For creative practitioners, the Hub has provided access to schools and education settings that may otherwise have been difficult to engage with independently. Practitioners consistently highlighted the value of WEMA's brokerage role in helping them build new relationships and establish connections with schools.

"I didn't find it easy to make connections with schools myself.... several schools came to me through the WEMA channel, so that worked well."

Creative Practitioner – Creatives in Schools

In addition, it has also supported the development of peer networks amongst creative practitioners themselves. Feedback indicates that opportunities to meet, collaborate and share experiences with other practitioners were an important element of the programme

and contributed to a stronger sense of belonging within the wider creative education community.

"I really enjoyed meeting the other creative practitioners at the training day and have stayed in touch with some over the duration of the project and beyond."

Creative Practitioner – Creatives CPD and Creatives in Schools

Beyond professional networks, a particularly noteworthy impact of the Cultural Education Hub's approach was the generation of new connections between schools and their immediate local communities. There was particularly strong evidence from the Creatives Residencies programme demonstrating the hub's potential to facilitate partnerships between schools, creative practitioners, local residents and community organisations, creating opportunities for children and young people to engage with local histories, cultural assets and community events. These connections appear to have generated benefits beyond the immediate participants, strengthening relationships between schools and their local communities and creating a sense of shared ownership and belonging.

"I am immensely proud and deeply grateful for this wonderful experience and opportunity our pupils have been given... [it has] helped them form meaningful connections with the place they come to learn each day."

"The highlights - going over to the Bottle Yard [Studios] and our children being able to see what was in place over there and so close on their doorstep. I think everything that they've been out and seen has been really, really buzzy."

School Senior Leaders – Creative Residencies

4.4.4 Enhanced pedagogical expertise and new pathways to develop education offers for creative practitioners

The Cultural Education Hub has played an important role in developing the pedagogical expertise and professional practice of creative practitioners working with children and young people. Through a coordinated offer of grants, mentoring, training, professional development and peer learning opportunities, the Hub has supported 31 creative practitioners to strengthen their understanding of educational contexts and develop their capacity to work effectively with schools and other education settings. Evidence of this impact is particularly strong within the Creatives in Schools programme, but is also reflected across the Creative Residencies and wider practitioner development activity.

Practitioners consistently reported that participation enhanced their understanding of how to plan and deliver activity in formal education settings, whilst strengthening their ability to

design workshops and learning experiences that respond effectively to the needs of children and young people. Several practitioners also reflected on how the programme influenced their future professional aspirations, helped them develop new education-focused offers, and opened up opportunities to pursue further work within schools and other educational environments.

"This positive experience has reinforced my passion for becoming a full-time art teacher."

"I discovered a new passion for working with kids because of it, I'd love to do this in the future. I've also gained such valuable skills in designing and structuring my workshops!"

"This experience has taught me to plan thoroughly, considering every detail and anticipating various scenarios to ensure a safe and engaging environment for everyone."

"It gave me the confidence to go into school believing in my workshop and my capacity of delivering it."

Creative Practitioners – Creatives in Schools

The Hub's integrated approach appears to have been particularly important for practitioners with limited prior experience of working in formal education settings. Through the Creatives in Schools programme, 20 independent artists received support to develop and deliver creative learning activities in schools, including eight practitioners with no previous experience of working in formal education. Across the cohort, practitioners reported that the programme had enabled them to develop new education-focused offers, adapt their creative practice for school contexts, and build relationships with schools that could support future work. Evidence from the Creative Residencies further suggests that opportunities to work collaboratively with teachers, engage in reflective practice, and learn alongside education professionals contributed to practitioners' ongoing professional development and understanding of effective pedagogical approaches.

Taken together, this evidence suggests that the Hub has not only expanded opportunities for children and young people, but has also helped develop a more skilled, confident and education-engaged creative workforce within the region, strengthening the capacity of practitioners to contribute to cultural and creative learning in the future.

5. Conclusions

This review has identified consistent evidence that the Cultural Education Hub has generated positive impact for children and young people, teachers, schools, creative practitioners, cultural organisations and funders across the West of England. Evidence indicates impact across participation, confidence, skills development, access, professional

practice, organisational capacity and creative futures. While this review does not constitute a formal impact evaluation, the breadth and consistency of evidence suggests that the Hub has established a credible and effective model for supporting cultural and creative education across the region.

A particularly significant finding is that the impact of the Hub extends beyond the delivery of individual activities. The evidence suggests that its most substantial contribution may lie in its ability to connect schools, practitioners, cultural organisations and communities through a coordinated model that combines funding, brokerage, mentoring, professional development and partnership working. Rather than operating as a standalone programme, the Hub has begun to strengthen the wider ecosystem within which cultural education takes place

The evidence suggests that many impacts have the potential to extend beyond the lifetime of individual programmes. New practitioner offers, strengthened school provision, enhanced professional networks, local partnerships and increased awareness of creative pathways provide important foundations for future activity. However, many of these outcomes have been enabled through dedicated coordination, brokerage, mentoring and strategic investment. Whilst the benefits of this work are likely to continue beyond individual projects, sustaining and expanding impact at a regional scale is likely to depend on continued investment in the relationships, structures and support mechanisms that underpin the Cultural Education Hub model.

Through this analysis, the findings suggest that the Cultural Education Hub has successfully demonstrated the value of a coordinated and locally responsive approach to cultural education. Through connecting schools, creative practitioners, cultural organisations and communities, it has increased access to creative opportunities, strengthened regional capacity, and established foundations for future cultural education activity across the West of England. The evidence suggests that continued strategic investment in this model has the potential not only to sustain these benefits, but to deepen and extend them for future cohorts of children and young people.

6. Key Links and Further Information

[Cultural Education Hub Website](#) - Overview of the Cultural Education Hub, its aims and programmes

[Cultural Education Hub Research](#) - Previous reports and evaluation related to the Hub

[Cultural Education Hub Case Studies](#) - Project case studies and examples

[UWE Bristol Rapid Research Review](#) - *Creative and Cultural Practitioners Working with Young People and Teachers in Formal Education.*



Appendix 1: Cultural Education Hub - Impact Report (2024-2026)

Summary

The Cultural Education Hub

The Cultural Education Hub represents a major initiative across the West of England region, supported by £310,000 of initial funding from the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority (WEMCA) and Arts Council England. Its primary aim is to ‘build connections between schools and creative practitioners to offer young people quality cultural education opportunities in the West of England’.

The Cultural Education Hub model facilitates creative connections and networks, to provide a catalyst for the introduction of new activities and opportunities, and to use this to offer quality enhancement for cultural education across the region. It does this through playing a key practical and strategic role, aiming to target resource to respond to local need and maximise impact by delivering and coordinating carefully planned programmes which embed key elements including mentoring, professional development, evaluation and network development. Its core work has included the creation of a set of programmes which partner creative practitioners with schools, deliver continuing professional development opportunities and provide creative careers events.

Purpose

West of England Music and Arts (WEMA) commissioned the University of the West of England to conduct a high-level review of the impact of its Cultural Education Hub between 2024 and 2026.

The review was conducted through secondary analysis of a wide range of evidence collated by WEMA across this period, including stakeholder feedback, project reports, commissioned research, engagement data and project films. This data was supplemented by additional collection of impact testimonials and an interview with the Hub’s Programme Lead. The full impact report is available at <https://wema.org.uk/CEH-Impact-26>

Reach and Engagement

The Cultural Education Hub has achieved significant reach across the West of England through creative experiences, partnerships, professional development and careers activity, which benefit children and young people, teachers, creative practitioners, schools and

enhancing regional infrastructure for creative education. Key engagement data and regional coverage are shown in figures 1 and 2 below.

Cultural Education Hub Impact Dashboard

West of England | 2024-2026



Figure 1. Cultural Education Hub Impact Dashboard

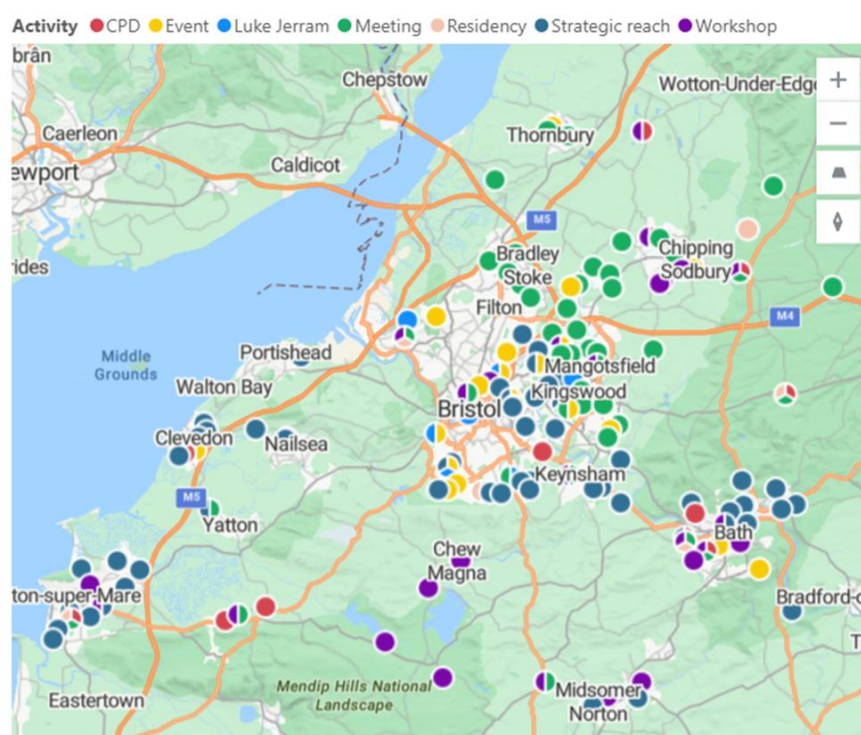


Figure 2. Cultural Education Hub Activity Across the West of England

Key Areas of Impact

Analysis of feedback, research and engagement data identified four key areas of impact across the Cultural Education Hub's programmes. Together, these findings demonstrate how

the Hub has generated benefits for children and young people, teachers, creative practitioners, schools and communities across the West of England.

Impact Area 1: Enhanced Creative Skills, Confidence and Capability

Evidence indicates that participation in opportunities coordinated by the Cultural Education Hub has strengthened creative skills, confidence and expression amongst children and young people. Meanwhile, for teachers and creative practitioners, the programmes have led to increased confidence and capabilities in the provision of creative education within formal education settings.

“It made me more confident, because I was picked to do something in front of the whole class. I didn't think I would ever do that.”

Young Person - Creative Careers

“Many children didn't consider themselves arty, but the simplicity of the workshop and all the scaffolding that supported it enabled those less confident to do a lovely piece of work.”

Teaching Assistant - Creatives in Schools

Impact Area 2: Increased Access and Participation in Cultural Activity and the Creative Arts

The Cultural Education Hub has expanded access to creative experiences, cultural organisations, creative environments and professional learning opportunities, enabling children and young people, teachers and creative practitioners to build skills and confidence through opportunities that may not otherwise have been available.

“The highlights - going over to the Bottle Yard [Studios] and our children being able to see what was in place over there and so close on their doorstep.”

School Senior Leader – Creative Residencies

“Opportunities for these sorts of things are really, really important in actually giving young people in this area, in such an area of disadvantage, an opportunity to express themselves through theatre, through drama, through the arts.”

Headteacher – Creative Residencies

Impact Area 3: Strengthened Regional Infrastructure and Capacity for Cultural and Creative Education

Through funding, mentoring, professional development and brokerage, the Cultural Education Hub has strengthened regional infrastructure and capacity for cultural and creative education. This has included enhancing creative practitioner capability, supporting schools to sustain and develop creative activity and introducing a coordinated and collaborative approach to cultural education across the West of England.

“This time last year we didn't have a cohort large enough to run a Performing Arts or Drama BTEC and just by running this one project we now have a class of 30.”

School Senior Leader – Creative Residencies

“I have since delivered 16 more workshops, adjusting the plan to suit younger year groups. I have also been able to use the resources again for these additional workshops.”

Creative Practitioner – Creatives in Schools

Impact Area 4: Improved Connections, Pathways and Creative Futures

The Cultural Education Hub has acted as a regional connector across the West of England region, bringing together schools, creative practitioners, cultural organisations and communities. For young people it has increased awareness of creative career opportunities and influenced career aspirations, whilst strengthening and developing professional networks and enabling new local partnerships for teachers, schools and creative practitioners.

“(I learned) there are many different jobs... for example in theatre there isn't only acting, there is design, lighting and costumes.”

Young Person – Creative Careers

“As a solo creative educator, it is almost impossible to make initial contact with new schools and thereby broaden the range of young people and educational establishments with whom I work. The Creatives in Schools programme gave me exactly that.”

Creative Practitioner – Creatives in Schools

Impacting the Regional Cultural Education Ecosystem

Analysis indicates the impact of the Cultural Education Hub extends beyond individual projects and activities. Evidence suggests that one of its most significant contributions may be its role in connecting schools, creative practitioners, cultural organisations and communities, through a coordinated and carefully planned model of funding, brokerage, mentoring, professional development and partnership working. The impact map in Figure 3 illustrates the interconnected and cumulative nature of the Hub's work across the West of England region.

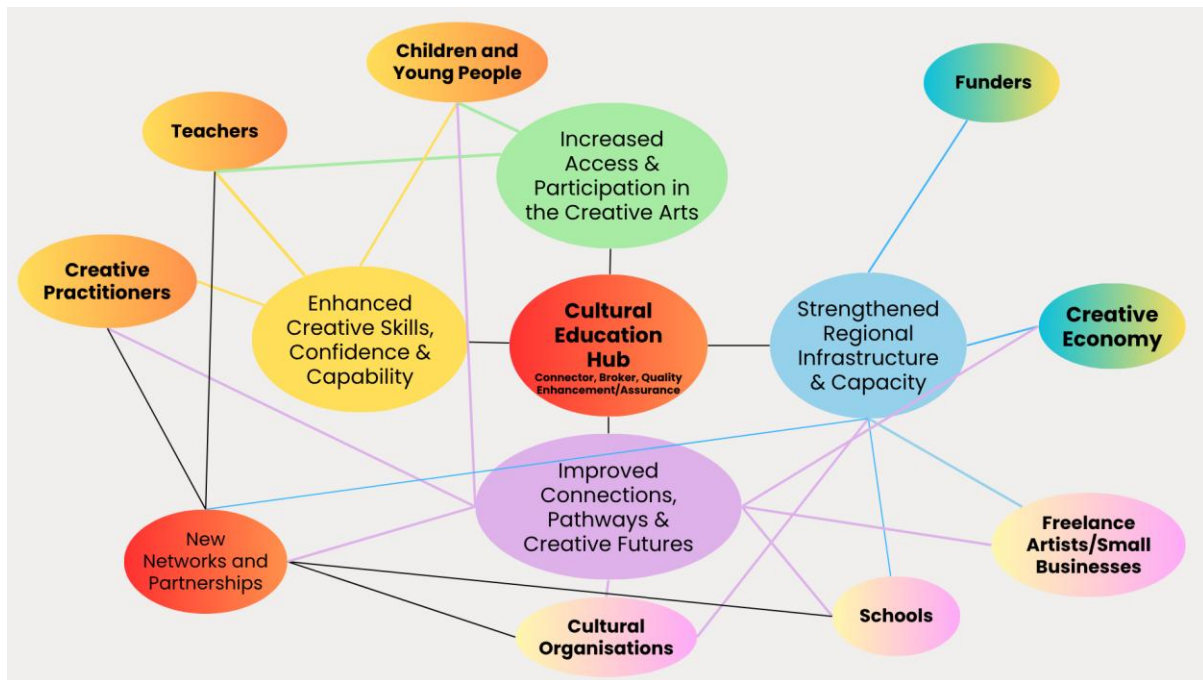


Figure 3. Cultural Education Hub Impact Map

Key Learning

- **Connections create opportunity.** Strategic brokerage and partnership-building helped schools, practitioners and cultural organisations access new opportunities and relationships.
- **Capacity-building enhances impact.** Combining funding with mentoring, professional development and collaborative design strengthened both practice and provision.
- **Place-based approaches generate wider benefits.** Tailoring activity to local needs and contexts supported inclusion, engagement and meaningful cultural participation.

Conclusions

The Cultural Education Hub has demonstrated how strategic investment in cultural education can generate impact at multiple levels: enriching opportunities for children and young people, strengthening professional practice, supporting schools, and building connections between education, culture and communities. The evidence suggests that the Hub has established an effective model for developing a more connected, ambitious and sustainable cultural education ecosystem across the West of England.