



Evaluation of CCE/NCB arts and cultural activities project with looked after children

Report to Creativity, Culture and Education

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OPM
252B Gray's Inn Road,
London WC1X 8XG

tel: 0845 055 3900
fax: 0845 055 1700
email: info@opm.co.uk
web: www.opm.co.uk

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Author	Sanah Sheikh
Quality assurance by	Ewan King
Contact details	
Main point of contact	Sanah Sheikh
Telephone	020 7239 7803
Email	ssheikh@opm.co.uk

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1. Introduction

The Office for Public Management (OPM) were commissioned in October 2011 to conduct an evaluation of the arts and cultural activities project for looked after children (between 7-11 years), managed by the National Children’s Bureau (NCB) and funded by Creativity, Culture and Education (CCE). The funding provided by CCE for the management, delivery and evaluation of the project was £76,973 .

The project includes a series of arts and cultural activities being delivered by three different arts organisations across the UK:

- Customs House, based in South Shields, Tyne & Wear
- Pie Factory Music, based in Ramsgate, Kent
- Whitewood and Fleming, based in Ulverston, Cumbria

The objective of this evaluation is to understand the impact and effectiveness of the various arts and cultural activities for the looked after children that participated. As well as understanding *what* impacts each of the projects is responsible for, we are also interested in understanding *how* each project creates those impacts. Understanding how different elements of the projects have contributed to impacts identified will be key to the sustainability of this line of work and will support the replication of projects beyond the three current settings.

1.1 About the project

The design and delivery of the arts and cultural activities differs significantly across the three sites. The table below provides an overview of each of the sites’ project plans.

	Customs House	Whitewood and Fleming	Pie Factory Music
About the sites	Customs House is a local arts centre with experience of working with a wide range of children and families in their community. The CCE/NCB project provided them with an opportunity to build expertise with looked after children and foster carers through close partnership working with the looked after children education services - The Place - and South Tyneside Fostering Services. Partners received training from NCB based on the	Whitewood and Fleming have over 25 years of experience of working with looked after children and young people, and an existing partnership with Cumbria Children’s Services. The company was involved in developing the NCB/CCE Artist Pedagogue Learning Framework, and all staff have been trained using the Framework, and receive on going supervision during their work.	Pie Factory Music have 7 years of experience of working with looked after children and young people, and an existing partnership and Service Level Agreement with Kent Children’s Services. All staff have been trained using the Artist Pedagogue Learning Framework, and receive on going supervision during their work

	Artist Pedagogue Learning Framework, as part of earlier strategic partnership development		
Artists / cultural providers	<p>Customs House recruited and trained ten artists and cultural providers including two from the private sector</p> <p>Included a mix of individual practitioners (e.g., dance instructors) and cultural organisations such as Seven Stories and The Sage Gateshead</p>	<p>The project director selected 5 artists who work closely with the organisation to deliver the project</p> <p>Included practitioners with a mix of skills: musician, film maker, poet/writer, textile specialist</p>	<p>The Pie Factory Music selected 4 of their current artists to deliver the project.</p> <p>Included practitioners with a range of skills: comic drawing, instrument making, musicians</p>
Design	<p>Foster carers/looked after children given an amount to spend on sessions with or trips to arts and cultural providers</p> <p>The Customs House' was not involved in direct delivery to the children, as the other sites were. Instead their role has been to train artists and cultural organisations and link them with foster carers/looked after children. They encouraged the foster carers/looked after children to participate and arranged group activities to cultural providers. The focus of the project was to promote existing activity, not create a project solely for looked after children, with the aim that this would make access to activities sustainable.</p> <p>Other partners involved were The</p>	<p>Four one-day sessions on the weekend in 2 different locations: Maryport, followed by Barrow, from July – October 2012</p> <p>Celebration day for all those who participated in November 2012</p> <p>Foster carers participated in all sessions as well</p>	<p>Two consecutive blocks of ten weekly sessions with two different groups. The sessions in the first group ran for 2 hours and the sessions in the second group ran for 1.5 hour. Delivery happened from June – October 2012</p> <p>Foster carers participated in three out of the ten sessions</p> <p>Celebration event for all children – December 2012</p>

	Place and fostering services Foster carers tended to participate in cultural visits but not in arts activities		
Planning	Included two day training programme held at Customs House for providers on working with looked after children in April 2012 and revisited in July 2012	Information / taster sessions for foster carers to learn about what activities would be on offer between January and March 2012 Planning days with artists and foster carers to decide locations and logistics in May / June 2012	A planning group comprising some of the delivery team, social workers, foster carers and foster children were involved to plan the project.
Recruitment	Combination of activities and information days held at Customs House, promotional materials in newsletters, phone calls and meetings with foster carers	Combination of flyers to foster carers and attendance and foster carer meetings Contact with foster carers facilitated by local authority	The first cohort was recruited through social workers and the local authority whereas the second cohort was through word of mouth. Recruitment also included phone calls to secure involvement
Participants	11 looked after children were involved, with 7 who regularly participated. Many of the foster carers own children and grandchildren also participated.	17 looked after children in Maryport (plus others outside of age group), and 6 in second cohort in Barrow	8 attended the first group and 8 attended the second group, although 1 boy dropped out from the second cohort

1.2 Methodology

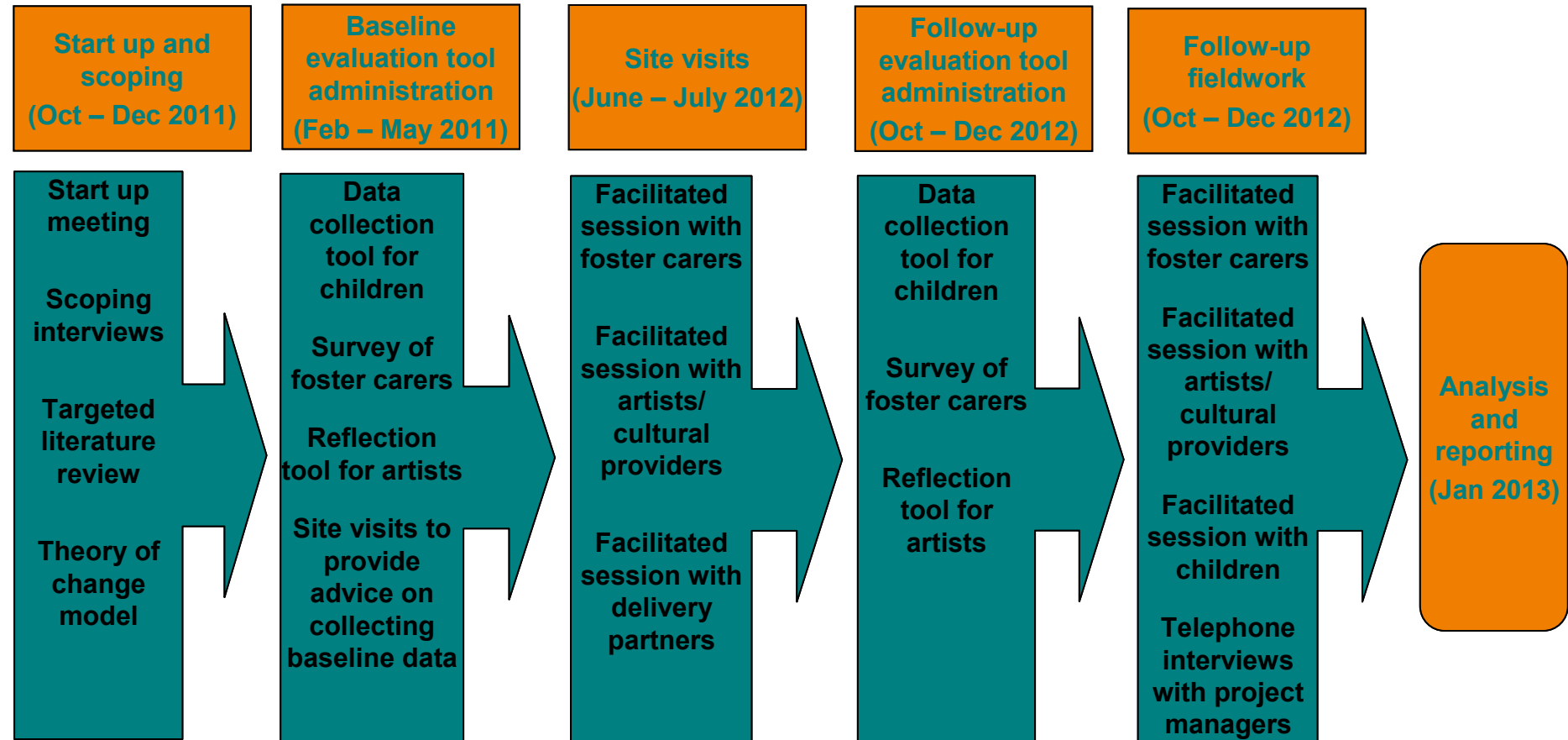
In conducting this evaluation of the arts and cultural activities project with looked after children, OPM has adopted a theory of change¹ based approach. Theory of change approaches seek to surface the theoretical or logical sequence by which an intervention seeks to achieve its desired effects. This approach to evaluation is ideally suited to interventions that are emergent and where learning and reflection on the part of all stakeholders is an integral part of the process. The aim of the theory of change approach is

¹ Chen, H.T. (1990) Theory-Driven Evaluations. Thousand Oaks, California, Sage Publications.

to build a clear understanding of how a programme or policy works, its intended outcomes and the extent to which its inputs, outputs and activities contribute towards these outcomes. The approach also offers considerable explanatory power, as it places emphasis on understanding not only whether activities/interventions produce effects but how and why.

The diagram below illustrates the stages of and research methods employed for this evaluation:

Evaluation research methodology



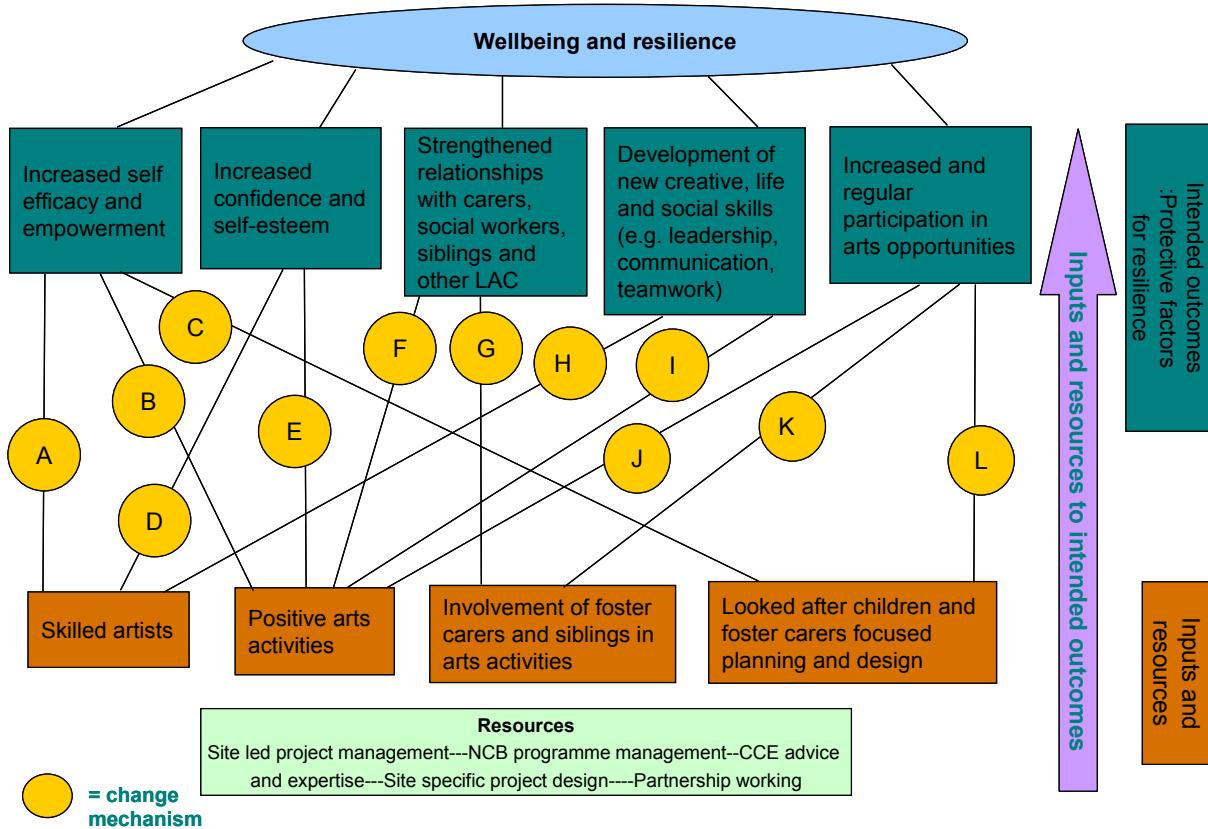
1.2.1 Start up and scoping

During the initial scoping stage of the evaluation, interviews were conducted with the project leads at each of the three projects. The purpose of these interviews was for us to get a better understanding of the intended outcomes of the projects, the design and implementation of the projects and the challenges and opportunities facing the projects. We also conducted a rapid review of a small number of key pieces of research and evidence to help us design the theory of change evaluation model.

The evidence gathered from the scoping interviews and the targeted review of literature was then used to design the theory of change model. The model was developed iteratively, with draft models being tested and refined in the light of discussions with CCE, NCB and each of the project leads. The model provides a high level visual map of the programme that articulates the:

- **intended outcomes** associated with the project;
- **range of inputs and activities** expected to be implemented to achieve these outcomes, and;
- pathways or **change mechanisms** that link the activities and inputs to the intended outcomes.

A visual map of the theory of change model is presented below. The full theory of change model can be found in Appendix 1.



1.2.2 Baseline evaluation tool administration

OPM developed three evaluation tools that were administered by each of the sites. These included:

- A simple data collection tool for looked after children, to be administered by project staff, which involved two forms of data collection. The first part of the tool involved inviting the children to indicate which person they identified with on a drawing of a tree with lots of different people positioned on the trunk and branches. The second part of the tool invited children to draw a self portrait to describe themselves – their thoughts, feelings and anything important they wanted to share about themselves.
- A short survey for foster carers that invites them to reflect on the children they care for.²
- A short reflection tool for artists or project staff members closely involved in the project to complete about the children taking part.

The purpose of these tools was to establish a baseline with respect to the intended outcomes identified in the theory of change model. We worked closely with CCE, NCB and project leads to ensure that the tools were flexible and sensitive to the needs of the children and adults involved in the projects. These tools were then administered again at the end of the project to assess the extent to which changes had occurred. OPM also developed guidance to accompany the tools that outlined for the sites how the tools should be administered.

OPM also conducted site visits to meet with the delivery team, the primary aim of which was to provide the team with advice and help them think through how they will gather baseline data. Part of this visit was also about ensuring that the team understood and were on board with the logic of the data collection tools designed by OPM. A copy of these tools and the accompanying guidance can be found in Appendix 2.

The table below illustrates the number of baseline responses that were received from each site:

	Custom's House	Whitewood and Fleming	Pie Factory Music
Children's tool	9	Maryport: 13 Barrow: 6	Cohort 1: 6 Cohort 2: 7
Foster carers' survey	11	Maryport: 10 Barrow: 6	Cohort 1: 6 Cohort 2: 6
Artist/project staff reflection tool	6	Maryport: 4 Barrow: 5	Cohort 1: 8 Cohort 2: 7

² Survey results, particularly site level analysis and differences, should be interpreted cautiously due to small sample numbers.

1.2.3 Site visits

OPM conducted site visits at the middle point of the project which consisted of three facilitated sessions: with foster carers, artists and cultural providers and the delivery team. In general, the groups were asked to reflect on:

- Involvement to date
- What's worked well / less well?
- Perceived impact of project to date
- Expectations going forward / further support that would be helpful in the future

A copy of the topic guides for the sessions can be found in Appendix 3. Attendance at the site visits is highlighted in the table below:

	Custom's House	Whitewood and Fleming	Pie Factory Music
Foster carers	3 foster carers	3 foster carers	1 foster carer
Artists / cultural providers	5 artists/cultural providers	4 artists/cultural providers and 1 representative from Whitewood and Fleming	3 artists/cultural providers and 1 representative from Pie Factory Music
Delivery team (including artists and project managers) and partner agencies	Six members of the delivery team: 2 from Customs House 2 from The Place 2 from fostering services	2 members of the delivery team: 1 support worker from an independent foster carer agency 1 social worker from Cumbria County Council	3 members of the delivery team: 2 from Pie Factory Music 1 from The Turner Contemporary Art Gallery

At this point, OPM analysed the data collected through the baseline tools and the site visits and provided CCE and NCB with an interim report outlining baseline findings and impact to date.

1.2.4 Follow-up evaluation tool administration

The three evaluation tools designed by OPM were administered again at the end of the project. The purpose of these tools was to ascertain the distance travelled by the children involved in the project. A copy of these tools can be found in Appendix 4.

The table below illustrates the number of follow-up responses that were received from each site:

	Custom's House	Whitewood and Fleming	Pie Factory Music
Children's tool	6	Maryport: 8 Barrow: 6	Cohort 1: 0 ³ Cohort 2: 5
Foster carers' survey⁴	6	Maryport: 8 Barrow: 6	Cohort 1: 4 Cohort 2: 5
Artist/project staff reflection tool	5	Maryport: 8 Barrow: 6	Cohort 1: 7 Cohort 2: 7

1.2.5 Follow-up fieldwork

Following completion of the projects, we conducted a range of other fieldwork to gather feedback from a cross section of the people involved in the project. This included:

- **Observation of a facilitated session with a sample of looked after children** – OPM designed a topic and activity guide to be used to gather feedback from the children about their involvement in the project. We recommended that someone known to the children should lead the session so that the children felt relaxed and comfortable, whilst OPM researchers observed and took notes. A member of the delivery team from the each of the projects led a series of activities with the children to help them reflect on what they had gained from being involved in the project.
- **Facilitated session with a sample of foster carers** - OPM facilitated a group discussion with a sample of foster carers to gather feedback on how they had been involved in the project and their perceptions of the impact of the project, both on them and on the children they care for.
- **Facilitated session with a sample of artists / cultural providers** – OPM facilitated a group discussion with artists / cultural providers responsible for delivering the projects to identify what worked well and less well about the project and their perceptions of the impact of the project on the children and foster carers involved in the project.
- **Telephone interviews with project managers** – The purpose of these interviews was to gather feedback on what had worked well and less well about project planning, management, design and delivery and perceptions of the impact of the project.

Copies of the research tools used for the follow-up fieldwork can be found in Appendix 5. Site participation in the follow-up fieldwork is highlighted in the table below:

³ OPM did not receive follow-up children's tools from cohort 1 because this cohort too place early in the project's life and at which point the follow-up tools had not been designed. However, we are confident that the richness and level of detail in other data sources has been sufficient to conduct a robust analysis of project delivery and impact at Pie Factory.

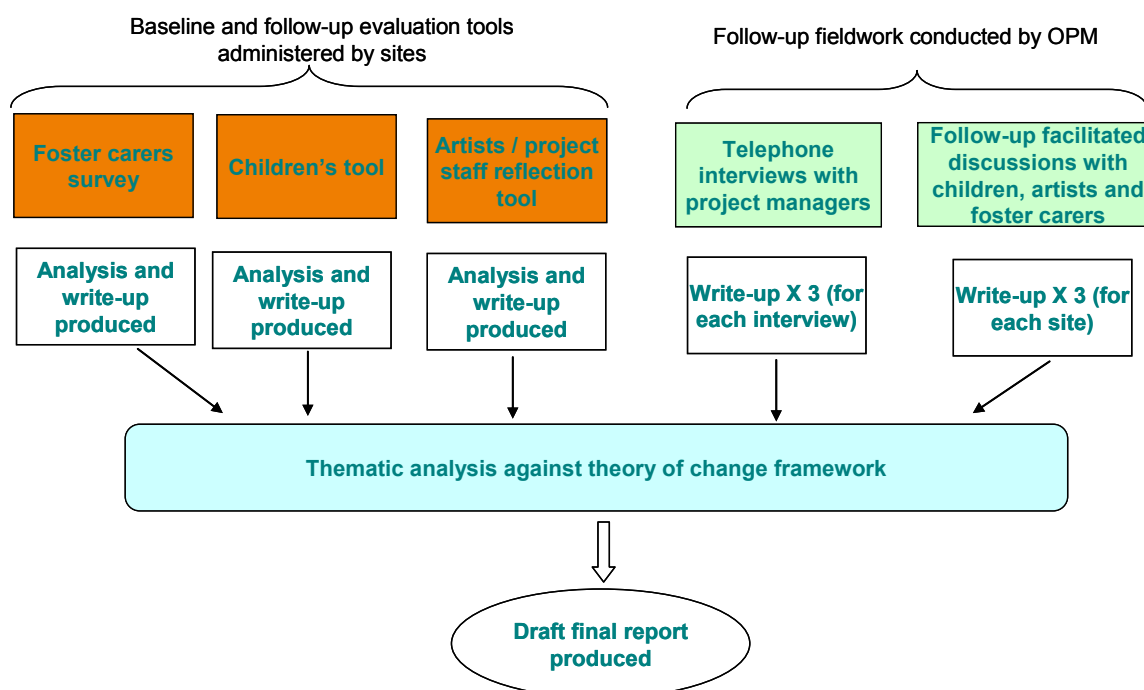
⁴ Survey results, particularly site level analysis and differences, should be interpreted cautiously due to small sample numbers.

	Custom's House	Whitewood and Fleming	Pie Factory Music
Foster carers	5 foster carers	3 foster carers and 1 support worker	4 foster carers
Artists / cultural providers	3 artists / cultural providers	4 artists/cultural providers and 1 representative from Whitewood and Fleming	4 artists / cultural providers
Looked after children	5 looked after children	Approx. 7-9 looked after children	5 looked after children
Project managers	1 project manager	1 project manager	1 project manager

1.2.6 Analysis

The data collected over the course of the evaluation from all groups of stakeholders (foster carers, artists, project managers and children) was subjected to thematic analysis to assess both extent and type of impact, and identify “how” impact has been created. We used the theory of change model as a broad framework for analysis as it includes the hypotheses and change mechanisms that this evaluation has tested.

Having collected data at different points in the evaluation and from different groups has also allowed us to triangulate the data to produce more robust findings, corroborated and mediated by three different perspectives. The diagram below highlights the different sources of data that were used in producing this report:



1.3 Reading this report

The rest of this report reads as follows:

- **Chapter 2** highlights the impact of the project on the children involved in the projects. It assesses the extent to which the intended outcomes of this project have been met as well as the extent to which these outcomes were achieved via the intended change mechanisms.
- **Chapter 3** provides an overview of the experiences of the three sites with respect to project recruitment, design and support.
- **Chapter 4** provides a summary of impact and conclusions. It also identifies the key success factors and barriers to impact and makes recommendations for the successful implementation of the arts and cultural activities project in other local areas.

2. Evidencing impact of project on looked after children

The arts and cultural activities project included four different elements that we hypothesised would have a positive impact on the children:

- Skilled artists,
- Positive arts activities
- Involvement of foster carers and siblings in activities
- Looked after children and foster carer focused planning and design.

Our evaluation model hypothesised that these elements would, through a series of change mechanisms (how an activity brings about a defined change), result in the following outcomes:

- Increased self efficacy and empowerment
- Increased confidence and self esteem
- Strengthened relationships with carers, social workers, siblings and other looked after children
- The development of new creative, life and social skills (e.g. leadership, communication and teamwork)
- Increased and regular participation in arts opportunities

In the following sections we will discuss the extent to which these outcomes have been achieved, and also what 'change mechanisms' have facilitated this impact. We draw on a number of sources of evidence to make this assessment, including: facilitated sessions with artists, foster carers and children, telephone interviews with project managers, artist/project staff reflection tools, children's reflection tools and the foster carer survey.

2.1 Increased self efficacy and empowerment

The extent to which this outcome was achieved

There is mixed evidence about the extent to which participating in the project has increased the self efficacy and empowerment of the children involved. On the one hand, there is strong qualitative evidence from the facilitated sessions with all artists, foster carers and children that describes there being a marked improvement in the self efficacy and empowerment of the children involved. The artists across all three sites described how many of the children had increasingly started to be more vocal about their creative outputs and products. They reported that many children now **'talked excitedly' or 'with pride' about their achievements**. One artist from Whitewood and Fleming remarked that the children had developed *'an awareness of how far they've come.'* For example, the artists described how one boy had taken a video he created into school because he was so proud of it:

"One film had the lad flying as superman and we said he should take it into school and he said he already had. A number of them are proud of what they have done." Artist, Whitewood and Fleming

This view was also echoed by the children when completing their evaluation tools. As part of the evaluation tool, the children were asked to indicate which person they identified with on a drawing of a tree with lots of different people positioned on the trunk and branches. At follow-up, a number of children chose figures that were at the top of the tree or higher up than the figure they had chosen at the beginning. Many reported that this was because they felt 'proud' because they had learned new skills and accomplished tasks like song writing and film making: *"I enjoyed all the new stuff I learnt."*

Other children had become keen to demonstrate and **showcase their new creative skills**:

"With some of them, we have seen really positive changes...they want share their skills, show what they can do." Project manager, Customs House

This view was also echoed by foster carers who reported that participation in the project had helped the children believe in themselves. One carer reported that the girl she cared for, who has regularly been taking part in dance classes, had taken part in a show for Halloween, something she would never have done before.

"She looks forward to it, she dances most of the time when she's in the house, she did a show at Halloween and I thought 'she'll never get on that stage' and she actually did and she enjoyed it." Foster carer, Customs House

Another carer also described how the child she cares for had been willing and eager to share what he had learned in front of the adults at the final celebration event:

"At the final presentation, he was very happy to let all of us hear it (his recording), and all the adults were there...and that was quite significant." Foster carer, Pie Factory Music

The artists from Pie Factory Music described how the children had demonstrated a sense of accomplishment, which was apparent by the way in which they were willing to lead the last session, with each child leading an activity with the foster carers present.

"The fact that they were able to stand up in a room, speak to their peers, in front of a room full of adults, and actually lead an activity without serious amounts of coercion, just in that you can clearly see a development in their confidence." Artist, Pie Factory Music

The artists at Whitewood and Fleming reported that the children demonstrated **different types and levels of achievement** which reflected their different starting points. For example, they felt that for one boy who because of his ADHD was unable to sit at the start of the session to be able to sit still and focus for ten minutes was a great achievement.

The artists/project staff reflection tools also indicated that many children demonstrated an increase in self efficacy and empowerment. Overall the artists felt that most of the children were keen to **try new activities and able to master new skills**, for example writing songs, recording music and speaking in front of the group. They also felt that for many of the children, the enthusiasm to engage with activities and commitment to learning new skills had grown over the course of the project:

"She can do more now, she is more confident and willing to try. She is less likely to say no or not try." Artist/project staff reflection tool, Customs House

"She is very able to master new skills and we have seen a real development over the weeks with us in the area. She is quite happy to get on with a new task once she understands what is going on and what's expected." Artist/project staff reflection tool, Pie Factory Music

On the other hand, the artists/project staff reflection tools also demonstrated that **some children continued to demonstrate low self efficacy and belief**. This was particularly the case at Pie Factory Music where there were some children with additional needs such as disabilities or challenging behaviour:

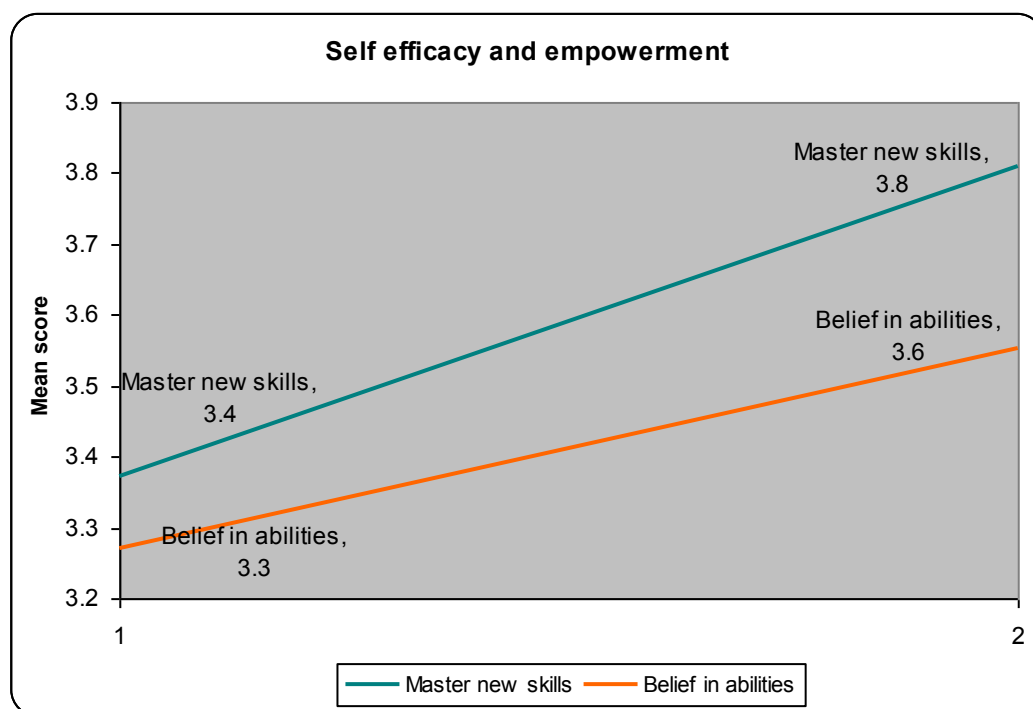
“As far as his self belief goes I'm not sure he really understands within himself how talented and able he is to learn new skills and showcase his talents as he doesn't speak highly of his own skills and ability at all.” Artist/project staff reflection tool, Pie Factory Music

They also felt that although a number of the children acted confident and self assured, this in fact masked low self belief:

“I still find it hard to establish his current level of self-belief, he comes across as very over confident in relation to his abilities but I wonder if he has used this as a way to protect himself.” Artist/project staff reflection tool, Pie Factory Music

Additionally, as illustrated in the chart below, there was an improvement in scores for both the questions relating to self efficacy and empowerment in the foster carers survey.

Chart 1: Baseline and follow-up responses on 0-5 scale to (1) To what extent do you think your foster child is currently able to master new skills? (2) To what extent do you think your foster child currently believes in his or her own abilities?



However, further analysis indicated that this improvement was largely due to an improvement in scores by foster carers at Whitewood and Fleming, with scores at Customs House and Pie Factory Music improving only slightly or staying more or less the same. However it is important to note that this site-level analysis is based on a very small sample and is therefore difficult to interpret. For example, the lack of significant improvement in scores at Customs House and particularly Pie Factory Music, could in fact be because of differences in the before and after sample – that is, perhaps the follow-up survey was completed by a larger number of foster carers with more challenging children in their care. This may have resulted in lower scores at follow up. As discussed above, the artist/project staff reflection tools did in

fact demonstrate that some children, particularly at Pie Factory Music, showed little improvement in self efficacy and empowerment.

Taking the evidence as a whole, it appears like there are differences in the extent to which the children demonstrated an increase in self efficacy and empowerment. Whereas there were many that showed significant improvement, there are also some that, perhaps because of their additional and challenging needs, showed little improvement.

Change mechanism: Artists create a safe space for looked after children that is empowering and builds self efficacy

Facilitated sessions with artists and foster carers and telephone interviews with project managers across all three sites indicated that the particular skills, knowledge and approach taken by the artists had created a safe space for the children that was empowering and built self efficacy.

Artists created a **participatory learning environment** where the children were able to make decisions and focus on activities that they enjoyed. At Pie Factory Music, this had meant ensuring that they had a range of activities planned so that the children would be able to find something that engaged them. The artists reported that they aimed to do approximately 4-5 activities over the hour and a half sessions. At Whitewood and Fleming, this meant ensuring that the sessions were flexible and the children were able to move from one activity to another and were free to focus on whatever interested them. The artists would watch and encourage them when something captured the child's interest. The foster carers at Whitewood and Fleming also reported that the artists had been very good at picking up on which activities the children enjoyed and helping them pursue those. They felt that this meant that children felt relaxed and therefore open to trying new things. Additionally, they felt that the flexible approach taken by the artists had also worked well in keeping the young people engaged:

“Some would start of singing, then moved away and go do dancing or drawing, , they weren't tied to doing one thing, they could move around and nobody said anything to them...some of the kids don't have concentration to do one thing all the time.” Foster carer, Whitewood and Fleming

Creating a safe and empowering space also included ensuring an informal and **non-hierarchical space** where the children could take ownership over the learning process. The artists at Customs House reported that the project had been empowering as a result of the children having access to a supportive and understanding environment, that wasn't structured or didactic like school, but where artists and the children worked together. This was also echoed by artists at Whitewood and Fleming who reported that a non-hierarchical approach included how the artists communicated with the children, the freedom they gave them in choosing what they wanted to do, and also in their body language where one artist felt it was important to actually *'physically get down on their level'*.

Foster carers at Pie Factory Music also felt that the artists themselves had had been good at keeping the children to task, but also *'not talking down to them'*. This also included ensuring the children felt a sense of ownership over the project, for example by actually creating outputs. One foster carer remarked that other after school activities such as sports and dance are always governed by rules and strict adult/child relationships, whereas there was more of a sense of adults and children working alongside each other in this project.

“With this project, it was their creation, they were steered and guided...but they recorded their own sounds, they made different raps, they made their own microphones...it was all their own input really.” Foster carer, Pie Factory Music

Similarly, the foster carers at Whitewood and Fleming reported that the artists allowed the children to be in control, for example in choosing what activities to do and in deciding the ‘rules’, and that this meant that the children had greater commitment to the project because they saw it as their own.

These findings highlight the important role that the learning environment created by artists can play in making projects such as this successful.

Change mechanism: Learning and showcasing new skills offers an empowering experience for young people

Two out of three sites, Pie Factory Music and Whitewood and Fleming, described the different ways in which they had provided the children with **opportunities to showcase their learning** which had contributed to a sense of achievement that was empowering for them. At Pie Factory Music, facilitated sessions with foster carers and artists indicated that the tangible creative outputs for example the microphones they made that they were able to take home, had allowed the children to feel like they had achieved something:

“The key is a focused activity with an output...so they get the feeling that they have achieved something at the end of it.” Artist, Pie Factory Music

“The fact that they were able to produce something in a short amount of time...that they felt was a finished article makes a huge difference.” Foster carer, Pie Factory Music

They also felt that the **celebration event** at the end had ensured that the children felt like they were working towards something. This view was also echoed by the children, who as part of the co-facilitated session were asked to finish the sentence ‘the things that made me feel good about coming here were...’ A number of the children mentioned the celebratory event at the end which indicates that this made them feel good about themselves.

At Whitewood and Fleming, facilitated sessions with foster carers and artists indicated that the **focus on celebrating achievements** that was built into the end of every session worked well in empowering the children:

“At the end of every session we try and have a bit of a celebration of what we’ve done that day, however big or small it may be.” Artist, Whitewood and Fleming

Similarly, building in **achievable goals** was also important. The artists recognised that many of the children were likely to have short attention spans and therefore felt it was important for the sessions to allow them to create outputs simply and quickly: *“You’ve got to let them go away feeling that they’ve achieved something.” Artist, Whitewood and Fleming*

Finally, the integration of the **Discover Arts Award** was also felt to contribute to this sense of achievement. It was seen as *‘another form of validation’* and the artists and foster carers reported that the children were looking forward to receiving these certificates at a celebration event which was scheduled for a few weeks later: *‘they cant wait to see everything put together at the final night...it will remind them of what they have done.’ Foster carer, Whitewood and Fleming*

These findings highlight the importance of ensuring that project design includes multiple and varied ways in which the achievements of the children can be recognised and showcased.

Change mechanism: Involvement in planning and decision making processes fosters a sense of ownership amongst young people

There is little evidence from follow-up fieldwork conducted at the end of the project to indicate that involving the children in the design and planning phase fostered a sense of ownership amongst young people. However, this may be because nearly a year had passed since the design and planning phase which meant that memory of this phase may have faded. However, there is some evidence from fieldwork conducted at the mid-point of the project that the involvement of young people in design and planning had fostered a sense of ownership. For example, the facilitated session with foster carers at Whitewood and Fleming indicated that they and the children had been consulted with since the beginning of the project so that they could decide where and when to meet for the sessions. The foster carers reported that finding out what would suit the carers and the children they care for was essential in building trust with foster carers and ensuring their engagement in the project.

“They loved that. It’s back to ownership, where do you want to be at the end of it. They loved being able to have an overview of it all. It’s very important”. Foster carer, Whitewood and Fleming

However, on the whole there is more evidence that the participatory learning environment and the opportunities to showcase skills played a role in empowering the children, rather than their involvement in design and planning.

NEW Change mechanism: Participation of foster carers provides opportunities for the children to showcase their skills which can be empowering

All three sites reported having involved foster carers in different ways. At Customs House, foster carers often accompanied the children on visits to cultural organisations. At Whitewood and Fleming, the foster carers attended each of the day-long four sessions and at Pie Factory Music they attended three out of the ten weekly sessions.

The facilitated sessions with artists across the three sites indicated that the participation of foster carers in project activities had been very important as it gave the children the opportunity to demonstrate their skills and outputs in front of their carers which contributed to a sense of achievement and pride:

“Its something about seeing the young person achieve....being there in that actual moment...they’re proud of them and the young people are proud as well.” Artist, Whitewood and Fleming

“They’ve probably never had that before, a lot of them have been very neglected...a lot of the parents have never ever been for a school play, and those kinds of things are an important part of a child’s life.” Artist, Customs House

Summary of impact

- There is mixed evidence about the extent to which participating in the project has increased the self efficacy and empowerment of the children involved.
- On the one hand, there is strong qualitative evidence to indicate that many of the children

had increasingly started to be more vocal about their creative outputs, had become keen to demonstrate and showcase their new creative skills and more willing to try new activities and able to master new skills.

- On the other hand, the artists/project staff reflection tools also demonstrated that some children continued to demonstrate low self efficacy and belief. Additionally, although there was an improvement in scores for both the questions relating to self efficacy and empowerment in the foster carers survey, further analysis indicated that this improvement was largely due to an improvement in scores by foster carers at Whitewood and Fleming, with scores at Customs House and Pie Factory Music improving only slightly or staying more or less the same.
- Taking the evidence as a whole, it appears that there are differences in the extent to which the children demonstrated an increase in self efficacy and empowerment.
- The evidence indicates that the particular skills, knowledge and approach taken by the artists had created a safe space for the children that was empowering and built self efficacy. More specifically, artists created a participatory learning environment and non-hierarchical space that was empowering.
- Two out of three sites, Pie Factory Music and Whitewood and Fleming, described the different ways in which they had provided the children with opportunities to showcase their learning, for example at celebratory events, which had contributed to a sense of achievement that was empowering for them.
- All three sites reported that the participation of foster carers in activities provided opportunities for the children to showcase their learning which was also empowering.

2.2 Increased confidence and self-esteem

The extent to which this outcome was achieved

There is mixed evidence about the extent to which participating in the project has increased the confidence and self-esteem of the children involved in the project. There is also variation across sites with the evidence indicating that children at Whitewood and Fleming were most likely to have demonstrated an increase in confidence and self esteem.

On the one hand there is considerable qualitative evidence from the facilitated sessions with artists, foster carers and children, and interviews with project managers that across all three sites some of the children demonstrated an increase in confidence. Foster carers at Whitewood and Fleming and Pie Factory Music talked enthusiastically about how participating in the project had given the children they care for *'a boost in confidence.'* More specifically, they developed the confidence to **take on lead roles or participate in activities** that they would not have done before. For example, at facilitated sessions the artists at Customs House described how one girl had developed the confidence to now take on a dance role in a school play where she is able to use the skills she had learned. Similarly, the artists from Whitewood and Fleming also described how a girl who had initially been very shy was able to stand up and sing in front of the rest of the group. This was also echoed by the project manager who described how:

“They are more likely to give things a try, they have taken what they did and gone on with it, e.g. keyboard or drama classes at school, which they wouldn’t have joined before because they didn’t have confidence.” Project manager, Whitewood and Fleming

The artists at Customs House also felt that the fact that some of the children now felt **comfortable participating in activities without the presence of their foster carer** or sibling, also indicated an increase in confidence: *“She has shown development in maturity – her carer previously stayed throughout the session in case she felt nervous or needed a familiar face around, but now she can be left alone.” Artist, Customs House*

The facilitated sessions with the children at Whitewood and Fleming and Pie Factory Music also demonstrated an increase in confidence. The children were asked to think about how they felt when they first came to the project and many responded by saying they felt ‘nervous’ or ‘unsure’ or ‘a bit scared’. They were then asked how they felt when they got more used to it and most responded by saying they felt **‘happy inside’ or ‘excited’**. This view was also echoed by the children when completing their reflection tools. As part of the reflection tool, the children were asked to indicate which person they identified with on a drawing of a tree with lots of different people positioned on the trunk and branches. As mentioned earlier, at follow-up a number of children chose figures that were at the top of the tree or higher up than the figure they had chosen at the beginning. Many reported that this was because they felt ‘happy’ or ‘confident’ or ‘safe’. Although these findings indicate that the children became more confident in the context of the project activities, it is not clear (from their responses) about the extent to which this translated into increased confidence in other areas of their lives.

The artists/project staff reflection tools also indicated that many children who had been quite shy at first were now much more **talkative and willing to contribute** their ideas and opinions:

“She became a lot more confident and talkative. She was more able to contribute new ideas by the end of the project and seemed to have more self esteem.” Artist / project staff reflection tool, Whitewood and Fleming

“I would say in the context of the group her confidence has increased. She is able to express herself freely and openly both in a 1:1 setting and in a group setting.” Artist / project staff reflection tool, Pie Factory Music

The reflection tools also indicated that a number of children, particularly from Pie Factory Music, who had initially hidden their lack of confidence behind bravado and loudness had developed more realistic and positive self images and that this had a positive impact on their behaviour:

“Yes, her confidence seems to be more grounded in reality now rather than being over confident like she was at the beginning. As the project went on I think she realised that she didn’t need to be bossy to get people to listen to her and there were other ways of being heard.” Artist / project staff reflection tool, Pie Factory Music

“Self esteem has gone up. She still likes to be the centre of attention, but knows when to stop.” Artist / project staff reflection tool, Customs House

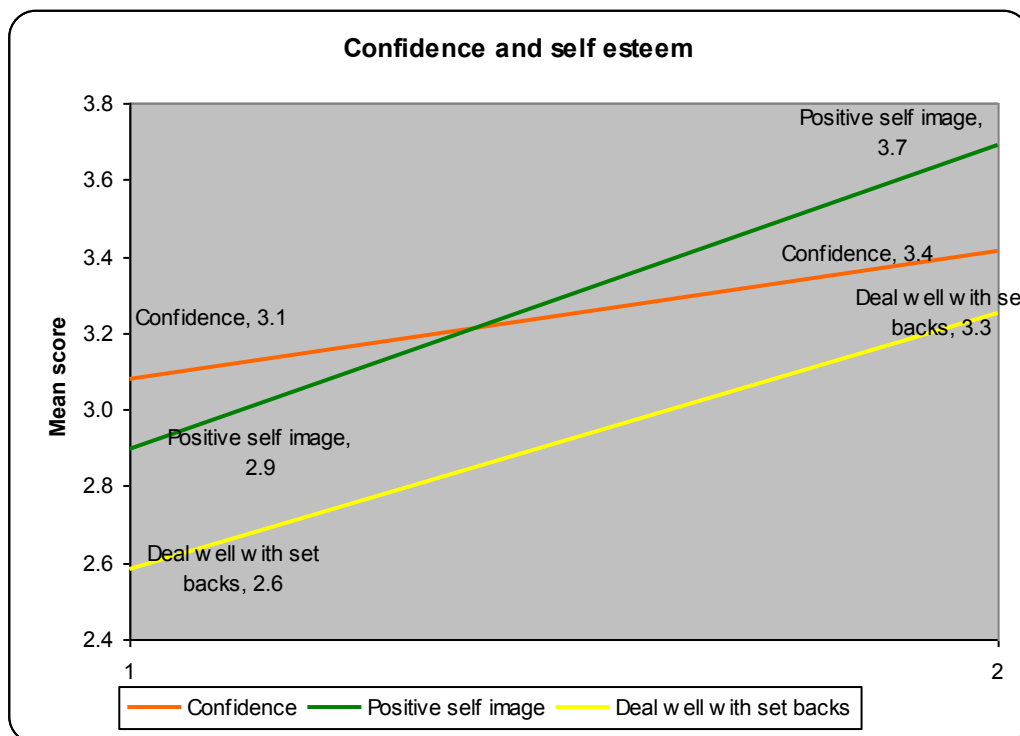
On the other hand, the artists/project staff reflection tools also demonstrated that **some children**, particularly from Pie Factory Music and Customs House continued to demonstrate **low self esteem and confidence** or continued to hide their lack of confidence behind bravado and loudness:

“She lacks self esteem and often feels the need to act overly confident - something to work on.” Artist / project staff reflection tool, Customs House

“I would still say that she really struggles with her self esteem self image. We’ve been doing an exercise where at the end of some of the sessions where each child says one nice thing about someone else in the room and one positive thing about themselves. She has struggled to do this. She really finds it hard to name one good thing about herself.” Artist / project staff reflection tool, Pie Factory Music

Additionally, as illustrated in the chart below, there was an improvement in scores for all three questions relating to confidence and self esteem in the foster carers survey.

Chart 2: Baseline and follow-up responses on 0-5 scale to (1) How confident would you say your foster child is? (2) To what extent would you say that your foster child is able to deal with setbacks or problems? (3) How would you score the self-image your foster child has of him or herself?



However, further analysis indicated that whilst all three sites showed an improvement of the self image measure, only Whitewood and Fleming showed an improvement with respect to the confidence and set backs measures, with scores at the other two sites staying largely the same. Again, it is important to note that this site-level analysis is based on a very small sample and is therefore difficult to interpret. The lack of significant improvement in scores at Customs House and Pie Factory Music, could in fact be because of differences in the before and after sample – that is, perhaps the follow-up survey was completed by a larger number of foster carers with more challenging children in their care. This may have resulted in lower scores at follow up. However, in addition to better quantitative evidence for Whitewood and Fleming, there is also more *qualitative* evidence to support an improvement of confidence and self esteem at Whitewood and Fleming – that is, all groups of stakeholders (project manager, children, foster carers, artists) reported this outcome at Whitewood and Fleming, whilst only some reported it for the other two sites.

On the whole, it appears that although the evidence is mixed with many children across all three sites demonstrating an improvement in confidence whilst some showed little improvement, the greatest improvement is likely to have been at Whitewood and Fleming.

Change mechanism: Artists create a safe space where young people feel listened to and valued

Facilitated sessions with artists, foster carers and the children across all three sites indicated that the artists created a safe space where the children felt listened to and valued. This included creating an **encouraging and supportive** environment in order to build their confidence and self esteem. At Pie Factory Music, this meant that at the end of every session the artists would encourage each child to say something nice about another child and the artists would make sure everyone was covered. It also included the 'wow stars' reward system which the foster carers felt had worked very well because *'its praise...and its coming from their peers.'* The facilitated session with the children also indicated that for many the 'wow stars' system had been one of the key things that made them feel good about the project.

At Whitewood and Fleming, being encouraging and supportive meant giving the children positive feedback while working with them:

"While we re working with them, there's a lot of 'wow, look at what you've done, its fantastic.'" Artist, Whitewood and Fleming

The foster carers also remarked on how the supportive environment had been key in facilitating impact. Additionally, at the facilitated session with the children, a few of the children also reported that it was meeting the artists and working closely with them that made them feel good about attending the project activities.

The artists at Customs House also created a safe space by ensuring that they were patient and **understanding about the behaviour** of the children. They reported that it was important to be aware that looked after children may have attachment and relationship difficulties and/or behaviour problems, which mean that artists need to be more flexible about their behaviour. The extent to which an artist may enforce rules or expectations around behaviour is therefore less when it comes to looked after children.

"It's about how far you take boundaries, and sticking to the letter in the law in the session." Artist, Customs House

Creating a stable and consistent space that facilitated the building of confidence and self esteem at Pie Factory Music also included ensuring that the **sessions were structured**, whilst also being flexible and varied. The artists reported that although the activities changed every week, the structure of the hour and a half stayed the same, for example, there would be reflection time at the end. There was also a pictorial depiction of the timetable on the wall. Foster carers agreed that this worked well because looked after children need a sense of structure so that they feel safe and are able to relax.

"His sense of needing to know, what's happening when...it's all the time, everything needs to be laid out for him...he needs to be able to prepare mentally for what's coming." Foster carer, Pie Factory Music

These findings highlight how both the skills of the artists and the design of the project have an important role to play in helping the children develop their confidence and self esteem.

Change mechanism: Opportunities to participate in creative endeavours create opportunities for self expression that build confidence and self esteem

Facilitated sessions with artists at all three sites indicated that to some extent opportunities to participate in creative endeavours had helped the children build confidence and self esteem. At Customs House, the artists commented on the important role of creative activities such as drama and dance that allow discussion and exploration to happen in a safe way. Similarly, the artists at Pie Factory Music reported that the fact that in the creative arts *'there is no wrong way of doing things'* was also reassuring for the children and motivated them to engage:

"With some looked after children, if they think they will get it wrong, they will sabotage it so they don't feel rejected by it. Creativity is about your expression so no one can say you've done it wrong." Artist, Pie Factory Music

They described how activities such as drawing, the use of sketchbooks or lyric writing gave them the space to reflect and express themselves, which looked after children often find it difficult to do.

"That whole concept is perfect for looked after children because it's what they generally struggle with." Artist, Pie Factory Music

The artists at Whitewood and Fleming felt that the arts were an important way for looked after children to 'tell their story', for example through a story or through a photograph, and that the experience could be potentially therapeutic for them.

"It's to do with being listened to and being given that platform." Artist, Whitewood and Fleming

However, they were unsure as to the extent to which this had happened in the current project, but felt that it was true from their wider experience of working with looked after children.

NEW Change mechanism: Participation of foster carers in project activities is encouraging and helps build confidence and self esteem

As discussed earlier, all three sites have involved foster carers in project activities in different ways. The facilitated sessions with artists and foster carers at Customs House and Whitewood and Fleming indicated that the participation of foster carers in project activities was encouraging and helped to build the confidence and self esteem of the children. The foster carers at Customs House felt this was important because it motivated the children to participate if they saw their carers participating:

"It was a family thing...they were laughing because we were doing it and it made them join, made them think 'we can do this, we don't have to be inhibited'" Foster carer, Customs House

Similarly, at Whitewood and Fleming the foster carers felt that their involvement gave the children the opportunity to see that their foster carers were also learning new and unfamiliar things, which was reassuring and helped with their confidence and openness to trying new things.

Summary

- There is mixed evidence about the extent to which participating in the project has increased the confidence and self-esteem of the children involved in the project. There is also variation across sites with the evidence indicating that children at Whitewood and Fleming were most likely to have demonstrated an increase in confidence and self esteem.
- On the one hand there is strong qualitative evidence that the children have developed the confidence to take on lead roles or participate in activities that they would not have done before, and that some now felt comfortable participating in activities without the presence of their foster carer or sibling. Additionally, many children who had been quite shy at first were also now much more talkative and willing to contribute their ideas and opinions.
- On the other hand, some children, particularly from Pie Factory Music and Customs House continued to demonstrate low self esteem and confidence or continued to hide their lack of confidence behind bravado and loudness.
- Additionally, although there was an improvement in scores for all three questions relating to confidence and self-esteem in the foster carers survey, further analysis indicated that whilst all three sites showed an improvement on one question, only Whitewood and Fleming showed an improvement with respect to the other two questions.
- The evidence indicates that the artists created a safe space where the children felt listened to and valued and that this helped to build confidence. This included creating an encouraging and supportive environment, ensuring that they were patient and understanding about the behaviour of the children and that sessions were structured to whilst also being flexible and varied.
- The evidence also indicated that, to some extent, opportunities to participate in creative endeavours had helped the children build confidence and self esteem. Additionally, at two out of three sites the participation of foster carers in project activities was encouraging and helped to build the confidence and self esteem of the children.

2.3 Strengthened relationships with carers, social workers, siblings and other looked after children

The extent to which this outcome was achieved

There is some evidence to indicate that participation in the project strengthened the children's relationships with their foster carers and other looked after children.

The artists/project staff reflection tools indicated that artists/project staff across all three sites felt that many of the children had **integrated well** into the group as the project had progressed. Whereas at the start of the project the children often tended to cling to their foster carers or stick with the children they already knew, they were much more willing to interact with the other children as time went on:

“At the beginning of the project she stayed by her foster carers’ side and didn’t interact much with others but by the end she integrated into the group and was happy to interact with everyone.” Artist/project staff reflection tool, Whitewood and Fleming

“Was very shy at first and reluctant to take part or mix with others (would cling to instructor) but now has lots of friends in group.” Artist/project staff reflection tool, Customs House

Facilitated sessions with artists and foster carers indicated that, a few children, particularly at Pie Factory Music and Customs House, had formed **close friendships** with each other:

“There were quite a lot of walls up in the first few weeks, but by the end they were describing each other as friends...for example when we were doing the song writing quite a few wanted to write about each other.” Artist, Pie Factory Music

“He has got friends at schools, but this has been a positive friendship, I’m not quite sure how healthy friends at schools can be.” Foster carer, Pie Factory Music

This view was also echoed in the co-facilitated session with the children at Pie Factory Music. The children were asked whether they had gotten to know anyone particularly well while at the project and a number of them mentioned each other, and describe each other as ‘cool’ or ‘fun’. Similarly, as described before, as part of the reflection tool, the children were asked to indicate which person they identified with on a drawing of a tree with lots of different people positioned on the trunk and branches. At follow-up, some children chose figures that were **in a group or were holding hands** with other figures, and reported that this was because they had made friends and that it had been fun being part of a group.

There is also some evidence that the project *may* have contributed towards building more positive relationships between the children and their foster carers. Facilitated sessions with artists and foster carers, particularly at Whitewood and Fleming and Customs House, indicated that the project gave the foster carers the opportunity **to participate in something ‘fun’ with the children** they care for: *‘it’s good to share experiences together.’ Foster carer, Whitewood and Fleming.* The artists at Whitewood and Fleming felt that for the foster carers the project was probably a nice change from the time they spend ‘managing’ the children’s behaviour:

“A lot of their (foster carers) time is spent managing behaviour really rather than socialising or enjoying themselves together.” Artist, WF

Similarly, the artists from Customs House reported that the project has really been **‘about family time’** :

“Families were doing the activities together, achieving together, and building memories together.” Artist, Customs House

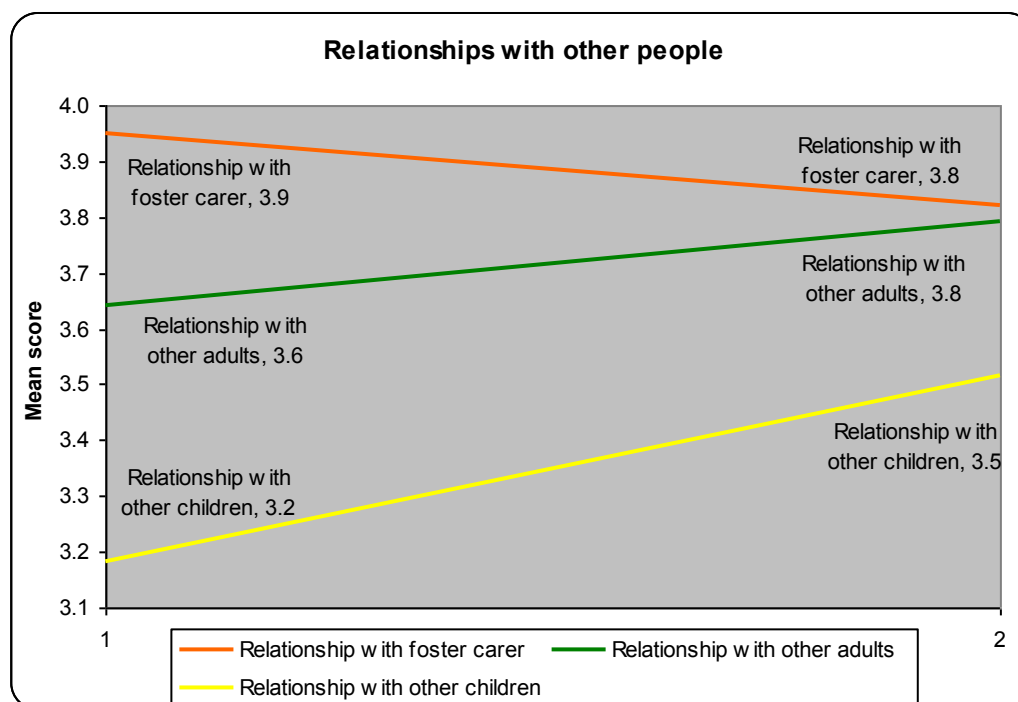
Facilitated sessions with artists and foster carers, particularly at Whitewood and Fleming and Pie Factory Music also indicated that participation in the project had given the foster carers **‘a new perspective’** on the children they care for which had the potential to strengthen their relationships with the children:

“It just motivates them (foster carers) more to know that there is a positive future for the kids they look after...it reassures them that they are good kids...” Artist, Pie Factory Music

“Some foster carers thought the children they care for weren’t able to do certain things and were surprised that they could actually do those things.” Artist, Whitewood and Fleming

However, as illustrated in the chart below, the scores for all three questions relating to relationships in the foster carers survey rose only slightly or stayed largely the same between baseline and follow-up.

Chart 3: Baseline and follow-up responses on 0-5 scale to (1) How would you score the quality of the relationship between yourself and your foster child? (2) How would you score your foster child's current relationships with other adults? (3) How would you score the quality of your foster child's current relationships with other children?



There was little variation across sites, except in relation to the relationships with other children measure where Customs House showed the most improvement.

On the whole it appears that there is some evidence to indicate that the projects facilitated new and improved relationships between some of the children involved in the project (particularly at Customs House and Pie Factory Music), and between some of the children and their foster carers (across the three sites).

Change mechanism: Taking part in arts activities creates a space where relationships can be developed through shared experiences

The evidence suggests that the arts and cultural activities created a space where relationships between the children developed through shared experiences. More specifically, the activities, by involving team work and focusing on group dynamics, provided a fun and engaging space where the children were able to come together and work as a team. For example, artists at Pie Factory Music reported that close friendships between the children were fostered by the children **working closely together** on assigned tasks.

Additionally, foster carers across three sites often talked about how the friendships and improved relationships between the children were a result of the *'culture of working together.'*

More specifically, the **encouraging and supportive environment** meant that the children became more understanding and supportive of each other, particularly at Pie Factory Music:

“I have been very impressed with the way most of the children have learned to interact with him. They have really tried to look after him and if they notice that he is struggling they try and help him to engage if he will.” Artist/project staff reflection tool, Pie Factory Music

“His relationships with his peers in the project improved over the weeks. I think this was largely to do with the increased awareness and understanding of the other children. When they started to understand him and his understanding of the world they then understood more about why he exhibited the behaviour he did.” Artists/project staff reflection tool, Pie Factory Music

Change mechanism: Foster carers support and in some cases participate, at times alongside with other siblings, in art activities with their children helping to strengthen their relationship

Facilitated sessions with foster carers and artists across the three sites indicated that the participation of foster carers in the arts and cultural activities may potentially have helped to strengthen their relationships with the children they care for. More specifically, foster carers and artists reported that the lives of foster carers can often be very busy and the project gave them the opportunity to strengthen their relationship through **spending time together on shared activities**:

“It gave them the space to work as a family unit” Artists, Pie Factory Music

Additionally, participation of the foster carers in the arts and cultural activities also allowed them to **see the children achieve**, through mastering and demonstrate new skills and creating outputs and products. This in turn helped validate the children’s expression and experience.

“She (foster carer) said that she had been surprised because his attention span was short. He was really pleased because he had done something no one thought he could do.” Artist, Whitewood and Fleming

Summary

- There is some evidence to indicate that participation in the project strengthened the children’s relationships with their foster carers and other looked after children.
- Many of the children had integrated well into the group as the project had progressed across the three sites. Additionally, a few children, particularly at Pie Factory Music and Customs House, formed close friendships with each other.
- The project also gave the foster carers the opportunity to participate in something ‘fun’ with the children they care for and gave them ‘a new perspective’ on the children as they watched them achieve and master new skills.
- However, the scores for all three questions relating to relationships in the foster carers survey rose only slightly or stayed largely the same between baseline and follow-up.

- The evidence indicates that the arts and cultural activities created a space where relationships between the children developed through shared experiences, for example by working closely together on assigned tasks or by becoming more supportive of each other due to the encouraging environment created by artists.
- The participation of foster carers in the project may have strengthened their relationships with the children because it gave them the opportunity to spend time together on shared activities and to see the children achieve, through demonstrating new skills and creating outputs and products.

2.4 Development of new creative, life and social skills

The extent to which this outcome was achieved

There is good evidence to indicate that participation in the project helped the children develop new creative, life and social skills. The development of new life and social skills was noted in the qualitative evidence across the three sites. As demonstrated in the artists/project staff reflection tools this included an **improvement in the communication abilities** of many of the children involved in the project:

“He became more expressive as the project progressed.” Artist/project staff reflection tool, Customs House

“In terms of her ability to communicate with me and those around her there has been a significant change. She has made a conscious effort to be more positive, less bossy and more receptive to others. You can see the benefit of this change in how her peers respond to her. In the beginning they would either ignore her and walk away or get really annoyed at her. However she is now able to hold a decent conversation with every member of the project, staff and child.” Artist/project staff reflection tool, Pie Factory Music

Foster carers from Customs House, at the facilitated discussion, also described how the project had helped the children with their communication skills. One carer reported that the teacher at the school where the boy she cares for is enrolled had reported that he had become much more communicative and interactive with other children over the last few months, whereas before that he used to keep to himself.

“A lot of looked after children are very withdrawn or very quiet when you get them...its teaching them how to mix and mingle with other kids and this spills into their home life and school life.” Foster carer, Customs House

Facilitated sessions with foster carers and artists across the three sites also indicated that some of the children who often demonstrated challenging or problematic behaviour had in fact shown an **improvement in behaviour**. For example, one foster carer from Customs House reported how the girl she cares for has learned how to behave appropriately around men, because her dance teacher is a man. Similarly, an artist from Pie Factory Music described how some children who had demonstrated inappropriate behaviour or the use of sexualised language at the start of the project, had become a lot better:

“At the start of the course he didn’t have any awareness of people’s personal space and would often make inappropriate comments and would be too touchy feely with others and

he definitely improved with this over the course but without any negative impact on his relationships with other members of the group.” Artists, Pie Factory Music

Artists and foster carers also reported how many of the children had become **more understanding and supportive of each other**, often demonstrating an increase in empathy. One artist from Whitewood and Flemings gave an example of how a girl had wanted to sing to the group but felt shy about facing them, so all the children had turned their backs so that she would feel able to sing. Another artist described how: *“certain people always wanted to have attention at first...but as the project went on, there was more of an awareness of turn taking and patience.” Artist, Pie Factory Music*

Many of the children also demonstrated **greater focus and improved attention spans** as the project progressed. For example, artists at Pie Factory Music described how many of the children had been *‘chaotic’ or ‘couldn’t sit still for long’* at the start of the project, but that at the end they were much more able to focus on and complete assigned tasks. This was also echoed by artists at Whitewood and Fleming and Customs House:

“He seemed more able to start and finish a creative activity by the end of the project. In the beginning he might start something but not finish it.” Artist/project staff reflection tool, Whitewood and Fleming

There is also qualitative evidence, from the facilitated discussions and artists/project staff reflection tools, to indicate that many of the children, particularly at Pie Factory Music and Whitewood and Fleming demonstrated new creative skills. Creative skills were mentioned less at Customs House. Artists and foster carers at the two sites mentioned a **range of technical creative skills** including playing the keyboard, storytelling and craft making.

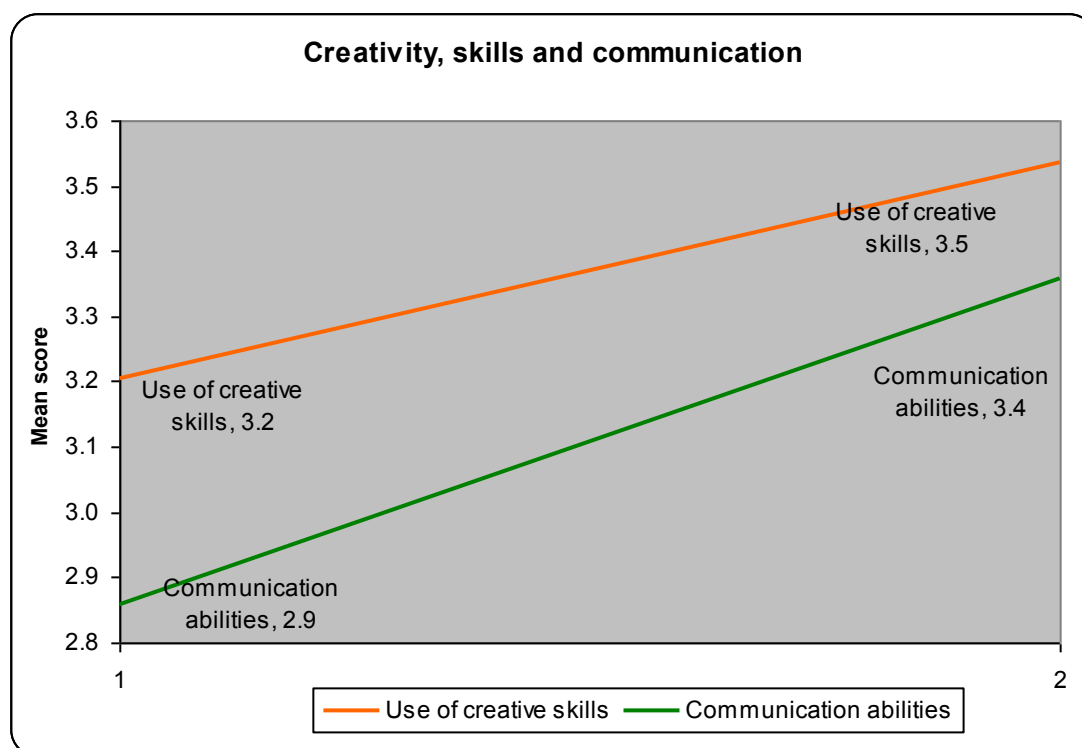
“It was amazing to see that someone who had never done it before just picked it up so quickly.” Artist, Whitewood and Fleming

“He is VERY creative. He has excelled in every creative task from drawing, sketching, comic drawing, song writing, instruments, drumming, rapping, singing.” Artist/project staff reflection tool, Pie Factory Music

“She is extremely creative and her creative skills seemed to grow from session two onwards.” Artist/project staff reflection tool, Whitewood and Fleming

Additionally, as illustrated in the chart below, the scores for both questions relating to creative and life and social skills in the foster carer survey improved between baseline and follow-up.

Chart 4: Baseline and follow-up responses on 0-5 scale to (1) How often does your foster child currently use his or her creative skills? (2) How would you rate the communication abilities of your foster child?



However, further analysis indicates that this improvement was largely because of improved scores at Whitewood and Fleming, with scores at the other two sites improving very little or staying more or less the same. However, as noted before, this site-level analysis is based on a very small sample and is therefore difficult to interpret. The lack of significant improvement in scores at Customs House and Pie Factory Music, could in fact be because of differences in the before and after sample – that is, perhaps the follow-up survey was completed by a larger number of foster carers with more challenging children in their care. This may have resulted in lower scores at follow up. The qualitative evidence described earlier does in fact indicate an improvement in the life and social skills of many of the children across the three sites as well as the development of new creative skills for many children, particularly those at Whitewood and Fleming and Pie Factory Music.

Change mechanism: Children develop their creative, life and social skills through participating alongside skilled artists that model these skills

The evidence suggests that the children have developed new creative skills through learning from skilled artists, with a range of technical creative skills. Artists at all sites described how a key part of the project was ensuring that the delivery team of artists was comprised of practitioners **with varied creative skills**. The children worked closely with the artists, often on a one to one basis, to acquire a range of skills, including playing the keyboard or guitar, story telling, instrument making, puppet making, drawing and dance. Artists also facilitated this by ensuring the children felt supported in developing these skills. For example, artists at Pie Factory Music described how some of the children needed a little **support and structure** to help them harness their creativity:

“She struggles a bit if you give her a totally blank canvas....she seems much happier and we see more creativity if we set her a specific task.” Artist/project staff reflection tool, Pie Factory Music

Additionally, the children have learned life and social skills through team work and through the **encouraging and supportive environment** created and modelled by the artists. As discussed earlier, the artists across the different sites created a supportive environment by praising the children, by celebrating their achievements and by encouraging the children to praise each other. This in turn helped the children be more understanding and communicate better with each other:

“One thing that stands out in this area for me is how the other children encouraged her at the end of each session. We made it part of the sessions to say something positive about someone else in the room and the other children really picked up on what she needed to hear.” Artist/project staff reflection tool, Pie Factory Music

The artists also found ways to help the children overcome their problematic behaviour:

“The only time when there are issues is when he gets a bit overexcited and holds onto other children. We have caught on to this and just remind him that our group agreement says ‘keep hands and feet to yourself’”. Artist/project staff reflection tool, Pie Factory Music

Additionally, **learning life and social skills** also helped the children focus which in turn helped them develop their creative skills:

“He was more able to use his creativity by the end of the project as he could focus for longer.” Artist/project staff reflection tool, Whitewood and Fleming

“He was open to using creativity from the beginning but by the end he was able to complete a project because he could stay focused.” Artist/project staff reflection tool, Whitewood and Fleming

These findings highlight the important role that skilled artists play in the development of both new creative and life skills.

Change mechanism: Engagement in creative activities by children helps to build their artistic, life and social skills, especially when they are involved in designing the activities

As discussed above, the evidence suggests that skilled artists facilitated the learning of new creative, life and social skills amongst the children. However, the fact that the creative activities were **enjoyable for and of interest to the children**, may also have encouraged and motivated them to listen and learn from the artists. As discussed earlier, artists created a participatory learning environment where the children were able to make decisions and focus on activities that they enjoyed. This meant that they were more likely to engage and commit to the activities and therefore learn new skills.

Some artists and foster carers from Pie Factory Music and Whitewood and Fleming commented on how the creative activities had allowed the children to discover skills that they did not know they had or that they had not had the opportunity to explore before:

“He’s certainly discovered a new interest in the technical side of things...its nice, its not something he would have been exposed to at school...” Foster carer, Pie Factory Music

The co-facilitated sessions with the children at Pie Factory Music and Whitewood and Fleming asked the children to reflect on what they had liked best about the project. A number of children responded by identifying the creative activities they had enjoyed, like cartoon drawing, instrument making and making puppets, which again could indicate that the activities did facilitate the learning of new creative skills.

Summary

- There is good evidence to indicate that participation in the project helped the children develop new creative, life and social skills.
- The development of new life and social skills, such as improved communication, behaviour, attention span and empathy, was noted in the qualitative evidence across the three sites.
- There is also qualitative evidence, to indicate that many of the children, particularly at Pie Factory Music and Whitewood and Fleming demonstrated new creative skills, including playing the keyboard, storytelling and craft making.
- Additionally, the scores for both questions relating to creative and life and social skills in the foster carer survey improved between baseline and follow-up. However, further analysis indicates that this improvement was largely because of improved scores at Whitewood and Fleming, with scores at the other two sites improving very little or staying more or less the same.
- On the whole the evidence does in fact indicate an improvement in the life and social skills of many of the children across the three sites as well as the development of new creative skills for many children, particularly those at Whitewood and Fleming and Pie Factory Music.
- The evidence suggests that the children have developed new creative and life skills through learning from skilled artists with a range of technical creative skills and who created a supportive and encouraging environment.
- Additionally, the fact that the creative activities were enjoyable for and of interest to the children, may also have encouraged and motivated them to listen and learn from the artists.

2.5 Increased and regular participation in arts opportunities

The extent to which this outcome was achieved

There is some evidence to indicate that the children involved in the project have started to participate in other arts opportunities, across the three sites. The co-facilitated sessions with the children highlighted a number of examples of the children having carried on with the development of skills learned as part of the project. For example, at Pie Factory Music one boy reported that he had started guitar lessons, another boy reported that he had made a flute as part of a school activity and a girl reported that she had made puppets. These were all skills that they had learned as part of activities at Pie Factory Music.

Similarly, at Whitewood and Fleming, the children were asked what activities they were doing in their free time at the moment. Some mentioned dancing and singing and others, (boys) mentioned sports such as football, tennis and rugby. One boy has joined an after school club which involves playing games and listening to music. It appears that the project has probably made them more open to trying out new activities in general.

It is important to note that this feedback was gathered at the end of the project. Follow-up fieldwork three to six months after the project would provide a clearer indication of whether participation in the project has resulted in increased and regular participation in arts opportunities. Additionally, this outcome may also have been limited by the fact that many of the children involved in the project, particularly at Pie Factory Music and Customs House already tended to get involved in creative and cultural opportunities before their involvement in this project. This tended to be a result of having proactive foster carers who were keen to involve the children they care for in positive activities.

Change mechanism: Having a positive experience makes the children want to continue to participate in arts opportunities

Evidence from the co-facilitated sessions with the children across the three sites indicates that having had a positive experience in this project had made the children want to continue to participate in creative and cultural opportunities. When asked whether they would like to take part in similar activities again the children tended to respond with a resounding 'yes!' and enthusiastic nods. One child from Whitewood and Fleming elaborated by saying: *'because its fun, it's exciting, you get to learn loads of stuff.'*

However, as discussed above, a number of the children already tended to be involved in these types of activities before this project.

Change mechanism: Foster carers see the benefits of the looked after children in their care and other siblings taking part in arts based activities and are supportive of future opportunities

There is some evidence, primarily from artists and project managers, that foster carers have seen the benefits of looked after children taking part in creative and cultural activities. They are hopeful that this will translate into the foster carers being more supportive of future opportunities: *"the foster carers that have supported them, will now finance these activities themselves."* Project manager, Customs House

At Whitewood and Fleming the artists reported that some foster carers may have been sceptical about creative activities before the project, but that their attitudes had changed as a result of being involved in the project. This was a result of simply having had the opportunity to participate – an opportunity, or rather a free opportunity, that they do not get very often.

"There's not a lot of opportunity, they're not exactly centres of cultures, there's only football clubs...especially where you don't have to pay." Artist, Whitewood and Fleming

Some had also started to feel that they themselves could begin to participate in creative activities with the children they care for:

“We had some that said ‘it’s been wonderful doing this, would never have done this at home. And now we’re going to buy some of these materials’. Think they were seeing it wasn’t so far beyond them.” Artist, Whitewood and Fleming

“Some said that they were scared that they weren’t artistic so wouldn’t do creative activities with children because didn’t think they could do it. So impact of this project was that they realised that it was easy to do things, you don’t have to be most artistic person in the world.” Project manager, Whitewood and Fleming

On the other hand, as noted earlier, many of the foster carers and children, particularly from Pie Factory Music and Customs House, already had an appreciation of creative and cultural activities and therefore the children had already been taking part in these types of activities.

Change mechanism: Through involvement in the planning of projects, foster carers and looked after children learn more about arts opportunities and its benefits and gain an understanding of how art activities can foster wellbeing and resilience in looked after children

There is limited evidence that through involvement in the planning of projects foster carers and looked after children have learned more about arts opportunities and its benefits. However, as discussed earlier, this may be because nearly a year had passed since the design and planning phase which meant that memory of this phase may have faded.

Evidence from fieldwork conducted at the mid-point of the project indicated that the involvement of foster carers and children in the planning of projects, did secure commitment and interest in participating in this project. However, it is unclear whether this has had an impact on their desire to participate in future activities.

Summary

- There is some evidence to indicate that the children involved in the project have started to participate in other arts opportunities, across the three sites, for example, guitar lessons and after school clubs.
- However, follow-up fieldwork three to six months after the project would provide a clearer indication of whether participation in the project has resulted in increased and regular participation in arts opportunities.
- Additionally, this outcome may also have been limited by the fact that many of the children involved in the project already tended to get involved in creative and cultural opportunities before their involvement in this project.
- Evidence indicates that having had a positive experience in this project had made the children want to continue to participate in creative and cultural opportunities.
- There is also some evidence that foster carers have seen the benefits of looked after children taking part in creative and cultural activities and project stakeholders are hopeful that this will translate into the foster carers being more supportive of future opportunities.
- There is limited evidence that through involvement in the planning of projects foster carers and looked after children have learned more about arts opportunities and its benefits.

3. Project recruitment, design and support

In the sections below we highlight the key experiences of the different sites in project planning and delivery. In particular, we discuss:

- Recruitment and involvement of foster carers and looked after children
- Factors that informed project design and delivery
- Training and support provided to delivery teams

3.1 Recruitment and involvement of foster carers and children

3.1.1 Involvement of foster carers

Foster carers across the three sites provided a range of reasons about why they chose to get involved in the project. At Customs House, a number of foster carers reported that they were always on the look out for new activities that they could get the children in their care involved with. This meant that many of the children had previously been involved in other creative or after school activities. They felt that it's good to get the children involved in activities, so that they don't spend too much time thinking about their difficult experiences.

"If the children are occupied they are less likely to be thinking about their family problems." Foster carer, Customs House

One foster carer said that the girl she cared for had behaviour problems and she hoped that this project would help her make friends and improve her attention span, which it has: *"She does have behaviour problems and we thought if she got into a group, and kept at it, it would help her make friends"* Foster carer, Customs House

Some were also encouraged to get involved because of the fact that the project also included other looked after children and their families.

"Children in care do feel different so when they're in a group where they know everyone is in the same boat as them, they relax a bit more and enjoy themselves a bit more." Foster carer, Customs House

For foster carers themselves, they can at times find it difficult to explain to people that the children may have behaviour problems, which they have to do if it's a mixed group. They feel this unfairly labels them as 'problematic children'. In these groups *'it's already known'* and *'whoever is doing the activity is already aware that they can be a little bit disruptive.'*

The foster carers also reported that they had heard about the project through letters and then follow-up calls from the project manager at Customs House. The foster carers were also asked to reflect on why other foster carers may have decided not to get involved. They felt that foster carers receive a lot of letters and invitations and so do tend to push these aside, and that following up with phone calls, as all the sites did in fact do, was very important. They felt that 'word of mouth' was also important and related how a number of foster families had gotten involved in the project after being told about it by one of them. Increased notice, so that the foster carers are able to put sessions/visits in their diaries was also recommended.

At **Pie Factory Music**, the foster carers reported that all of them were already aware of the work of Pie Factory Music. Some of the children had already been involved in other activities

at the site and had always enjoyed them. One foster carer reported that the boy she looked after loved music and so it made sense to involve him in this activity.

“He loves music and I’ve been thinking about finding out about Pie Factory Music anyway..” Foster carer, Pie Factory Music

Another carer reported that he had a background in creative arts and so knew the potential benefits of creative work with young children. He hoped it would expose the boy he cares for to something different than football: *“We saw this and thought, it’s something different from football...it’s just something else...and he’s enjoyed it.” Foster carer, Pie Factory Music*

Most of the carers reported that they had heard about the project through the children’s schools. One foster carer reported that her daughter works with Pie Factory Music which is how she heard about it. As above, the carers were asked why they thought other carers may have opted not to enrol the children they care for in this project. One reported that she did know of a carer who had wanted to bring the girl she cares for but was told that at six years old she was too young. Other proposed reasons were that perhaps ten weeks was too long a commitment for some foster carers, or that there are already so many after school activities that foster carers may have struggled to fit in something new.

At **Whitewood and Fleming**, the foster carers reported that they had gotten involved in the project to give the children that they care for the opportunity to ‘try new things’, and ‘to see what they could achieve’.

“Give them an insight into something we wouldn’t normally do.” Foster Carer, Whitewood and Fleming

They felt it was important for the children to experience ‘things like this’, particularly outside of a school setting. They also said that it sounded like a ‘fun’ and positive activity that the children would enjoy. They reported having heard about the project through attending a coffee morning where the project manager from Whitewood and Fleming talked to them about the project.

When asked why other foster carers may have decided not to get involved the foster carers reported that perhaps some foster carers thought that the project wasn’t appropriate for the children they care for - that the children were too young or too old to benefit from involvement. They felt that this was not the case and that the project had been suitable for all age groups, and all age groups had in fact attended. Another potential reason could have been that the full day sessions were considered too long for some children, particularly those with more challenging behaviour and attention problems. Another potential reason could be that committing to many weekends in a row may have been difficult for some foster carers because of other commitments. They discussed whether once a month would have been better, but also felt that having successive sessions had worked well because it gave the children a sense of continuity:

“To come back the week after and continue where they left off it was fresh in their minds and I think they got right into it.” Foster carer, Whitewood and Fleming

3.1.2 Recruitment of foster carers

The three sites have also had varying experiences of and approaches to recruiting foster carers to be part of the project. At **Customs House**, recruitment has been through the Place – the looked after children’s education service - coupled with information days, follow-up meetings and calls from the project manager. The ‘cascade’ design of the Customs House

project also means that the delivery team have the additional role of connecting the foster carers with the artists and cultural providers. The purpose of the information days was for foster carers and looked after children to hear about the project and sample some of the activities. These were publicised through newsletters, phone calls and presentations at other meetings attended by foster carers. Whereas there was a good turnout at the first information day, attendance at the second information day was poor. Recruitment therefore shifted towards a much more individual approach, with lots of one to one meetings and phone calls with foster carers to tell them about the project, identify the children's needs and interests and then match them with providers in their local area. The team at Customs House, The Place & South Tyneside Fostering Services have devoted a great deal of effort, time and commitment to engaging with and recruiting foster carers to enrol the children they look after in the project. The project manager described how the recruitment process ended up being very different to what had initially been planned:

"How we thought it would work was that everyone was going to come to an activity day, talk to providers about signing up, fill in a template and do a pro form invoice. We would collect all those, and see if we could support all those activities. Actually, it involved a lot more conversations with foster carers about providers and what was available, then phone call with providers to find out what was on, and then sitting with foster carers one on one to develop their invoice, so we could give it to them in one payment." Project manager, Customs House

Recruitment resulted in the involvement of a core group of about 7 foster carers and 11 looked after children regularly attending the activities, which is under their target recruitment number of 15 children. However, towards the end of the project many more foster carers and their children took part in the cultural visits – for example, over 30 people attended the last cultural visit to Seven Stories and The Cave. The project manager reported that the foster carers and looked after children that were regularly involved tended to be those that were already involved in positive activities, but that the project had broadened their understanding of what arts opportunities are available and how to access them:

"For some it's a new activity that they haven't done before, but the nature of foster carers involved is that they are very supportive and up for getting young people involved in activities. They just need support in getting access...we've helped them do that." Project manager, Customs House

At Pie Factory Music, recruitment for the first cohort was through social workers at Kent County Council, schools and follow-up phone calls. The social workers *'were important in spreading the word'* and the project manager also sent invites out through schools. She reported that

"It wasn't always easy. Once people have booked, you still have to be reminding them a week before and a day before. I was probably calling and emailing people about once a week." Project manager, Pie Factory Music

Recruitment for the second cohort was through word of mouth *'so we cut out the middle man'*. There were approximately 8 children involved in the first cohort, many of whom had complex needs and 7 in the second (one boy dropped out) which the project manager described as *'disappointing'* as they could have taken on 10-15 children. At the same time, the project manager did see the benefits of the smaller group and felt that it facilitated greater impact and change. The foster carers that were recruited for the project tended to be a

mixture of some who already had some familiarity and experience with the arts and some who didn't.

At **Whitewood and Fleming** recruitment, for both the Barrow and Maryport cohorts, was also through the fostering team at children's services and through independent fostering services. A flyer advertising the project was sent to all foster cares that had looked after children in the 7-11 years age bracket. The project manager also attended some foster carer meetings to talk about the project. This was followed by an activity day where the foster carers and the children could sample some of the activities. Whereas recruitment in Maryport resulted in significant enrolment in activities (approximately 17 children), this proved more difficult in Barrow with only 6 children enrolling, although the foster carers were very engaged and involved in planning. The project manager described why she thought this had happened:

"We have a couple of theories. It was the summer holidays so they found better things to do, also we heard that some foster carers had fallen out with children's services over money so were protesting. They saw it as connected to children's services– but we don't actually know." Project manager, Whitewood and Fleming

However, Whitewood and Fleming did in fact meet its recruitment target of 20 looked after children. The project manager reported that some of the foster carers and looked after children involved were already involved in positive arts activities, but that some had reported 'that they were scared that they weren't artistic so wouldn't do creative activities with children because didn't think they could.'

3.2 Factors that informed project design and delivery

The artists and project managers at each of the sites identified a number of factors and considerations that have guided their approach to design and delivery on this project. At **Customs House**, the artists reported that it was important for them, as practitioners, to be **aware that looked after children may have attachment issues** and/or behaviour problems. This means that as artists they need to be more understanding and flexible about their behaviour.

"It's about how far you take boundaries, and sticking to the letter in the law in the session." Artist, Customs House

Creating a space that feels safe for the children was also described as a key design feature. The artists felt that it was important to give the children the **freedom and flexibility** to focus on whatever they wanted – to have a plan and set project in mind, but to be flexible about changing this. It's also about ensuring the children are able to participate and interact as much as they felt comfortable. The artists also felt that an important part of the delivery process was to **involve foster carers**, for example, even in simple communications, as this ensures that *'if the parents/carers are also involved they are more likely to support them.'*

One artist also highlighted the importance of **ensuring adequate adult presence** and reported that due to having a number of new children within the group with a variety of specific needs (including the looked after children), a company decision was made to ensure that they always have one extra member of staff within the session.

At **Pie Factory Music**, the artists described how they had designed the hour and a half sessions to include approximately 4-5 **multiple and varied** activities as they recognised that looked after children often have short attention spans. They also tried to ensure a balance

between variability and structure and reported that although the activities changed every week, the structure of the hour and a half stayed the same, for example, there would be reflection time at the end. There was also a pictorial depiction of the timetable on the wall. This ensured that the children felt secure in knowing what the session would be like, and also set boundaries in terms of what was expected of them during this time. The artists also **encouraged the children to be reflective** during the sessions, for example there was a wall where the children could write what they were feeling. The sessions were also designed to ensure that activities took place in **small groups**. This made it easier for the children to stay on task and would ensure that the artists *'were able to facilitate those who were less confident than others in a larger group'*.

Outside of the sessions, project delivery included **artist reflection meetings** before and after the sessions. This would allow them to share anything they had noticed about the children and plan for the next session – for example, which children should be in each small group, and which children should be with each of the artists. It also included **regular communication with foster carers**, so that artists were up to date about changes in the children's lives and so that foster carers were up to date about what had been happening in the sessions and plans for future sessions.

At Whitewood and Fleming an important factor that guided both design and delivery was the emphasis the artists placed on **'finding the key'**, that is, focusing their efforts on identifying what each child is interested in. They recognised that looked after children can be difficult to engage and *'wont necessarily give off themselves'* and the aim was to find a *'way in'* with them. In practice this meant that the sessions were designed to be very **flexible** and the children were able to move from one activity to another and were free to focus on whatever interested them. The artists would watch and encourage them when something captured the child's interest. The artists also ensured that they took a **'non hierarchical'** approach with the children and took care not to create the traditional 'teacher/student' structure. Additionally, they recognised that many of the children were likely to have short attention spans and therefore felt it was important for the sessions to allow them to **create outputs simply** and quickly.

Finally, the artists at Whitewood and Fleming also felt that project design was guided by ensuring they had the **right team of artists** with a range of skills and as importantly, a range of personalities. This was felt to be important because they felt it was important to give children access to a range of different role models as they tended to gravitate to different types of people, based on their own needs and interests.

3.3 Training and support for artists and project managers

The artists and project managers across the three sites identified a range of sources of support that they felt had helped them over the course of the project. At Customs House, the artists reported that the **training** provided by Cap-a-Pie Associates and The Place at the start of the programme was particularly helpful as it helped the artists understand the needs of looked after children and the foster carers. They also felt that **Customs House's role** as a brokering *'agent'* or an *'advocate'* and as that *'friendly face'* that foster carers and the children trusted had been an important one.

The project manager at Customs House reported that the **positive working relationship between the delivery partners** – Customs House, The Place, and fostering services – had also been key in ensuring take-up of activities by foster carers.

“They got the project and were on board with it from the start, we really a sense of us doing it together, rather than us doing it in isolation.” Project manager, Customs House

Additionally, the support offered by the NCB programme manager was also helpful:

“She’s been a good critical friend with whom to explore how to resolve issues we have faced. Because of the breadth of her experience. I’ve learned a lot from working with her.” Project manager, Customs House

At Pie Factory Music, the artists reported that the fact that they **worked together regularly** at Pie Factory Music meant that they could share their worries and concerns as and when these occurred to them. The artists had all been trained prior to this project using the Artists Pedagogue Learning Framework and had experience of working with looked after children and young people. They also worked well together and ‘*had a good level of honesty*’, so if one artist wasn’t sure about how to deal with a certain situation, he/she was able to ask another artist to take the lead, or artists were able to say if any of the children were becoming too much for them to handle. Additionally, the project manager reported that regular updates and conversations with the project director. Support from the NCB programme manager was also described as helpful, for example, in providing advice about how to talk to foster carers about children they care for that may have been exhibiting troubling behaviour during the sessions.

At Whitewood and Fleming, the artists had also been trained prior to this project using the Artists Pedagogue Learning Framework and had experience of working with looked after children and young people. They felt that **debrief sessions** at the end of every session had been a helpful way for the artists to share their worries and concerns and get feedback and advice from each other. They also felt that the **presence of support workers** during the sessions had been helpful as it reassured foster carers who felt supported having someone else who was familiar to the children present.

“It was really good to have social workers there to support the sessions – so to always make sure that they are there. If something came up and the artists didn’t know how to deal, then social worker is there and would know what to do.” Project manager, Whitewood and Fleming

The project manager reported that support from the project director had been helpful as had been support from one of the social workers who had been proactive about calling foster carers to ensure their attendance at sessions. Finally, as reported by the other sites, support from the NCB programme manager, in particular the monthly reports provided by the manager, was also found to be helpful.

4. Summary and conclusions

4.1 Summary of impact of project

In general the evidence indicates that the arts and cultural activities project has had a positive impact on the looked after children that participated at each site. In particular, the project has resulted in a marked improvement in the self efficacy and empowerment of many of the children involved. Stakeholders described how many of the children have developed a sense of pride and achievement with respect to their creative outputs. Others were keen to showcase their newly acquired creative skills and became increasingly willing to try new things. Similarly, the project has also resulted in an increase in the confidence and self esteem of many of the children involved, particularly at Whitewood and Fleming. Many of the children are now more willing to take on lead roles and to participate in activities without the presence of their foster carers. Others have become more talkative and willing to contribute their ideas and opinions. On the other hand, there is also evidence to indicate some of the children continue to demonstrate low self efficacy, belief and confidence across the three sites.

Some of the children have also developed close friendships with each other, particularly at Pie Factory Music and Customs House. To a lesser extent, the project may also have developed a more positive relationship with their foster carers as it gave them the opportunity in something 'fun' together. Children across the three sites have also demonstrated new life and social skills, including an improvement in communication abilities and behaviour, an increase in empathy for each other and a greater attention span. The development of new technical creative skills was also identified, particularly at Pie Factory Music and Whitewood and Fleming. There is also some evidence to indicate that the children involved in the project have started to participate in other arts opportunities, across the three sites. However, follow-up fieldwork three to six months after the project would provide a clearer indication of whether participation in the project has resulted in increased and regular participation in arts opportunities.

This positive impact has largely been a result of the safe space created by the skilled artists coupled with the use of positive arts activities. More specifically, the artists created a participatory learning environment and an informal and non-hierarchical space where the children felt empowered. They were supportive, encouraging and understanding about the children's potential behavioural difficulties, all of which contributed to ensuring that the children felt listened to and valued. This in turn helped the children focus and develop new skills. The use of positive arts activities which provided the children with multiple and varied opportunities to showcase their learning, for example through celebration events, and which allowed the children to express themselves in safe way all contributed to a sense of achievement and self belief. Positive arts activities also provided a different and fun experience where relationships could develop between the children and which made the children continue to want to participate in such activities.

To a comparatively lesser extent, the involvement of foster carers in activities has also contributed to positive impact. Their involvement in activities encouraged and motivated the children to participate. It also provided opportunities for the children to showcase their learning which was empowering and provided a space where relationships could be strengthened.

On the whole, the project has inevitably had more of a positive impact on some children compared to others. Those with more challenging behaviour and lower self belief are likely to have seen less improvement, although the difference in starting points and thus achievements is an important one to note. There has also been some variation across the sites which is inevitable as the project was an ambitious one where sites had to choose where to focus their efforts.

4.2 Success factors

A number of factors have contributed to the success of the project as a whole:

Safe space created by a skilled team of artists

It is clear from the analysis that the safe space and learning environment created by the artists has been one of the key strengths of the project. This included artists being encouraging and supportive and creating a participatory learning environment which differed from the strict 'teacher/student' hierarchical relationship that the children were used to:

"They're more likely to engage if they don't feel you're judging them, and making sure we're not coming across as teachers." Artist, Pie Factory Music

"Nobody laughs at you, we're very positive about everything, it's just about 'having a go, you might be good at it, you might enjoy it.'" Artist, Whitewood and Fleming

Foster carers across the three sites talked about how patient and understanding the artists were and how this had been instrumental to the success of the project. In addition to the skills of the artists, the right mix of the artists who work well together was also felt to be important at Whitewood and Fleming and Pie Factory Music, so that the different children could participate and achieve in different ways:

"It's important that each of us brought something different to the table. We had different children relating to each person which is important. Having a mixture of people helps each child to engage. Both in terms of skills and personalities." Artist, Pie Factory Music

"The fact that we have number of practitioners on site with different skills, we meet before hand, discuss how we do things, we support each other, afterwards we get together to talk about how its gone and how we may change delivery next time. A lone practitioner couldn't have provided this kind of things – it's the flexibility you need when working with this group." Artist, Whitewood and Fleming

Involvement of foster carers and other siblings

There is evidence to indicate that the involvement of foster families, albeit in different ways, has contributed to the success of the project across the three sites. This included the involvement of foster families in project activities, as this is not only reassuring for the children but also ensures that the foster carers are able to see the benefits of involving their children in arts opportunities and contributes to more regular participation in such opportunities:

"[Involving foster families meant] they could chat about it at home, explore the internet, find images for the next session, you've got a little joint activity you can share, it becomes more a part of your life." Artist, Whitewood and Fleming

'If the parents/carers are also involved they are more likely to support them.' Artist, Customs House

Additionally, opening up project activities to include foster carers and/or the carers' own children also made it more likely that the looked after children would be able to participate.

"Usually, foster carers have to leave their own children behind, to bring foster children, and this can cause organisational issues. But here they could bring their own children as we were trying to involve the whole family." Project manager, Whitewood and Fleming

This also included ongoing communication with foster carers throughout the project. For example, at Pie Factory Music the artists described how by talking to foster carers regularly they were able to get a sense of what the children's needs were and whether there had been any disturbing events in their lives over the course of the weeks. This meant that the artists were aware of any issues that may spill over into the sessions, perhaps exhibiting themselves behaviourally: *"Just knowing those things in advance helps you respond in the best possible way."* Artist, Pie Factory Music

Finally, this also included the involvement of foster carers in planning which helped to ensure that they were 'on board' with the project. Artists at Whitewood and Fleming felt it had been very important for the foster carers to identify 'when', 'where' and 'how' the sessions would take place as this had secured their involvement. They felt that foster carers are 'told' to do so many things that this was a change which resulted in a sense of ownership and commitment to the project.

Positive arts opportunities

The role of positive arts opportunities, which allowed the children to have fun as well as learn new skills and showcase their learning, for example through celebratory events, the Arts Award and certificates of achievement, was also key in ensuring the success of the project. Artists and foster carers related how these opportunities provided the children with 'proof' that they were good at something and had achieved something, which in turn had an impact on their belief in their abilities and self esteem. Additionally, the creative activities facilitated discussion and exploration in a safe way and allowed the children to feel confident in expressing their personal thoughts, opinions and experiences.

The size and composition of the group

Across the three sites the stakeholders identified how the size and composition of the group had worked particularly well. At Customs House and Whitewood and Fleming the mix of age groups was felt to have worked well. For example, artists and foster carers at Whitewood and Fleming describe how the combination of older and younger children meant that the older children were able to act as role models and guide and support the younger ones: *"they took them under their wing."*

At Pie Factory Music and Whitewood and Fleming (Barrow cohort), the small size of the group was also felt to have worked well and had its own advantages. For example, at Whitewood and Fleming the artists felt that the small group meant that the children were able to take part in more joined up projects and had a sense of shared achievement: *"It felt like they were working together more."* At Pie Factory Music, it ensured that the artists could give the children individual attention if needed, particularly in the first cohort which included a number of children with complex needs:

‘If someone didn’t want to do a particular thing, we could cater for that, whereas if there were only a couple of us then actually we physically couldn’t, and there was a real benefit too.’ Artist, Pie Factory Music

Focus on looked after children and their families

Stakeholders at Customs House and Whitewood and Fleming felt that the fact that the project had included other looked after children and their families had also been an important part of ensuring the success of the project. This had meant that the activities could be tailored to the needs of the families and the children, for example, the artists can have the same set of rules for everyone, rather than one set for the looked after children and another set for children that aren’t in care. It also meant that the children ‘all got on’ and worked well together as they tended to empathise with each other:

“Because they were all looked after children....I always think that they have an antennae, and they are drawn to each other.” Foster Carer, Whitewood and Fleming

“Children in care do feel different so when they’re in a group where they know everyone is in the same boat as them, they relax a bit more and enjoy themselves a bit more.” Foster carer, Customs House

Varied and multiple activities

Another aspect of design that was key to the success of the project at Pie Factory Music and Whitewood and Fleming was the availability of multiple and varied activities for the children to engage with. Looked after children often find it difficult to focus and having varied and multiple activities means they are more likely to engage. Additionally, certain activities inevitably suit some children better than others, and this ensures that if children were struggling with one task they would be able to move on to another that they were better suited for.

“I think the key is really to just have a wide range of activities in the sessions so they all get catered for...” Artist, Pie Factory Music

“Because if the young person is having difficulties, we can move on to something else and then back to it.” Artist, Whitewood and Fleming

4.3 Challenges and limitations

There were a range of challenges and limitations which may potentially have limited the impact of the project. Some of these were similar across the sites whereas others were specific to each site.

Difficult recruitment process

Across the sites the recruitment of foster carers was a difficult and lengthy process. This was particularly the case at Customs House where a longer planning and recruitment phase would have been beneficial in establishing relationships with the foster carers and securing their commitment and buy in. It would also have helped Customs House do some more work with providers to plan for provision. This is not surprising since the ‘cascade’ design of the

project meant that this site faced the added challenge of trying to connect foster families with providers:

“If I would do it again I’d put more emphasis on getting to know the foster carers before expecting them to come. In an ideal world I would have liked to have more time for those relationships to develop. It took a lot of time for people to understand what we were trying to do with the project. They didn’t understand how easy it would be to access the funding for this project.” Project manager, Customs House

At Whitewood and Fleming, the recruitment and attendance in Barrow wasn’t as good as expected. The taster sessions had been well attended but take up had fallen. There was also a significant delay between the taster event and delivery. The artists felt that this was because recruitment had taken place through children’s services and at that time foster carers had a bad relationship with children’s services and therefore decided not to participate. This highlights the importance of exploring different avenues of recruitment, in case one avenue fails.

Short term delivery

Delivery at the three sites ran over the course of approximately 2-4 months, which many stakeholders felt was too short. They reported that a longer term or more regular project would have been helpful in facilitating even greater impact as well as providing a clearer picture of change.

“If it was over a longer period of time, a two or three year period of time, a measure in this amount of time doesn’t give clear picture.” Project manager, Customs House

“If you had a long time with the children you would really see amazing results...the longer you’re doing something with them, the more they can see the change as well.” Artist, Pie Factory Music

Some stakeholders also felt that a longer project would also give the children a sense of continuity and consistency which is often lacking in the lives of looked after children.

Challenging behaviour

It appears that the difficult behaviour of some of the children involved in the project proved to be a little challenging at some of the sites which could suggest the need for additional training and support for deliverers. At Customs House, one artist reported that it had been a challenge to deal with the difficult behavior often displayed by the looked after children and some of the other children had shown frustration or joined in with it. She reported that having a social worker observe a session and provide feedback and advice would have been helpful. At Whitewood and Fleming, the artists reported that some children had been very introverted and quiet and therefore a little more difficult to engage. One artist felt that the behaviour of some of the children had been a challenge, often in response to whatever else had happened in their lives that week and felt that *“it’s about being able to work around that so that child gets support they need and doesn’t affect the rest of the group.”*

Venue / space unsuitability

At some sites the artists reported having some trouble or disappointed with their venue where the activities were delivered. At Pie Factory Music, the artists reported that it would have been helpful to have some more space, as the workshop they worked in was rather

small. They reported having used the space at the Turner Contemporary Art Gallery three times during the first cohort but only twice during the second cohort which was a shame.

Similarly, at Whitewood and Fleming, the artists reported that the last session had taken place at a different venue which they felt had not been well suited for the project. More specifically, it was too big and with little outdoor space and as a result was a little overwhelming for the children.

Other design limitations and challenges

There were some design limitations and challenges that were specific to each site. At Customs House, it appears that the cultural visits to institutions such as Seven Stories and The Sage Gateshead tended to work better than the arts activities led by practitioners. The foster carers reported that going on visits in groups felt like they were going on a 'trip' or on an 'adventure' and that was exciting for the children. Additionally, the children enjoyed the visits more because they went in a group where they knew other children, compared to the arts activities where they often did not know the other children, or not all the other children were in fact looked after children. Some foster carers also felt that the arts activities may have worked better if they had been held at Customs House, as the children were familiar and comfortable at the venue. This implies that it is important for projects such as these to be run at a well known local arts venue which is a familiar safe space for families.

There was also not enough variety of arts activities arranged by Customs House. This was because the variety of activities were necessarily limited by the types of providers that chose to participate in the project. This which meant that some of the older children felt that some of the activities were *'too babyish for me'* or that some children were not able to find activities that interested them: *'we don't like drawing, we like making stuff.'* This view was also echoed by the project manager:

"Next time we would make sure we had more art forms covered in South Tyneside. We didn't have any drama for young people, any music, no film making. It would have given them more options." Project manager, Customs House

At Pie Factory Music, greater engagement with foster carers would have been useful. The project manager reported that this would have helped the carers appreciate how participating in the project was beneficial for the children:

"I'd like if possible to have a bit longer with carers when children aren't here. It takes a little while to catch the vision. Ideally it would be great for carers to see us in action...or show them a DVD – which we are producing. It's easy to explain the practicalities, but not the heart and depth of the project." Project manager, Pie Factory Music

At Whitewood and Fleming, the foster carers reported that full day sessions could be too long for some children, particularly the younger ones with shorter attention spans and those with more challenging behaviour. One foster carer, who had only participated in the first half of the first session, said that this was why she had taken the child she cared for home.

"We only lasted the first half of the first day because my youngest has tantrums and starts playing up so we went home." Foster carer, Whitewood and Fleming

The foster carers agreed that half day sessions may be more suitable for some children, a view which was also echoed by the project manager.

“Maybe do a shorter one for children who can’t sustain for that long, and then a longer one for the other children.” Foster carer, Whitewood and Fleming

Finally, the large size of the group in Maryport and the range of age groups present meant that the artists found it a little difficult to manage. They reported that although they had managed fine, it may have been better to have a slightly smaller group the next time.

4.4 Recommendations

Creating a participative and flexible learning environment

Practitioners delivering arts and cultural activities to looked after children should create a “participative learning environment” where the children must be given the power to choose different activities that they want to engage with, and the freedom and space to test out their skills rather than following a strictly prescribed programme. In practice, this can entail allowing the children to move from one activity to another so that they are free to focus on whatever interests them

Aligned to the finding about the need to create a flexible and participative environment, this evaluation found merit in artists creating a non-hierarchical and empowering space where the children could take ownership over the learning process. In practice, this involves adopting a teaching style that is unstructured and open, rather than structured or didactic like school.

Celebrating achievement

For children who may have low levels of self confidence and self efficacy, it is important to find opportunities in projects like these to celebrate the achievement of participants. This evaluation recommends the use of celebration events and reflection sessions at the end of sessions that enable the young people to showcase their achievements. Every project should have built in opportunities for celebrating achievements or reflecting on what participants most enjoyed about the session.

It is recommended that arts based programmes are integrated with other established awards such as the Discover Arts Awards so that the children feel that the project is not just a discrete one off session, but is part of helping them achieving broader progress in their studies.

Providing a mix of creative opportunities through a team with varied skills

The tendency for projects to utilise a mix of creative opportunities contributed to an increased level of participant engagement and enjoyment. It is important to ensure that there are a broad range of activities in place that will enable the young people to find something that excites and interests them. We recommend that projects are deliberately structured to involve children in a range of activities, including drama, dance, music and drawing. In turn, it is recommended that the artists that are selected to deliver future projects either possess knowledge of a range of techniques, or have access to a wider range of appropriately trained and supported artists who can offer this mix of approaches.

Encouraging and supporting looked after children

We recommend that those delivering arts-based projects use the following approaches and tools to engender a supportive and encouraging environment:

- Take time at the start of the project to assess the specific needs and behaviour of the children, such as their higher likelihood to have “attachment issues”. Having assessed

the needs of the participants carefully at the beginning is more likely thereafter that the facilitators/artist will create a supportive environment that is tailored to the specific needs of participants. More broadly, it is important for all practitioners to have an understanding of the issues and needs of looked after children.

- Build in opportunities – particularly at the end of sessions – for children to make positive comments about other participants. The “wow star” award system utilised – which gives participants the opportunities to give others awards for their contribution, may provide a good off-the-shelf system for other project leaders to adopt in the future.
- Ensure that several opportunities are taken throughout the project to give positive feedback and point out what participants are doing well

Importance of involving foster carers

Foster carers have an important role to play in ensuring the success of these projects. We recommend that project leads/artists build in regular mechanisms for ongoing communication with foster carers throughout the project, so that they feel engaged and committed. We further recommend that projects provide opportunities for foster carers to take part in sessions as this can help strengthen relationships and build the children’s confidence. However, this involvement should be balanced with the need for children to spend time away from their foster carers and vice versa.

Encouraging the participation of foster carers

It is recommended that project design includes a number of approaches to recruitment of foster carers and looked after children, to ensure participation. The following types of activities will help with recruitment:

- Foster carers who have previously taken part in the programme are asked to “champion” the programme amongst other foster carers
- Involving social workers as a conduit for recruitment of foster carers – they often hold a deep relationship with foster carers and understand what will attract them to this project
- Recruitment through schools, the looked after children education service and fostering services
- Requests for participation are made through face to face or telephone contact
- The benefits of participation of foster carers are clearly articulated in documents and conversations, such as the opportunity it offers to experience something new and exciting and meet other foster carers

Empowering participants

Involving children and foster carers in the co-design of the projects can enhance their enjoyment and sense of ownership over the project. It is recommended that artists and project leads involve participants in the design and planning at the start of the project, both in terms of the content, but also in terms of practical decisions, such as when and where the young people meet.

Building skills and support within the project teams

This evaluation recommends that artists should receive training and support to work with looked after children and young people. All three sites had received training and this was felt to have contributed to quality provision. Managers should provide ongoing supervision and support. Additionally, opportunities are developed for artists and project leads to meet and

share learning. Such contact enables artists to share learning and provide mutual support. It would also be beneficial for someone to take up the role as an overall project lead or co-ordinator (a role that was fulfilled in part by NCB) who can facilitate regular meetings or information sharing.

As part of this, we recommend that project de-briefs attended by the project team are undertaken at the end of the project, if possible involving the support worker or foster care during which the artist can feedback on what she has learned about the child and what might help the child in the future. These sessions also provide the opportunity for the artists to receive feedback on how they performed and what they could do better in the future.

Capturing learning

In challenging economic circumstances, it is important that the learning and tools developed through this project are captured and made more widely available. We recommend that the range of tools and outputs are collected and categorised in a guide that can be picked up and used by others running similar projects. This could contain:

- Agendas, module outlines, scripts etc
- Example outputs
- Explanations about awards/celebrations
- Outcome and impact measures
- Tips on project planning, recruitment, and delivery, e.g. venue selection, size and composition of groups, and tips on managing challenging behaviour

Measuring impact

There are mixed results about the extent to which these projects increased self efficacy, confidence, belief and self esteem, with some projects positively increasing scores while others appeared to contribute to lower progress. As we explained earlier, the sample sizes for the quantitative measures were very small, making it difficult to draw significant conclusions from this aspect of the data collection process. This project has enabled some robust data collection tools to be designed and tested. We recommend that data collection is widened to a much larger group of looked after children involved in arts-based projects utilising the tools used in this study. This will enable researchers to establish a statistically significant assessment of the overall impact of arts and culture based programmes on looked after children.

5. Appendices

Appendix 1: Theory of change model

In conducting this evaluation of the arts and cultural activities project with looked after children, OPM will adopt a theory of change⁵ based approach. Theory of change approaches seek to surface the theoretical or logical sequence by which an intervention seeks to achieve its desired effects. This approach to evaluation is ideally suited to interventions that are emergent and where learning and reflection on the part of all stakeholders is an integral part of the process. The model that we have developed for this programme provides a high level visual map of the programme that articulates the:

- **intended outcomes** associated with the programme;
- **range of inputs and activities** expected to be implemented to achieve these outcomes, and;
- pathways or **change mechanisms** that link the activities and inputs to the intended outcomes.

The model is an essential component of our evaluation, as it allows us to build a clear narrative of how the programme is intended to work and make a difference. We can then test the extent to which this theory is delivered in practice, drawing out when the change mechanism occurred or deviated from what was planned. It also provides a framework that will guide the development of our research tools for use during fieldwork and an analytical framework to guide the synthesis and analysis of our findings.

Intended outcomes

Our interviews with project leads from each site have indicated that the broad aim of the projects is to improve the wellbeing and resilience of the looked after children involved in each of the projects. More specifically, we have identified five intended outcomes that the projects are aiming to achieve:

1. Increased self efficacy and empowerment
2. Increased confidence and self esteem
3. Strengthened relationships with carers, social workers, siblings and other looked after children
4. The development of new creative, life and social skills (e.g. leadership, communication and teamwork)
5. Increased and regular participation in arts opportunities

Our targeted review of literature (see Appendix) has also indicated that the above outcomes are also all protective factors⁶ that can help children and young people adapt to, resist and recover from adverse and challenging situations.

⁵ Chen, H.T. (1990) *Theory-Driven Evaluations*. Thousand Oaks, California, Sage Publications.

⁶ Benzies, K. and Mychasiuk, R. (2009) 'Fostering family resiliency: a review of the key protective factors', *Child and Family Social Work*, 14, pp 103-114.

Project resources, inputs and activities

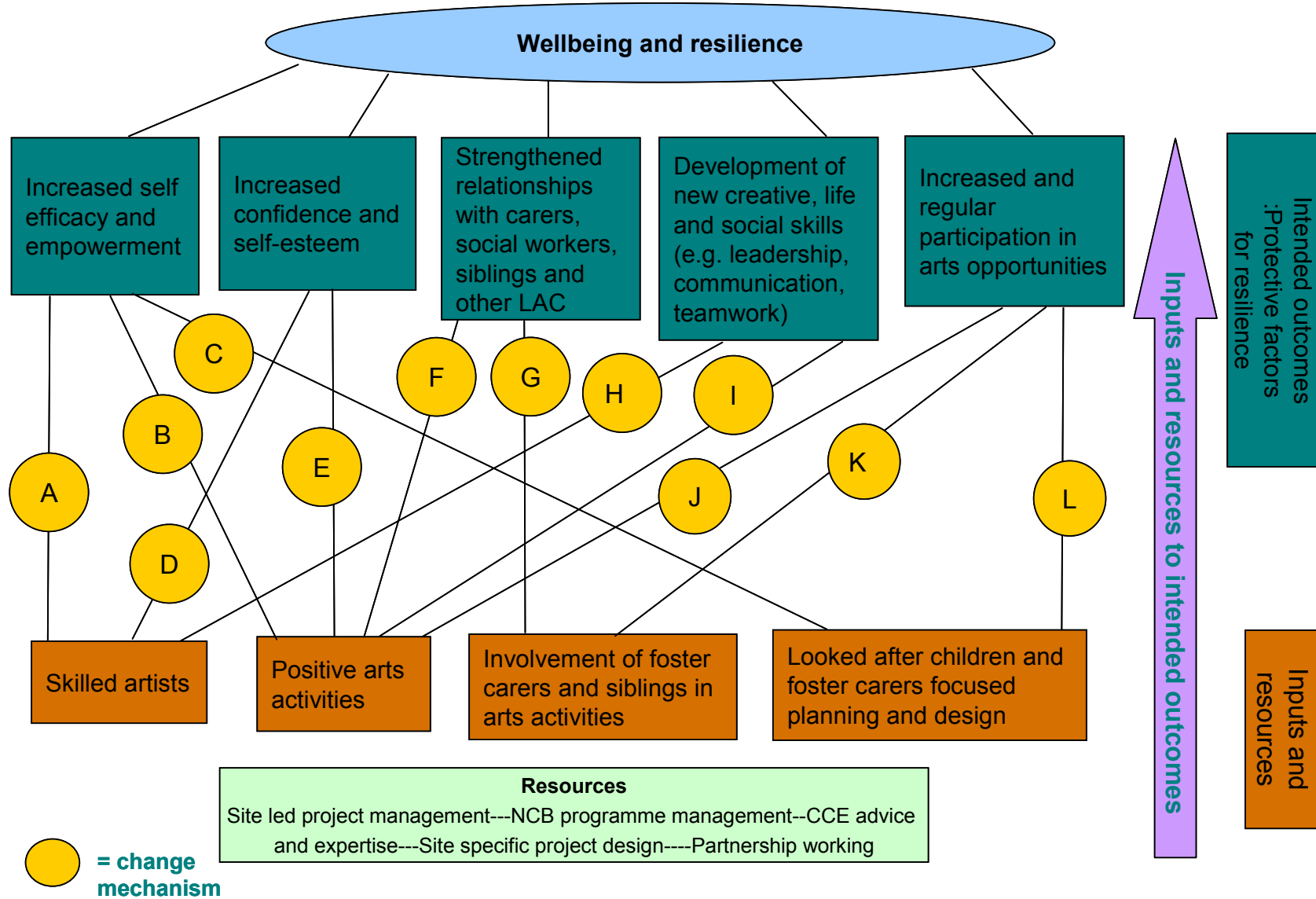
Our interviews with project leads and review of project proposals identified four key inputs that we hypothesise will result in the intended outcomes listed above:

- **Skilled artists:** All projects will be employing and/or providing training to artists that will have the skills and knowledge necessary to work with looked after children.
- **Positive arts activities:** The looked after children across all three sites will participate in a range of arts activities and creative workshops. These will allow the children to have fun as well as learn new skills and showcase their learning, for example through celebratory events, the Arts Award, certificates of achievement and celebratory films/videos.
- **Involvement of foster carers and siblings in arts activities:** To a certain extent, foster carers across all sites will be involved in the delivery of the project. Some will be involved either in directly supporting the children's participation in the activities whereas others will directly participate in the activities with the children. Additionally, one site is also aiming to involve siblings that live in the same family unit with the looked after children in project activities.
- **Looked after children and foster carer focused planning and design:** All projects seek to involve the children and/or foster carers in the design and planning phase of the project. Some also involve 'taster' sessions or 'creative marketplaces' where the children can explore the different options. This is to help ensure that the activities that are delivered are in line with the interests and needs of the children.

In addition to these inputs, there are also a range of resources that will also support the delivery and implementation of the projects. These include site-led project management, NCB programme management, CCE advice and expertise, partnership working across all stakeholders involved and individual project design.

A visual map of the theory of change model is presented below. This is followed by an explanation of the series of change mechanisms that our model theorises will result in the above listed intended outcomes.

Evaluation model



Change mechanisms

Intended outcome: Increased self efficacy and empowerment		
	Change mechanism	Explanation
A	Artists create a safe space for looked after children that is empowering and builds self efficacy	<p>The evidence indicates that the particular skills, knowledge and approach possessed by artist pedagogues⁷ helps create a space where looked after children feel empowered and that their experiences, opinions and views matter. In particular, the evidence indicates that artist pedagogues can successfully build children's self efficacy by creating a participatory learning environment that supports young people's decision making, choice and personal expression.</p> <p>Additionally, creating an informal and 'non hierarchical' space also helps ensure that the children feel like active agents in determining their own destiny and are able to take ownership over and shape the learning process. To support this artists need to ensure that they are sharing the journey and experience with young people.^{8,9}</p>
B	Learning and showcasing new skills offers an empowering experience for young people	<p>Art and creative activities can enable looked after children to feel a sense of accomplishment by providing them with the opportunity to learn new skills and master new tasks that are different to those normally practiced at school or at home. Secondly, providing the children with opportunities to showcase their learning also contributes to a sense of achievement that can be empowering for them.¹⁰ Many of the projects include elements that are focused on recognising the achievement of young people, for example through celebratory events, the Arts Award, certificates of achievement and celebratory films/videos.</p>

⁷ Artist pedagogues are creative practitioners that use the principles of social pedagogy to work with vulnerable children and young people. A social pedagogic approach uses creative practices to build relationships and help children and young people gain enjoyment, self realisation and cultural inclusion.

⁸ Chambers, H (2008) People with passion....getting the right people around the table

⁹ Gilligan, R (2009) Promoting resilience: supporting children and young people who are in care, adopted or in need

¹⁰ McLellan, R; Galton, M (2011) The Impact of Creative Partnerships on Student Wellbeing: Interim Report

C	Involvement in planning and decision making processes fosters a sense of ownership amongst young people	All projects seek to involve the children in the design and planning phase of the project to help ensure that the activities that are delivered are in line with their interests and needs. Some also involve 'taster' sessions or 'creative marketplaces' where the children can explore the different options. Involving them in this process, ensuring their voices and opinions are heard and encouraging them to make decisions will also encourage them to feel a sense of ownership over the project leading to greater self efficacy.
Intended outcome: Increased confidence and self esteem		
	Change mechanism	Explanation
D	Artists create a safe space where young people feel listened to and valued	Artist pedagogues, by understanding the emotional needs and attachment issues of looked after children, are skilled in creating a consistent and stable environment where children feel safe and supported. Artists adopt an approach to working with children so that they feel listened to and valued. For example they will be patient and encouraging, allowing the children the time they need to show interest and find their own way and to express their thoughts and opinions ¹¹ . This safe space and positive learning environment will help build the confidence and self esteem of the children.
E	Opportunities to participate in creative endeavours create opportunities for self expression that build confidence and self esteem	Arts and creative activities provide a safe space for children to feel confident in expressing their personal thoughts, opinions and experiences. Creative mediums of expression offer different channels over and above simply talking which children may be able to access more readily and feel less threatened by. The arts can enable children to find their own meaning and provides them with a language to identify and describe their emotions. Such opportunities for self expression can help build their confidence and self esteem ¹² .
Intended outcome: Better or new relationships with carers, social workers, siblings and other looked after children		
	Change mechanism	Explanation
F	Taking part in arts activities creates a space where relationships can be	Arts opportunities, by involving team work and focusing on individual and group identity and dynamics, can provide a fun and engaging space where looked after children can come together and work as a team.

¹¹ Gilligan, R (2009) Promoting resilience: supporting children and young people who are in care, adopted or in need

¹² McLellan, R; Galton, M (2011) The Impact of Creative Partnerships on Student Wellbeing: Interim Report

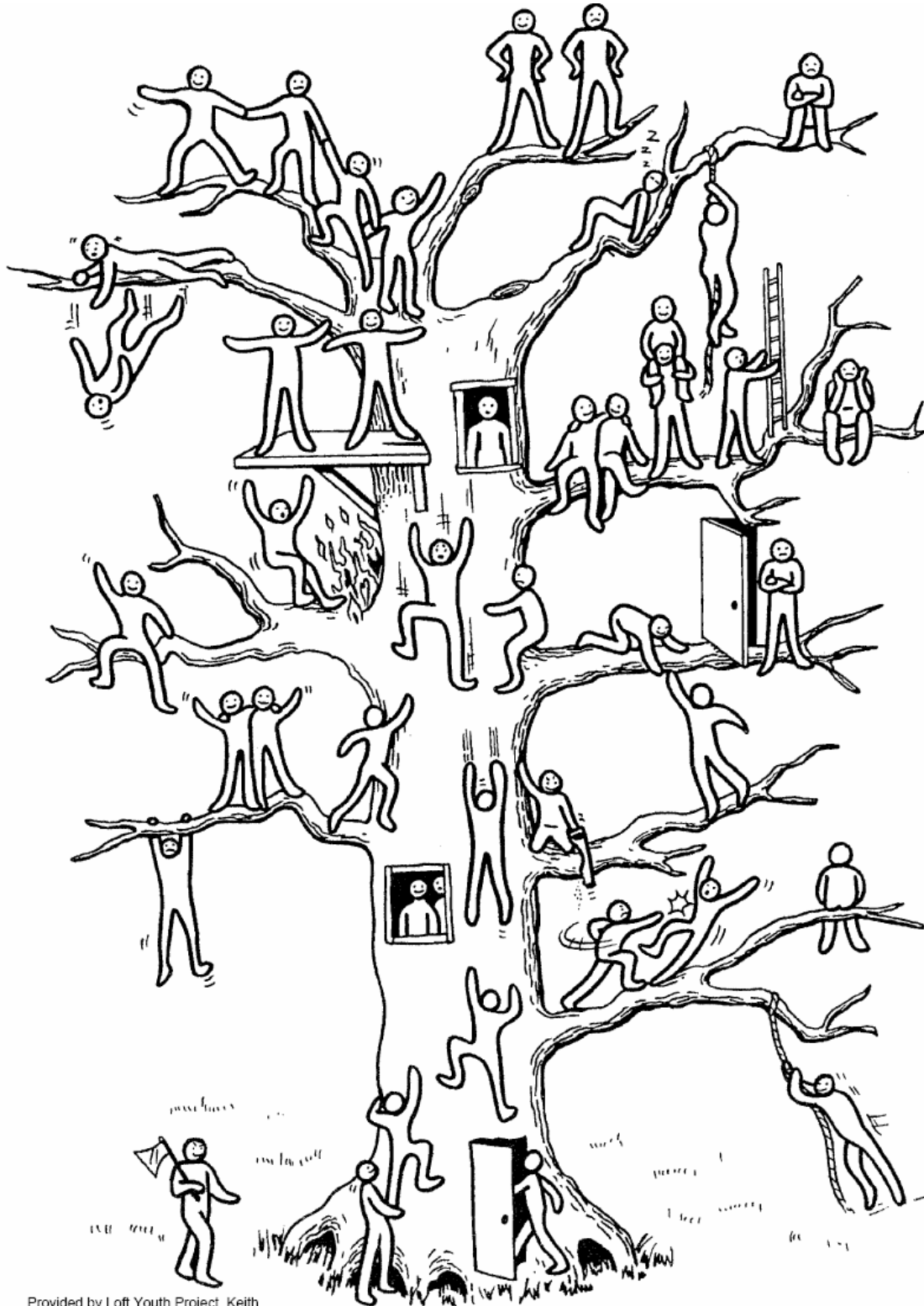
	developed through shared experiences	Developing trusting relationships with other children and artist pedagogues helps support other relationships, for example, with their foster carers, social workers, siblings and wider networks. The shared experience can be conducive to building new and more trusting relationships that will widen and improve the network of support available to the children.
G	Foster carers support and in some cases participate, at times alongside with other siblings, in art activities with their children helping to strengthen their relationship	The involvement of foster carers in art projects either through taking their children to the project, taking part in activities or seeing the creative product/performance that emerges from the project, strengthens their relationship through spending time together on shared activities and validating the child's expression and experience ¹³ . Similarly, the participation by siblings that also live in the same family unit in arts activities alongside the looked after children also strengthens these relationships and bonds.
Intended outcome: Develop new creative, life and social skills		
	Change mechanism	Explanation
H	Children develop their creative, life and social skills through participating alongside skilled artists that model these skills	Children develop their creative skills through learning from skilled artists, life skills through team work, and social skills through seeing these modelled by artists and colleagues and having opportunities to communicate with their peers and supportive adults.
I	Engagement in creative activities by children helps to build their artistic, life and social skills, especially when they are involved in designing the activities.	Artists help build a range of skills through the activities they co-design and produce with children. Creative, life and social skills are developed through taking part in activities that are of interest to children and that meet their needs and interests.
Intended outcome: Increased and regular participation in arts activities		
	Change mechanism	Explanation
J	Having a positive experience makes the children want to continue to	A positive experience created by this project cultivates an interest and passion for the arts. This experience leads to a desire for future participation in creative opportunities. The arts are valued as a medium for

¹³ Chambers, H (2008) People with passion....getting the right people around the table

	participate in arts opportunities	positive experiences such as personal expression, learning skills, building confidence and working with others to achieve something.
K	Foster carers see the benefits of the looked after children in their care and other siblings taking part in arts based activities and are supportive of future opportunities	Foster carers are aware of the benefits of their child taking part in arts based activities and are therefore supportive of identifying future opportunities and helping their child take part. At one site, they are also motivated by the enjoyment of the activities by other siblings in the same family unit. Awareness and valuing the arts is built through involvement in the project, undertaking creative activities with children and seeing final performances or pieces by the children. An appreciation of the value of the arts is also built through noticing and reflecting on any changes shown in their children e.g. increase in confidence, expression, regulation of emotion etc.
L	Through involvement in the planning of projects, foster carers and looked after children learn more about arts opportunities and its benefits and gain an understanding of how art activities can foster wellbeing and resilience in looked after children	Fosters carers and looked after children are involved in the planning of projects across all three sites. This will give foster carers a better understanding of the different types of arts opportunities available in the local area and how such activities can foster wellbeing and resilience in looked after children. Similarly, it will allow the children to understand the broad range of arts opportunities that exist and identify which of these best suit their interests.

Appendix 2: Baseline evaluation tools

Children's tool



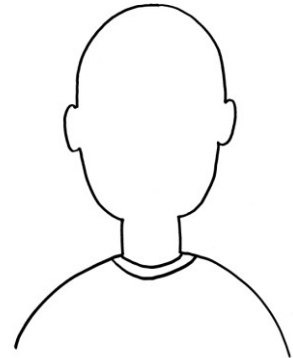
1. Have a look at the people in this picture. There are people climbing up, people hanging on, people waving and smiling and people feeling worried or needing help.

Which person is the best match for how you feel about coming here and being yourself? Why don't you colour them in!

2. Please could you draw a picture of yourself?

Think about what you like and don't like and what's important to you.

We will come back to this picture from time to time to think about thoughts and feelings you might have and new things that you've tried.



Initial recording template for evaluation tools with children

Please use this template to make notes from your **initial conversation** with each child you undertake the evaluation with. Use a separate template for each child.

Child's name.....

Date.....

Person undertaking the evaluation activity

Tool 1 – Tree tool exploring confidence and self-esteem

What were the main feelings or thoughts that the child mentioned in relation to their position on the tree?

Tool 3 – Portrait to explore self efficacy, empowerment and new skills

What were the main things the child mentioned in relation to their self portrait? What were their hopes for their time at the project?

Questionnaire for foster carers

Your feedback is very much appreciated and we will use it to see if attending the project has made a difference to the child you look after.

Please answer the questions carefully. The questions are designed to look at different areas of the child's life and relationships and to see if taking part in this project makes a difference to these. They are not intended to make a judgement on you as a foster carer or the child you look after.

Please take 10 minutes to fill out this short form. You will be asked to complete another form at the end of the project. You do not have to provide any personal details such as your name or phone number. The questions relate to the different outcomes this project is aiming to achieve. There is space at the end of the survey to write any further comments or reflections you might have. This questionnaire is intended to provide a 'snapshot' of the child you care for. You will also have the opportunity to express more in-depth views through a focus group to be held at the end of the project.

Name of child you look after: _____

Date: _____

Being able to enjoy and achieve

1. On a scale of 1-5 with 1 being not at all and 5 being a great deal, to what extent do you think your foster child is currently able to master new skills?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all				A great deal

2. On a scale of 1-5 with 1 being not at all and 5 being a great deal, to what extent do you think your foster child currently believes in his or her own abilities?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all				A great deal

Confidence and self esteem

3. On a scale of 1-5 with 1 being very unconfident and 5 being very confident, how confident would you say your foster child is? (By confidence we mean real, inner confidence – not just 'acting' confident)

1	2	3	4	5
Very unconfident				Very confident

4. On a scale of 1-5 with 1 representing poor self image and 5 representing a positive self image, how would you score the self image your foster child has of him or herself?

Not very strong**Very strong****Taking part in arts activities**

11. On a scale of 1-5 with 1 being never and 5 being frequently, before this project, how often - did your foster child take part in creative and arts activities (for example, drama, music making, poetry writing, photography, drawing, singing to his or herself and visiting cinemas and museums)?

1**2****3****4****5****Never****Frequently**

12. On a scale of 1-5 with 1 being never and 5 being frequently, before this project, how often did *you* take part in creative and arts activities (for example, drama, music making, poetry writing, photography, drawing, singing, and visiting cinemas and museums)?

1**2****3****4****5****Never****Frequently****Anything else**

13. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your foster child or your involvement in this project so far?

Thank you for taking the time to fill in this form.

Please return it to:

Reflection tool for artists/project staff

Please use this form to note down your early reflections of the different children attending the project which you are going to be the evaluation lead for.

We will ask you to revisit your initial reflections and think about any changes that may have occurred throughout the journey of their involvement.

Name of the child:..... Name of artist/staff member.....

Date:

Ability to enjoy and achieve

From your experiences so far, how well do you think this child is able to master new skills? What is the current level of self-belief this child holds in relation to his or her abilities?

Confidence and self esteem

From your experience so far, how confident would you say this child is? What can you tell about his or her current level of self esteem and self image? How does s/he deal with set backs?

Relationships with other people

From your experience so far, what would you say about how this child interacts with other people around him or her? What kind of relationship does s/he have with their foster carers, members of the project and their peer group?

Creativity, skills and communication

From what you have observed so far how open is this child to using their creativity? How able is s/he able to communicate with you and those around him or her?

Other information

Is there anything else you've noticed so far which you feel is important and would like to come back to during the lifetime of the evaluation in relation to this child?

Guidance to accompany the self evaluation activities with children, foster carers and artists taking part in the CCE/NCB project

This guidance accompanies the evaluation tools for this project. There are three different tools for the project which relate to:

- Looked after children
- The foster carer(s) of children involved
- One of the artists or project staff members closely involved with the children taking part

Conversations with the children

The three page tool has been developed as a guide for a conversation with the child. Please use the recording form to note down the main points of your conversation with the child.

Page 1

The first page relates to the outcome of **increased confidence and self-esteem**. Start off by looking at the tree with the child and the different situations the people are in. Ask the child to imagine some of the emotions and thoughts they may be having. Then ask the child to choose one of the people that best represents how they are feeling about coming here and being themselves.

When the child has chosen, ask them to colour in the figure.

Then ask them if they can tell you why they are feeling that way.

If a child is reluctant to choose a figure that best represents how they are feeling, the practitioner can volunteer to the child which figure they would choose for themselves and why, as this may help put the child at ease.

Page 2

The second page relates to the outcomes of **self efficacy, empowerment and developing new skills**.

Ask the child to draw a picture of themselves. Ask them to think about:

- Who they are / what their personality is like
- What they enjoy/don't enjoy
- What's important to them e.g. they might draw themselves in a particular setting or doing a certain activity.
- What their dreams and hopes are for their time at the project (these could be put in speech bubbles above their head).

Explain that we'll come back to the drawing at different intervals to be agreed with each project (depending on the shape and length of your project) to see what's changed and what's stayed the same.

When coming back to the picture encourage the child to put down:

- Any feelings or new thoughts they've had and explore what they relate to
- Any new activities they've tried and what this was like

- Whether their dreams have stayed the same or changed? Did they fulfil their hopes or dreams?
- How they have felt in the group with other children and staff at the project

Use the new information to listen and find out what impact these changes have had on the child's life. For example, if the child says 'I've learnt how to sing' find out how this makes them feel about themselves/being in a group of other children singing etc.

Questionnaires with foster carer(s)

The evaluation requires one of the foster carers responsible for the child to fill in a pre and post questionnaire so we can explore the impact of the project on the outcomes described in the theory of change for the children involved.

The questionnaire should be fairly self explanatory but please take your time when distributing the survey to ensure foster carers are happy with the questions and understand them. Foster carers will be asked to fill in a follow up questionnaire after their child has been involved in the project. It may also be helpful to let foster carers know that this tool is intended to provide a 'snapshot' of the child they care for and that they will also have the opportunity to express more in-depth views through a focus group to be held at the end of the project.

The questionnaires will remain confidential as we will not be plotting changes of individual children but the sample as a whole.

More in-depth qualitative research with foster carers will also take place towards the end of the project.

Reflections of artists / project staff

Observations of project staff are central to measuring the impact of this project and also exploring *why* particular changes may have occurred.

The different factors you have been asked to comment on reflect the specific outcomes your project is aiming to achieve as represented in the theory of change model and aim to reflect on the child as a whole.

Firstly, decide as a project team which artist or member of staff will be responsible for completing the form for which child.

Then complete the reflection form following the first or second initial sessions with the child(ren). Your initial reflections will be returned to towards the end of the child's involvement so that any differences or similarities can be considered. We will also be conducting interviews and focus groups with artists to explore change in more depth and look at if and how change occurred.

Appendix 3: Tools for site visits

Agendas for discussions

1. Foster carers

- Introductions / overview of involvement in project activities to date
- Reasons for getting involved / expectations from project
- What has worked well / less well? (in terms of content, design and delivery)
- Impact of project to date on (i) children and (ii) foster carers

Probes:

- Increased self efficacy and empowerment
- Increased confidence and self esteem
- Strengthened relationships with carers, social workers, siblings and other looked after children
- The development of new creative, life and social skills (e.g. leadership, communication and teamwork)
- Increased and regular participation in arts opportunities
- Aspects of project responsible for facilitating impact to date / what about the project was responsible for this impact?
- Suggested improvements?
- Expectations going forward

2. Artists / cultural providers

- Introductions / overview of involvement and delivery to date
- Understanding of aims of the project
- Reasons for getting involved / expectations from project
- Feedback on training and learning gained
- How learning gained has or will shape delivery / how have they had to adapt their approach?
- What has worked well / less well? (in terms of content, design and delivery)
- Perceived impact of project to date on (i) children and (ii) foster carers

Probes:

- Increased self efficacy and empowerment
- Increased confidence and self esteem
- Strengthened relationships with carers, social workers, siblings and other looked after children
- The development of new creative, life and social skills (e.g. leadership, communication and teamwork)

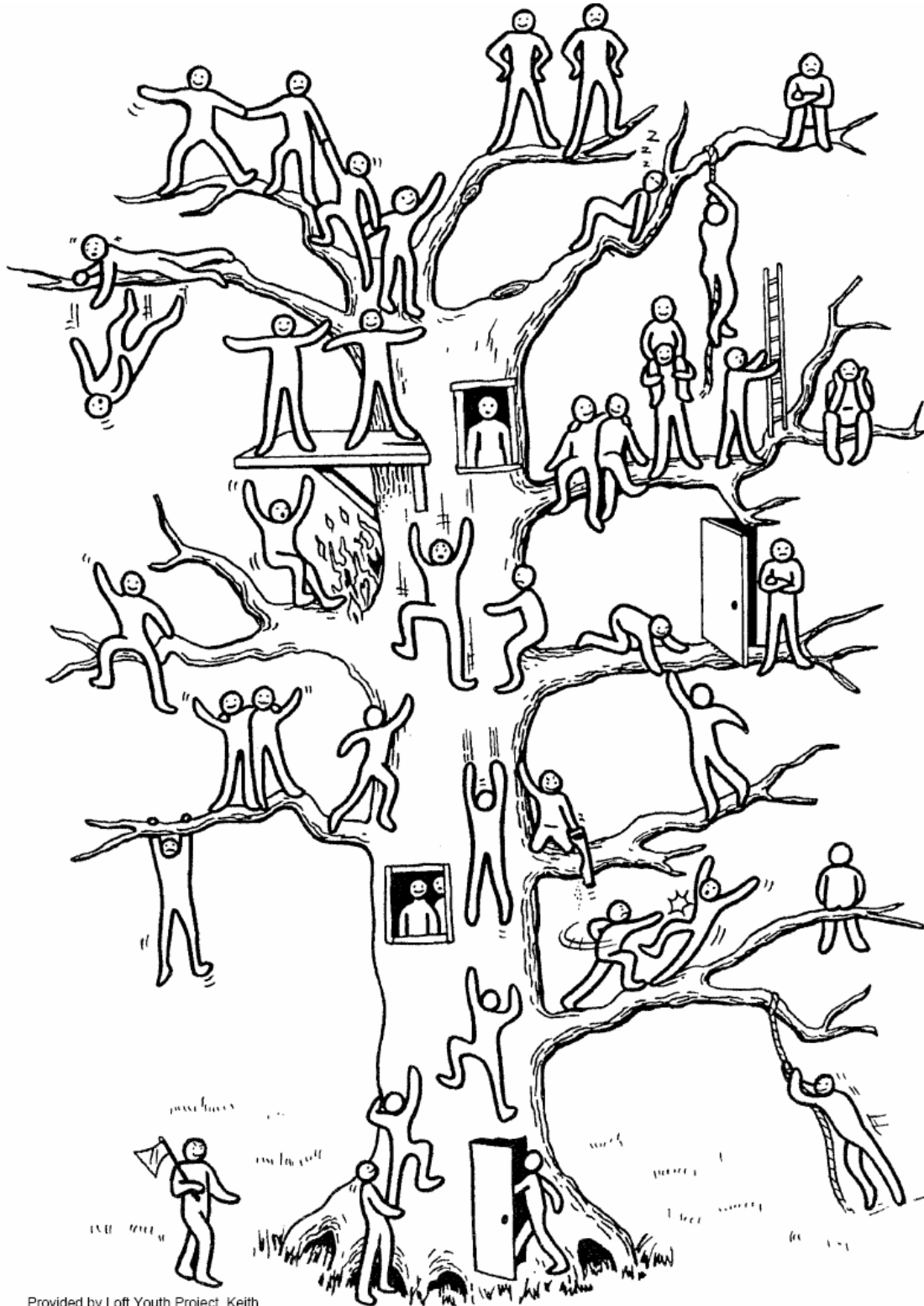
- Increased and regular participation in arts opportunities
- Aspects of project responsible for facilitating impact to date
- Further support or resource that would be helpful going forward?
- Any changes you would make if you were going to run the project again?

3. Delivery partners

- Introductions
- Recap of design of project
- Overview of delivery to date
- Feedback on processes:
 - ‘Cascade’ design of project: what has worked well / successes?, what has worked less well / barriers? Opportunities and challenges associated with cascade model?
 - Recruitment of children and foster carers: what has worked well / successes?, what has worked less well / challenges? Implications for future delivery?
 - Recruitment of artists / cultural providers: what has worked well / successes?, what has worked less well / challenges? Implications for future delivery?
 - Training of artists / cultural providers: what has worked well / successes?, what has worked less well / challenges? Implications for future delivery?
 - Project management: what has worked well / successes?, what has worked less well / challenges? Implications for future delivery?
 - Partnership working: what has worked well / successes?, what has worked less well / challenges? Implications for future delivery?
- Perceived impact of project to date on (i) children and (ii) foster carers
 - Probes:*
 - Increased self efficacy and empowerment
 - Increased confidence and self esteem
 - Strengthened relationships with carers, social workers, siblings and other looked after children
 - The development of new creative, life and social skills (e.g. leadership, communication and teamwork)
 - Increased and regular participation in arts opportunities
- Aspects of project responsible for facilitating impact to date

Appendix 4: Follow-up evaluation tools

Children's tool



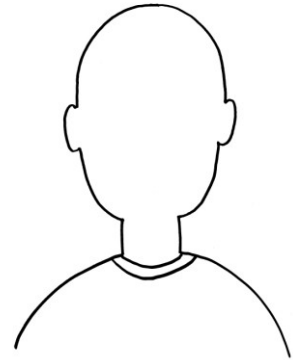
1. Have a look at the people in this picture. There are people climbing up, people hanging on, people waving and smiling and people feeling worried or needing help.

Which person is the best match for how you feel about coming here and being yourself? Why don't you colour them in!

2. Please could you draw a picture of yourself?

Look at the picture you drew at the start of the project? What's different? Is anything the same?

What are the new thoughts and feelings you might have had since you drew this picture?'



Follow up recording template for evaluation tools with children

Please use this template to make notes from your **follow up** conversation with each child you undertake the evaluation with. Use a separate template for each child.

Child's name.....

Date.....

Person undertaking the evaluation activity

Tool 1 – Tree tool exploring confidence and self-esteem

What were the main feelings or thoughts that the child mentioned in relation to their position on the tree now? Have these changed from their original position? If so how does the child explain this change?

Tool 2 – Portrait to explore self efficacy, empowerment and new skills

What are the main things the child has added to their self portrait? Have they added any new skills or activities? What has been the impact of these skills? Did they get to do or achieve what they hoped they might at the beginning?

Reflection tool for artists/project staff

Please use this form to note down your reflections of the different children attending the project which you have been the evaluation lead for. As you may remember, we asked you to record initial reflections on a similar form at the start of the project. When completing this form please think about any changes that may have occurred throughout the journey of their involvement.

Name of the child:..... Name of artist/staff member.....

Date:

Ability to enjoy and achieve

From your involvement with this child, how well was he/she able to master new skills? Did you notice any differences (positive or negative) about the child's self belief in their abilities or did this stay largely the same?

Confidence and self esteem

From your involvement with this child, did you see any changes in his/her confidence? Did you notice any differences in the child's self esteem and self image or did this stay largely the same? What about in the way s/he deals with set backs?

Relationships with other people

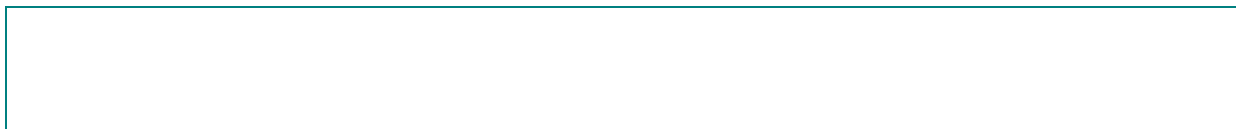
From your involvement with this child, did you see any changes in how this child interacts with other people around him or her, or did this stay largely the same? What about differences in the kind of relationship s/he has with their foster carers, members of the project and their peer group?

Creativity, skills and communication

From what you have observed, has there been any change in how open this child is to using his/her creativity? What about in his/her ability to communicate with you and those around him or her?

Other information

Is there any other change that you've noticed which you feel is important in relation to this child?



Appendix 5: Follow-up fieldwork tools

End of project evaluation activities with the children

This topic and activity guide is to be used flexibly and in discussions between OPM and projects to ensure the evaluation activities are meaningful and accessible for the different children involved. The projects have been working creatively in different ways with the children e.g. some have been using music, video, poetry or movement. We suggest tailoring the session to utilise some of the creative methods that the children have enjoyed and are familiar with.

We recommend that someone known to the children leads the session so that the children feel relaxed and comfortable but that the session is co-facilitated by Annie or Sanah.

A short information sheet with Annie and Sanah's photo will be sent in advance of the session so the children feel prepared and comfortable about who they will talk to and the purpose of the session.

The session is divided into four topic areas looking at:

1. If and how being at the project helped children learn new things and feel more able to try new things (outcomes relating to self efficacy, empowerment, new creative and life skills)
2. How being at the project made the children feel about themselves (outcomes relating to confidence and self esteem)
3. If being at the project changed how the children related to each other, the staff or foster carers (outcome relating to strengthened relationships)
4. If being at the project changed their attitudes to the arts and creative activities (outcome related to increased and regular participation in arts opportunities)

If the children have kept sketch books or diaries they can be encouraged to bring these with them to reflect back on. We would envisage the session lasting about 45 minutes in total.

Topic area	Methods
<p>Topic 1:</p> <p>When you were at the project:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What kind of things did you like doing? • Was there anything that you didn't like doing? • Did you get to try things you'd never done before? What was that like? • Would you do any of these things again? 	<p>Children are invited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post up the things they liked doing / did not enjoy on different ends of a graffiti wall • Position themselves in different spaces in the room to represent their favourite or least favourite activities / part of the project • Create a facial expression or a body sculpt to represent how they felt about the different activities • Create a facial expression, a body sculpt or chose a word to represent how they would feel trying one of the activities again
Topic 2:	Children are invited to:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you remember back to the first day when you came here? How did you feel? • When you got more used to it, how did you feel coming here? • What kind of things here made you feel good? • What kind of things here made you feel worried or not sure? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post up ready prepared feeling words or pictorial expressions of feelings on the graffiti wall for the first day and how they feel now • Finish the sentences 'The things that made me feel good about coming here were' 'The things that made me feel worried or not sure about coming here were • Create a facial expression or a body sculpt to represent how they felt about the different elements of the project e.g. Meeting new people, the celebration event, the artists they worked with, spending time with/without their foster carers • Use an instrument such as a piano to represent how they felt at the beginning and the end of the project e.g. minor/major chords or loud and dark/light and quiet etc.
<p>Topic 3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did you get to know anyone especially well here? Who did you enjoy spending time with? • What was it like spending time with the other children, foster carers or artists? What did you like best? Was there anything you found difficult? 	<p>Children are invited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draw a picture or fill in a blank template of a face of one of the artists they had enjoyed working with and write some words to explain why • Identify some of the qualities of the people they had enjoyed spending time with by posting these up (e.g. funny, patient) on the graffiti wall. NB this is not about identifying the most popular person but getting underneath that to identify supportive qualities • Describe their journey home with their foster carer – what did they talk about? What was it like when they got home?
<p>Topic 4:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If someone asked you to take part in a project like this again, what would you say? • Have you done anything else like this such as making things, singing, dancing – since coming here? 	<p>Children are invited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use an instrument such as a piano to represent how they would feel about taking part in something like this again e.g. minor/major chords or loud and dark/light and quiet etc. • Make a facial expression or a sound to show how they would feel if they were asked to take part in a project like this again • Post up creative activities or ways of spending time they have been involved in since coming here
<p>De-brief and warm down</p>	

Artists discussion guide

1. Introduction of OPM (5 minutes)

- OPM is an independent research consultancy. We are pleased to be conducting an evaluation of the creative and cultural activities project with looked after children that CCE and NCB, in partnership with Customs House/Pie Factory Music/Whitewood and Fleming have been running. As some of you may remember, I had a chat with you at the start of the project. Now that the project is over, I would like to talk to you about your experience of delivering activities, any changes you observed whilst working with the children and foster carers that were involved and what you felt went well or less well. This discussion will help us find out more about what changes creative projects such as this make for looked after children and foster carers.
- *Session ground rules*
- *Reassure confidentiality*
- *Ask for permission to record*

2. Participant introductions and warm up activity (10 minutes)

- *Participants to introduce themselves and tell the OPM facilitator about the activities that they delivered as part of the project. OPM facilitator will map activities on a flip chart as they are introduced by the participants.*

3. Delivering the project (15 minutes)

This section will explore the artists' experience of and approach to delivering activities, in particular what worked well and less well.

1. Can you tell me about your approach to delivering the activities? What were the main things you thought about when designing the sessions?
2. Did you have a particular philosophy or ethos underpinning the activities, for example, guiding how you worked with the children?
3. Was there anything in particular you took into consideration because you were working with looked after children specifically? What kind of things did you think about?
4. Thinking of the project as a whole, what do you think worked particularly well about the project? And less well? Why?
5. Are there any changes that you would make if you were going to deliver these activities again? Why is this so?

5. Perceived impact of the project on looked after children and foster carers (15 minutes)

This section will explore the artists' perceptions of the impact of the project, in relation to the outcomes identified in the theory of change model as well as any other outcomes achieved.

6. Now that the project is over, I'd like us to spend a bit of time thinking about any changes you may have seen in the people involved in the project:

- Firstly, thinking about the child(ren) that were involved - What do you think they have gained from being involved in the project? What do you think they have achieved? Can you think of examples of these impacts? *OPM facilitator to probe on intended outcomes identified in theory of change model:*
 - Increased self efficacy and empowerment – did you notice any difference in the children’s belief in themselves or what they could do?
 - Increased confidence and self esteem – did you notice any difference in the children’s confidence? What about how they felt about themselves and their self esteem?
 - Strengthened relationships with carers, social workers, siblings and other looked after children – did you notice any difference in how the children related to the other children in the project as time went on? How about their relationships with yourselves? And their relationships with their foster carers or siblings?
 - The development of new creative, life and social skills (e.g. leadership, communication and teamwork) - did any of the children develop new types of skills – either creative ones or more like life skills?
 - Increased and regular participation in arts opportunities - do you know if any of the children became more interested in and took part in other arts opportunities?
- Were these changes experienced by everyone or did some children seem to benefit more than others or in different ways? Why do you think this was?
- The foster carers – Do you think that involvement in the project has made a difference to them? In what way?
 - Did you see their relationship or attitude to their foster child changing at all?
 - Did you see their attitude to the arts or creativity changing at all?

6. Factors that facilitated impact (10 minutes)

OPM facilitator will feed back the individual impacts identified by participants, and then take these in turn to discuss the factors that facilitated this impact:

7. Were there any aspects of the project that were particularly responsible for leading to this change you have identified? Why is this so? *OPM facilitator to take each identified impact in turn and probe on inputs identified in theory of change model:*
 - Skilled artists – what was the impact of having practitioners that are creative and artistically based? Was there any impact achieved through ‘working alongside’ the children? If so, can you describe this?
 - Positive arts activities – what was the impact of involving children in arts-based activities?
 - Involvement of foster carers and siblings in arts and activities – what difference did the involvement of foster carers and siblings in the activities or celebration events make?
 - Looked after children and foster carers focused planning and design – were foster children and carers involved in planning and designing the project? Did this make a difference?
8. Is there anything that could have helped the project to have even more of an impact on the children and the foster carers?

7. Challenges and success factors (10 minutes)

This section will explore the factors that may have supported or hindered the delivery of the project.

9. What do you think has been most instrumental to the success of this project?
10. Over the course of the project did you come across any barriers or challenges? If yes, how were these overcome?
11. What type of support or assistance did you get from the project management team or from NCB? Was this helpful?
12. Is there any further support or resource that would have been helpful for you?

8. Closing questions (5 minutes)

13. In your opinion, if we were to visit the children and foster carers again in 6 months time, do you think we would be able to see any differences as a result of this project? What would it be? Why do you think this is so?
14. If you were to give another artist one piece of advice about delivering this project in another area, what would it be?

Thanks and close

Foster carers discussion guide

1. Introduction of OPM (5 minutes)

- OPM is an independent research consultancy. We know that CCE and NCB, in partnership with Customs House/Pie Factory Music/Whitewood and Fleming have been running a creative and cultural activities project with the looked after children. As some of you may remember, I had a chat with you at the start of the project. Thank you for taking the time to fill out the before and after surveys about the child(ren) you care for this. Now that the project is over, I would like to talk to you in more depth about the experience of the project and whether you think it has made any difference to the child(ren) you care for and for you as a foster carer. This discussion will help us find out more about what changes creative projects such as this make for looked after children and foster carers.
- *Session ground rules*
- *Reassure confidentiality*
- *Ask for permission to record*

2. Participant introductions and warm up activity (10 minutes)

- *Participants to introduce themselves and tell the OPM facilitator:*
 - *how long they have been fostering*
 - *a little about the child(ren) they care for and how they were involved in the project.*
 - *whether their own children were involved in the project activities.*
- *Participants to identify the range of activities that were part of the project. OPM facilitator will map activities on a flip chart as they are introduced by the participants. This will serve as a visual reminder/reference point for the rest of the session.*

3. Involvement in the project (10 minutes)

This section will cover initial motivations for participation. Probe questions to include:

1. Thinking back to the start, can you remember where/how you heard about the project?
2. Why did you choose to get involved? What were you hoping that the child you care for would get out of the project? and yourself?
3. Do you know any foster carers that decided not to get involved? Can you think of reasons why other foster carers may have decided not to get involved? What would encourage them to get involved?

4. Impact of the project on looked after children and foster carers (15 minutes)

This section will cover the impact of the project, in relation to the outcomes identified in the theory of change model as well as any other outcomes achieved.

4. Now that the project is over, I'd like us to spend a bit of time thinking about any changes you may have seen in:

- The child(ren) you care for that were involved in the project - What do you think they have gained from being involved in the project? What do you think they have achieved? Can you think of examples of these impacts? *OPM facilitator to probe on intended outcomes identified in theory of change model:*
 - Increased self efficacy and empowerment – did you notice any difference in the child(ren)'s belief in themselves or what they could do?
 - Increased confidence and self esteem – did you notice any difference in the child(ren)'s confidence? What about how they felt about themselves and their self esteem?
 - Strengthened relationships with carers, social workers, siblings and other looked after children – did you notice any difference in how the child(ren) related to the other children in the project as time went on? How about their relationships with yourselves, or their siblings? And their relationships with the artists involved in delivering the activities?
 - The development of new creative, life and social skills (e.g. leadership, communication and teamwork) - did the child(ren) develop new types of skills – either creative ones or more like life skills?
 - Increased and regular participation in arts opportunities - Has the child(ren) become more interested in and taken part in other arts opportunities?
- You personally - Has involvement in the project has made a difference to you? In what way?
 - Did you notice any changes in how you and the child(ren) you care for get on with one another? How about other family members like partners or siblings?
 - Has it changed how you think about the arts and creative activities?

5. Factors that facilitated impact (15 minutes)

OPM facilitator will feed back the individual impacts identified by participants, and then take these in turn to discuss the factors that facilitated this impact:

5. Were there any aspects of the project that were particularly responsible for leading to this change you have identified? Why is this so? *OPM facilitator to take each identified impact in turn and probe on inputs identified in theory of change model:*

- Skilled artists – what was the impact of having practitioners that are creative and artistically based? Was there any impact achieved through artists that 'work alongside' the children? If so, can you describe this?
- Positive arts activities – what was the impact of involving children in arts-based activities?
- Involvement of foster carers and siblings in arts and activities – what difference did the involvement of yourselves and the siblings in the activities or celebration events make?
- Looked after children and foster carers focused planning and design – were you and the child(ren) involved in planning and designing the project? Did this make a difference?

6. Is there anything that could have enabled the project to have even more of an impact on the child(ren) you care for?

6. Strengths and weaknesses of the project (10 minutes)

This section will cover the most and least successful parts of the project. Probe questions to cover content, design and delivery of project, and include:

7. Thinking of the project as a whole, what do you think worked particularly well about the project? And less well? Why?
8. Looking at the list of project activities you've mentioned, which of these was the most popular with the children who were involved? And which were least popular? Why?
9. What did you think of how the artists and staff based at the project related to the children and to you? What do you think was particularly helpful or unhelpful about this?
10. Were there aspects of the project that did not work so well for the child you look after? Can you describe these?
11. What changes do you think should be made if the project is run again? Why?

7. Summing up (5 minutes)

12. What would you say is the most important thing that you and the child(ren) you care for have gotten out of this project?
13. What is the main thing that could be improved about the project?

Thanks and close

Project managers interview guide

Introduction

OPM is pleased to be conducting an evaluation of the creative and cultural activities project with looked after children that CCE and NCB, in partnership with Customs House/Pie Factory Music/Whitewood and Fleming have been running. As you may remember, through this evaluation we are trying to understand the impact of the projects on the lives of looked after children and foster carers. As well as understanding *what* impacts each of the projects is responsible for, we are also interested in understanding *how* each project creates those impacts.

As you know, we have already completed initial sessions with a small sample of foster carers, artists and the delivery team in the early stage of the project. Now that the projects have come to an end, we have/are in the process of conducting evaluation sessions with the looked after children, the foster carers and the artists.

Additionally, in this interview we would like to talk to you about your experiences of managing the delivery of the project, the perceived impact of the project on the looked after children involved, the successes and the challenges.

This interview should take around 45 minutes. If there are any responses which you wish to remain anonymous that is perfectly fine, and please flag this up during the interview.

Any questions about this interview or the evaluation overall before we begin?

1. Recap of the aims and design of the project

1. To start, can you give me a quick overview of what this project involved?

- What were you trying to achieve?
- How was it designed? Was there a philosophy/ethos behind it?
- What tasks and activities were delivered?
- Who was involved?

2. Project delivery: perceived strengths and weaknesses

Reflecting on your experience of the project, and the aims of the project:

2. Strengths: What have been the most successful / effective aspects of the project? What worked particularly well? Why?

3. Weaknesses: What have been the least successful / effective aspects of the project? What worked less well? Why?

4. Areas for improvement: Are there any changes that you would make if you were going to run this project again? Why is this so?

5. What are the key elements – both in terms of skills and behaviour – that you observed the artists needed to have to work effectively with this group of young people?

3. Perceived impact of the project on looked after children and foster carers

6. Now that the project is over, what impact do you think it has had on:

- The child(ren) that were involved: What do you think they have gained from being involved in the project? What do you think they have achieved? *Probes:*
 - Increased self efficacy and empowerment – Has there been any difference in the children’s belief in themselves or what they could do?
 - Increased confidence and self esteem – Has there been any difference in the children’s confidence? What about how they felt about themselves and their self esteem?
 - Strengthened relationships with carers, social workers, siblings and other looked after children – Has there been any difference in how the children related to the other children in the project as time went on? How about their relationships with yourselves? And their relationships with their foster carers or siblings?
 - The development of new creative, life and social skills (e.g. leadership, communication and teamwork) - did any of the children develop new types of skills – either creative ones or more like life skills?
 - Increased and regular participation in arts opportunities - do you know if any of the children became more interested in and took part in other arts opportunities?

- Can you think of examples of these impacts?

- The foster carers: Do you think that involvement in the project has made a difference to them? In what way?

6. Factors that facilitated impact

7. Were there any aspects of the project that were particularly responsible for the impacts we just discussed? Why is this so? Probes:

- Skilled artists – what was the impact of having practitioners that are creative and artistically based? Was there any impact achieved through ‘working alongside’ the children? If so, can you describe this?
- Positive arts activities – what was the impact of involving children in arts-based activities?
- Involvement of foster carers and siblings in arts and activities – what difference did the involvement of foster carers and siblings in the activities or celebration events make?

- Looked after children and foster carers focused planning and design – were foster children and carers involved in planning and designing the project? Did this make a difference?

8. Is there anything that could have enabled the project to have even more of an impact on the children and the foster carers?

9. Where did you notice the least impact or difficulties in achieving change? For example with particular children or foster carers. What made change particular difficult in these circumstances?

3. Project recruitment, management and delivery

10. As a reminder, can you tell me again about how you recruited foster carers/looked after children to get involved in this project? Who did you talk to? What partners or relationships did you rely on?

11. Did your approach to recruitment change at all over the course of the project? If yes, in what way?

12. To what extent do you feel you've been successful in reaching your target group of looked after children and foster carers? Were there any barriers faced during recruitment?

13. Do you feel that the children and foster carers involved are likely to be families already interested in the arts/creativity or ones for whom this is a new area? Why do you think this?

14. Have the recruited participants been continuously and regularly involved? If not, why?

15. Has there been any cancellation of activities due to poor attendance?

16. How well have the following processes worked? What are the implications of this for future delivery?

- Project planning – (including recruitment of and training for artists)
- Project management and governance - (including support from NCB, strategic project management support)
- Project monitoring and evaluation – (which elements of the evaluation were helpful/unhelpful)
- Partnership working and communication – (e.g., with local authorities, children's services)

4. Learning and recommendations

17. What recommendations would you make to:

- Improve the effectiveness and impact of the project? What would you do differently next time?

- Improve the management and support offered to you?

18. How do you think the findings from the evaluation can be most effectively communicated?

19. Find out when the learning tools will be returned....

Thanks and close