

# Evaluation Report

## Back to Ours Phase 2 Year 2

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RMR

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# About this report

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This is an evaluation report covering 2021, the second year of Phase 2 of the Back to Ours Creative People and Places (CPP) programme for Hull.

This evaluation will continue to December 2022, ending with a final report in March 2023. It uses data collected using an action learning approach, in keeping with national CPP approaches. Thus, much of the learning has fed directly into the programming through regular feedback to the Director and the Team.

The report has 6 sections:

- The Summary covers the main findings and recommendations.
- Section 1 offers an introduction to Back to Ours and their programme and approach to 2021.
- Section 2 explores how Back to Ours are reaching and inspiring audiences least likely to engage with the arts.
- Section 3 explores the process and outcomes of the Hubs, Back to Ours' route to ensure community voice in programming and decision making.
- Section 4 examines how Back to Ours work with local and national artists to ensure the excellence of the art on offer, and how their bespoke model of engagement is developed and shared in wider practice.
- Section 5 concludes and shares recommendations for next steps.

There are also Appendices providing extra in-depth information and analysis on the content of the report.

In addition, the report addresses Arts Council England's three National CPP Research Questions:

1. Are more people from places of least engagement experiencing and inspired by the arts?
2. To what extent was the aspiration for excellence of art and excellence of the process of engaging communities achieved?
3. Which approaches were successful and what were the lessons learned?

The answers are threaded throughout the sections of the report.

## Credits

This Evaluation was produced by RMR, embedded evaluation and strategic development specialists.

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*Photographs:* Used with permission of Back to Ours

RMR would like to thank Back to Ours for their help in compiling this report, in particular Louise Yates and Christie Parkin

More about the whole Creative People and Places programme can be found at

<http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/creativepeopleandplaces>



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# Summary

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## This is the evaluation report summary for 2021, the second year of Phase 2 of Back to Ours, the Creative People and Places (CPP) programme for Hull.

The report finds that despite the huge challenges of the year, 2021 has been very successful for Back to Ours. Work has been universally appreciated by partners, participants and audiences, and is truly reflective of Back to Ours' core aims and intentions. This has laid a sound foundation for the next stage in its development and it is clear that Back to Ours offers a unique, ground-breaking approach to arts and engagement in communities which should be funded to continue.

- Back to Ours **continue to reach audiences in communities least likely to engage with the arts**, and are increasingly reaching into those groups most difficult to engage.
- The **work inspires and excites audiences to engage further**, and community members to sign up and become more involved in planning and promoting the work.
- **Programming is extremely strategic**, the familiar is mixed with the unfamiliar, within a wraparound approach where every aspect of the programme is considered. This results in **excellent arts and an excellent process of engagement**, as audiences see and enjoy work they might not have considered attending otherwise.
- Back to Ours continue to **ensure a community voice is increasingly strong within their programme**, drawing on local knowledge and expertise by working with and through the Hubs.
- Back to Ours have over the last four years developed **a clear model with a set of core 'ingredients'** which enables them to tie a diverse programme into what has become their trusted brand.
- This confident programming will allow them to **continue to explore new opportunities**, enabling them to **stand alone as a company, rather than a project**, as well as continuing to break down more barriers to the arts and stretch the boundaries of what they achieve.

## Programming

The challenges around Covid persisted in 2021, meaning a hybrid model of on- and offline work continued as lockdowns and restrictions came and went. This was reflected in the programme broadly delivering two strands of work – face-to-face via **Right on your Doorstep** and virtually via **Right on your Sofa**.

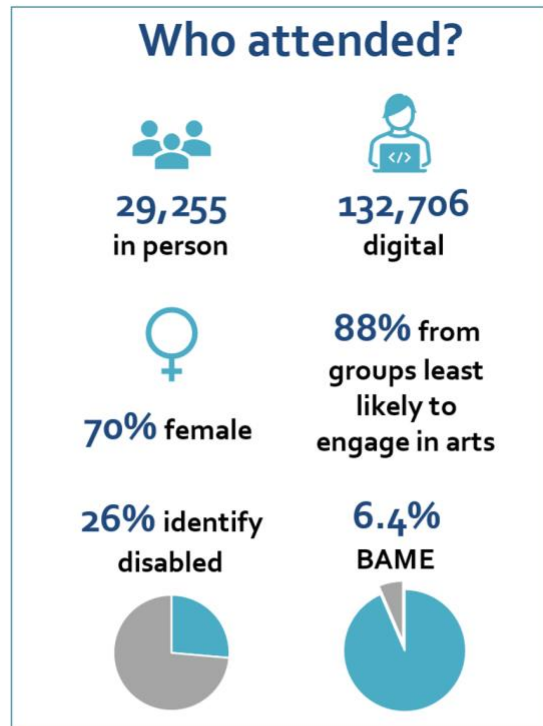
In 2021, the Programming included:

- Regular features such as **Bedtime Stories** which continued to be successful.
- Work continuing with artists such as **Dean Wilson** and **Black Kings Upon Hull**.
- **Shindig on your Sofa** going into people's homes.
- The **Hubs Bus Tour** and **The Christmas Card Parade** taking events back out into communities.

This continued to be underpinned by five core ingredients:

- The values at the heart of Back to Ours drive how and why things are done.
- Strategically and consciously thinking about the offer.
- The importance of mixing the familiar and unfamiliar.
- A willingness to take steps into the unknown.
- Listening, learning and adapting in response to audiences.

# 2021 in Numbers<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Some events included more than one activity. Digital numbers are calculated using last known values in some cases where videos have since been taken down. 'Big Numbers' taken from a range of sources including Engagement and demographics monitoring for Arts Council England quarterly reports, survey data from all available sources, analysis completed by The Audience Agency on postcodes and information gathered by the team at Back to Ours, as well as RMR.

## Engaging and inspiring new audiences

Back to Ours' ability to engage with audiences is a key question for this evaluation, helping us answer Arts Council England's CPP National Research Question 1: *Are more people from places of least engagement experiencing and inspired by the arts?*

We find that:

- The Programme is definitely reaching those people least likely to engage in the arts and from poorer backgrounds.
- Back to Ours audiences overwhelmingly came from Hull and were widely distributed across all areas of the city and concentrated in areas of programming focus, which are also areas of low arts engagement and higher deprivation.
- Audience reach is increasing among men and people from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds – and there is retention of the high proportions of disabled people.
- Audiences and participants are enthused and inspired to do more.
- Participants feel the programme makes a difference to their sense of community and pride in place.

**"What an amazing Event! An absolute tonic for the soul. Thank you so much BTO for putting this on."**

Audience Member, Annual Survey

## The Hubs

The four Hubs are integral to engaging audiences at a hyperlocal level. Members are local people who meet regularly to plan events and activities and socialise at cultural events. The Hubs are key to Back to Ours' programming in three ways:

- 1) In providing a sounding board for ideas
- 2) As promoters and encouragers of other people in their area to attend
- 3) As the voice of the community in co-developing the programme

We find that:

- Hub Members have stayed with Back to Ours through the pandemic lockdowns but are very appreciative of the chance to attend in person again.
- They felt strong ownership of the programme, particularly the Hub Bus Tour in the summer and the Christmas Card Parade – both co-designed and delivered with the Hub Members in their neighbourhoods.
- As a result of Back to Ours, they felt much more likely to go to arts or art events, had increased interest in the arts and an increased confidence to try new things.
- Being involved with Back to Ours has made a big difference to their emotional and mental health.
- Hub Members have a strong desire to make improvements in their community – they particularly engaged with the opportunity to support isolated neighbours through the Shindig on your Sofa care package.

**"I loved being involved in meetings where events were discussed and ideas formed and developed from an original idea... I really enjoyed the process of putting forward ideas, and listening to other people's ideas for the Christmas Card."**

Hub Member, Survey

## Developing artists to deliver to Back to Ours' audiences

Back to Ours continue to work with locally and nationally based artists to support them to work more effectively with Hull's communities. Through this approach, communities across Hull have more opportunities to engage in a wider range of arts and culture which resonates with them.

We find that:

- Back to Ours are seen as a positive partner for artists from Hull and beyond.
- A strong model has developed since 2018 of introducing new artists to the community – particularly via the Hubs – as well as involving others who audiences feel more comfortable with.
- Through partnership with Back to Ours, artists have:
  - Created new artwork relevant to the communities of Hull;
  - Developed their practice in reaching new audiences, and;
  - Presented their work in new community settings and thus to a wider audience.

**“Back to Ours' support is always brilliant - the freedom they allow us artists, the financial support that allows us to make bigger and better work, and the on the ground support from their team and volunteers.”**

Back to Ours Artist, Annual Survey

## Conclusions and recommendations

As Back to Ours move into the final year of CPP activity we would recommend they focus on looking to the future and building on the successes so far to ensure the work can be sustained:

- 1) **Share the Back to Ours Model externally.** Be confident and explicit about the unique model, write it up and make it the heart of a sustainable business plan for long term delivery and share nationally as an example of good practice.
- 2) **Share the Back to Ours Model more internally.** The model is integral to everything the Programme does. Continue to ensure it is fully understood and embedded to guarantee continuity of vision.
- 3) **Continue to put time and effort into building and maintaining trust** – it is an essential ingredient in everything Back to Ours do and has underpinned the successes so far.
- 4) **Keep working in (more) areas beyond the city centre** – across the board people see this as unique to Back to Ours and something other arts organisations aren't doing.
- 5) **Carry on developing the Hubs model** so they continue to take the lead in programming what they feel would work for their communities. This is about designing how to promote the work to new audiences – neighbours and friends – as well as about designing the work.
- 6) **Recognise the importance of community spirit** – getting people together safely – especially at a time when issues such as the pandemic and the increasing cost of living are impacting on everyday life.
- 7) **Explore new income models.** There is benefit in looking at models that keep the work affordable for people but also generate income for the Programme.
- 8) **Keep accessibility in mind.** Make sure venues are accessible for those with disabilities so this doesn't impact on people's participation and enjoyment.
- 9) **Extend event marketing,** with more publicity in different areas of the city, and more advanced warning of dates in the marketing materials.
- 10) **Enhance current data collection systems.** Continue with excellent audience data collection and enhance and reintroduce opportunities for more qualitative data collection.





# 1. Back to Ours Programme and Model

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In this section, we set out the context for Back to Ours in 2021 including the Creative People and Places programme, the city of Hull, the programming and the programming model.

## 1.1. Creative People and Places and Back to Ours

Creative People and Places (CPP) is an Arts Council England (ACE) funding programme which aims to engage new people in the arts through commissioning projects in areas of low arts engagement. CPPs focus on engaging new audiences with an offer which is excellent in terms of process and product, through building new and unusual partnerships beyond the arts.

The programme started nationally in 2012 and initially funded 21 places (in three rounds in 2012, 2013 and 2014). Due to its success at reaching those who don't usually engage in ACE funded programmes, from 2019 a whole new round of (new) CPPs were commissioned with 10 more places funded. In November 2021, ACE announced another £38.3m to be invested into the programme nationally for 2022-25, meaning extension for 28 Places, and eleven new projects, with a rename of the programme as CPP National Portfolio Organisations.

Back to Ours were not, however, eligible for this extension as levels of arts engagement in Hull had risen by last measurement point to be above the threshold for CPP eligibility. As a result, Back to Ours are planning a transition of the model to fit within the core National Portfolio, and will learn whether they are successful for 2023-26 funding in late 2022. The current CPP programme will now run to March 2023.

ACE CPP funding runs alongside two other funding streams: National Lottery Community Fund (NLCF) funding for work specifically on Bransholme Estate (2019-2022); and Esmée Fairbairn funding for work with the Hubs.

With funding secured until March 2023, the team is now working on developing Back to Ours' approach to create a sustainable organisation to deliver and embed the work locally, to share learning and deliver nationally through a funding model with National Portfolio Organisation investment at its core, and a range of other funds to support this.

## 1.2. About Hull

**City of Culture:** Hull is a city of 259,126 people<sup>2</sup> situated on the Humber Estuary. In 2017, it became the UK City of Culture, challenging long-held stereotypes of the city, attracting millions in investment, and bringing in 6+ million visitors<sup>3</sup>.

**Economy and employment:** The city's 6,335 businesses generate 120,000 jobs, although unemployment is at 4.9%,<sup>4</sup> slightly higher than the national level. Average pay for full and part time workers, and the numbers of those with a degree, are lower than national figures<sup>5</sup>.

**Health and welfare:** Hull is the fourth most deprived local authority in England according to the 2019 Index of Deprivation. The areas of Hull that fall within the most deprived 10% of areas nationally make up 45% of the

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<sup>2</sup> Kingston upon Hull Data Observatory, Population, [https://data.hull.gov.uk/population/#/view-report/fo67fagf6ad840008507427e844d538f/\\_\\_\\_iaFirstFeature](https://data.hull.gov.uk/population/#/view-report/fo67fagf6ad840008507427e844d538f/___iaFirstFeature)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.marketingweek.com/hull-brand/>

<sup>4</sup> Nomis Labour Market Profile for Hull, <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157109/report.aspx>

<sup>5</sup> Kingston upon Hull Data Observatory, Economy and Employment, [https://data.hull.gov.uk/economy-and-employment/#/view-report/741f6f758c7e455ea748ee5d2a846db6/\\_\\_\\_iaFirstFeature](https://data.hull.gov.uk/economy-and-employment/#/view-report/741f6f758c7e455ea748ee5d2a846db6/___iaFirstFeature)

city<sup>6</sup>, with rates of homelessness almost twice the national average<sup>7</sup>. In 2019, 31% of dependent children in Hull were living in poverty, compared to 18% nationally<sup>8</sup>, and there were high levels of childhood obesity. 32.5% of the population identify as Equality Act core or work-limiting disabled<sup>9</sup>.

**Arts engagement:** The Active Lives Survey in 2018 reported arts engagement was 55%, lower than the national average for England as a whole (60%)<sup>10</sup>, but not in the lowest third of local authorities. This may well be skewed by Hull City of Culture in 2017 which led to very high levels of engagement for that year; the evaluation found that: "nearly all residents (over 95%) attending at least one cultural activity during the year."<sup>11</sup>.

**Arts ecosystem:** The city has a rich arts and culture heritage and several nationally significant cultural destinations. Hull has five NPOs (National Portfolio Organisations) and an MPM (Major Partner Museum) in receipt of Arts Council funding. This is comparatively low compared with other cities in the North of England. All Arts Council funded organisations and projects must commit to engaging people in areas of low arts engagement. There have been high levels of non-arts investment for working with communities over the last 15 years meaning communities in Hull have been used to short term programming with external groups coming in to 'fix and leave'. This has meant Back to Ours' commitment to long term relationships – based on work they trial in the community – has been well received. The gaps in the existing cultural offer have also made Hull a great place to try things out, and it has been a fertile breeding ground for more fleet of foot approaches like outdoor festivals.

### 1.3. The 2021 Programme

Back to Ours put the people of Hull at the centre of everything they do.

They deliver outstanding arts and cultural experiences for, and with, the people of Hull – engaging local communities as audiences, participants, co-creators and commissioners.

Venues for live shows are right in the centre of Hull neighbourhoods as opposed to the city centre. So schools, community centres, churches and social clubs are used to connect audiences with high-quality arts experiences – as well as online in a time of Covid.

At the heart of the programme is connection and engagement – building trust and relationships – mixing the familiar with the unfamiliar to grab attention, provoke and entertain.

People are taken on a journey – someone who doesn't feel particularly interested or confident in the arts might have a dance with a Dolly Parton impersonator on the Hub Bus Tour, then somewhere down the line bring their children to a performance of High Horse. The idea is they engage with the Back to Ours experience and want more.

In 2021 Back to Ours produced or supported 366 activities at 153 events, totalling 1,792 hours of delivery. This included:

- 110 live-streamed digital shows, with 121,197 views.
- 43 physical events including the hugely popular The Christmas Card Parade.

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<sup>6</sup> Kingston upon Hull Data Observatory, Deprivation, [https://data.hull.gov.uk/deprivation/#/view-report/b41787867bad4ebb83of3a24faa36991/\\_\\_\\_iaFirstFeature](https://data.hull.gov.uk/deprivation/#/view-report/b41787867bad4ebb83of3a24faa36991/___iaFirstFeature)

<sup>7</sup> Kingston upon Hull Data Observatory, Deprivation, [https://data.hull.gov.uk/deprivation/#/view-report/b41787867bad4ebb83of3a24faa36991/\\_\\_\\_iaFirstFeature](https://data.hull.gov.uk/deprivation/#/view-report/b41787867bad4ebb83of3a24faa36991/___iaFirstFeature)

<sup>8</sup> Kingston upon Hull Data Observatory, Deprivation, [https://data.hull.gov.uk/deprivation/#/view-report/b41787867bad4ebb83of3a24faa36991/\\_\\_\\_iaFirstFeature](https://data.hull.gov.uk/deprivation/#/view-report/b41787867bad4ebb83of3a24faa36991/___iaFirstFeature)

<sup>9</sup> Kingston upon Hull Data Observatory, Economy and Employment, [https://data.hull.gov.uk/economy-and-employment/#/view-report/741f6f758c7e455ea748ee5d2a846db6/\\_\\_\\_iaFirstFeature](https://data.hull.gov.uk/economy-and-employment/#/view-report/741f6f758c7e455ea748ee5d2a846db6/___iaFirstFeature)

<sup>10</sup> Arts Council England's Active Lives Survey 2015-17, % that attended an arts event OR spent time doing an arts activity

<sup>11</sup> The Impacts Of Hull 2017 Preliminary Outcomes Evaluation – March 2018, <https://www.hull.ac.uk/work-with-us/research/institutes/culture-place-and-policy-institute/cultural-transformations/preliminary-outcomes-evaluation>

- 30 Bedtime Stories shared through Facebook and YouTube with almost 40,000 views<sup>12</sup>
- There were over 170,000 engagements<sup>13</sup> made up of:
  - 132,706 total digital audience
  - 125,723 Facebook audience
  - 6,983 YouTube audience
  - 29,255 in-person audience
  - 7,989 Facebook participants
  - 200 YouTube participants
  - 507 in-person participants
  - At least 380 artist opportunities
- There were Four Hubs in Bransholme, East Hull, North Hull and Derringham, all areas of low arts engagement in the city.
  - Around 70 Hub Members, with 20-30 particularly active.
- A team of volunteers giving 1,238 hours of their time, volunteering a total of 645 times, with an estimated value of nearly £11,800<sup>14</sup>.
- 96% of audience members came from the top 40% most deprived areas in England, and were 24% more likely to come from the 10% most deprived areas than the Hull population as a whole.

The challenges around Covid persisted in 2021, meaning a hybrid model of on- and offline work continued as lockdowns and restrictions came and went. This was reflected in the programme broadly delivering two strands of work – face-to-face via **Right on your Doorstep** and virtually via **Right on your Sofa**. How these were delivered, and worked together, reflected the fact that Back to Ours had time to fully reflect on what had happened in the previous year, expanding on successes and exploring opportunities.

Highlights of the work programmed in 2021 included:

- **Bedtime Stories:** A children’s story regularly read by a local performer (or key figure in a particular neighbourhood), these were pre-recorded and shared via Facebook Premiere<sup>15</sup>. It was aimed at families with young children, as well as a hyper-local audience. Having started in 2020, it was developed further in 2021. Aspects of its development included linking to a live event (*High Horse*, see below) and having stories for Children’s Book Week read by high profile opera singer and performer Le Gateau Chocolat<sup>16</sup>.
- **High Horse:** This show from 2019 was rewritten to be performed at The Big Malarkey 2021, Hull’s children’s literature festival. The emphasis of the story shifted from “rules” to inviting the young audience to think about what “traditions” meant. Back to Ours, working with artist Alex Bennett, created an intricate and beautiful pop-up journal version of the show which was read as a Bedtime Story<sup>17</sup>. One hundred of these storybooks were made to share at The Big Malarkey performances.
- **Dean Wilson:** The spoken word artist continued his Film Club, presented an online event with Memphis Pete to coincide with the online premiere of the poem *When Elvis Died*, and made a film for National Poetry Day. His Cinema Shack – “a sit-in experience where passers-by can watch all of Dean and Dave

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<sup>12</sup> 39,904 views across all Bedtime Stories

<sup>13</sup> 170,657 engagements across all digital and in person audiences and participants logged by Back to Ours in quarterly monitoring reports to Arts Council England

<sup>14</sup> Calculated by multiplying number of volunteer hours by minimum wage for over 255, estimated to be £11,747.15

<sup>15</sup> Live performances had been a feature in 2020 but these were discontinued

<sup>16</sup> For example, Le Gateau Chocolat reads Barbara Throws A Wobbler by Nadia Shireen <https://youtu.be/YfucTDwXojY>

<sup>17</sup> See Finlay McGuigan reads High Horse by Back to Ours <https://youtu.be/2A109riey3Q>

Lee's classic short films, plus six brand new ones"<sup>18</sup> – appeared at Bransholme Chat and Freedom Festival, and he was a featured performer on the Hub Bus Tour.

- **Hub Bus Tour:** In September, after discussions with the Hubs, a host of performers were taken out into four communities on an open-top bus. For Back to Ours, it was an opportunity to introduce Dean Wilson to new audiences and get back 'on the ground' as the impact of Covid reduced<sup>19</sup>. Using an open-top bus attracted attention, echoed what had been done previously and allowed the shows to be hyperlocal.
- **Black Kings Upon Hull:** Starting in October 2020 and continuing in 2021, Hull musicians Bacary Mundoba and Chiedu Oraka presented episodes of their documentary series exploring issues of race, class, colour and power in Hull. Although a response to Black Lives Matter, these were about the artists' individual experiences as well as local and national issues. For example, Episode 2 explored the death of Christopher Alder<sup>20</sup> in police custody in Hull, Episode 5 issues of race and football after Euro 2020<sup>21</sup>.
- **Shindig On Your Sofa:** Running in the first part of 2021 and looking to help tackle social isolation, this delivered a show direct to people's homes. Each show came in a box that contained everything needed to have a "Shindig On Your Sofa" including a DVD of Back to Ours performers. The Back to Ours team and performers delivered two hundred boxes, engaging people on their doorsteps and generating a buzz about what was in the box.
- **The Christmas Card Parade:** Themed around a traditional Christmas card coming to life, this compromised a "parade on wheels" and a "static" performance in four local neighbourhoods on four nights. It had been planned for 2020 but had been delayed due to the pandemic. For more details, see Case study: The Christmas Card below.
- **The Last Dinosaur:** Presented with The Herd<sup>22</sup>, this was an intimate show for younger children that toured the city in October 2021. Audience numbers were kept small given continuing concerns about returning to "face-to-face" as the pandemic lifted.
- **Hologram Jukebox:** Back to Ours commissioned award winning mixed reality artists Davy and Kristin McGuire to create a hologram jukebox<sup>23</sup>. This featured Back to Ours artists (Dean Wilson, Chiedu Oraka, Casus Circus etc) in 'virtual performances' and was first shown at the Bransholme Chat shop.

**Bransholme Chat** shop<sup>24</sup> continued to offer a space where local people could come and talk. It was also a venue (as noted above), hosting events such as **We Are Bransholme**, Jason Shipley's exhibition of photographs capturing everyday people and places in Bransholme where people came to the shop to see both the show and the photographer.

In relation to the Hubs, there was regular work throughout the year including **Quiz Nights**, online **Go Sees**, **Socials**, **Showcases** and check-ins.

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<sup>18</sup> <https://hullisthis.news/back-to-ours-co-commissions-the-dean-wilson-cinema-shack-and-deanworld-premiere-gala> - Dave Lee is the director of Dean's short films

<sup>19</sup> The narrative explaining the tour was that the performers had been locked up in a social club during the pandemic and were now escaping.

<sup>20</sup> See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Death\\_of\\_Christopher\\_Alder](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Death_of_Christopher_Alder)

<sup>21</sup> Black Kings Upon Hull Episode 2 <https://youtu.be/6VwBASGwKfg> and Episode 5 <https://youtu.be/N7hitFpfCXo>

<sup>22</sup> An associate company of Back to Ours

<sup>23</sup> For more details, see <https://www.studiomcguire.com/hologramjukebox>

<sup>24</sup> Based at The Living Room, North Point Shopping Centre, Bransholme

## 1.4. The Back to Ours programming model

Back to Ours have developed a unique programming model which was discussed as it developed through the previous evaluation reports. It was heavily tested during lockdown with a need to shift delivery method completely, and it is a sign of the strength of the model that its core 'ingredients' didn't need to fundamentally change, despite having to go online.

In 2021 this model formed the basis for the programme, as Back to Ours' Director Louise Yates shifted to a mixed on- and offline delivery mode – retaining the best elements of the online time, while moving to live programming as appropriate. This has been extremely successful with audiences still following the online options – and artists enjoying the challenge of cross-programming – while allowing for a coming together of the community through the in-person programming around the city.

Reflecting the five programming ingredients in the 2021 programme:

**Strategically and consciously thinking about the offer** remains central to Louise's approach, nothing at Back to Ours happens by chance or without considerable thought. Each element of the programme in 2021 has roots that can be traced back into lockdown and beyond.

The obvious example is The Christmas Card Parade which had its evolution in a discussion with Hub Members in summer 2020, and was followed, 'teased' and 'trailed' until it grew into a large show in December 2021.

It is also true for every aspect of the programme, the decisions to work with certain artists come about from careful consideration both of what might work, and what the gaps are in terms of the local offer. The shift from online to in person and retaining a blended approach was done slowly, carefully and deliberately ensuring that audiences were able to follow the process through.

How and why things are done matters and this is **driven by the core values at the heart of the Back to Ours brand**.

Although Back to Ours are happy to follow opportunity, this still needs to fit with their core values and the 'brand' – which is what the trust of the community is built on. Shindig on your Sofa is a good example of how Back to Ours responded to a time-limited opportunity (and pressure) to deliver work to overcome isolation. This needed to be developed and delivered very fast, but Back to Ours ensured it fully built on the Back to Ours 'feel' by delivering the 'Shindig' – a Back to Ours staple pre-lockdown – into the homes of those who were most likely to be isolating and also were least likely to have internet access. Over six days the team delivered 213 boxes to vulnerable adults across Hull who were previous attenders of the Shindigs or had been nominated by friends, neighbours and family as deserving of a treat. The box included a DVD of previous Back to Ours shows and entertainment to be watched at any time, along with party props such as a feather boa and an afternoon tea from Betty's.

The brand itself still works well as a lynchpin and defining feature – for example the use of the bus within both the Hub Bus Tours and The Christmas Card Parade allowed a nod back to the Back to Ours feel within other events and will form the basis for future projects.

**The importance of a mix of the familiar and unfamiliar** continues to be the central motif in programming meaning that audiences are gently introduced to new things, the use of 'familiar' locations was particularly important in 2021 as people were only just feeling safe to venture into their formerly familiar spaces of their streets and communities, rather than venturing into town.

The importance of this is really clear in the response to the Hubs Bus Tour and The Christmas Card Parade, where everyone commented on the value of the activity being near where they live.

**"[Christmas Card] 'felt jolly' and reminded people we are a community ... bring something special to people's doorsteps..."**

**"Really important the event came to them (the local community) – especially post-Covid"**

Interviews with local Councillors from the areas where the Christmas Card parades took place

The traction of mixing some unfamiliar content and programming into a familiar (and trusted) setting is shown by the growing affection for Dean Wilson – originally seen as a bit strange, and with the added issue that poetry wasn't seen as accessible – among Hub Members who now promote his work to friends and family.

Back to Ours continue to show **a willingness to take steps into the 'unknown'**, that takes risks and experiments, offering the audience the chance to embark on a journey. This was evidenced in the Black Kings Upon Hull piece which was among the more challenging pieces being put on in Hull around Black Lives Matters, and was remarked upon as a risk particularly given the Back to Ours audience. The work had traction due to the quality of the work itself, but also the trust which the audience had in Back to Ours programming. The success in really reaching and connecting with people over this difficult subject matter is shown both by the positive relationship with the police which came out of the process, and also the depth of engagement apparent in the audience feedback

**"This is such important stuff! And Chiedu's mum is one heck of a woman - that fiercely proud speech had me in tears. Well done for commissioning this, guys - this stuff needs saying"**

Audience Member, via Black Kings upon Hull Facebook

Back to Ours remains an action research project, understanding the importance of monitoring and evaluation – **listening, learning and adapting** in response to audiences, partners and the team itself. This has proved even more important during a year of slow lifting (and reintroduction) of lockdown. The team itself has had to stop, listen and adapt to a huge number of changes, with only the Director and Bransholme Chat co-ordinator remaining full time in post over the whole period with some on breaks for maternity leave and others leaving and arriving. The non-wavering in the direction of travel of the programme is testimony to the central artistic leadership within Louise Yates as the Director, meaning that the core ingredients haven't shifted – even if additional 'flavours' may change.

The new team is still bedding into their roles and the specific flavours they may each add aren't yet clear, but they are listening, learning and adapting through team discussions, reflection sessions and most of all working and adapting through delivering together.

Relationships with partners are also adapting and building trust. The role of Back to Ours within the city cultural ecosystem remains strong and valued, with the Director in particular playing a strong role in the city. Wider relationships are also strong, and the huge amount of work, and clarity of mission and approach have resulted in high levels of trust which were important particularly in delivering The Christmas Card Parade:

**"It was great they delivered despite having to cancel in 2020... it showed a commitment to wanting to come to the area and they communicated the postponement well. [I] trusted BtO would deliver even tho' the funding was granted previous year and the Parade happened in 2021...Can't praise them enough"**

Interview with Local councillor about Christmas Card, delivered in her ward with locality budget support

Artists and Communities also really believe in and enjoy the work:

**"All projects I work on, with BTO seem to positively engage with the community. It seems that BTO have built up a strong relationship with local communities."**

Artist, Annual Survey

**"I thought that the Back to Ours team did a brilliant job, in thinking quickly on their feet when dealing with unexpected things that happened, and being sure to ensure the safety of everyone involved."**

Hub Member

Participants on average rate their experience of being involved with Back to Ours 9 out of 10. The standout events of the year as reported by participants are the Hubs Bus Tour and The Christmas Card Parade, rated as hugely successful, exciting, and brought communities together. People also highly rate the variety of events and the connections with new and old friends they make. Very few reported any changes they would like to see





## Case study: The Christmas Card

"I took part in the Christmas Card which was a magical experience and one myself and my son will never forget. I hope we get to do something similar again." Hub Member



### The original idea

Back in 2020, in response to early consultation with Back to Ours, Sara, a Hub Member from Orchard Park estate in North Hull suggested the idea of an event where characters stepped out of a magical Christmas Card. Based on this idea, Back to Ours began developing the idea of the parade with the Hub Members. They had regular Hub Meetings to discuss what to include in the event, which neighbourhoods to present the event in, and how they would be involved as characters or as promoters of the event to family and friends.

The pandemic meant it wasn't possible to stage a parade in 2020, so the story of the magical Christmas Card was adapted. It became a Bedtime Story with illustrations and music, acting as a "first chapter" for what would happen in 2021.

The Christmas Card Parade presented the opportunity for an outdoor winter celebration, something positive for families after a difficult year but that recognised that not everyone celebrates Christmas. The event was made up of a Parade (illuminated vehicles, people in costume, a brass band etc) and a static site ("Victorian Land"<sup>25</sup>) with stalls and free mulled wine or hot chocolate where performances took place.

This gave Back to Ours the opportunity to make something outdoors, hyperlocal but with a sense of scale. Though predominantly Victorian themed, the time-travelling nature of The Christmas Card allowed for an eclectic mix of characters and styles to be used.

<sup>25</sup> This phrase was used to avoid making it sound like it was a normal Christmas Market where there was an expectation of things being sold.

## The 2021 Parade

The Parades took place across four nights<sup>26</sup> in neighbourhoods where Hub Members lived. In these areas, Back to Ours engaged with the Council's Area Teams, providing deeper knowledge of both the local people and the area.

Back to Ours also engaged with local councillors, who in some cases provided funding for the project. Back to Ours spent considerable time building these relationships, explaining the concept of the event, how it would engage and benefit local people and remain true to its original ambitions.

The long development time for the project meant more opportunity for every element to be thought through and discussed with the Hubs and other local people. For example, a clear beginning and end, having things at different heights meant people could see from the street or their windows, and also what was placed on each vehicle.

Originally planned as a walking parade, the decision was made to move to vehicles. The reasons for this included the complexity and expense of possible road closures, but also the success of using an open-top bus for the Hub Bus Tour earlier in 2021.

Even with rolling street closures, planning and approval for routes took a lot of work. To succeed, the Parade had to come close to people's homes, not cross too many main roads, yet work for everyone involved (residents, Hub Members, Councillors, Back to Ours, drivers etc). Routes were driven several times on different days and different times to check what was possible.

The marketing was carefully planned and started early. Building on the Bedtime Story discussed above, in summer 2021, information appeared in local Council newsletters hinting that something was happening. This was followed up with a "Junemas" street theatre event on 25th June. Mother Christmas toured around the neighbourhoods chatting with local residents, giving out fliers and sweet treats to raise the profile of the Parade in December. Though the June weather was terrible, people enjoyed talking with the performer on their streets, shop owners wanted to know more about the Christmas event and new people joined the mailing list.

Back to Ours worked with both an illustrator and a Christmas Card design specialist to get the right look for a card to invite people to the Parade. This card included all the elements that made up the magical Christmas Card and would therefore appear in the Parade. Thought went into how and when to deliver the card so residents would read it rather than ignore it. In the end, the Victorian Land invite was in an envelope and sealed, the general invite was simply a card through the door.

This care paid off with people who got the invitation saying it felt special – some said they even intended to keep the Christmas Card. Conversely, despite the extended marketing campaign, one lady thought the invite was from "Morris Dancers" – though, once she realised what the Parade actually was, she brought her daughter along<sup>27</sup>.

Having Back to Ours staff at the event was seen as a positive – they could capture stories like the one above but also saw people's excitement and enjoyment. People of all ages came out for the parade and to Victorian Land - talking to neighbours, looking out their windows or standing on the doorstep. This was reflected online with lots of positive sentiment on social media.

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<sup>26</sup> 6<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> December 2021 inclusive

<sup>27</sup> Conversation with the Back to Ours Marketing Manager on the night of the Parade - reported by the Director in Zoom call with the evaluator (12 January 2022)

## Learnings

**Different locations, different experiences:** No one exactly knew what the whole Parade experience would be like until the first night – and there was surprise at the number of people attending. Staff felt the first night was the best because of people’s reactions, though delays in the Parade arriving led to some confusion. The second night had the complication of bad weather (see below) - and the final night in Derringham, a relatively new area for Back to Ours, had issues with the shape of the space in which the Victorian Land had to set up.

**Problem solving:** Each night had new challenges, changes and ad libs – some of which were then incorporated into the shows. For example, the second night’s stormy weather meant some elements of the Parade were cancelled – plus issues over a generator meant illuminated characters from Victorian Land appeared on the bus instead of it being lit, this worked well and stayed in the performance on other nights.

**Competing stakeholder interests:** Working with the Hubs on the Parade was a positive experience. However, more generally Back to Ours had to invest time in managing the interests of many different stakeholders (local residents, local funders, the Hubs, national funders etc) in a very specific local context. This was not just about negotiating between these interests but also making sure Back to Ours’ expertise was valued and stakeholders understood their priorities (as a Creative People and Places project).

**Successfully managing staff:** The Parade was like a very intense four-day team building exercise for Back to Ours, particularly for newer staff who had joined during lockdown, as there was less freelance support than previously so it relied on the core team. Whilst staff were excited and engaged, they were also challenged. Even though the team is small, and everyone does a bit of everything, the Director had to find ways to play to everyone’s strengths and deal with people being out of their comfort zones.

**More on the buses:** The success of using buses and vehicles as a way of getting out to communities – of working outdoors and being hyperlocal – built on from the Hub Bus Tour and earlier work. As a consequence, a new project is being planned involving bus stops and sound installations. More broadly, it ties into a Back to Ours theme of “taking people on a journey”.

This review by a Hub Member of the night in her area conveys the excitement and feel of the event:

What a night! Loved every minute of the Victorian Land and having it literally on my doorstep was fantastic. So many people from babies in prams to pensioners came out to see it, a lot of which would not normally go out into the city centre to see such an event.

The event was well organised and provided some great entertainment and totally transformed the look of the green with the lighting, not just the festoon lights hung around, the ones shining on the trees and the ones on the actors/community group that were performing, it looked so magical. The singer and dancing Victorians got us in the Christmas mood, the kids seemed to be loving the Jack in the Box, fairies, toy soldier and teddy, all of which interacted well with them, my grandsons loved them. I really enjoyed the performance by the reindeers, it was mesmerizing to watch, only criticism I have is that as it was towards the end of the night, quite a few people missed out on seeing it.

Providing free drinks was a nice touch and went down well and I wasn’t expecting seating so that was good for those that needed to sit down.

Stood waiting to see the parade pass by was exciting and the parade didn’t disappoint, again the lights had a big impact of the look of it, first thing you saw as it was coming around the corner, the reflection of the lights in house windows and it was great to see a variety of different kinds of vehicles used in the parade. It’s not every day you get a horse and carriage, train, open top bus, etc coming down your street, it was just beautiful. There were so many happy faces as it went by.

I have had lots of good feedback from family, friends and neighbours who attended the event and saw the parade, many of which can’t believe something like this would happen on our street. Thank you Back to Ours.

Tracy Padley – Hub Member, Review of Bilsdale Grove Christmas Card Night



## 2. Engaging and inspiring new audiences

This section explores who attended Back to Ours events, with specific reference to Arts Council England's CPP National Research Question 1: *Are more people from places of least engagement experiencing and inspired by the arts?*

We consider the geographic spread of the audience, their diversity and their previous arts engagement, and how well it represents the population of Hull<sup>28</sup>. We look at how Back to Ours are approaching the challenge of engaging and inspiring new audiences, and how engagement with Back to Ours makes a difference to communities with a view to assessing the likelihood of longer-term and sustainable impacts in these areas.

We find that:

- Back to Ours audiences overwhelmingly came from Hull itself, and were widely distributed across all areas of the city.
- There were concentrations in areas of programming focus, which are also areas of low arts engagement and higher deprivation.
- Back to Ours are definitely reaching those people least likely to engage in the arts and from poorer backgrounds.
- There is increasing reach to men and people from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds, and retention of the high proportions of disabled people.
- Audiences and participants are enthused and inspired to do more.
- Participants feel the programme makes a difference to their sense of community and pride in place.

### 2.1. Who were the Back to Ours Audiences?<sup>29</sup>

#### 2.1.1. Where did they live?

Back to Ours audiences overwhelmingly came from Hull itself: 96% of those who shared postcodes live in Hull, with the remaining 4% living elsewhere in the UK. Within Hull, there was spread across the city, but with clear concentrations on the target areas of Bransholme, Orchard Park and East Hull, and within postcodes HU5, 6, 7 and particularly HU9.

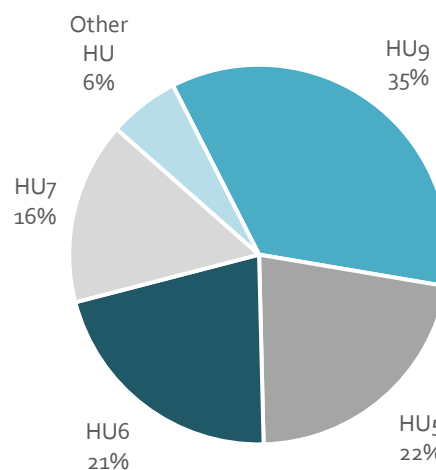


Figure 2 Breakdown of postcodes of Back to Ours audience

<sup>28</sup> Note of caution in all this data as it is likely that those most comfortable in engaging with the arts will also be most comfortable with filling in online surveys or in engaging with data collection at events – however sensitively handled. Despite all efforts, this will always be something to be borne in mind.

<sup>29</sup> Demographic data was gathered at events from an audience survey, with 7678 responses being analysed, 6538 postcodes were used for the postcode analysis of geographic, socio-economic and arts engagement reach. Data from participants is also available, shared in a mini report in Appendix 4: Participant analysis.

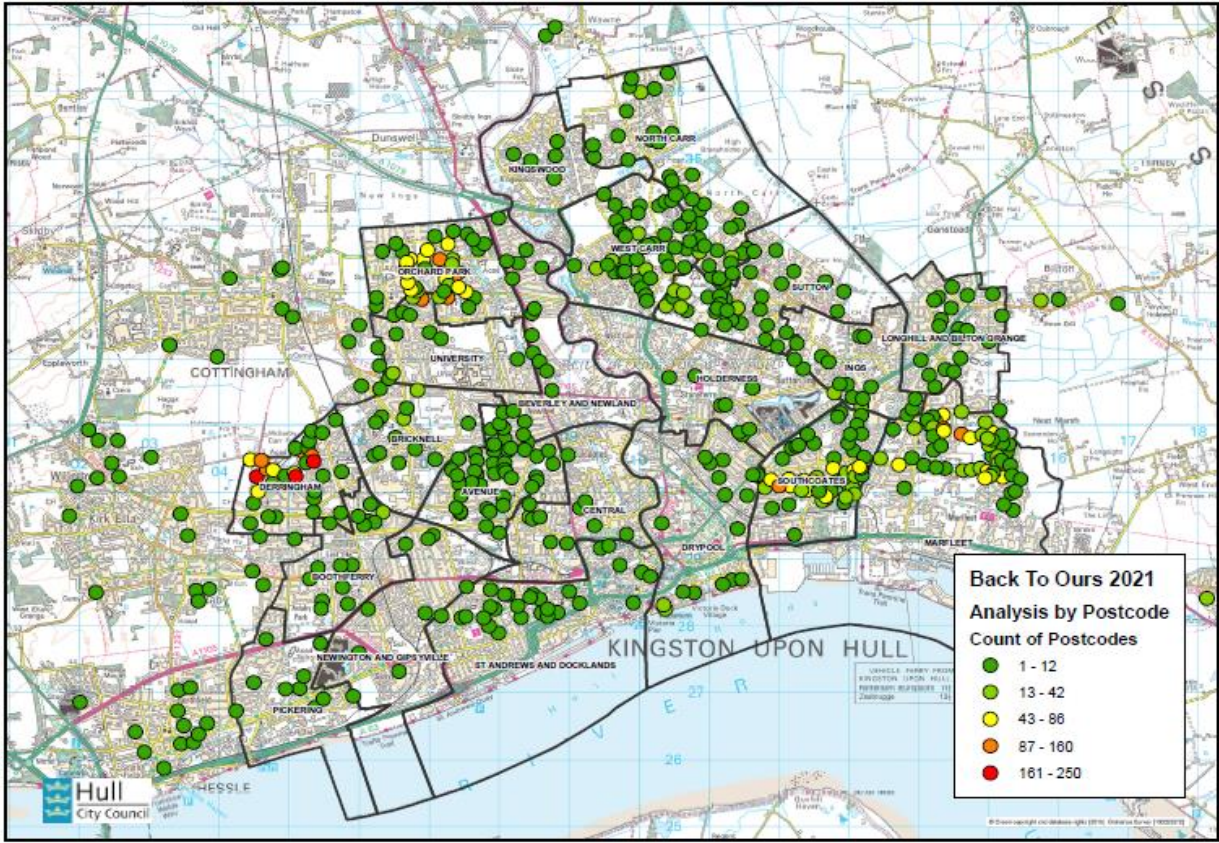
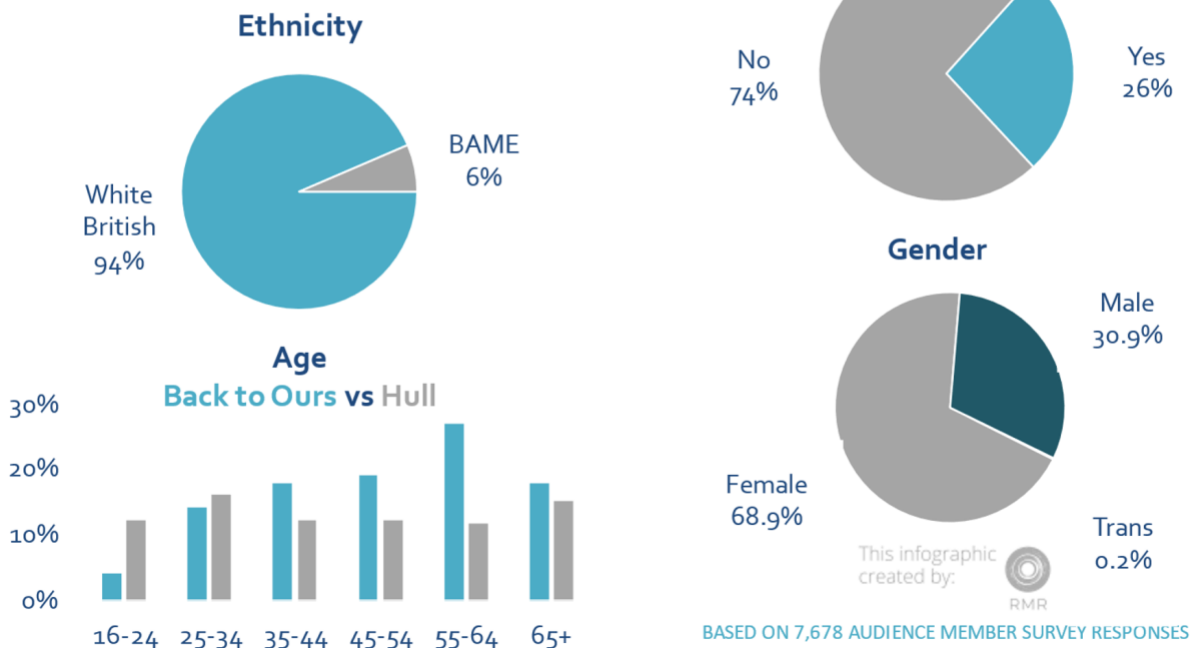


Figure 3: Map showing where Back to Ours audiences live

### 2.1.2. What were their demographic groups?

## Demographics AUDIENCE MEMBERS



31% of survey respondents identified as male, an increase on previous years, showing increasing reach and appeal into this gender group who tend to be less likely to fill in surveys, but also less likely to engage in this sort of arts.

Data from audience surveys this year shows that the proportion of audiences who identify as BAME has more than doubled to 6.4% from the levels of between 2 and 3% reported last year, although there is still further reach needed to match the proportions in the 10% in the Hull population<sup>30</sup>.

As discussed in the previous report, Back to Ours work with a series of estates that are predominantly white which would account for the difference to Hull diversity levels, however, there has been specific work to reach wider communities, for example the **Black Kings Upon Hull** commission which specifically responded to Black Lives Matter and the concerns of young Black people.

26% of audience members defined themselves as having some form of disability or other long term health condition that affects their day-to-day activities, with 8% of them being limited a lot<sup>31</sup>. This is a good reach for arts events and shows there is generally an inclusive approach. This high proportion could be due to the particular reach into the Heydays group (see below) or the online approach. A few of the feedback quotes show that there is still a way to go in terms of full access for all events:

**“Liked the design, don't totally understand the films. Like that it's in trinity. Not very accessible for wheelchair users.”**

Audience member, Dean Wilson poetry Trinity market

The audiences remain older; over a quarter of respondents were between ages 55 and 64 with average age being around 50 years old. There is still reach into the 25-44 year age ranges and 18% are over 65 showing that there is appeal to all but the under 25s. 50% of audience members attended with others under 16 years showing high numbers of children attending<sup>32</sup>. For more see Appendix 6: Audience Member analysis.

### 2.1.3. What was their socio-economic status?

70% of Back to Ours audience members come from the 10% most deprived areas in England, a rate even higher than Hull as a whole at 54%. This means that Back to Ours are successfully reaching people from the poorest areas of Hull, with 96% of audience members coming from the top 40% most deprived areas in England.

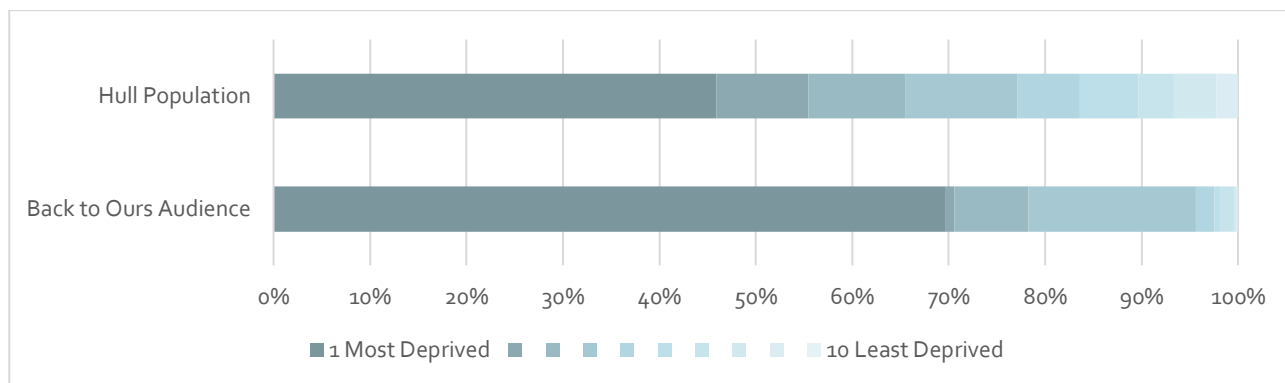


Figure 4 Indices of Deprivation Back to Ours audience against Hull population

<sup>30</sup> Kingston upon Hull Data Observatory, Population, [https://data.hull.gov.uk/population/#/view-report/f067fa9f6ad840008507427e844d538f/\\_\\_\\_iaFirstFeature](https://data.hull.gov.uk/population/#/view-report/f067fa9f6ad840008507427e844d538f/___iaFirstFeature)

<sup>31</sup> Percentages calculated using the 432 responses to this question from the audience survey data.

<sup>32</sup> 50% average, but this figure is based on only 72 responses due to sampling for this question at only 4 events. Actual scores are 67% Bedtime Stories, 27% Black Kings upon Hull, 7% Dean Wilson Film Club and 100% The Last Dinosaur. Hull comparator figures taken from Hull population estimates from the Office for National Statistics 2020 report: <https://data.hull.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/Briefing-Paper-Mid-2020-Population-Estimates.pdf>. Under 16s have been removed from the data set due to the issue of parents filling in the survey on behalf of children, therefore showing much lower than the true engagement for this age group

Hull City Council analysis found very high levels of people who attended Back to Ours events who live in areas typically made up of Public Renting Young Families, with 44% of all postcodes from the audience survey responses falling into this category, which is defined as having above average levels of young families living in privately rented accommodation, with high levels of unemployment and lone parents. Bransholme East is a key ward for this group, which may explain the high levels seen here due to the location of Back to Ours events in this area<sup>33</sup>.

High levels of two further groups were also found in the Back to Ours audience postcodes, namely Economically Active Terraces, who tend to be working-age adults who own their own terrace homes, a group particularly found in Derringham, and Low Income Public Renters, who are typically older families living in rented or right-to-buy owned properties, who are prevalent in Bransholme West.

## 2.2. Were they new to the arts?

Back to Ours are very effective in reaching people who are new to the arts, with 43% of survey respondents saying they had not engaged with arts or culture in the last 12 months<sup>34</sup>. This is down from the 60% reported in the last report, although this represented a year full of lockdowns and was from a much smaller sample. The data this year is a much broader picture of the entire programme.

Using the Audience Spectrum approach, we find that 88% of Back to Ours audiences are in the low engager category – compared to 65% of Hull residents, in terms of likelihood of engaging in the arts. There is particular reach into three groups within the least engaged segments:

- Facebook Families (54% of Back to Ours audiences vs 26% in Hull)
- Kaleidoscope Creativity (15% of Back to Ours audiences vs 13% in Hull)
- Heydays (5% of Back to Ours audiences vs 6% in Hull)<sup>35</sup>

This shows a very effective targeting of these areas by Back to Ours.

Further details of the approach to measuring reach into new audiences and full information on Audience Spectrum approach can be found in [Appendix 3: Reaching Audiences Least likely to engage in the arts](#).

## 2.3. How were audiences and participants reached?

Audience members were asked how they found out about Back to Ours as part of the survey. Over a third had been involved in the events (or previous Back to Ours events). The second most common way was Word of Mouth, with almost 30% hearing from friends, family or work, amongst others.

Social media was the third route, with five times more people finding out via Facebook than Twitter. Other ways included newspaper adverts, TV and radio.

### 2.3.1. Social media engagement

Social media engagement is a core part of Back to Ours strategy and they carefully target through their approach and use of different platforms. The 2020 report discussed this in depth.

Back to Ours found that social media was less easy to predict in 2021. The previous year had seen Covid forcing people online – but with restrictions being lifted, there was a reduction in engagement, getting people to share content or sign up to newsletters required more effort. With “digital fatigue”<sup>36</sup> perhaps setting in and people

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<sup>33</sup> HCC use postcodes to analyse the typical socio-economic status of those who attended Back to Ours events, by using consumer habits to categorise postcodes into groups. Further information can be found at <https://data.hull.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/FullDescriptions.pdf>

<sup>34</sup> Audience survey of 7714 respondents across all Back to Ours events in Phase 2 Year 2

<sup>35</sup> Descriptions and more information on these areas can be found at <https://www.theaudienceagency.org/audience-finder-data-tools/audience-spectrum>

<sup>36</sup> Social Media Stats, Back to Ours, January to March 2021



trying to get back to 'real life' rather than screens, it was a case of finding a new balance between engaging on- and offline.

The programme continued to attract viewers and engagement across platforms. For example, early in the year, Benidorm Tom's online gig had the highest viewing figures for any similar event, and The Christmas Card Parade attracted very positive feedback across social media reflecting its overall popularity.

Facebook was still Back to Ours' main digital engagement channel, reflected in an increase over the year of 1,800+ followers. However, as might be expected, daily engagements dropped over the year – from 193 per day in the first quarter to 108.

There was a noticeable gender split in the Facebook audience. Women made up around 73% of fans with almost 40% in the 35-44 and 45-54 age groups. From the data available, women were the majority audience on Instagram and YouTube but not on Twitter.

There was an emphasis on developing YouTube and LinkedIn – while making sure that Twitter and Instagram continued to engage those who didn't use Facebook. On YouTube, 66 new videos were posted through the year. Whilst subscriber numbers were modest, 558 hours of video were watched through the year –47% in the first quarter of the year before "digital fatigue" had fully set in.

|                                     | Facebook | Twitter | Instagram | LinkedIn | YouTube |
|-------------------------------------|----------|---------|-----------|----------|---------|
| Followers or subscribers (Dec 2021) | 8012     | 3321    | 2445      | 210      | 183     |
| Increase on the year                | 1887     | 565     | 456       | 31       | 83      |

Table 1: Followers and subscribers by social media channel

Towards the end of the year, a new website was launched which aimed to be more user-friendly and easier for staff to update. More generally, digital supported other marketing activities, engagement activities and the programme overall, even when the latter offered very different types of online content.

**"It's not many organisations who can run a Bedtime Story by Nelly the North Sea Mermaid in the same week as a hard-hitting documentary on the Black, Yorkshire, Working Class experience... people are happy and comfortable to be constantly surprised by what's on offer and what we'll dream up next."**

Back to Ours Social<sup>37</sup>

## 2.4. Were they inspired to engage further?

All participants surveyed<sup>38</sup> reported being much more likely to attend arts or arts events after their involvement with Back to Ours, as well as high increased enthusiasm and interest for such events. All participants who had stated they had not done anything similar prior to getting involved with Back to Ours have been involved for at least 2 years, showing that Back to Ours is maintaining people's interest in the long term. Participants report being more confident in many areas following involvement with Back to Ours, with many wanting to use this to continue to pursue arts events in the future:

**"Being with other people doing similar, stops feeling embarrassment as we all learn together. I have made new friends. I look for events that I can go to more."**

Back to Ours participant

<sup>37</sup> Social Media Stats, Back to Ours, January to March 2021

<sup>38</sup> 16 respondents to the annual participant survey 2021

**“Same time next month everyone? - Sign me up!”**

**“So lovely to see you Dean! Miss seeing you in the delightful flesh! What can we expect from you in 2021?”**

Two different audience members, via Dean Wilson Facebook

Participants also mention how Back to Ours gave them new routes to engage with the arts:

**“Attended events I’d never have seen/done/thought of going to before.”**

Back to Ours participant

**“I travelled over 100 miles to attend Dean’s event and I loved every minute”**

Audience Member, Annual Survey

The majority of Hub Members also felt much more likely to engage in the arts or arts events following their involvement with Back to Ours, with most reporting an increased interest in the arts too:

**“We are much more likely to book a ticket even when we are not sure just to try something new and different. We feel very confident now to do things we wouldn’t normally try such as act to ours and chat to ours been part of the Hub Member family and the support the BTO team give us when we are involved in something new has given us the confidence and the opportunity to try things we wouldn’t normally of dreamt of!”**

Hub Member, Annual Survey

When asked, audiences very much agreed that the events they attended were definitely making a positive difference and that they wanted to seek out more from the artists involved, with an average score of 8. They were also highly likely to recommend the event to family and friends, with an average of 9. Audiences were also likely to seek out more arts and culture as a result of the Back to Ours events, with an average score of 7<sup>39</sup>.

**“Fantastic Show Steve - can’t wait to see you at Hailsham LIVE 2021 next month!!!”**

Audience Member, via Steve Hewlett Facebook

All participants<sup>40</sup> felt that their involvement in Back to Ours had had a strong positive difference on many aspects of their lives, in order of impact:

- Their confidence to try new things
- How likely they are to go to arts or arts events
- Their interest in arts or arts events
- Their mental health
- Their knowledge of their local area
- Their friends and social connections
- Their emotional health

**“I’m more tolerant of society and it’s difficulties. Not everyone is privileged.”**

Back to Ours participant

**“Like many individuals the past year has presented hardships to myself, family and friends. I have had two bereavements... I felt very alone and of little will power to find the get up and go again. Eventually I came to realise that I had friends new and old that were involved in the**

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<sup>39</sup> Results from 81 audience survey responses from audience members who attended Bedtime Stories, Black Kings upon Hull, Dean Wilson Film Club and The Last Dinosaur events. Average scores out of 10, with 10 being the highest

<sup>40</sup> Participants were asked to complete a survey of their experiences, the data comes from the 16 responses received. Further information on participants can be found in Appendix 4 below

**bto group, they give me huge strength and also a distraction and a sense of belonging this is what back to ours gives to me the very drive to step outside and be human again it makes me want to be happy and give the joy to others."**

Back to Ours participant

**"Taking part in BTO events takes you different areas of our city, so you see different places and meet different people. Giving you different experiences."**

Back to Ours participant

**"Your mother is one amazing women she inspired me to have faith in myself"**

Audience Member, via Black Kings upon Hull Facebook

**"A great atmosphere – raised the spirits ... Made Xmas 2021 better than the one before ...Created community cohesion – got people out and chatting – all ages – "This is us"**

Interview with local councillor, about Christmas Card

## Case study: Julie Shakesby and Janet Anderson – part of Act to Ours since the beginning

Act to Ours is a community cast who were originally brought together by Periplum for the 7 Alleys<sup>41</sup> production, one of eight events created for the Land of Green Ginger<sup>42</sup>, during Hull's City of Culture year in 2017. The Act to Ours cast have grown in numbers since they first came together; originally a cast of 25 members, 19 were Hull2017 volunteers and 6 were non-professional actors/performers. Now under the wing of Back to Ours they have around 45 members.

Julie and Janet have been involved with Act to Ours from the beginning. They were both (and still are) volunteers with busy lives, jobs, and families, and still, they are extremely enthusiastic and ready to incorporate Act to Ours into their busy schedules.

The Act to Ours cast have appeared in a number of small and large-scale events for other arts organisations, such as Slung Low's Flood (2017), Hull Truck Theatre's Last Testament of Lillian Bilocca play (2017), The Witching Hour performed in Hull, Liverpool (2018) and Grimsby (2021), also a Periplum production. They have worked with some of the UK's best outdoor spectacular and theatre companies. They also form the backbone of many of Back to Ours' productions and have appeared in the Bus Flash Mobs (2018, 2021), Hotel Paradiso (2018), Back to Bransholme (2019), and The Christmas Card Parade (2021), amongst other events. The reason they do, as Julie says, is because:



**“You’re getting to see the joy of people. We get people joining in with the performance, the dancing and the parading. I love performing anyway. But it’s not something that I’ve always done.”**

All of the Act to Ours members are highly skilled and dedicated to being part of the cast, they meet regularly for rehearsals, and they take part in workshoping and skills development, such as circus skills and clowning. One member of the Act to Ours group recently left their day-job to become a professional extra on ITV's Coronation Street.

Many of the cast particularly enjoy being part of the big spectacular events, such as Back to Bransholme and The Christmas Card Parade. Janet explains:

**“When we did the Christmas Card, I just loved it, being back amongst everyone in the community. Back to Ours have supported me 100% to be involved in events, we’re tret the same as a touring company. It’s really good.”**

Louise Yates - Director at Back to Ours is the main point of contact for Act to Ours, and she has been on the journey with them, as she was a Producer on the 7 Alleys production back in 2017. Louise holds the vision for the group and is great at spotting opportunities for others to get involved with Act to Ours. As part of The Christmas Card Parade, the Sarjo family, who are long established Hub Members, were invited to join the Act to Ours cast. This was a new experience for the family and something they really appreciated about being involved with Back to Ours, see Hub Member case study below. Act to Ours is an important legacy of Hull2017 and an invaluable resource for people in Hull who want to get involved with something creative in their community.

<sup>41</sup> <http://www.periplum.co.uk/content/seven-alleys/>

<sup>42</sup> This event was also headed up by the Director of Back to Our, Louise Yates



## 3. The Hubs

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This section explores the role of the Hubs within Back to Ours and considers the way in which Back to Ours have addressed quality of engagement in co-design and co-creation, a key principle of Creative People and Places<sup>43</sup>.

The Hubs are key to Back to Ours' programming in three ways:

- In providing a sounding board for ideas
- As promoters and encouragers of other people in their area to attend
- As the voice of the community in co-developing the programme

We find that:

- Hub Members have stayed with Back to Ours over the pandemic including through 2021 lockdowns but are very appreciative of the chance to attend in person again
- They felt strong ownership of the programme, particularly the Hub Bus Tours in the summer and The Christmas Card Parade, both co-designed and delivered with the Hub Members in their neighbourhoods
- As a result of Back to Ours they felt much more likely to go to arts or art events, had increased interest in the arts and an increased confidence to try new things
- Being involved with Back to Ours has made a big difference to their emotional and mental health
- Hub Members have a strong desire to make improvements in their community and particularly engaged with the opportunity to support isolated neighbours with the Shindig on your Sofa care package

### 3.1. The Hubs in 2021

Established in 2019, the Hub groups are an integral part of how Back to Ours reach and engage audiences at a hyperlocal level<sup>44</sup>. The four Hub groups meet regularly to plan events and activities, they socialise together at Back to Ours and other cultural events, and over the years they have gained new skills and experiences. Collectively, the Hubs have around 70 members, with 20-30 being particularly active in the lockdowns during 2021. People who join the Hub groups come from different backgrounds, they have different life experiences, and they are not the usual art crowd. They do however, live and work in the areas of Hull that they represent as Hub Members. 93% of Hub Members interviewed are proud to live in Hull, with 50% agreeing strongly, and 43% agreeing.

Hub Members were interviewed through an annual survey and in-person interviews<sup>45</sup>. In the annual survey, for which 14 Hub Members gave feedback, they rated their experience of being involved with Back to Ours as 9 out of 10. All indicated their appreciation of the support they received from Back to Ours; and they were passionate about the art and cultural experiences that they, their families and friends gained from Back to Ours.

2021 has been a year of change and transition for many of the Hub Members. They have shifted from only being able to attend the Right on Your Sofa online programme, to attending and volunteering at live events again, due to the lifting of Covid restrictions in July 2021. Attending live shows and events was always the bedrock of the relationship between Back to Ours and the Hub Members. However, throughout the lockdowns of 2021,

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<sup>43</sup>Data for this section is largely derived from online survey responses from 14 Hub Members. One Hub Member was interviewed on the telephone for the case study, whilst 2 more Hub Members provided their written responses to the Christmas Card Parade. Interviews with the team, reflection sessions and attendance at online events also contributed to the analysis.

<sup>44</sup>For Back to Ours own description of the role of Hubs and Hub Members, see <https://www.backtoours.co.uk/about/hub-Members%e2%80%8b/>

<sup>45</sup>For a mini analysis report on Hub Members see Appendix 5: Hub Member analysis

Hub Members continued to meet regularly for planning meetings, to socialise and have fun, and to support and watch the Back to Ours Right on Your Sofa events on Facebook.

The new Engagement Coordinator Laura Cox has spent much of her time during 2021 getting to know the Hub Members since she started in post in May, mainly through one-to-ones and group meetings. Her role is to support them during this unusual time and adapt the Back to Ours offer so they can continue to play a full and important role within Back to Ours. Laura acknowledges that it has been difficult to feel connected during the lockdowns, but is “feeling optimistic about the future” and that the online meetings and events have helped to deepen the relationships between Back to Ours and the Hub Members.

### 3.2. Developing creative confidence and involvement in programming

Two key events were driven and influenced by the Hub Members. The Hubs Bus Tour in September and The Christmas Card Parade in December - both created new opportunities and experiences for the Hub Members to exercise and develop their creative confidence and involvement in programming new and community focused Back to Ours events. The Christmas Card event had previously been planned to take place in December 2020 but was cancelled due to Covid restrictions. The Hub Members’ journey has been significant – they have moved on from programming touring theatre shows based on their Go See trips to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival to creating their own bespoke community events, right on their own doorsteps.

Back to Ours explicitly aims to build the Hubs into a group which can help shape programming. This starts with building confidence in attending arts events and trying new work, in particular giving a sense of the joy in attending cultural events with others and discussing their experience. As confidence grows, group members feel able to respond more to the opportunities to shape Back to Ours programming and marketing. This creative confidence is developed through a number of mechanisms, such as Hub meetings, event planning, and go see events; to inspire and encourage Hub Members to try something new. For example, Back to Ours supported Hub members to book onto other local arts events, such as the Freedom Festival’s ‘The Vigil’ and Hull Truck’s ‘Hull and High Water’ production.

Gradually they become key to the Back to Ours model, including initiating and acting as co-designers of the Hubs Bus Tour and then The Christmas Card Parade.

When asked to describe art in just three words, the Hub Members said they felt it was “expressive”, “fun”, and “thought or conversation provoking”:



Figure 5 Word cloud of Hub Members' responses to the question "Describe art in three words"

Despite the challenges of Covid, many of the Hub Members have really engaged with the Back to Ours programme. They regularly attend planning meetings, they support and encourage friends and family to join in with the Right on Your Sofa online programme, and they have been key agents in the delivery of Right on your Doorstep real life events, such as the Bus Tour and The Christmas Card Parade.

The Hubs Bus tour was led from the very beginning by the Hub Members who were encouraged to take the lead through their sharing of ideas, skills, and knowledge for the project. They held regular planning meetings online and in person, over many months to plan the bus routes, the stop off points, the cabaret performances at each bus stop event. The Hub Members were instrumental in promoting the event and engaging local audiences to come along on the day and they were trusted and allowed to take decisions which the team might not have necessarily taken themselves. The team felt it was a testament to their longstanding relationship with the Hub Members that they trusted the end event would be excellent and relevant for their friends and neighbours and thus were willing to put themselves on the line to promote it.

In early 2021, Back to Ours offered the Hub Members a variety of online experiences, such as the Dean Wilson Film Club, Bedtime Stories and Go See experiences. This provided a welcome opportunity to socialise with their Hub Member colleagues, see some great entertainment, and feel part of the Back to Ours family during lockdown periods. When Covid restrictions were lifted, Back to Ours took Hub Members to a number of live shows. In August they went to the Freedom Festival to see *Deanworld*, *The Premiere Gala* and many of the other festival shows. In September they went to see *The Last Dinosaur* by The Herd. Both of these live shows were developed and delivered in partnership with Back to Ours. The Hub Members also went to see other live shows; in October a group went with Back to Ours staff to see Absolutely Cultured's *Floodlights*, an outdoor light projection show presented across Hull City Centre. They later went to see Hull Truck's Christmas show *The Railway Children*. All these different experiences gave the Hub Members safe, enjoyable, and sometimes challenging art experiences. One Hub Member said that:

**"We feel very confident now to do things we wouldn't normally try"**

Hub Member, Annual Survey

Another Hub Member talked about her son's excitement after seeing his first theatre play and wanting to go back for more. These first steps are supported and encouraged, with the Back to Ours staff taking the time to encourage and hold a safe space for the Hub Members. This Hub Member who took her son to the theatre said:

**"We both absolutely enjoyed it. He was amazed from start to finish and he came out wanting to know what he can go and watch there next! He said it was better than going to watch a film at the cinema because it's all real people."**

Kirsti Murray – East Hull Hub Member

Building on this greater confidence to try new things, Back to Ours have worked with the Hub Members to develop their involvement in programming and delivery of arts activities and events. This is a work in progress, with explicit thought given to how much to let the Hub Members lead ideas, and how much the Director should bring in her own experience in terms of which decisions she feels will work. Most importantly, the Hub Members themselves all feel fully engaged and there were no comments in interviews or surveys indicating a sense that they aren't given enough power in the programming.

Through the regular Hub group meetings, Hub Members were asked back in 2020 if they would like to be involved in creating a Christmas event. One Hub Member came forward with the idea of a Christmas card coming to life, and that was the beginning of The Christmas Card Parade. Hub Members have been involved throughout this project, including planning, promotion, delivery, and feedback after the event. This slow and steady approach adopted by Back to Ours, was in part due to Covid restrictions which cancelled the December 2020 event, but the extended planning period has allowed Back to Ours to take the time to listen, support, build confidence through discussions and training, and fully engage Hub Members in the monumental task of putting an outdoor street theatre show across four outdoor spaces. All the interviewed Hub Members reflected on what an emotional experience The Christmas Card Parade was for them, the staff and members of the public who came to see the show. Crucially they show a strong sense of ownership of the event, arising from their involvement in development of the idea and content, and the promotion and marketing.



**“I loved being involved in meetings where events were discussed and ideas formed and developed from an original idea... I really enjoyed the process of putting forward ideas, and listening to other people's ideas for the Christmas Card.”**

Hub Member, Survey

### 3.3. Personal and social outcomes for Hub Members

There are many personal and social outcomes reported by the Hub Members, arising from their involvement with Back to Ours. Many of the Hub Members have gained new experiences and memories, which were life-changing and life affirming at times. Laura the Engagement Coordinator gave a couple of examples of how Hub Members relayed their positive experiences to her and the Back to Ours team. One example was of a Hub Member taking part in a photoshoot for the first time. This was not in their comfort zone, but they came out feeling very happy with themselves for having tried something new.

Another key reason for Hub Members being part of the Back to Ours experience is because they are able to come together, socialise and make new like-minded friends. The experience of coming together to see an art event for the first time is a galvanising experience for many of the Hub Members. When asked about what they get out of Back to Ours, one Hub Member said:

**“I've gained another circle of friends now. We love what Back to Ours are trying to do and we're all really similar minded really. The way that Back to Ours is with the Hub Members it creates a lovely atmosphere.”**

Emma Sarjo – North Hull Estate Hub Member said The Christmas Card Parade not only brought together Hub Members in the planning and delivery of the event, but it brought together friends, family, and neighbours, some of whom hadn't been out of their houses in many months. The transformation of an ordinary street on a Hull council estate, into a living and breathing Christmas Card, with Victorian traders wandering around, and giant lit-up reindeers performing a dance, allowed people to enter a magical realm and enjoy a special moment together. The majority of Hub Members felt that the best thing about being involved in Back to Ours was the friendships they'd made, and the sense of community it gave them. Several Hub Members also highlighted the inclusivity of events:

**“Being part of the Christmas card when I have a disability has been awesome.”**

Hub Member, Annual Survey

**“Back to Ours is inclusive, and challenges perceptions.”**

Hub Member, Annual Survey

**“I've met some lovely people that I now call friends through bto. Also talk to more of my neighbours because of spreading the word of events happening.”**

Hub Member, Annual Survey

**“In a bad couple of years, having BTO maintaining contact has helped me engage with other people outside of work”**

Hub Member, Annual Survey

Another Hub Member talked about overcoming anxiety of being around new people to get involved with The Christmas Card Parade:

**“I suffer with anxiety and find it hard to be around lots of new people but I managed to be a part of the christmas card and it was amazing. I managed to do it even though there was loads of new people.”**

Hub Member, Annual Survey

Others still have developed their confidence and resilience:

**"I now have a much more open mind to trying new things, I would previously have been wary to get involved but now I have more of a 'why not' sort of attitude."**

Hub Member, Annual Survey

**"Gave me the confidence to meet new people and be part of a group."**

Hub Member, Annual Survey

The wider social outcomes of the Back to Ours programme were predominantly around care of others. Many of the Hub Members understood and bought into this ethos. In the summer of 2021, Hub Members were asked to nominate an elderly or vulnerable person to receive a Shindig box, this included DVDs of Back to Ours performers and past events, an afternoon tea set which included items from Betty's tea shop and a vintage cup and saucer set, plus other fun items. The Shindig boxes were based on the real-life events that had happened before the Covid lockdowns and were well received by the nominated Hull residents.

The level of care and commitment from Back to Ours in developing each Hub Member and engaging them in the care of their wider community is infectious. Some of the Hub Members are now involved with the Bransholme Chat Shop – including supporting the Covid Calls service during 2021. Several Hub Members were trained to call people who are elderly and vulnerable to isolation in and around Hull area. They would check in with them and see how they are doing, making the service invaluable to some call recipients, during a difficult and uncertain time. Continuing to support personal growth and opportunities for Hub members remains a key development area for Back to Ours into the future.

## Case study: Emma Sarjo, North Hull Hub Member

Emma Sarjo and her husband and three boys have been regular Back to Ours event attendees and Hub group supporters since the early days. They have always enjoyed doing creative activities together, and they went to the first ever Back to Ours event, a puppet show near to where they lived, and they loved it!

Before getting involved with Back to Ours, Emma was already community minded; she ran regular Playing Out Day events on her street, which was part of a national Playing Out programme<sup>46</sup>. Emma says that because of community events such as Playing Out, her street already felt like a family, which was important to her. Together with Back to Ours she wanted to build on the growing community spirit that she and her neighbours had begun to create.



Before the North Hull Hub group was established, Emma saw a Back to Ours poster inviting people to get involved and she was keen to help out in whatever way she could. She gave Back to Ours a tour of the North Hull estate and introduced them to her neighbours and friends. From when the Hubs started, Emma and her family have always been involved, from the early days when they were able to hold meetings for all four Hub areas together at the comedy club in Hull city centre, through to the online Back to Ours Quiz Nights during the first year of the pandemic, to today's events when they venture out and go to real life events again, like the Hubs Bus Tour and The Christmas Card Parade.

Before the lockdowns, Emma would take her neighbours to the live Shindig events; she took three different sets of neighbours to the St Michael's Church Hall Shindigs and would help out, serving tea and biscuits to attendees. Then during lockdown Emma realised that some of her neighbours were at risk of becoming isolated again, so she nominated them for the Back to Ours Shindig Box, delivered to her neighbour's door by the Back to Ours 'posh butler'. Emma says that the lockdown made her street look out for each other; there was time for a chat over the fence to check in with each other. She misses the time and care that people were able to show each other during the lockdowns now that people are going back to work.

**"We were making an effort to look after each other more during lockdown. We're too busy now to see the prompts that people give us, to show you and let you know that they want a chat."**

Over the years Emma and her family have been involved with the Hubs, they have pretty much said yes to everything that Back to Ours has encouraged them to try. In 2021, her son Oliver helped The Herd brainstorm and plan their next production, *The Last Dinosaur*, a children's theatre show, before it went out on national tour. Oliver really enjoyed telling the people from The Herd what he most liked about dinosaurs, and he enjoyed seeing the live performance at St Mike's Church in October.

Emma says that the reason why she always says yes to a new Back to Ours experience is because they are made to feel as though they are part of the Back to Ours family and importantly, they are listened to. For example, when Emma suggested that Back to Ours puts on events for children aged 11+, Back to Ours brought in a touring dance production called *Fagin's Twist* (2018). And because Emma enjoys doing craft activities with her boys, Back to Ours have asked her to run some craft workshops at the Bransholme Chat Shop. Having not run public workshops before, she says that she is supported and encouraged by the staff team and that Jen at the Chat Shop has been great helping to get the materials and provide the encouragement that she needs.

The level of individual care invested into Hub Members and their families ensures that, as Emma says:

**"Hub Members are made to feel special and included, and that Back to Ours are interested in who you are."**

<sup>46</sup> <https://playingout.net/> is a national play scheme, and run by local volunteers.



## 4. Developing artists to deliver to Back to Ours' audiences

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**In this section, we examine how Back to Ours work with local and national artists to ensure the excellence of the art on offer, and how their bespoke model of engagement is developed and shared in wider practice.**

Back to Ours continue to work with locally and nationally based artists to support them to work more effectively with Hull's communities. This can be through encouraging them to produce work in Hull for the first time, or adapting how they engage with audiences so their reach is greater. Through this approach, communities across Hull have more opportunities to engage in a wider range of arts and culture which resonates with them.

We find that:

- Back to Ours are seen as a positive partner for artists from Hull and beyond
- A strong model has developed since 2018 of introducing new artists to the community, particularly via the Hubs, as well as involving others who audiences feel more comfortable with. Over time, artists gain the skills and move from being 'new' to familiar to Back to Ours audiences.
- Through partnership with Back to Ours, artists have:
  - Created new artwork relevant to the communities of Hull
  - Developed their practice in reaching new audiences and
  - Presented their work in new community settings and thus to a wider audience

All artists involved in the delivery of the 2021 programme were invited to complete an annual artists' online survey (with 7 responses), another eight artists were interviewed in person, with two being interviewed twice, so that their progression and delivery could be analysed and better appreciated - these artists are showcased in the artist case study below.

All of the artists commissioned already had an established creative practice mostly in digital and performing arts, such as music, film, performance poetry, and theatre, and are well known within Hull and outside of the city. Whilst working with Back to Ours, these artists have created new artworks, presented their work in new community settings, and been able to reach new audiences. The work hasn't particularly changed their opinions about working in Hull, mostly as they already had positive perceptions of this.

Whilst Back to Ours are primarily concerned with engaging new arts audiences, they also regularly work with artists who don't see themselves primarily as socially engaged artists. The common factor for the Back to Ours audiences and artists is that they are willing to give it a go and trust Back to Ours to take them on the journey.

### 4.1. Supporting and developing artists' engagement with communities

The relationship between Back to Ours and the artists is constantly changing and developing, and this was particularly the case in 2021 as Back to Ours transitioned from an online programme (Right On Your Sofa) to an in real life programme (Right on your Doorstep).

Generally, the relationship with Back to Ours is built on confidence and trust. Sometimes a leap of faith is taken by the artist in which they pitch an idea to Back to Ours and it is picked up and run with - one artist told us they sent a film to Back to Ours at the beginning of the first lockdown which Back to Ours put on their Facebook page, then they commissioned five more. Another artist met Back to Ours whilst delivering their own project in another part of the city - this led to conversations about the artist's connections with Bransholme and later he

was commissioned to go out and photograph the people of Bransholme. This became the very successful 'We Are Bransholme' exhibition, which attracted 400 new followers to the Bransholme Chat Facebook page and 6,675 Twitter impressions, along with 160 in person visitors between the 15th June and the 2nd July to the Chat Shop.

While supporting artists to engage with communities, Back to Ours respects their work and practice as artists: a number of artists fed back that a key to their relationship with Back to Ours is the freedom they are given to make creative decisions:

**"Having the freedom to find interesting people to read and books for them to introduce to audiences has been a good experience."**

Back to Ours Artist, Annual Survey

As well as the breadth of support from the Back to Ours team:

**"Back to Ours' support is always brilliant - the freedom they allow us artists, the financial support that allows us to make bigger and better work, and the on the ground support from their team and volunteers."**

Back to Ours Artist, Annual Survey

Learning and mentorship are also important to many of the artists. Learning new skills such as marketing and new approaches to audience engagement were highlighted by one artist, who felt they had learned a lot from their time working with Back to Ours. More importantly, this learning is now their standard benchmark for delivering touring theatre shows around the UK.

A number of artists interviewed also stated that they would often try out new ideas and ask for advice and guidance on specific issues with the Director and team at Back to Ours.

Examples of ways in which approaches to reaching audiences have been broadened and deepened include this artist being supported by Back to Ours to run online family testing sessions during one of the lockdowns. They were able to trial with the target audience children which dinosaurs they liked best, and how the dinosaur should be in their production. This led to the development of a digital app which was the pre-show launch and marketing tool for their show.

For all of the artists commissioned by Back to Ours, developing their creative practice and reaching new audiences is recognised as one and the same thing. New audiences can be reached and engaged when a new film is commissioned for the Dean Wilson Film Club, or a street theatre company is commissioned to create the characters for a Christmas parade. Artists are sometimes surprised by the level of commitment from Back to Ours audiences; The Christmas Card Parade was delivered in December 2021 when storm Barra was in full force and Covid infection rates were on the rise. One artist stated that:

**"I was surprised by how many people actually came out for the motorized parade bit. Cos on the night when the winds meant we couldn't do the static site. That was really heartening to see so many people turning out to watch it."**

Artist interview

With many of the artists being performing artists, and who have an established audience in Hull, a number of them reflected that they felt they brought their own audience to the Back to Ours events. Although not a CPP priority for Back to Ours, it does give both opportunities for income generation and also offers an interesting blend of the familiar and new into the audience experience.

## 4.2. How has the quality of work been maintained?

Ensuring a high-quality experience for audiences is paramount for the Back to Ours team. They do this by choosing the right artist for the project and by maintaining the integrity of the artwork through high production values and delivery.

Generally, artists felt that the projects they had delivered for Back to Ours had advanced their practice, that it was inventive, and some said that it was a bold choice for the participants. Other artists reflected that because they are down to earth and 'working class' in their style and delivery, that they are a good match for the Back to Ours audience. Another artist felt that keeping the 'fun' in their work and practice was important, whilst another felt that quality could be measured by the end product remaining true to its original concept. Whilst there are many interpretations of quality from the artists, all rated the quality of engagement for audiences as excellent.

Remaining agile and responsive during 2021, meant that Back to Ours was able to adapt to the many changes in government Covid restrictions. Moving back into delivering real life events was challenging for many of the artists. The logistics of sourcing materials, and transitioning into busy periods of rehearsals was, as one artist described it, 'a shock to the system.' But it would appear that Back to Ours supported the artists along on this process. Another artist stated that:

**"You know you're going to be looked after as an artist, and you're going to be properly paid. It can be little things, like where I'm going, they will tell me who is looking after things, where you need to be, and it makes a big difference. It's all the stuff around the performance."**

Artist interview

This supportive and often collaborative approach supports and enables the artists to deliver a high-quality experience to audiences, whether it be in the hand-holding stage before a performance, in the visioning and planning stages, or in sharing good practice.

Many of the artists interviewed and surveyed did not report anything that didn't work as well with the projects, only a few comments were made around logistics and practical circumstances, of Covid and bad weather, largely outside of Back to Ours' control which affected the quality of the event and audience experience.

Overall, all artists interviewed had an extremely positive view of working with Back to Ours and what they offer to Hull.

**"I whole heartedly believe in all that Back to Ours stand for. Best wishes for 2022."**

Artist, Annual Survey 2021

**"I am very grateful that BTO often ask me to do work that is an extension of my normal practice... My confidence in my practice is always improved by working with BTO."**

Artist, Annual Survey

## Case study: Hand in Glove - Dean Wilson and Dave Lee

Dean Wilson is a seasoned performance poet of 30 years, and Dave Lee was, until the pandemic, a TV producer for Sky Sports and restaurant critic. Both have a long-established track record of working in their specialist fields within the arts world.

They enjoy working together and had made a number of films together before getting involved with Back to Ours. 2021 was a busy year for Dave and Dean working with Back to Ours, they formed the Dean Wilson Film Club, the Cinema Shack and put on a Gala Premiere of DeanWorld, as part of Freedom Festival. All these events framed Dean performing his poems either live at the Gala event, or as films shown as part of the Right on Your Sofa programme on the Back to Ours Facebook page.

### So, are Dean and Dave a good fit with Back to Ours?

Both Dean and Dave feel that the artwork they create is a good fit with Back to Ours and their audiences.

**"It's just great to be a part of something like Back to Ours, they aren't stuffy, and they are really nice to work with. They just fit like a glove really."**

Dean and Dave agree that Dean's style of poetry is not highbrow: it includes a lot of comedy, and makes his art and performances accessible to the Back to Ours audience.

### How does Back to Ours work with Dean and Dave?

Back to Ours acknowledge that Dean and Dave are both high quality artists and as with all their events, they place them in everyday spaces like Trinity Market in Hull city centre, and North Point Shopping Centre in Bransholme, a large housing estate in North/East Hull. This makes it easier for people to come across them whilst out shopping and going about their daily lives.

Back to Ours ensured that all events were accessible; both the Cinema Shack and the Premiere Gala had subtitled films. The Shack had a volunteer present each day to ensure that people were welcomed in to explore and experience the world of Dean Wilson, and The Gala also had a BSL interpreter, ensuring all attendees could enjoy the same Dean Wilson experience.

### How do they collaborate?

Dean and Dave reflected that they appreciate and value the partnership with Back to Ours. They say that Back to Ours really know and understand their audience and have helped them to shape the event's non-traditional arts audience. Dave reflects that he comes up with the ideas such as the Cinema Shack and the Gala event, which are designed to promote Dean and his poetry, and that Back to Ours have always supported them and encouraged them to go further and improve on their ambitions.

**"I've broadened my skills through Back to Ours. I get help and advice from Louise and I can send her an email if I need advice."**

### Has the Back to Ours audience benefitted?

Audiences attending the Cinema Shack and the DeanWorld Premiere Gala were later able to go see Dean at other Back to Ours events, such as a new season of The Dean Wilson Film Club, his appearance on the Hubs Bus Tour (with Memphis Pete, an Elvis tribute act, who Dean loves) and he's appeared as a 'chatter' at the Bransholme Chat Shop. Dean mentioned that a group of ladies that had seen him at The DeanWorld Gala event came to see him at the Chat Shop and they had their photos taken with him.

The broadening of audiences has worked both ways: Dean's local arts audience have enjoyed going out to see him in new community settings, whilst Back to Ours have brought a local and well-loved performance poet to their established Back to Ours audience on Facebook, at the Chat Shop and as part of their partnership working with fellow arts organisation, Freedom Festival.





## 5. Conclusions and recommendations

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In this final section, we draw conclusions about Year 2 of Phase 2 of Back to Ours and share our recommendations for the coming year based on the findings contained in this Report.

### 5.1. Conclusions

Despite huge challenges in terms of delivering through lockdown and opening up, and team turnover, 2021 has been a very successful year for Back to Ours in terms of delivering work which is universally appreciated by partners, participants and audiences, and is truly reflective of what it intends to be. This has laid a sound foundation for the next stage in its development and it clear that Back to Ours offer a unique, ground-breaking approach to arts and engagement in communities which should be funded to continue.

Considering the Arts Council England CPP Research Questions<sup>47</sup>:

Back to Ours **continue to reach audiences in communities least likely to engage with the arts**, and is increasingly reaching into those groups most difficult to engage – for example older more isolated communities and families least likely to engage across the city.

The **work inspires and excites audiences to engage further**, and community members to sign up and become more involved in planning and promoting the work. This is testament to **excellent art coupled with excellent engagement** – in particular through very strategic programming of work which mixes the familiar with the unfamiliar, alongside a wraparound approach where every aspect of the programme is considered, from the invitation, to the 'welcome' on arrival to the follow up afterwards. As a result, audiences see and enjoy work they might not have considered attending otherwise.

Back to Ours continue to **ensure a community voice is increasingly strong within their programme**. Drawing on local knowledge and expertise by working with and through the Hubs has been particularly successful in programming the big events this year, as shown by the audience figures and universally positive responses to the Hubs Tour and The Christmas Card Parade.

Back to Ours know **what works**: they have over the last four years developed a clear model with a set of core 'ingredients' which enables them to tie a diverse programme into what has become their trusted brand. This confident core to the programming will allow them to continue to explore new opportunities, in particular enabling them to stand alone as a company, rather than a project, as well as continuing to break down more barriers to the arts and stretch the boundaries of what they achieve.

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<sup>47</sup> ACE Research Questions are: 1. Are more people from places of least engagement experiencing and inspired by the arts?; 2. To what extent was the aspiration for excellence of art and excellence of the process of engaging communities achieved? And 3. Which approaches were successful and what were the lessons learned?

## 5.2. Recommendations

As Back to Ours move into the final year of CPP activity we would recommend they focus on looking to the future and build on the successes so far to ensure the work can be sustained:

- 1) **Share the Back to Ours Model externally.** Be confident and explicit about the unique model, write it up and make it the heart of a sustainable business plan for long term delivery and share nationally as an example of good practice.
- 2) **Share the Back to Ours Model more internally.** The model is integral to everything the Programme does. The Director should continue to make time to ensure it is fully understood and embedded within the Team to ensure a continuity of vision, especially if there is continued staff turnover.
- 3) **Continue to put time and effort in building and maintaining trust** – it is an essential ingredient in everything Back to Ours do and has underpinned the successes so far.
- 4) **Keep working in (more) areas beyond the city centre** – across the board people see this as unique to Back to Ours and something other arts organisations aren't doing.
- 5) **Carry on developing the Hubs model** so they continue take the lead in programming what they feel would work for their communities. This about designing how to promote the work to new audiences – neighbours and friends – as well as about designing the work.
- 6) **Recognise the importance of community spirit** – getting people together safely – especially at a time when issues such as the pandemic and the increasing cost of living are impacting on everyday life.
- 7) **Explore new income models.** As living costs increases, price plays an increasingly part in people's decisions around what they do. There is benefit in looking at models that keep the work affordable for people but also generate income for the Programme.
- 8) **Keep accessibility in mind.** Make sure venues are accessible for those with disabilities so this doesn't impact on people's participation and enjoyment.
- 9) **Extend event marketing,** with more publicity in different areas of the city and more advanced warning of dates in the marketing materials.
- 10) **Enhance current data collection systems.** Strong data is available on the audiences although greater uniformity of survey questions would make it possible to do more comparative analysis. Additionally, it would be worth considering how more nuanced data can be captured through a return to use of the Chat to Ours research team and more work with participants and the Hubs.

# Appendices

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## Appendix 1: Methodology

This report is based on work carried out by Ruth Melville Research (RMR) and the Back to Ours team using an evaluation approach developed by Ruth Melville in discussion with the Back to Ours team and Steering Group and which followed on from the approach taken during the evaluation of the previous Phase.

The evaluation framework takes into account the National Evaluation Research Questions developed for CPP by Arts Council England at the start of the programme in 2012 and not changed since:

1. Are more people from places of least engagement experiencing and inspired by the arts?
2. To what extent was the aspiration for excellence of art and excellence of the process of engaging communities achieved?
3. Which approaches were successful and what were the lessons learned?

It draws on the monitoring and reflection required within the ACE Quarterly monitoring and reporting model, with adaptations made to fit with the particular focuses of Back to Ours, and then to fit with necessary changes on programming prompted by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Data collection was carried out by Ruth Melville and Vickie Bissett from RMR and by the Back to Ours team and volunteers, particularly Christie Parkin, Monitoring & Evaluation co-ordinator. The Chat to Ours volunteer research team didn't play as much of a role in data collection and analysis in 2021 as pre-pandemic, and thus the level of qualitative analysis of audience experience is lower than in 2019 and before. It is hoped that their expertise can be used more in 2022 and onwards.

Analysis of postcodes was carried out by The Audience Agency and Hull City Council.

Full analysis and reporting was carried out by the RMR team.

Data gathering included:

**Audience surveys:** carried out at most audience events in 2021, using a mix of paper questionnaires, postcards and online surveys, which received 7678 responses.

**Hub and participant surveys:** carried out in 2021, largely online, by RMR responding to emails from the Back to Ours team. 14 people responded to the Hub Members survey and 16 to the participant survey.

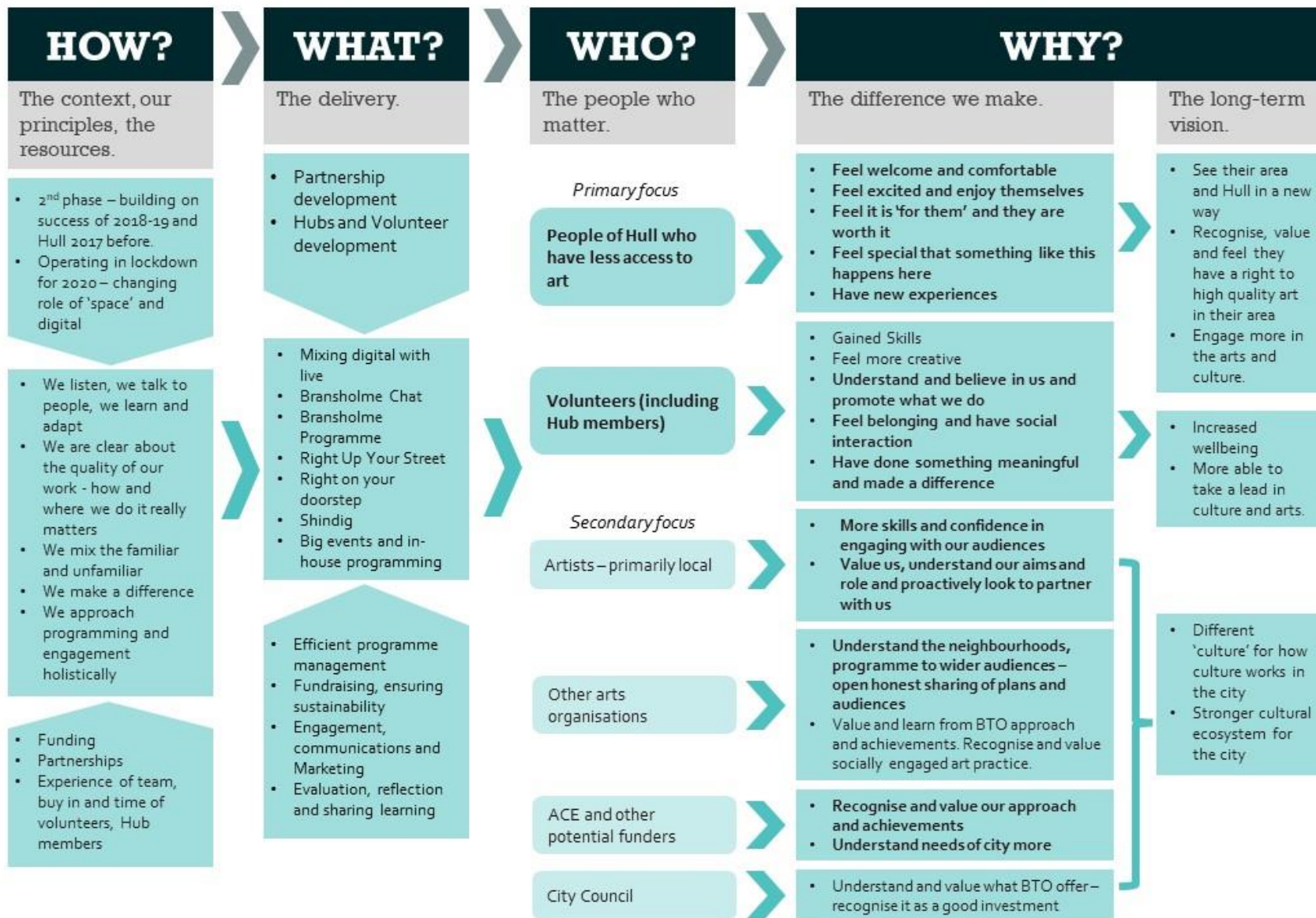
**Interviews:** 16 interviews were carried out throughout 2021. 8 artists, 7 team members, 1 Hub Member and 2 Act to Ours participants were interviewed, several more than once.

**Observations:** extensive data gathering has been carried out through events and participant observations at team meetings, Right on your Sofa and Right on your Doorstep events, Chat Shop events, plus Chat to Ours and Hub meetings. Seven Right on your Doorstep events, including: Big Malarkey, the Dean Wilson Cinema Shack, DeanWorld Premiere Gala, Play Day events and The Christmas Card Parade, and 24 Right on your Sofa events including: Black Kings upon Hull, the Dean Wilson Film Club, Bedtime Stories and Top Tips Tuesday.

**Story of Change sessions:** the Story of Change approach is a way of looking holistically at a project, taking into account 'who' you want to make a difference to, 'why' – what's the difference you are trying to make, as well as principles and approaches – 'how' you'll do it, before thinking about 'what' you are planning to do. This approach has formed the bedrock of the Back to Ours evaluation and was used for regular review sessions with the Director and the team giving a chance to stop and reflect on what's working in terms of approach and outcomes. These feed into both programming development and the evaluation. Back to Ours' Story of Change is constantly evolving – see Appendix 2 below for Phase 2 model, and will continue to change throughout the course of the programme as they reflect, learn and adapt.

**Postcode analysis** was carried out to determine the reach of the audience. 6,776 postcodes were collected from audience members who attended one of the 153 digital or physical events this year and were matched and analysed (separately) by Hull City Council and The Audience Agency.

## Appendix 2: Back to Ours Story of Change



## Appendix 3: Reach into audiences least likely to engage in the arts

Attracting new audiences to the arts is a central aim of Creative People and Places and can be hard to measure. In order to get the clearest view on this, and on whether Back to Ours is reaching not just 'non-attenders' but also those who typically are least likely to engage in the arts, we measure via two routes:

- Direct feedback from audiences at events through a question on the online audience survey.
- Analysis of audience postcodes, matched to Audience Spectrum segmentation, which uses consumption behaviour to map likelihood of people living in this postcode to engage in the arts.

There can be benefits and issues with both approaches – self reporting can over-represent through positive bias (people feeling they should say they do attend the arts) and/or be unreliable due to memory. On the other hand, Audience Spectrum profiling only looks at the likelihood of people attending due to the consumer characteristics of where they live. Despite this, in previous research we have found strong alignment of these two indicators. For Back to Ours audiences there are two specific issues with this approach: The first is that the 'baseline' for Back to Ours was measured when public engagement in the arts in Hull was at a historic high (post- City of Culture). Hull 2017 claimed involvement of 95% of the local population (see CPPI Cultural Transformations, p69 "around 95% of residents experienced a cultural activity, event, installation or exhibition over the course of the UK City of Culture year") This means that all those who have the least interest in attending the arts, presumably took up this opportunity in 2017. If the Hull 2017 figures are to be believed, only 5% of the local population would be 'new to the arts' in terms of the usual CPP category, and it is possible these people might never be interested. The second issue is how people self-define being new to the arts, and is shared by other CPPs. The question asked: "Have you been to an arts event in the last 12 months, e.g. a theatre, gallery, festival etc? Yes/No" appears clear. However, it is known from analysis of data in other CPPs that people's own definitions of 'art' varies, plus their memories may not be totally reliable.

## Audience Segmentation using Audience Spectrum postcode analysis

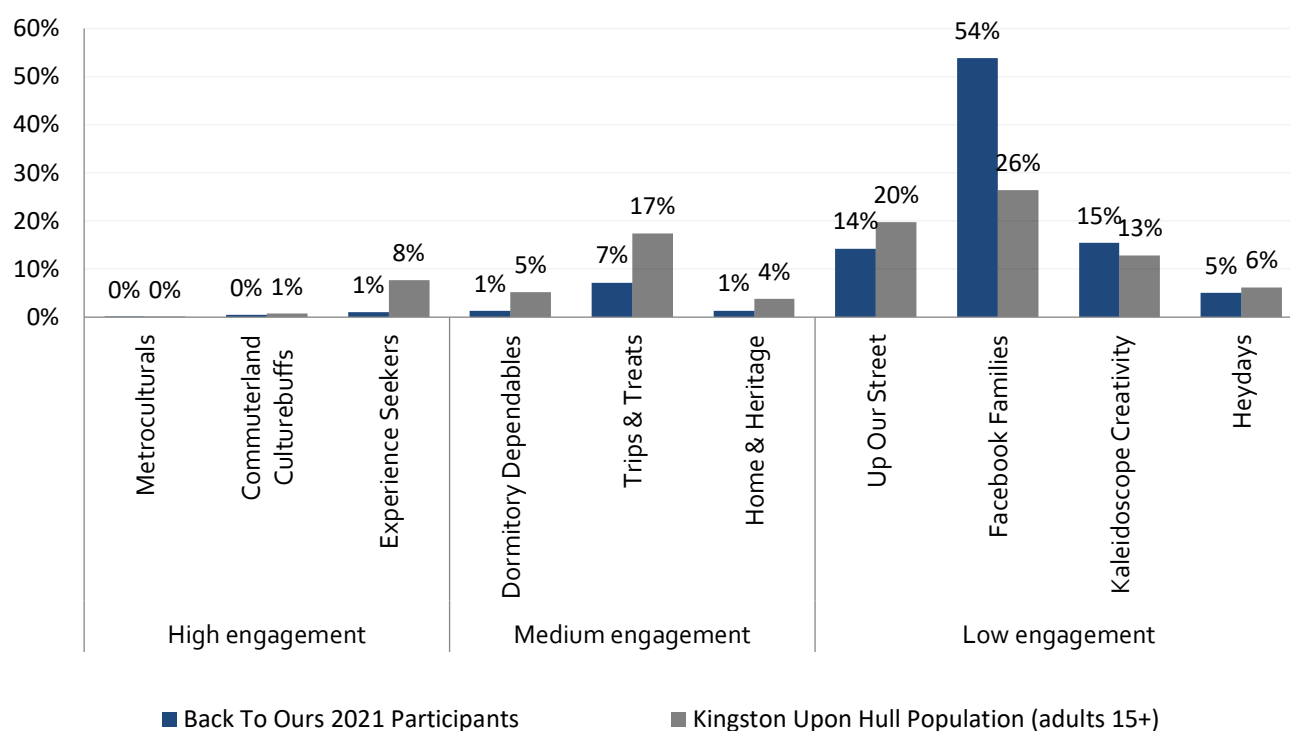


Figure 6 Audience Spectrum segmentation for Back to Ours audience vs Hull population<sup>48</sup>

The chart (Figure 6) shows the three key groups that Back to Ours are reaching in particular are:

- Facebook Families (54% of Back to Ours audiences vs 26% in Hull)
- Kaleidoscope Creativity (15% of Back to Ours audiences vs 13% in Hull)
- Heydays (5% of Back to Ours audiences vs 6% in Hull)<sup>49</sup>

For descriptions of the groups, see the highlighted boxes, which outline the audience spectrum model.

Whilst this group has faced many challenges in the pandemic, Back to Ours have been successful in engaging them with their programming. This is likely due to the years of work with families in target areas pre-pandemic, including work with the Hubs which include many people from Facebook Families backgrounds. With the move online, the inclusion of digital events for families with children, such as **The Christmas Card** or the **Bedtime Stories** programme strand retained a highly accessible style of programming for this group, and negated any risk to older generations or concerns around using public transport by being delivered remotely, or close to their homes.

### Facebook Families

Facebook Families tend to be younger with less disposable income. They often live in suburban and semi-urban areas of high unemployment. Art plays a very small role in their lives, with typically less than a third believing the arts is important. During the Covid-19 pandemic, this group has been more likely to feel the financial effects of the recession, with many having children to support, possibly as lower-paid key workers. They have some dependence on public transport which may have affected accessibility of events. While this group tends to be younger, many live with older relatives so may have had to be cautious about risk of infection. Introduction of booked slots may have presented a barrier for this group, although they tend to be highly engaged in digital and streaming options, with high levels of social media use and gaming.

<sup>48</sup> Audience Spectrum analysis by The Audience Agency on 6,766 valid postcodes provided by Back to Ours audience members at events

<sup>49</sup> Descriptions and more information on these areas can be found at <https://www.theaudienceagency.org/audience-finder-data-tools/audience-spectrum>

The second group worth noting is Kaleidoscope Creativity. This is another low engagement group, who have seen an increase in representation in Back to Ours audiences this year.

## Kaleidoscope Creativity

This group tend to be a mix of ages, living circumstances, resources and cultural backgrounds, with only 59% White British. They often live in cities, meaning many opportunities are within easy reach, however, low income and unemployment may present barriers for cultural engagement. Two thirds engage annually in more accessible popular culture, such as free outdoor festivals and carnivals, or music events. The Covid19 pandemic has had similar consequences for this group as Facebook Families, with many suffering financial hardship from the recession, with a third having children to support. Additionally, as a group with the highest proportion of BAME people, they have had a higher impact and risk of Covid, along with a high reliance on public transport that presents another risk of infection. This group already preferred free events, with less interest in ticketed events in traditional institutions, so increased non-traditional programming during the pandemic has been a plus for this group. They also have a high level of engagement with digital and streaming, although are unlikely to feel that arts and cultural organisation's offers are 'for them'.

Further research is needed to understand the increased reach into this group. It may come from programming into new geographical areas, but it is possible that given their preference for engagement away from traditional institutions, the innovative programming delivery, and increased focus on digital delivery of Back to Ours may be one of the reasons for such a high engagement with this group in Year 2. Digital delivery may have also helped negate issues around increased Covid risk for BAME people, and those living in multigenerational households. Black-led programmes such as **Black Kings upon Hull** may have helped address the feeling that events are not on offer 'for them' by increasing representation of Black creatives in the arts.

The final group of note is Heydays. Whilst Back to Ours has reached a similar number as the Hull population in general (5% and 6% respectively), this is traditionally the hardest to

engage group as those least likely to attend arts or cultural events, so figures comparable with the population is an impressive achievement.

Despite the barriers to engagement, Back to Ours have achieved a good level of engagement with this group during Year 2. Some possible reasons for this may be that they may be feeling the increased effects of isolation and loneliness from Covid19 lockdowns, and were encouraged to attend events as a means to address this. Older members of this group were particularly engaged in community events such as the Bransholme Chat and The Christmas Card Parade, which was highly praised by all involved as bringing people together. From the audience survey, those who consider themselves to have a disability were more highly engaged in digital events, most likely due to the increased accessibility and reduced barriers of these for them. Despite typically low levels of digital uptake in this group, this may account for good engagement of some members of this group who would otherwise not have been able to attend events in person.

Whilst a small number of attendees were in the high engagement Experience Seekers group, these tend to be some of the most engaged in arts so will always find these events to attend, and are considerably lower than the Hull population in general. The high proportion of audience members in the lower categories shows that Back to Ours are successfully reaching their targeted audiences outlined in the Story of Change, with exceptionally high and impressive reach this year.

## Heydays

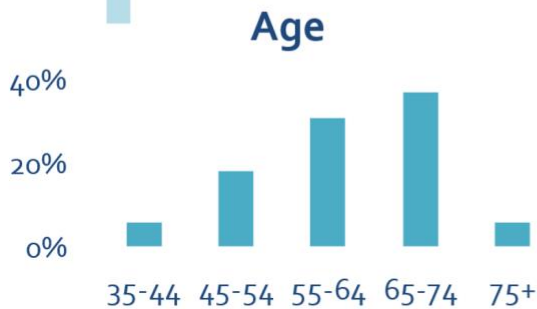
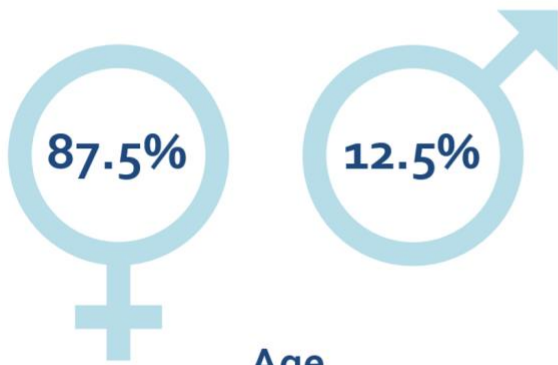
This group tends to be older and believe that the arts are no longer as important or relevant as they once were. Many live in sheltered housing, with health and resource issues causing a barrier to engagement. Given that many members of this group are older and with health complications, they have been hit harder with the effects of Covid. They are also typically not engaged with digital and streaming beyond television. They are more susceptible to loneliness and isolation which were compounded during lockdowns, and they often have additional accessibility needs.



# Appendix 4: Participant analysis

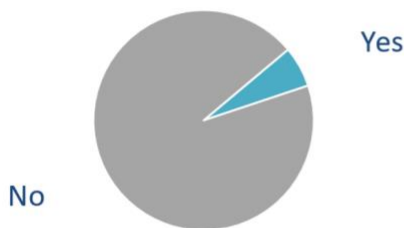
## Who joined in?

### PARTICIPANT ANALYSIS



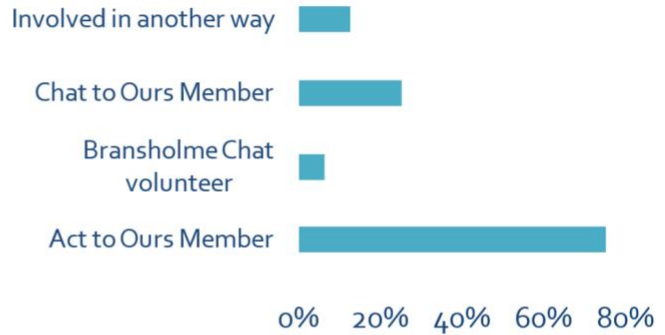
**“I’m more tolerant of society and it’s difficulties. Not everyone is privileged”**

### Disability

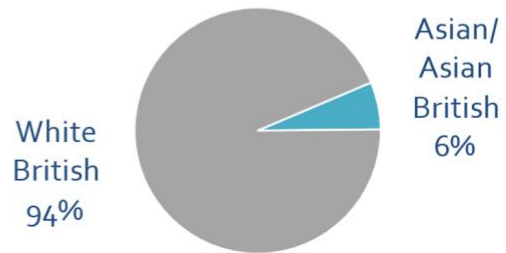


**“Being with other people doing similar, stops feeling embarrassment as we all learn together. I have made new friends. I look for events that I can go to more”**

## How are you involved with Back to Ours?



### Ethnicity



**“Helped my confidence, more carefree and kept me happy and having fun in covid times”**



Being involved rated **9/10**



**27%** hadn’t done anything similar before



**100%** speak English as their main language

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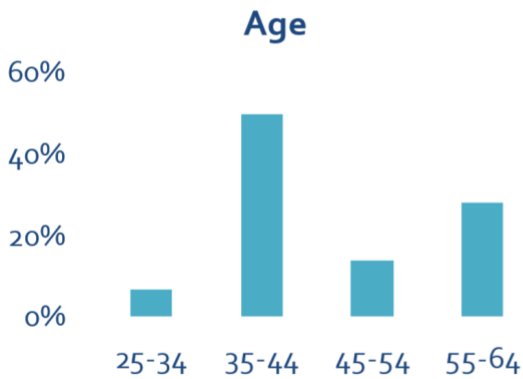


BASED ON 16 PARTICIPANT SURVEY RESPONSES

# Appendix 5: Hub Member analysis

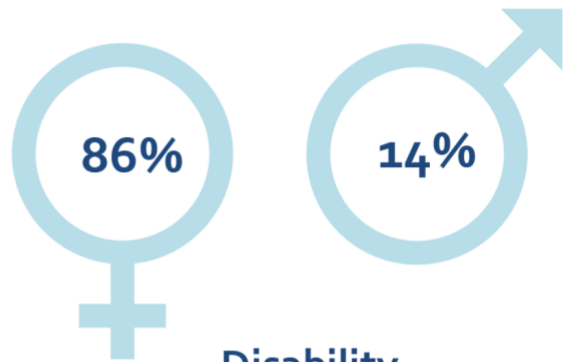
## Who helped?

### HUB MEMBER ANALYSIS

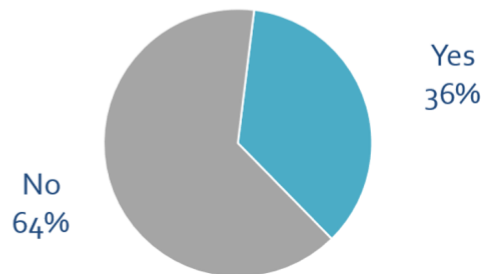


“Local events improve communities usually forgotten”

“It got me out of the house when I was feeling lonely/depressed.”



### Disability



### Ethnicity

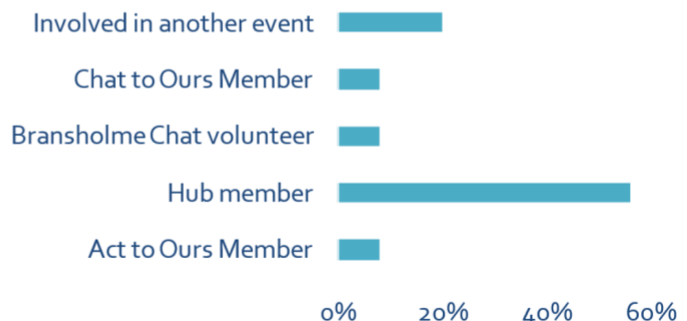


92% want to be involved again



Being involved rated 9/10

### How are you involved with Back to Ours?



### Which Hub?



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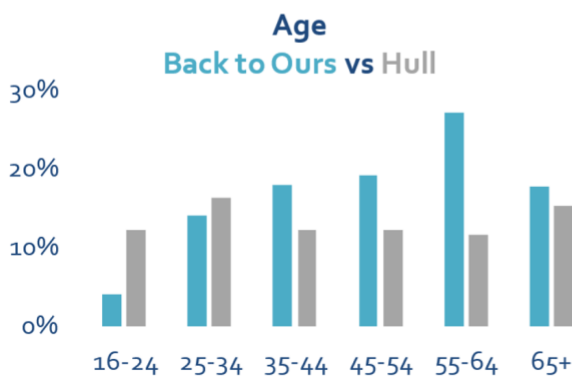
BASED ON 14 HUB MEMBER SURVEY RESPONSES

# Appendix 6: Audience Member analysis

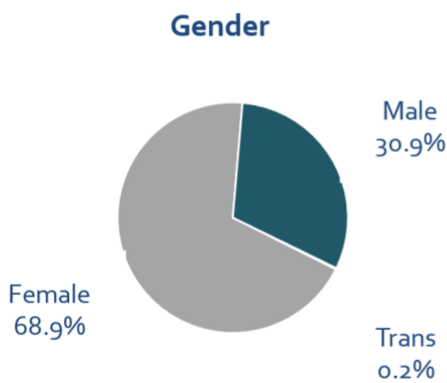
## Demographics

### AUDIENCE MEMBER ANALYSIS

**"Local events improve communities usually forgotten"**

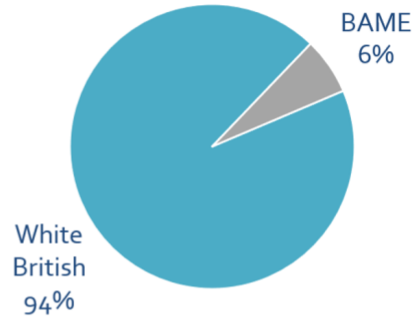


**96% live in Hull**      **43% new to the arts**



**"Please commission more artists like this - I loved every minute"**

### Ethnicity

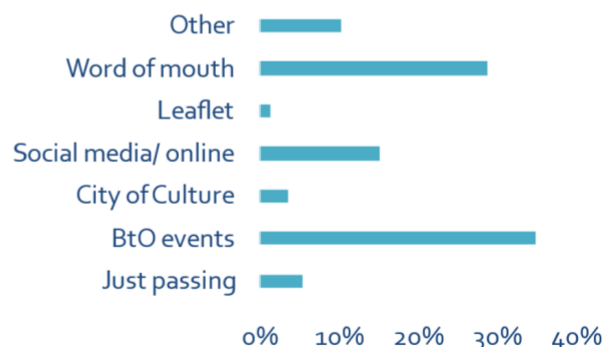


**"Captures the heart and soul of the estate."**

**Limited by disability or long term health condition**



### "How did you find out about Back to Ours?"



This infographic created by:

BASED ON 7,678 AUDIENCE MEMBER SURVEY RESPONSES