

Evaluation Report

LeftCoast –Phase 3 Final Report

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Credits

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RMR would like to thank everyone at LeftCoast for their assistance and patience in the production of this, our final evaluation.

About this report

This is an evaluation report covering all of Phase 3 of LeftCoast, the Creative People and Places project for Blackpool and Wyre.

This report has seven sections:

- Section 1 provides a background to LeftCoast, Blackpool and Wyre as an area and an overview of the programming.
- Section 2 reviews who the audience and participants were in the programme.
- Section 3 explores how partnerships have shifted perceptions of Blackpool and Wyre, encouraging ambition and fresh thinking.
- Section 4 looks at how cross-sector partnerships have enhanced understanding of the value of the arts in delivering on wider social aims.
- Section 5 considers how activity in Phase 3 helped to strengthen the local cultural ecosystem and support artists.
- Section 6 investigates how in a number of ways the project has developed social capital.
- Section 7 sets out conclusions, learning and recommendations.

Summary

This report evaluates Phase 3 of LeftCoast, the Creative People and Places (CPP) project in Blackpool and Wyre. The Phase covered October 2019 to March 2022, the programme having run for eight and a half years.

Background

- LeftCoast is at the end of its third Phase Arts Council England (ACE) funding which ran alongside a three-year project funded by the National Lottery Community Fund. It is now entering a new phase with ACE funding running to March 2025.
- LeftCoast aims to bring people together to make work and explore collective skills, talents and ideas, so as to provide opportunities to experience high quality arts and culture that is accessible to all.
- Even before COVID-19, Blackpool and Wyre faced a number of underlying demographic, health and economic challenges.
- The arrival of COVID-19 in the Spring of 2020 presented a major challenge to LeftCoast in four broad areas – delivery, projects, partners and the evaluation.



More people enjoying the arts

LeftCoast brought enjoyable arts to more people than ever, reaching more of Blackpool's population with their targeted offer in Phase 3.

Through the phase:

- LeftCoast continued to successfully reach those least likely to engage in the arts, as well as people new to the project, in increasing numbers.
- People enjoyed the programme and are inspired to do and create more.

The audiences and participants for the phase:

- Came from all over the UK but with a focus on Blackpool and Fleetwood – in particularly areas with Artists in Residence.
- Tended to be older, female and more likely to be white than the populations of Blackpool and Wyre in general.
- Mainly came from the more deprived areas of Blackpool and Fleetwood.

Shifting perceptions of Blackpool

LeftCoast has worked in partnership to shift negative perceptions of Blackpool and Fleetwood.

These are partnerships not just with other cultural organisations but with partners from education, health, social, visitor and commercial sectors. For Blackpool this is important as the rest of the UK has a negative and outdated view of the town.

One way to change perceptions is sharing more positive, accurate narratives about Blackpool. Another is increasing ambition and the level of strategic partnerships within the town to creating new, dynamic narratives.

In Phase 3, LeftCoast has achieved both of these by:

- Developing and building on existing strong partnerships cross sector and joining in with strategic initiatives.
- Continuing to develop alternative approaches to the Blackpool's "brand".
- Finding opportunities to broaden the visitor offer and commercial partnerships.
- Investing time and energy in Get Dancing as a strategic project to shift perceptions – both in local area and beyond.

Valuing the arts in building stronger communities

By delivering on community building aims, LeftCoast has demonstrated to partners from other sectors the value of the arts in achieving broader goals.

In particular, it has used high-quality socially-engaged art activities to deliver on partners' aims around social change. This can be seen in the Real Estates project, as well as The Upside and elements of Get Dancing.

We find that in Phase 3, LeftCoast's approach:

- Built on existing relationships, successfully strengthening and deepening them.
- Had the flexibility to ensure that relationships survived and flourished despite the challenges of Covid 19.
- Led to a range of outcomes for residents which were understood and valued by partners.
- Increased their own understanding of the LeftCoast model (see below) and what works where. This will be at the core of new and existing neighbourhood partnerships in Phase 4.
- Has left some legacy – although further work is needed to ensure it fully embeds with partners, particularly in Fleetwood.

Strengthening the local cultural ecosystem

While LeftCoast's focus is developing audiences, they recognise the need for a local arts ecosystem to support this work.

Phase 3 activity focussed on supporting the existing and emerging local artist communities to survive and develop through Covid lockdowns and beyond.

LeftCoast has supported artists to deliver with local communities:

- It supported them to respond to people, place and time through lockdown commissions and short residencies.
- Locally based artists value the opportunity which LeftCoast gives to explore the quality of their practice with communities.
- Local arts partners value the ambition and commitment to socially engaged practice that LeftCoast brings.

This support was in the context of a challenging cultural ecology in Blackpool and Wyre:

- Lacking strong coherent cultural partnerships.
- With a traditional emphasis on tourists rather than local audiences.
- Affected by austerity, the pandemic and the looming cost of living crisis.

Developing social capital

LeftCoast has continued to develop the social capital of participants and audiences. This includes the relationships people make, the value placed on these, people's sense of connection to their localities and the opportunities they experience.

This has come about through a range of intentional and well-planned activities such as The Upside and Inside Out.

As a consequence, LeftCoast has:

- Reduced isolation and supported people to return to social interaction and connections following lockdown.
- Increased pride in, and connection to, the places people live.
- Increased people's confidence to speak up, or take action, in their neighbourhoods.
- Uncovered hidden talent and developed people's confidence in making and showing their own art.

This has been achieved by providing a wealth of experiences to local people which were carefully designed to lead to these outcomes. All of these have had a significant and lasting impact on local communities.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Phase 3 has seen a strong development of LeftCoast's confidence and effectiveness as an organisation. They have a clear brand and a large range of partners from across sectors – and across Blackpool and Fleetwood – with whom they can deliver programmes and embed learning and legacy.

The Phase has seen a massive increase in number of engagements (over seven times the level of Phase 2) including a big increase in physical participants, not just digital reach.

The people who they engage come from the areas where poverty and deprivation are highest, and from groups least likely to engage in the arts. Participants and audiences have fun and experience deeper outcomes – connection, pride in place and enthusiasm in the arts.

The approach taken has become more focused – strengthening the brand and raising the potential for work to have long term legacy. The commitment to add quality and ambition into partnership projects runs through the design and delivery to engagement and outcomes.

They are clear in what works and have designed their 2022-25 programme to build on this learning. They continue to build in action research and learning, relying on strong data collection and a reflection model which helps understand what works in each location and each relationship.

LeftCoast offers a successful model for Blackpool, and, hopefully, for continued work in Fleetwood although funding is needed to enable this to happen.

The LeftCoast Model

The LeftCoast model has been evolving since the project started. Phase 3 marked a shift in focus from lots of programming to development – of partnerships, innovation and socially-engaged practice. The approach is underpinned by LeftCoast’s skills, experience and their strong core principles.

The main elements of the model can be summarised as:

1. **Know how to partner:**
 - Cultivate brilliant individuals who understand LeftCoast.
 - Develop organisational partner with shared aims and style.
 - Don’t do one offs.
2. **Understand what works for community-based arts residencies:**
 - Think by doing.
 - Develop partnerships by working in partnership.
 - Work with individuals, person-to-person.
 - Share connections to place to increase a sense of agency.
 - Mix Asset Based Community Development with arts practice.
 - Be in it for the long-term.
3. **Be “the quality” by design not by accident** – put in the time, focus on the feel, building quality in.
4. **Everything is a chance for learning** – always take an action research approach.
5. **Team commitment:** A working culture, led by the Director, that encourages teamworking and full commitment to LeftCoast’s work and it’s way of doing things.

Challenges

The ongoing challenges for LeftCoast as it moves into Phase 4 are:

1. **Team wellbeing:** Working with people in-depth is a challenge to the team’s mental health.
2. **Operating in Blackpool** – it’s a unique and ever-changing environment which requires careful navigation.
3. **Communicating clearly** about the project’s aims to multiple audiences.
4. **Finishing things off** – make sure there’s enough finance to do the legacy work.
5. **Keeping the ambition going** – though natural for LeftCoast, ambitions can be boosted, perhaps around the quality of socially engaged practice.
6. **Disinvestment in Fleetwood:** Due to higher levels of arts engagement, the area is no longer eligible for CPP funding.
7. **Reaching new communities:** To roll out and embed the model in new communities across Blackpool and Wyre
8. **Sustainability:** Developing approaches which lead to sustainable funding models beyond Arts Council England’s CPP funding.
9. **Sharing best practice:** Look for ways to share the model across the country as a good practice example.

Recommendations

LeftCoast delivered on all our recommendations from Phase 2, showing a commitment to learning from evaluations which will hopefully continue into the new phase.

For this phase we recommend:

1. **Continue with the focused approach**, apply the learning around who to partner with and how to deliver.
2. **Continue to be committed** personally, socially and politically, and maintain the high standards expected from partners.
3. **Continue to work in partnership at a strategic level** to raise the ambition and perception of Blackpool.
4. **Build in enough space and funding for legacy**, to enable the full realisation of key projects.
5. **Continue the improvement in communications**, particularly online – sharing what you are achieving enables new partnerships.
6. **Work with the new evaluators to ensure the outcomes** of the work continue to meet the aims.
7. **Develop relationships with critical friends** for support and challenge in developing and sharing your practice and models.
8. **Make space and time to reflect and adapt practice** for the team.
9. **Write up the LeftCoast model to share** with a practice and academic audience nationally and internationally.
10. **Invest significant efforts in looking for funding** to make LeftCoast sustainable beyond Art Council England's CPP funding.
11. **Expand the geographical reach**, work in new areas across the Fylde Coast where LeftCoast can make the most difference.

1. Background

LeftCoast is the Creative People and Places project for Blackpool and Wyre in the North-West of England. This is the final report for Phase 3 covering October 2019 to March 2022.

To help contextualise both this Report and the data presented, this section provides a brief overview of LeftCoast as a programme and Blackpool and Wyre as a place.

In summary:

- LeftCoast is at the end of its 3rd Phase Arts Council England (ACE) funding which ran alongside a three-year project funded by the National Lottery Community Fund. It is now entering a new phase with ACE funding running to March 2025.
- LeftCoast aims to bring people together to make work and explore collective skills, talents and ideas, so as to provide opportunities to experience high quality arts and culture that is accessible to all.

1.1. About LeftCoast

LeftCoast is a Creative People and Places project funded by ACE, along with local partners, to raise arts engagement in Blackpool and Wyre. It started in 2013, with Phases 1 and 2 running for three years each. From April 2022, LeftCoast is running as a CPP National Portfolio Organisation with funding from Arts Council England to March 2025.



Arts Council England funding for Phase 3 ran alongside Real Estates, a three-year National Lottery Community Fund project (2019 to 2021) working in three local estates.

This report covers Phase 3 (October 2019 to March 2022). In this phase, LeftCoast is running a programme of arts, culture and creative activity that works towards the following long-term outcomes:

- Inspire new and strengthen existing community activism
- Commission and/or produce brilliant, high-quality, socially engaged projects / events / artworks about local people and place
- Reframe clichéd internal and external perceptions of Blackpool and Wyre
- Support local artists to be 'commission-ready' by providing relevant learning platforms and opportunities
- Further develop models of working that help us to be an efficient and effective, sustainable organisation.

1.2. Blackpool and Wyre

LeftCoast covers two distinct but adjacent boroughs in the North-West of England. Blackpool is a town associated with twentieth

century seaside culture, and Wyre is a more rural district to the north with the seaside and fishing port of Fleetwood as the key focus of LeftCoast's work in Wyre.

The programme has worked across administrative boundaries, with the unitary authority of Blackpool, Fleetwood Town, Wyre District and Lancashire County Councils.

Demographics: The population of Blackpool (141,000¹) features areas of high population movement² and has fallen as predicted³ in recent years. Wyre's population is 112,000⁴, with the largest town being Fleetwood (25,632⁵). Wyre has a markedly small non-white population (1.8%⁶) compared to Blackpool (3.3%) or the national average (14%)⁷. Over 65s make up a larger proportion of both populations when compared to the national average (17.9%) – 26.9% for Wyre⁸, 20.4% for Blackpool⁹. Only 3.3% of Blackpool residents are classed as ethnic minorities, a third of the percentage for the North-West at 9.9%, and considerably lower than the average for England of 14%¹⁰.

Health and welfare: Blackpool is one of the most deprived districts in England¹¹ and "faces major health challenges"¹² – on 24 of 32

¹<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/bulletins/populationandhouseholdestimatesenglandandwales/census2021>

² <http://www.blackpooljsna.org.uk/Blackpool-Profile/Population.aspx>

³ <http://www.blackpooljsna.org.uk/Blackpool-Profile/Population.aspx>

⁴<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/bulletins/populationandhouseholdestimatesenglandandwales/census2021>

⁵ https://www.citypopulation.de/en/uk/northwestengland/lancashire/E34003462__fleetwood/

⁶ <https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/media/897604/census-2011-districts-ethnicity-change-since-2001.pdf>

⁷ All figures from <http://www.blackpooljsna.org.uk/Blackpool-Profile/Ethnicity.aspx#Figure1>

⁸ Public Health England, Wyre: Local Authority Health Profile 2018

⁹ Public Health England, Blackpool: Local Authority Health Profile 2018

¹⁰ 2011 ONS Census data as cited in the Blackpool 'Joint Strategic Needs Assessment'

[https://www.blackpooljsna.org.uk/Blackpool-Profile/Ethnicity.aspx#:~:text=The%202011%20Census%20indicates%20that,in%20England%20\(Figure%201\).](https://www.blackpooljsna.org.uk/Blackpool-Profile/Ethnicity.aspx#:~:text=The%202011%20Census%20indicates%20that,in%20England%20(Figure%201).)

¹¹ Public Health England, Blackpool: Local Authority Health Profile 2018

¹² <http://www.blackpooljsna.org.uk/Blackpool-Profile/Life-Expectancy.aspx>

health indicators it is worse than the national average¹³. Fleetwood has similar deprivation levels to Blackpool, although Wyre as a whole performs better¹⁴. Local research in Fleetwood has identified stress as a major negative in people's lives¹⁵.

Economy: Tourism contributes £1.44 billion to Blackpool's economy and provides many jobs.¹⁶ The town's unemployment rate is above the regional average and there are significant numbers of people who are long-term sick¹⁷. Although Wyre has an unemployment rate below the regional average, there was a marked decrease in employment between 2009 and 2017 and a very low job-density rate¹⁸.

Arts engagement: The latest Active Lives Survey (2015-17) data shows 52.2% of people in Blackpool attended arts events or spent time doing an arts activity¹⁹. This compares to 61.6% in Wyre and 60.2% for England as a whole.

1.3. An overview of the programming

Many of the projects that make up Phase 3 have come from the Real Estates residencies and micro-residencies. This continues work begun in Phase 2, an experiment in socially engaged practice where

artists lived on local estates for varying periods, becoming part of the community.²⁰

LeftCoast²¹ continued to work with local festivals – Lightpool and SpareParts – often helping them through the challenges of the pandemic. There was continued delivery on commercial partnerships – Painting The Town and Arts B&B. With the latter, like the festivals, time was spent innovatively negotiating the pandemic.

The invitation to create an ident for ITV offered a high-profile opportunity to showcase local creativity and engage volunteers (the LeftCoast Makers) in something unique. The idents were broadcast in May 2020²².

There was a direct response to the continued impacts of the pandemic both through the micro-residencies (Scrub Hub) and with projects such as Small Radical Acts and Lockdown Letters).

A few highlights include the following:

Get Dancing developed a new social dance that was shared with local communities and then a film was produced that celebrated Blackpool's diversity of dance talent and heritage. Viewed as "an antidote to the pandemic"²³, the aim was to get people active, reduce isolation and increase awareness of Blackpool's dance

¹³ <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/static-reports/health-profiles/2019/E06000009.html?area-name=Blackpool>

¹⁴ Wyre Council portfolio report appendix - Fleetwood Coastal Community Action Plan, The Great British Coast, 2016, [rp01ks.pdf moderngov.co.uk](https://www.moderngov.co.uk/rp01ks.pdf)

¹⁵ Source: Wyre DC "Life in Wyre 2018 report: Area Profiles"

¹⁶ Blackpool Council, Tourism Performance Update, <https://democracy.blackpool.gov.uk/documents/s36486/ITEM%2010%20-%20Tourism%20Scrutiny%20Report%20-%20June%202018.pdf>

¹⁷ Nomis figures, <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157102/report.aspx?c1=2013265922&c2=1946157070#tabempunemp>

¹⁸ <https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/lancashire-insight/area-profiles/local-authority-profiles/wyre-district/>

¹⁹ Source: Active lives survey 2015-17 figures <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/participating-and-attending/active-lives-survey#section-2>

²⁰ See <https://leftcoast.org.uk/realestate/> for details of more projects

²¹ The LeftCoast core team was never more than 4.1 FTE and for much of the time during Covid the core team was equivalent to 2.4 FTE (including the residency artists in the neighbourhoods). We have taken this as an average of 2 FTE employees over the Phase.

²² See <https://leftcoast.org.uk/itvcreates/>

²³ Quote from <https://leftcoast.org.uk/getdancing/>

heritage. The project was delivered in partnership with Showtown and House of Wingz.²⁴

The Upside aimed at supporting socially isolated people and was another specific reaction to the pandemic. A beautiful limited-edition, accessibly designed newspaper was produced that was hand-delivered to residents by volunteers during April – June 2021. Over four editions, the newspaper took readers on journey, offering real world, practical support.²⁵

Inside Out, growing out of the Real Estates work, celebrated creativity in Fleetwood and the artistic talents of local people through highlighting more craft-based skills. An exhibition ran at the old Fleetwood Hospital in summer 2021 and again in November of that year. There was also a follow up day where artists shared their making skills with a live and online audiences.²⁶

In Memoriam / Unchartered / Flag Up as part of SpareParts 2021, were three interlinked events exploring grief, loss, gain and intention in a time of pandemic. *In Memoriam*, a touring piece by Luke Jerram was originally made to raise awareness of the NHS, but now provides a space to remember those lost to Covid 19. The soundscape *Unchartered* used stories from local Fleetwood residents, while *Flag Up* offered people the chance to write personal messages about their experience of the pandemic.

Wash Your Words is a new community space for Mereside opening in July 2022, following extensive consultation and co-development of ideas with the local community. It will be a library and laundry – “a modern-day wash house – somewhere people can come together to wash clothes, but also chat, share wisdom and tell stories.”²⁷. Building on previous projects, it will be a testbed for a

community ownership model and explore the environmental and economic benefits of sharing facilities.



Figure 1: Key Phase 3 numbers

²⁴ See the stand-alone Get Dancing Evaluation Report in Appendix 2

²⁵ See the stand-alone The Upside Evaluation Report in Appendix 2: The Upside report

²⁶ See <https://leftcoast.org.uk/insideout/>

²⁷ <https://leftcoast.org.uk/wash-your-words/>

2. More people enjoying the arts

LeftCoast are bringing enjoyable arts to more people than ever, reaching more of the population of Blackpool with their targeted offer in Phase 3. In this section, we explore the extent to which LeftCoast is meeting the central Creative People and Places aim of ensuring that people from places of least engagement are experiencing and inspired by the arts.

This answers ACE Research Question 1: *Are more people from places of least engagement experiencing and inspired by the arts?* and looks at the geographic, demographic and previous arts engagement of the audience and participants in the LeftCoast programme, as well as their immediate responses to the arts. Through Phase 3:

- LeftCoast continues to successfully reach those least likely to engage in the arts and people new to LeftCoast in increasing numbers.
- Audiences and participants come from all over the UK but with a focus in Blackpool and Fleetwood and particularly in the residency areas.
- Participants and audiences tend to be older, female and more likely to be white than the populations of Blackpool and Wyre in general.
- Audiences and participants tend to come from the more deprived areas of Blackpool and Fleetwood.
- People enjoy the programme and are inspired to do and create more.



2.1. Engaging those least likely to engage in the arts

We find that huge strides have been made in Phase 3 to reach people who are least likely to engage in the arts. In Phase 2, only 46% of engagements were with people who had not engaged in the arts in the last 12 months²⁸. For Phase 3, this figure is 81%.

This is likely to be a result of the pivot in the programme to focus on work in the Real Estates areas, and with communities through other programmes. In addition, the ability to put on large audience focussed events, and collect postcodes from them, mean that existing arts engagers are far less likely to attend LeftCoast events. Finally, we need to take into account the fact that the Covid19 lockdown would have meant many people didn't engage in their typical arts engagement in 'the previous year' – thus skewing the data.

Audience Spectrum²⁹ analysis of LeftCoast engagements shows that³⁰ overall, 77% of the people who engaged with LeftCoast in Phase 3 are from groups typically least likely to engage in the arts³¹, compared with 45% for Blackpool and Wyre residents. This is a huge increase on Phase 2, and shows clearly how effectively LeftCoast are reaching into their target communities.

Specifically, a large majority of this reach is into the 'Heydays' group, recently rebranded as 'Supported Communities', with five times the population average, and particularly high reach in 2020-21 (that is at the height of the lockdown). This group tends to be

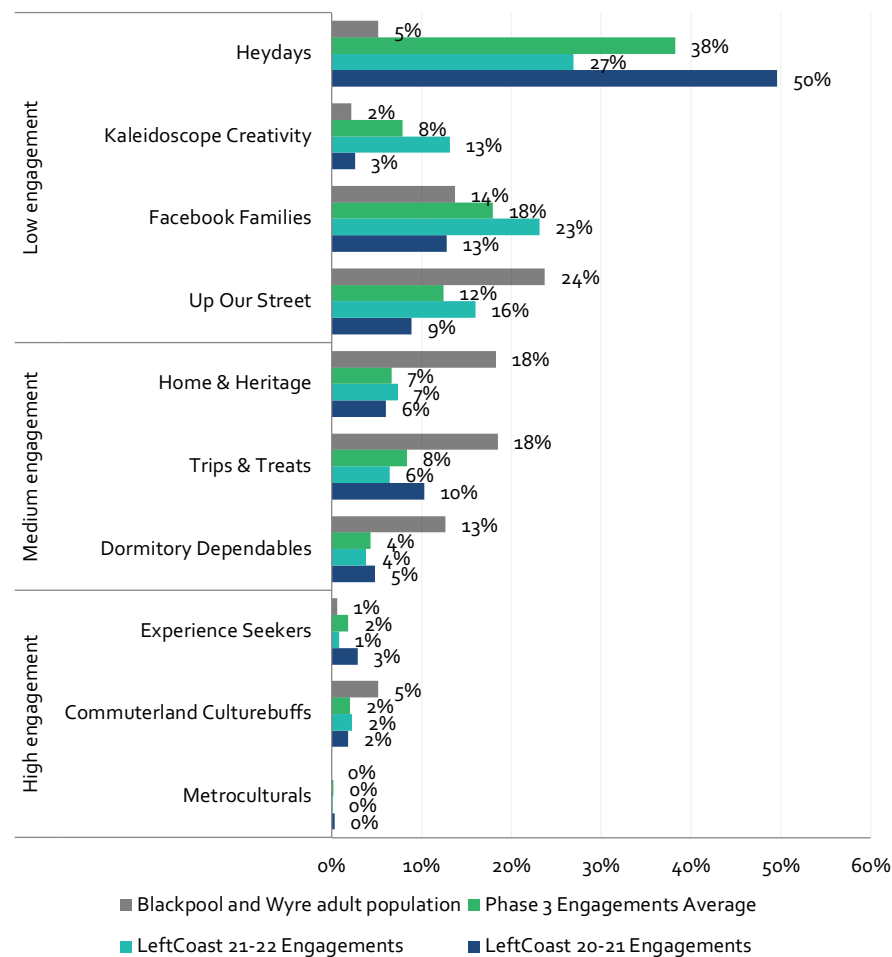


Figure 2 Chart showing Audience Spectrum for LeftCoast in Phase 3 against Blackpool & Wyre population

²⁸ Self-reported data gathered at events

²⁹ Audience Spectrum is developed by The Audience Agency, in conjunction with Arts Council England and measures likelihood to engage with the arts, around a number of profiles using participants' postcodes and various metrics, to calculate how likely people living in an area are to

engage in the arts. See <https://www.theaudienceagency.org/audience-finder-data-tools/audience-spectrum>

³⁰ Data from 999 postcodes provided to The Audience Agency by LeftCoast in 2020-21, 2,364 in 2021-22, 3,363 Phase 3 total

³¹ 74% and 79% for 2020-21 and 2021-22 respectively

older, with many financial and health related concerns, they are also typically extremely hard to engage in arts events so this is very impressive reach.

A second group of note is Kaleidoscope Creativity³². This group is another of the hardest to engage groups, and is often the most ethnically diverse. LeftCoast have had an impressive reach of 8% on average over Phase 3, four times that of the population of Blackpool and Wyre. Not only have they seen a huge increase in this group compared with the previous phase, the majority of this uplift is seen in the more recent programming of 2021-22, showing real growth in this area, as LeftCoast are continuing to improve engagement with those least likely to engage in the arts.

The final group to mention is Facebook Families, recently rebranded as 'Frontline Families'³³. This group tends to be made up of families on low incomes, who are affected by many financial issues such as unemployment and caring responsibilities. This group doesn't tend to think of themselves as 'arty' and are one of the lowest engagement groups. LeftCoast were engaging a decent percentage of this group in 2020-21, in line with that for the local population, but this has seen a large increase of 10% for engagements in 2021-22, once again showing the commitment to bringing in new audiences and engaging with those least likely to seek out arts and culture events.

Targeting specific areas such as Bostonway in Hawes Side, and Greenfields in Flakefleet allowed LeftCoast to successfully bring arts and culture to those least likely to seek it out themselves. 71% of those who responded to the survey carried out in the areas

covered by the Real Estates residency programme said they would not typically engage in community activities³⁴.

In general, there has been a major increase in the reach of the LeftCoast programme between phases 2 and 3. In Phase 2, engagements totalled just 70,000, while Phase 3 has seen over 500,000 engagements to date alone, with several months left of programming for the phase. The increased engagement is, at least in part, due to the Covid19 pandemic, with a shift to increasing digital output offering a new opportunity to reach audiences and participants. However, it also reflects the increase in the number and duration of events during this Phase, with events increasing between phases from 259 to 370, and hours of programming increasing five-fold from over 600 to over 3,000. Participant numbers have soared from almost 3,000 in Phase 2 to nearly 8,000 in Phase 3. All data we have compiled shows the LeftCoast programme, as well as reaching deeper, has also had more engagements, showing it is bigger, braver and bolder in this latest phase, and is showing no signs of slowing down.

2.2. Participant reach and profile

The following section gives an overview of participant reach and profile, for a more comprehensive look please see the full report in

³² For more, see <https://www.theaudienceagency.org/audience-spectrum/kaleidoscope-creativity>

³³ For more, see <https://www.theaudienceagency.org/audience-spectrum/frontline-families>

³⁴ Area survey data gathered from 554 Greenfields, Flakefleet, Bostonway, Mereside and Hawes Side residents

Appendix 4: Full participant reach and profile report.

2.2.1. Geographic reach



Figure 3 Map of engagements - UK wide



Figure 4 Map of engagements – North-West focus

The maps on this page show the reach of the LeftCoast programme in Phase 3. Figure 3 shows a map of engagements UK wide, Figure 4 shows engagement across the North-West region and Figure 5 is a focus on engagements in the Blackpool area.



Map key: Physical Digital

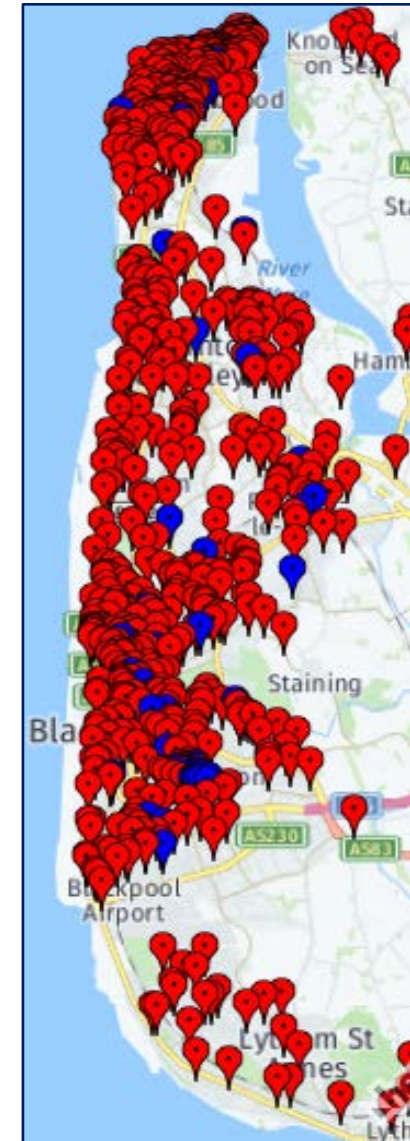


Figure 5 Map of engagements - Blackpool area

In Phase 3, LeftCoast have really honed their geographic reach. The map opposite draws on postcodes of LeftCoast engagements to show the reach of the programme over the different periods³⁵.

They show that whilst the programme has continued to engage participants from outside the area, the significant majority were from Blackpool and Wyre. Residents from across the areas have engaged at some point albeit that pre-pandemic activities tended to attract mainly Blackpool residents.

Table 1 draws on the weighted data and shows that over the course of Phase 3, over 80% of participants were local (from Blackpool & Wyre). This is much higher than the 63% reported overall for Phase 2 and likely to be the result of both a change in programme focus and lockdown restrictions, evident in the minimal proportion of engagements from outside Lancashire over this period.

This increased focus and reach amongst local residents is also evident in the catchment area for this Phase (defined by the most proximate area from which 80% of participants and audiences originate). This works out at under 10 miles overall and compares with 35 miles reported for Phase 2. The area is significantly smaller (see map aside) and reflects a greater intensity of engagement amongst local people.

This is further evident in the greater proportion of engagements by Blackpool residents, accounting for 44% across the period and double the proportion reported for Phase 2.



Figure 6 Map showing comparison of catchment area for Phase 2 and 3

³⁵ Based on analysis of 322,524 postcodes from weighted data gathered from LeftCoast engagements in Phase 3

By contrast, the proportion of participants from Wyre (39%) is similar to that reported for Phase 2 (41%), largely the result of a high number of digital engagements from the area during lockdown (particularly for ITV Creates) and a high number of physical engagements at Transported SpareParts in the post-lockdown period.

Participant origin	Pre-lockdown	Lockdown	Post-lockdown	Physical	Digital	Phase 3 total
Blackpool	51%	32%	44%	45%	34%	44%
Wyre	9%	56%	43%	37%	53%	39%
Elsewhere in Lancashire	18%	12%	9%	10%	13%	11%
Rest of North-West	15%	0%	2%	5%	0%	4%
Outside North-West	7%	0%	2%	3%	0%	2%

Table 1 Comparison of pre-, during and Post-lockdown attendance figures for both physical and digital engagements of LeftCoast Phase 3

Although it is clear from the maps that digital activities attracted interest from further afield, the weighted data relating to engagements shows that the significant majority (87%) of digital engagements were by local people and, as such, likely to be both intentional and frequent. The results suggest that whilst digital delivery channels may not always secure the same depth of engagement and/or outcomes as physical activities/platforms, they can be effective in reaching and maintaining engagement with local people, albeit supplementing activities that have a greater physical presence.

The extent to which the programme has engaged people from across Blackpool and Wyre is evident from the map below which

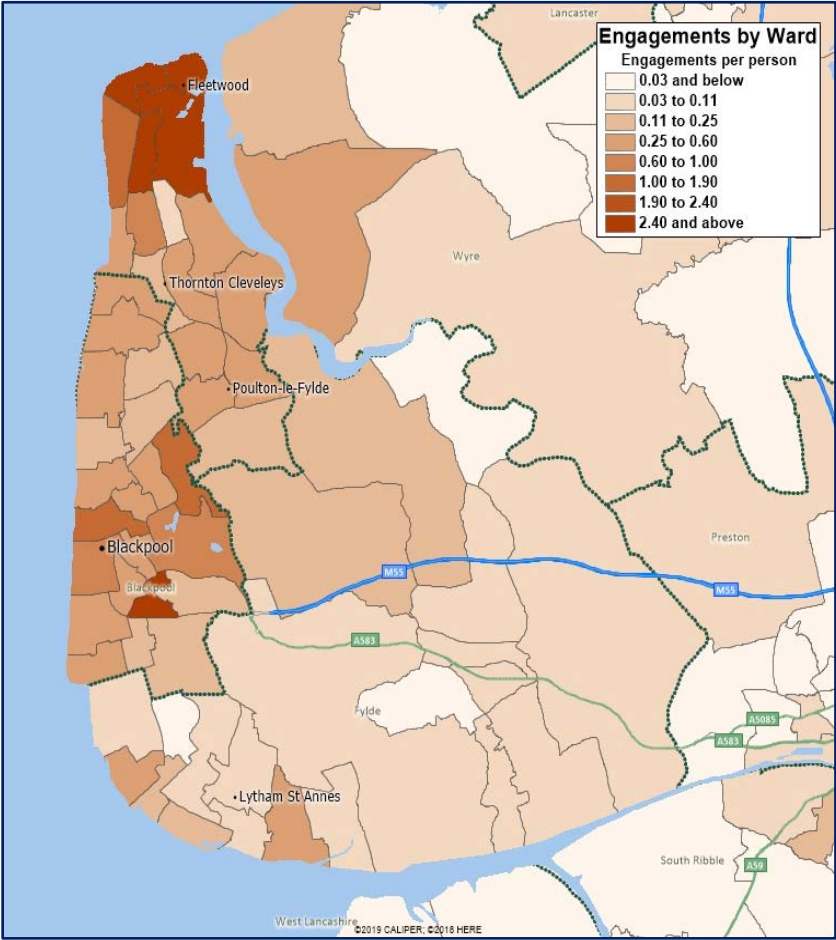


Figure 7 Map of LeftCoast Phase 3 engagements by ward

shows the distribution of engagement across the wards. It indicates that residents from all 21 wards in Blackpool and at least 22 out of the 24 wards in Wyre engaged with Phase 3 of the programme at some point. There has been a continuation in the intensity of engagement amongst residents in those wards around

Fleetwood where the average frequency of engagement per resident is over 2.4 times: in Park ward this exceeded 14 times. Other areas with high levels of engagement over the period are Hawes Side, where the average number of times residents engaged with the programme was 5.9 times, and Park and Talbot wards where the average frequency per resident was over 1. Again, the findings reflect the distribution of activities with several taking place in Hawes Side over the period of lockdown (including the Artist in Residence, Mark Borthwick’s Story Line and Garden projects).

As we would expect, those engaging with Doorstep Dance activities were all from Blackpool and the majority of those engaging with Inside Out activities (including the exhibition in the old Fleetwood Hospital) and the Transported SpareParts activities were from Wyre. By contrast, the digitally distributed Meanwhile talks achieved a geographically broader reach, albeit involving fewer people.

2.2.2. Engaging people from across all demographic groups

The figure opposite summarises the demographic breakdown of the audiences and participants across all Phase 3 events.³⁶ In general, the age breakdown reflects the areas LeftCoast worked in, particularly the three key estates. The gender split does not match the general population but this is common for arts and cultural organisations.

81% of audiences and participants being new to the arts is a great result, reflecting the Audience spectrum data that shows reach into low engagement groups. 18% identifying as disabled is a positive indicator of the accessibility of the programming.

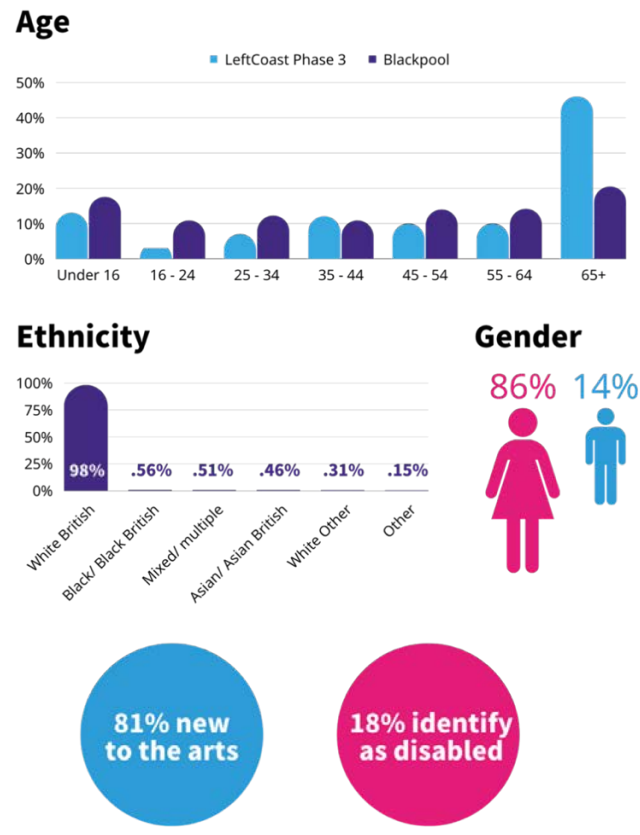


Figure 8 Summary of demographic profile of audiences and participant

³⁶ Data derived from 4,346 responses to monitoring at LeftCoast Phase 3 events. 81% had not engaged in arts and culture events in the last 12 months. Blackpool age comparator data from <https://www.blackpooljsna.org.uk/Blackpool-Profile/Population.aspx>

2.2.3. Engaging participants from deprived communities

To gain further insights about the types of people who have engaged during Phase 3 of the programme and the communities they represent, we can draw on the English Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2019 (IMD). It provides a measure of a broad concept of deprivation, including deprivation associated with income, employment, education and health, access to housing and services, living environment and crime.

As there is a coincidence between area deprivation levels and arts engagement, it also acts as an indicator of the programme’s success in engaging audiences that might otherwise have limited exposure to high quality arts. We should also note that deprived communities have been amongst those most adversely affected by the pandemic³⁷ and are amongst those most likely to benefit from improved mental health as a result of engagement³⁸.

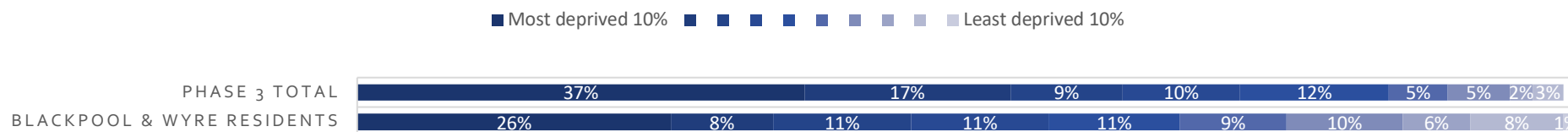


Figure 9 Deprivation for LeftCoast engagements against Blackpool & Wyre residents

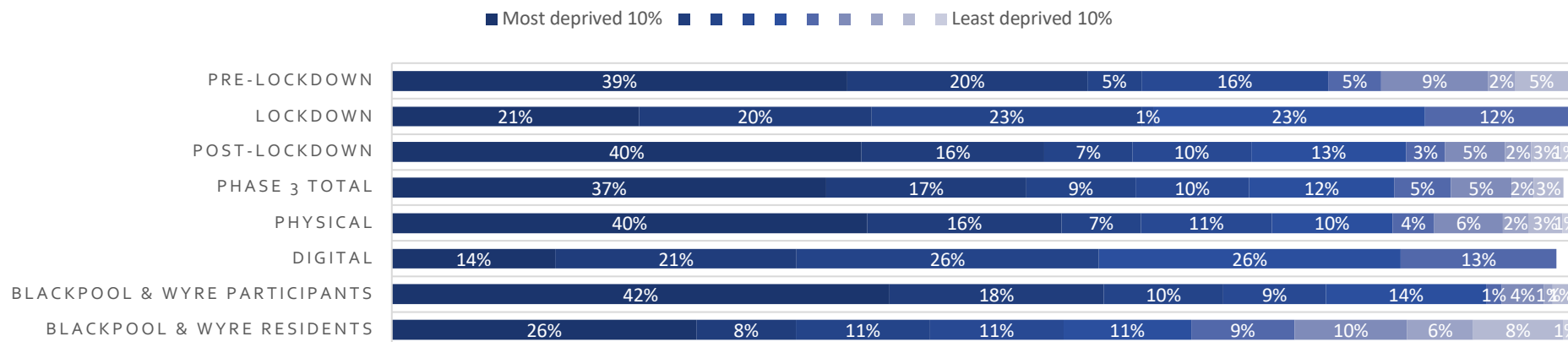


Figure 10 Deprivation deciles by period and engagement type

³⁷ Leaving no one behind – a review of who has been most affected by the coronavirus pandemic in the UK: December 2021, ONS

³⁸ See <https://www.artsprofessional.co.uk/news/deprived-areas-benefit-most-culture>

As such, the results also demonstrate the programme's success in engaging people who are most likely to benefit from positive outcomes associated with their health and mental wellbeing, particularly in terms of reductions in isolation and loneliness exacerbated during lockdowns.

Figure 9 compares levels of deprivation between LeftCoast Phase 3 engagements and the general population of Blackpool and Wyre. We find that 37% of LeftCoast engagements are with people who live in the 10% most deprived areas in England, compared to 26% of Blackpool and Wyre residents. This shows that LeftCoast are successfully engaging people from the most deprived areas. This is also greater than the 32% reported for Phase 2 and demonstrates how more targeted community work has helped to engage people who might otherwise not.

Figure 10 provides a more in-depth breakdown and compares the IMD decile ranking of participants' neighbourhoods by period, overall, for Phase 3 of the programme and by engagement type (digital or physical). It also compares the decile ranking of participants from Blackpool and Wyre with all residents in the area (the breakdown we might expect if the audience were truly representative of these residents).

The comparisons between digital and physical activities help to explain why the proportion is smaller over the lockdown period than before or after. They indicate that people from these most deprived areas are more likely to engage in physical activities than digital, which may have reduced their opportunities to participate over lockdowns. Notwithstanding this, one in five engagements over lockdowns were made by people living in these areas.

When we compare the deprivation ranking profile of participants from Blackpool and Wyre (amongst who 42% are from the most deprived communities) with those of the resident population in these areas (26% of who live in the most deprived communities), the results are also notable. They demonstrate the programme's continued success in engaging an over-representation of residents from local deprived communities, despite their greater likelihood to be adversely impacted by the pandemic and other barriers to engagement.

2.3. Inspiring to engage further

There is undeniable evidence that LeftCoast audiences and participants have enjoyed the events and are inspired to engage further by their positive experiences. The word cloud below shows feedback gathered by the LeftCoast team from their audiences, and paints a highly positive picture, showing that people love the experiences they've had, but also that LeftCoast provide something surprising and exciting. People spoke about feeling proud of themselves or others around them, and the need for more work like this in their area.

During Phase 3, the Arts Council England Diversity and Wellbeing survey gathered responses about audience and participant experiences³⁹. It found that one third of respondents had attended a new arts or culture-based activity having been involved in LeftCoast. 12% had taken up a new hobby, 9% had learnt a new

³⁹ 38 responses to ACE Diversity and Wellbeing Survey

He has also been helping me tidy the community centre garden this afternoon. And he is back tomorrow to brush up... there's no stopping him!

LeftCoast team member



Figure 12 Picture from LeftCoast team showing flowers planted by residents



3. Shifting perceptions of Blackpool

LeftCoast recognises that working in partnership is the best way of shifting negative perceptions of Blackpool and Fleetwood. This needs to be carried out through a partnership approach not just with the rest of the cultural sector, but also with education, health, social, visitor and commercial partners. This is particularly the case for Blackpool which has a negative perception at a national level.

Change in perception needs to come not just from sharing more positive – and accurate – narratives, but also from increasing ambition and level of strategic partnership within the towns to go beyond correcting inaccuracies to creating new narratives.

In Phase 3, LeftCoast has done this through:

- Developing and building on existing strong partnerships cross sector and joining in with strategic initiatives across the towns.
- Continuing to develop alternative approaches to town brand, and opportunities to broaden the visitor offer and commercial partnerships.
- Investing time and energy in Get Dancing as a strategic project to shift perception.



3.1. Developing and supporting strategic initiatives in culture and beyond

In a locale where working together has been challenging in the past, and during a time of serious financial and operational pressure for local government, LeftCoast has continued to play a strong role across Blackpool and Fleetwood. LeftCoast's director is often mentioned as a key player in bringing more of a strategic approach across each town.

Following on from our Phase 2 report in 2019, where we found that there was a need for a strong and coherent strategy for culture across Blackpool, if not across the whole Fylde Coast, this need is even more stark now after two years of lockdowns and cost of living challenges growing.

A coherent and shared strategy would support engaging new audiences, a strong volunteering offer, developing specialisms and particularly new local talent as well as growing the numerous talented artists and organisations to be able to operate to their full potential. Through this, Blackpool and its surrounding area could truly shine on a national and international stage.

This strategic approach will need leadership which can't come from LeftCoast alone, but their continued strong partnership working, innovative approaches and flexible model, and their proven ability to survive and prosper through a series of lockdowns has put them in a place where others are beginning to galvanise around this need.

LeftCoast continues its role as a cultural sector representative on wider groups, sitting on the Blackpool Town Centre Plan Board, the Local Cultural Education partnership group, the Arts Lancashire partnership, Lancashire Arts network and Wyre arts partnership.

LeftCoast's role in Phase 4 needs to be different for Blackpool and Fleetwood:

In Blackpool there's a need for an organisation which works on creatively engaging with new audiences, and also which can bridge the divide between various interest groups in the town. With the flexibility which is allowed by not having to maintain a venue, LeftCoast can adapt to offer what is needed and can be freer to take risks than some other partners, with the continuation of Arts Council England CPP investment into Blackpool, the Director of LeftCoast will have time and space to fulfil that role – in partnership with others where possible.

In Fleetwood there is even more need, but also serious challenges for LeftCoast to continue that role. There are fewer large organisations and there's a role for a strong and confident cultural voice to unite the sector. The case study shows how specific work in Fleetwood to support the museum, the new resource centre for Fleetwood Trust, and the High Street Heritage Action Zone's Cultural Consortium illustrates the potential LeftCoast can add into a town by joining up with local partners with shared goals and taking a leadership role in cultural programmes.

However, with the removal of Wyre from the CPP eligible areas, LeftCoast no longer has core funding to operate in Fleetwood and there needs to be strategic consideration from other partners, such as Wyre Council and Regenda Housing, as to how the work they and local partners see the value of can continue.

Case Study: LeftCoast and Fleetwood together

Kelly Garrick's enthusiasm resonates down the phone. She is working hard to bring more wellbeing to Fleetwood and is completely committed to the project. Kelly works with the Fleetwood Trust, a group of people who have come together to purchase a large and partly derelict hospital building to redevelop it into a community hub for the benefit of the people.

The Fleetwood Trust is one of several groups in Fleetwood coming together in partnership to make good things happen. LeftCoast have become more and more involved in helping that develop.

One of these is Fleetwood Museum. Manager Ben Whittaker knows LeftCoast through their work with the Arts Partnership Steering Group and as member of the new Heritage Action Zone Cultural Consortium⁴⁰ for Fleetwood. LeftCoast also contributed to an exhibition about Fleetwood Women (called 'This Lass Can: Stories of Fleetwood Women' and set for 2021) by loaning an item of clothing developed by Ocean Farini, the previous Phase 2 LeftCoast Artist in Residence. Gillian Wood, the current Artist in Residence, is contributing some material to the Museum that was produced during lockdown by the Scrub Hub locally, and this will be added to a Museum Covid 19 collection. She is also producing 'Inside Out' - an exhibition to exhibit examples of lockdown creativity by local residents. The Museum will also be involved with this, and it will be held in the Fleetwood Hospital building. Gillian has helped use existing networks to help let people know about the Fleetwood Hospital building and the new opportunities it brings.

LeftCoast came to us and said could they use the hospital as an exhibition... well we nearly fell over ourselves, we were that excited about it! Because it links in every single thing that we're trying to do

- it's about mindfulness and positive attitude and really celebrating successes with people, and creating hope for the future, and that's what we're trying to create.

Kelly Garrick, Fleetwood Trust

Kelly hopes the collaboration with LeftCoast will continue. She wants to carry on bringing the community together, to help tackle isolation, help maintain mental health and create hope for the future:

It excites the whole Trust about what we could do working together in partnership. It just blows our minds!

Kelly Garrick, Fleetwood Trust Community Engagement Officer
2020

3.2. Building commercial and visitor sector partnerships to shift perceptions

3.2.1. Painting the Town

Although largely curtailed or delayed by the lockdowns of Covid 19, in late 2019 and into 2020 there was some development of the positive commercial partnerships which were a key outcome of Phase 2. These offer potential for a diversification of funding as well as ability to reach a whole new range of audiences.

LeftCoast continued to develop Painting the Town⁴¹ into the beginning of Phase 2, with a new palette and a range of new partnerships for sharing this being developed, including both Blackpool Football club and several visitor sector partners.

⁴⁰ Fleetwood High Street Heritage Action Zone | Historic England
<https://historicengland.org.uk/services-skills/heritage-action-zones/fleetwood/>

⁴¹ See Phase 2 report for analysis of this project, or <https://pttblackpool.co.uk/> for info on the project

For example, LeftCoast consulted a community group at the Grange when developing the colour palette. Subsequently, Grange Community Centre bought all the main colours to be used in a mural created by artist Adam Robinson which depicted local people and places. A local hotel used the palette within their apartments, using a different colour in each apartment, and promote this as part of the unique offer of the hotel.⁴²

This range of paints has taken inspiration from the colours that make Blackpool so special, whether that is the sun reflecting off the sands, the hue of the gulls' wings in flight, or the blaze of colour you can enjoy as you watch the sun set at sea. Just look at your door plate to see which facet of Blackpool your Apartment reflects – it's just one thing that makes us special.⁴³

[The Berkeley Blackpool website](#)

While there has been little development in 2021, the relationships still exist, and as LeftCoast develops its forward plan post 2025 the legacy can be built on and the experience validates the team's creativity and reach in the range of partners.

3.2.2. Art B&B

The Art B&B was an outcome of Phase 1 of LeftCoast and the LeftCoast Director remains on the Board and LeftCoast's office is based there. 2020 and 2021 have been extremely challenging years for Art B&B, and they received ACE support to survive. Now managing to survive through bookings, although still under pressure from potential impacts of the cost of living crisis, Art B&B

does offer a challenge to LeftCoast due to the time needed for the Director to support it. However it also enables LeftCoast to develop new audiences and interact with them online in a contrasting way to the hyper-local creative engagement work, for example in 2020, the Arty Party had a reach of 770 people.

There is a huge value in the partnership with Art B&B and this innovative approach to both arts engagement and funding resilience, but this needs to be considered in the context of the time needs spent.

3.2.3. Lightpool

The Lightpool project, developed from Phase 1 of LeftCoast as a way of adding art into the visitor experience of the world-famous Blackpool Illuminations continues as an element of the LeftCoast offer in partnership with Blackpool Illuminations and the Grundy Art Gallery. It is now fully incorporated as part of Blackpool's offer and strongly promoted by Visit Blackpool and the Blackpool Illuminations

Lightpool Festival 2021 is Blackpool's annual celebration of light! Enjoy live performance, 3D projection shows, parades and light-based installations. It's free-to-see entertainment and a whole load of fun!

[Blackpool Illuminations website](#)⁴⁴

LeftCoast is a partner in this annual event which includes exciting high quality interactive light-based art installations and runs alongside the start of the Illuminations offer. Lightpool adds ambition, a moment of wonder and a chance for engagement

⁴² Our Apartments – The Berkeley Apartments [theberkeleyblackpool.co.uk](https://www.theberkeleyblackpool.co.uk)

⁴³ <https://www.theberkeleyblackpool.co.uk/about-us/>

⁴⁴ <https://www.theblackpoolilluminations.info/about/this-years-illuminations/lightpool-festival-2021/>

which particularly appeals to locals into the Illuminations which are locally seen otherwise as an entirely visitor-focused offer.

This partnership continues a very positive dialogue between the arts sector and the larger and commercial visitor economy, as well as helping shift perceptions of what might be on offer in Blackpool for visitors to the town.

These partnerships enable LeftCoast to work with a range of partners from all sectors to shift the level and ambition at which Blackpool and Fleetwood operate, and to work across each town in a strategic way to change perceptions.

It is clear that this commitment to change perceptions of place is part of what encourages partnerships from such a diverse range of organisations, particularly within Blackpool, and this should remain an aim of LeftCoast into Phase 4 and beyond.

... We actually shared quite similar outlook about what Blackpool can be... she was doing that with LeftCoast ... not to just make it history, but how it really is now and it really struck a chord with us.

Berkeley Hotel owners, Blackpool

3.3. Get Dancing – a strategic project to shift perception

Developed in partnership with Showtown⁴⁵ – Blackpool’s new museum – and House of Wingz⁴⁶ – a local dance organisation – with National Lottery Heritage Funding and National Lottery Community Funding, Get Dancing has been a huge success for

LeftCoast in this Phase, despite needing masses of adaptation as a result of lockdown.

Get Dancing drew on Blackpool’s place within popular dance culture to crowdsource a new social dance, which was developed, shared and then filmed with the communities of town. The project aimed to engage communities in something fun – particularly in a challenging time, raise awareness of Blackpool’s dance heritage, and showcase the quality of work Blackpool partners can do when they work together.

It was a very successful project in terms of positivity felt by the participants who had fun and gained a sense of connection.

However its greatest impacts are likely to come in the future arising from the work itself, and the film that was produced.

The Get Dancing film⁴⁷ is a short, high quality dance video which showcases Blackpool’s dance heritage in a fun and engaging way and has received extremely positive reviews⁴⁸.

This film will be used over the course of 2022, and beyond, to promote and share the dance heritage of Blackpool, and thus challenge perceptions of the town.

The partnership approach to producing the project was extremely successful in helping LeftCoast as a team get to know the main partners, how they work, and how future work can happen. As a result, the partnerships with Showtown and House of Wingz are very strong.

⁴⁵ Showtown | Home showtownblackpool.co.uk

⁴⁶ Welcome - House of Wingz www.houseofwingz.co.uk

⁴⁷ New Get Dancing - LeftCoast <https://leftcoast.org.uk/getdancing/>

⁴⁸ View the film and feature at leftcoast.org.uk/getdancing/

4. Valuing the arts in building stronger communities

Sharing the value of the arts in delivering on community building aims amongst partners from wider sectors continues to be the heart of LeftCoast's work, using high quality socially engaged arts to deliver on the aims of partners, particularly in terms of social change.

This section explores the way in which LeftCoast used the Real Estates project as well as The Upside and elements of Get Dancing to develop and work through cross-sector partnerships to enhance understanding of the value of the arts in delivering wider social aims.

We find that in Phase 3, LeftCoast's approach:

- Built on existing relationships and successfully strengthened and deepened them
- Had the flexibility to ensure that relationships survived and flourished despite the challenges of Covid 19
- Led to a range of outcomes for residents which were understood and valued by partners
- Deepened their understanding of their model and what works where – and this learning will be at the core of work in new and existing neighbourhood partnerships in Phase 4
- Has left some legacy continuing, although further work is needed to ensure it fully embeds with partners, particularly in Fleetwood.



4.1. Previous work and operation of the Real Estates residencies

The Phase 2 evaluation found that the partnership work developed over the first six years of LeftCoast operation was one of the strongest outcomes in terms of potential for long term impact. The new approaches developed were already beginning to show impact in a place with existing serious socio-economic and image challenges, as well as a weak and fragmented sector, which had been further devastated by austerity and major cuts to services.

This was built on the history of trust and ownership of the process between LeftCoast and the local authorities and other partners which had further developed in Phase 2. Despite Phase 3 beginning with yet another challenge to partnership – with the impacts of Covid 19 on timescales, priorities and finances – the trust developed meant that LeftCoast was able to flex their approach with the trust and commitment of the various partners, calling on them as appropriate.

The approach taken by LeftCoast is to show the value of the arts, or of socially engaged arts, in addressing partners' aims and outcomes. Delivering on community cohesion and resident agency when working with a social landlord; or community wellbeing when working with health initiatives; modelling or sharing approaches which extend audience reach and engagement when working with the local arts sector or using creative thinking to bring out the commercial potential of arts projects or their ability to change perceptions of place.

The Real Estates programme used community activists and artists embedded as residents to transform the ways people engage with their neighbourhoods and neighbours. The programme asks if it is possible to deliver artistic and arts-informed activities in ways



Figure 13 Locations of the Real Estates residencies

which improve community relations and confidence in the long term.

The project had three main objectives:

1. Estate residents will feel less isolated.
2. People have opportunities to identify feelings of pride in, and connection to, their locality.
3. People having increased self-confidence to request or make the changes they want to see happen on their estate.

A report by the Psychosocial Research Unit (PRU) at the University of Central Lancashire⁴⁹ explores the extent to which the outcomes for residents were met, and they are summarised in Section 6 below.

The main part of the delivery was through artist residencies in partnership with the local social housing providers, Regenda Housing - in Flakefleet, Fleetwood) and Blackpool Coastal Housing (BCH) - in Hawes Side and Mereside, Blackpool. The residencies themselves have been more challenging in Phase 3 than the previous one-year trial where two artists stayed in the areas of Flakefleet and Hawes Side for the full year envisaged. With the extension of the project from 2019 into Mereside (an estate where LeftCoast had done considerable work in Phase 1) there was a recognition that the level of community voice was higher (partly because of the previous LeftCoast work) and LeftCoast specifically wrote in a 'residency' based around creating a Community Launderette, which was what the community wanted.

In Hawes Side and Flakefleet the initial plan was to run two, one-year residencies, which, learning from the experience of Phases 1

and 2, had a very open brief: the plan was for artists to live within communities and work alongside them. They were designed to be a full-time placement for the artists lasting a year and were both a considerable undertaking, and a unique opportunity for the artist to enable something truly co-created with the community they were now part of.

Lockdown came almost immediately after the two artists Mark Borthwick (in Hawes Side) and Gillian Wood (in Flakefleet) moved in, and with this came a huge challenge to their practice for the residency. Both the artists involved had a socially engaged practice, but Mark's, as a Storyteller, was even more contingent on social interaction than Gillian's, as a film maker and costume designer. Both found it difficult to develop social networks during a time of lockdown and both adapted their practice (by storytelling using the phone, for example), but Gill had more of a pre-existing personal social network as a local person, and there were differences in the community networks already present in their locations. Mark found that connections with LeftCoast were affected and felt unable to continue the residency while Gill felt very supported and able to move forward as part of a LeftCoast team, in which ways of adapting and developing were found.

The challenges of lockdown delaying and affecting the practice led to Gillian being asked to stay in Flakefleet for another year – as she had felt that she'd only just got started on projects which were beginning to bear fruit by the end of the first year. During that year, she further developed work in Greenfields and the exhibition of Inside Out. Mark didn't feel able to stay after six months and LeftCoast initially appointed Sarah Harris for a six-month period: she ran a number of activities including a Halloween event and

⁴⁹ See Appendix 3: Real Estates report

making portraits of locals and then, reviewing the challenges faced by all resident artists in Hawes Side, decided to move to a Community Activist with micro-residencies only model in Hawes Side.

In addition to the main residencies, there has always been a Community Activist post running alongside⁵⁰ as well as micro-residencies which are short term interventions, sometimes including an element of 'live in' in the main houses.⁵¹

PRU identify three delivery approaches used over the Real Estates period which were used to fit the different needs of the three areas:

1. Resident Artists: A commissioned artist living as a resident for one year or more
2. Community Activist: Maintaining a responsive relationship and supporting short-term micro-residencies by commissioned artists
3. Community consultation on a single, large-scale community-initiated proposal followed by a community-led design process

Flakefleet had mainly delivery approach 1, with some of 2, Hawes Side a mix of 1 and 2 and Mereside had 3, although elements of 3 featured in some of the work carried out in Hawes Side in 2021-2.

⁵⁰ This post was initially undertaken by Sarah Harris during Phase 2 and the first six months of Phase 3 before she applied for the Artist in Residence post advertised in late 2020 when Mark left. Rachel Wheble was then recruited to the post and her background in Asset Based Community Development has helped drive some of the thinking of the model for Phase 4.

4.2. Challenges and learning in building partnerships

Drawing on our own research and the PRU evaluation we identify learning over the three years of the Real Estates programme, and from wider LeftCoast work, around what works in delivering embedded 'residency' work in estates:

Think by doing: The residencies work better for artists whose practice involves trying a lot of different approaches in order to develop their work, trying things out and adapting – rather than researching and 'thinking' then producing at the end.

The 'thinking by doing' approach provided continuous feedback and meant that regardless of the perceived success of a project, relationships were being continually developed...

[UCLan LeftCoast Real Estates final evaluation report, May 2022](#)

This was more flexible as an approach, but also more reassuring for funders, and threads through LeftCoast's practice as a whole including developing partnerships by **working together on a smaller project to develop shared understanding with likeminded partners.**

LeftCoast is very clear that a good partnership is based on shared values, which orient around commitment to delivering change and willingness to work together to make a difference.

⁵¹ Where appropriate, the outcomes of the residencies are referenced through this report, for a full description of all of the work for Real Estates, including the micro-commissions see the PRU final report Appendix 3: Real Estates report

It is clear that the approach taken within the Real Estates programme and other activities based in communities – the approach of working together in a small way on a project first, before forming a longer relationship – is particularly effective in finding and developing these sorts of partnerships. This aligns with the approach at an individual level of thinking by doing – develop partnerships by working in partnership.

In their turn, all partners who work with LeftCoast to deliver social outcomes see themselves as having very aligned aims and approaches. This has been particularly clear in the feedback from the new Phase 4 partners who worked with LeftCoast for The Upside and/or Get Dancing.

I think we have to do that on a very small scale and it starts with small interactions. For instance, the Supper Clubs – we've got one of our parents from Magic Club who attended the last one, one of the gardeners from the community centre attended that with me, we've got another resident coming to the next one. And I think the supper clubs are a really good start, because it's very informal. It's not 'art', it's a space to just get together and just have a feel for a bit of the stuff that might be going on especially with creative activity as part of that.

Laura White, Magic Club, Phase 4 LeftCoast

Work with individuals, person to person: Work with people who are struggling with isolation, poverty or other factors needs to be small-scale because of the amount of time required to build relationships and get to know participants.

[The artists found that] creating a friendly social environment from scratch inevitably meant small group sizes. It would only be in small groups that people could experience a sufficient level of comfort and trust to explore aspects of their own lives through unfamiliar creative processes.

UCLan LeftCoast Real Estates final evaluation report, May 2022

Our evaluation found that this worked best in situations where the artist was able to immediately make a connection on a personal level.

Just being able to create a connection with different people, being able to talk to people from different places and that sort of thing... just get on a level with people.

Sarah Harris, Artist in residence

Listening to people and following their needs is most important – the unhurried way of building understanding between people and using this as a base to work on, rather than imposing ideas on people. The quality in the art lay in this, over and above the actual outcomes produced.

Quality means different things to different people. So I think it was really listening and chatting to people and finding out what they wanted to do.

Sarah Harris, Artist in residence

This often involved the artist giving a lot to the process and being more active in community situations that they would perhaps 'naturally' be, although their actions in this are still based essentially on the created friendships with the people involved.

I feel like I gave a lot of myself to it, where sometimes it's nice to be able to walk away. For example, when there's a Jubilee party in my street, or those parties in lockdown, I would never, ever go, but if I'm working, I'd be the one that would be organising. So sometimes I feel like, is that really me?

Sarah Harris, Artist in residence

The artists also care a great deal about making sure the interactions people have as part of the project are good ones, so they can bring them along 'with them' on the journey of the project, and hopefully lead them to want to be involved in other similar projects in their futures as well.

Creating opportunities where people can share their expression of feelings and connection to place enhances their sense of agency in the place: PRU research in the final UCLan Real Estates report found that the pride of participants in their area was reinforced each time they saw the physical results of the projects they had worked on in their public spaces, for example the raised beds in Greenfields and Bostonway, or the window display of scrubs in the Affinity shopping centre. They also reminded people that they had been and were now thinking in a more community-oriented way; they now felt they had more agency over their areas and the visible results helped express their connection to it.

Mixing the approaches and values of Asset Based Community Development with arts practice is needed in places where agency has been particularly low in the past: Research from the UCLan Real Estate report found that the Bostonway micro-residencies programme had been effective in engaging new participants and existing ones when supported by the community activist present long term. At the end of the third year, the research

found that people in Bostonway talk to one another much more (as it is now established as a norm that people do so). Activity happens because there is an established relationship with LeftCoast through which residents can now ask for and make improvements. This has resulted in a variety of activities which have also, through the approach and commitment of the artist, drawn in residents who have not previously taken part.

Be in it for the long-term: it is easy to underestimate the value of working at something for a long time and being around, slowly building reputation with small activities and commitments. This is clearly a challenge with investment patterns but pays off when it is possible to run a long-term programme like LeftCoast:

If somebody from Left Coast approached them to do something, they will jump on it. They'd be up for it because they know from their engagement that it'll be a fun thing. It'll be a good thing to do. And they're open to new ideas and different things.

Cath Powell, Groundwork, LeftCoast partner

Once one person has built this level of trust, they can act as a conduit to bring others into the community:

A vital part of my residency was the fact that Rachel was a consistent presence within Bostonway, building a gentle relationship between the residents and the project which enabled me to integrate more quickly and felt less extractive. Rachel had taken the time to get to know the residents and build their trust by listening and responding to them which allowed them to feel as though they could become part of the project on their own terms in a comfortable way, which for me was invaluable. It was really

insightful for me to work with an organisation that understood and valued this role within community-based art practice as crucial for genuine exchange, challenging often unspoken hierarchical dynamics that occur when artists work in communities.

Frances Disley, micro-residency artist

Understanding the challenges of 'permission' as a barrier to action on both sides: Gill found that a frustrating area of her work in Greenfields was being unable to start because of delays getting permissions to get started - sometimes ownership of parts of the land was unclear and asking for/receiving permission to do things to the area often took time. When permissions did come, the group felt the area was 'claimed' and was able to plant things which are still there. The gardens themselves were very successful, but to some extent, to make the project start and commence in time, Gill sometimes felt she had needed to act before permissions were strictly in place (with the understanding that the work could be reversed if needed):

So that was a big achievement, and it was a little bit challenging, because some things we did knowing that we were pushing the boundaries - but I felt that was necessary, in one way to show what could be achieved.

Gill Wood, Artist in residence

This key piece of learning was echoed by some of the other artists, who also felt that sometimes being proactive was the best way forward.

'Permission' was considered slightly differently in conversations with Sarah Harris – Sarah felt that communities were ready to be active in changing their communities, but somehow needed the

'permission' to do it – someone to say they could go ahead and it would be good.

4.3. Developing partnerships through projects: Upside and Get Dancing

Both Get Dancing and Upside, (the latter in particular) were helpful in enabling the development of partnerships. This showed the value of the arts in delivering on wider sector aims. The Upside was specifically designed to achieve this – to create or to develop nascent relationships in key areas, and this worked very effectively – many of the organisations who were involved in the project are now partners who will work with LeftCoast during the upcoming Phrase 4.

What particularly worked in enabling these relationships to grow was getting to know the organisations, their needs and their aims first so it was clear where their aims would be a fit with those of LeftCoast and how they might go about achieving them. Talking about what particularly works to engage the residents or participants these organisations was also most important – and showed they genuinely cared about these participants. These organisations also valued the fact that LeftCoast were willing to put the work in and be there – up to the most senior staff, they demonstrated that they would put the time in and be hands on.

4.4. Partner's aims and experiences of working with LeftCoast

Partners old and new appreciate the approach the LeftCoast team have, their flexible approaches to problem solving and dealing with challenges, their good networks and their wider view of the

regional and national arts sector. They appreciate being able to gain a different perspective from LeftCoast's wider experience. The team's approachability and the ease of working with them has also been valued.

They just have a wider vision and the whole range of connections, which I think are going to be really useful... They are hands on, and understand working with arts in the community. They are approachable, team is easy to get on with...

Simon Lawton, Revoelution, Upside project and now Phase 4 LeftCoast

I think that the expertise, and a different sort of creative mindset on that [the project] is really important... [and a] shift in thinking, just a different way of approaching problems or challenges or opportunities - we all get stuck in our own organisations. So it's really useful to work with other people who don't have the same kind of ties to those organisations.

Laura White, Magic Club, Phase 4 LeftCoast

LeftCoast are valued for their professional approach and bring a lot to partners. Their general experience and networks mean they have can suggest artists and methods which would suit project partners' situations.

There is an understanding amongst partners of LeftCoast's increasing orientation to a community-based model – away from major events. The decision to invest time in working in their areas is very much welcomed by the new area partners as meeting their aims as well. For example, Simon Lawton of Revoelution in the Revoe area of Blackpool hopes the work in the new Phase will fulfil

a key Revoelution aim to 'improve the area and improve the lives of people living in this area'.

I know from past history that LeftCoast have done stuff that has been town-wide and in the centre of town, and that's fine, but for our purposes, it's good that they're now doing looking to do community arts activities. The fact that they are here talking to us [and] interested in it fills me with confidence. Good things are going to come out of this.

Simon Lawton, Revoelution, Upside project and now Phase 4 LeftCoast

Specifically arising from the longer-term residencies, social housing providers also valued having a source of information from the community. This achieves one of the key aims of Real Estates which is to explore, investigate, and make visible to others the lived reality of people in these estates. This was particularly valuable for the local social housing providers who several times noted that the residencies raised issues faced by the tenants which they hadn't come across. Often small things, overcoming these could make a huge difference in how people felt about – and treated – their area, and how connected they felt to others.

Just to have somebody there who's got the time to listen and find out what people want, I think that really worked above everything.

Gill Wood, Artist in Residence

4.5. Did it all work? Shifting mindsets, investment and ensuring legacy

Both of the social housing providers are more than convinced by what LeftCoast can offer. CEO of Blackpool Coastal Homes John Donnellon is now happy to say that he sees the value of art as a different way of meeting and engaging with communities – especially for those who might not otherwise engage – and continues to invest in the partnership, through the space in Mereside and the house in Hawes Side and his role as Chair of LeftCoast.

BCH's belief in the value of LeftCoast is shown in action through their decision to reinvest in LeftCoast every year without a reduction, even during a period of local authority drops in funding, with the CEO of BCH advocating for this funding to the leader of the council. The extremely 'light touch' approach taken by BCH in terms of requirement for outcomes for this funding is something which John is particularly proud of; he emphasises that he doesn't specify what work they need to do, as he is confident from experience that they will do the work which has the right outcomes for residents. This trust was shown further during lockdown when BCH staff were 'loaned' to LeftCoast to support delivery of work on the Upside and in Bostonway. Finally, there has been a high level of trust shown by BCH in handing over the community space in Mereside for the new 'Wash your Words' Launderette and Library space.⁵²

⁵² <https://leftcoast.org.uk/wash-your-words/> - this is the outcome of the Mereside element of the Real Estates residency, for more information see the PRU evaluation of Real Estates in Appendix 3: Real Estates report

Steve Newsham, the local lead for Regenda, the social housing provider for Fleetwood is also enthusiastic about the quality and value of LeftCoast's work

I think it is recognised, certainly from me but also from speaking to partners, that what they deliver is really top quality. They are an organisation of quality and choice.

Steve Newsham, Regenda

He has also fully bought into the model of an artist living in – not parachuted in:

I would certainly recommend other boroughs or other local authorities following the true Artist in Residence programme, because there's few around the country... they were living in a social rented Housing Association home in the middle of a larger housing estate, whereas other Artists miss the opportunity to immerse themselves with neighbours in the community where they are working. This experience determined and drove the arts programmes which they delivered.

Steve Newsham, Regenda

The level of belief Regenda has in LeftCoast is further shown by the fact they invest in other LeftCoast projects and advocate to the rest of Fleetwood and to wider sector colleagues about LeftCoast's work and value, and as senior officers – including the local CEO – attend feedback events. They also show their belief and support through the level of trust given in letting LeftCoast go ahead with

changes to their property in small ways without demanding permission, for example putting in growing beds and mowing areas. They also created an apprentice role to support the Greenfield growers – although it is not clear that they are prepared to fund this to continue.

From April 2022, the removal of Wyre from the CPP programme and the associated lack of ACE funding for work in Fleetwood provides a challenge to Regenda as well as to LeftCoast as their level of commitment can be judged by how much they are prepared to directly invest in the work in Flakefleet. Currently they are applying for funding to work with LeftCoast to carry on and are working with LeftCoast to actively advocate to ACE and other funders for more investment in Fleetwood. However, there are two other potential models through which the benefits could continue:

- Using core funding to continue elements of the residency model, based on the recognized value it brings in meeting Regenda's aims, or
- Embedding all the learning in core delivery by Regenda staff in the area.
- Regenda currently feel that there is no longer the need for a fully embedded residency model, but they are keen to do elements of the work, particularly using the principles of being on the ground and knowing the community. They are also using the model of active engagement with communities and green spaces, particularly growing things which was very successful in Greenfields, in two other areas of Regenda housing with different partners so some of the learning will continue.
- It is not clear whether all the lessons are fully embedded, particularly the small pieces of learning around communication

and being accessible to residents so they can state their needs and have action taken before problems build up.

- Legacy does remain in the Greenfields area of Flakefleet in particular as residents are now carrying gardening work forward under their own steam and have taken ownership of it.

And eventually, Maureen told me, she was calling the gardeners by the first names, and she said 'Oh, strim this bit, mow that bit' – they had a good relationship, so they were doing what the residents asked for. There was quite a nice relationship, so it's maintained very well.

Gill Wood, Artist in Residence, talking about the Greenfields gardening project.

The projects often do have a strong legacy; however, there is a feeling that to develop this further and make it truly sustainable, a person is still needed to enable that to happen. The work has become embedded with people and grown 'roots', but it still requires someone with the time and the relationship-building, practical and organizational abilities to carry that forward. The take up of this in the future remains in question, and artists can find that frustrating after the hard work and commitment from residents and the artists themselves.

I think with something like that [the Inside Out exhibition] you just need somebody, even if it's just for like a couple of weeks to come in and organise it - it won't happen by itself, because it's not established.

Gill Wood, Artist in Residence

Because of their experiences and 'on the ground' relationships with local residents, these artists are well placed to consider what would

work best for these communities in the future in order to ensure the impacts of the residencies are sustainable.

The learning from all of this has fed into the new model within the neighbourhoods of a 'Neighbourhood Producer' role which combines the community development support with an understanding of making art projects happen.

4.6. Conclusion

LeftCoast have been very successful in showing partners how arts and culture delivery can align with their aims but also with developing and adapting the residency model so that it is as effective as possible in making the differences both partners intend.

The level of alignment of aims achieved is really summed up by John Donnellon of Blackpool Coastal Homes (BCH):

LeftCoast is accessible to all; the outcomes for them are really the outcomes for BCH residents...LeftCoast mirrors what both the Council and BCH are trying to achieve.

As always, a huge amount of time is needed to make these partnerships work – these are building on work started in 2014 – and the challenge of ACE disinvesting CPP from Wyre means that extra work will be needed to make these partnerships continue. In Blackpool there is great potential for the work to fully embed in the whole way BCH and other partners deliver across the town, with the roll out of the residency model – in various forms – to 3 new areas.



5. Strengthening the local cultural ecosystem

While LeftCoast's focus is developing audiences, they recognise the need for a local arts eco-system to support this work. Phase 3 activity focussed on supporting the existing and emerging local artist communities to survive and develop through lockdown and beyond, developing their skills and confidence in working with the communities of Blackpool and Fleetwood, and developing projects alongside other arts organisations locally to share expertise and commitment to ambition, and high quality socially engaged practice.

LeftCoast has supported artists to deliver with local communities:

- It supported them to respond to people, place and time through lockdown commissions and short residencies
- Locally based artists value the opportunity which LeftCoast gives to explore and develop the quality of their practice with communities
- Local arts partners value the ambition and commitment to socially engaged practice that LeftCoast brings to the towns

LeftCoast operates within a challenging cultural ecology – a lack of strong coherent cultural partnerships, a sector with a traditional emphasis on tourists rather than local audiences, a time and place particularly affected by austerity, the pandemic and the looming cost of living crisis.



Blackpool in particular, and the Fylde Coast as a whole has a sizeable committed artistic community working locally, nationally and internationally. However, with reductions in local authority resources there hasn't been an overall talent development or sector development approach for many years. This role was to some degree filled by LeftCoast in Phases 1 and 2, with the 2013-16 (Phase 1) period in particular characterised by considerable artist development input, leading to a number of lasting initiatives including the Art BnB⁵³ and Abingdon Studios⁵⁴. The Covid commissions' programme in Blackpool and Wyre which followed very quickly after lockdown. It was felt that initial responses weren't reflecting the new situation of lockdown or the development of artists work but were often a continuation of their previous practice with a move online, probably reflecting a lack of time and creative thinking space to deal with the new circumstances, and so a new approach was adopted which led to new, more tailored proposals being subjected.

- As a result, a new approach was adopted which is explored in section 5.2 below. There were three proposals which were felt to be suitable:
- Daniel Astbury's poster project involved carers and NHS workers, exploring the messages people wanted to express at this time.
- Tina Dempsey developed a project alongside the Scrub Hub set up by Gillian Woods documenting the experience of those who sewed medical scrubs and those who received them. This was written up in a book and is discussed further in a Case Study in [Section 6](#) below

⁵³ ART B&B Blackpool artbb.org

⁵⁴ Abingdon Studios <https://abingdonstudios.org.uk/>

- Photographer Henry Iddon documented the lockdown in Blackpool and Wyre from day 1.⁵⁵

5.1.1. Small Radical Acts

Taking advantage in the pause in programming, there was also a decision to commission a series of workshops developing a virtual peer network. Five locally based artists with an interest in socially engaged practice and five experienced socially engaged artists (based across the UK) were brought together in a virtual group over six workshops facilitated by experienced facilitator and artist Debbie Chan. Called Small Radical Acts, the idea was to explore the observation arising within the residencies that very often small acts of resistance or change are more catalytic or powerful than large acts which tried to solve every problem.

In practice the group acted as a space for sharing and discussing ideas around the way forward for socially engaged practice, both in and after lockdown, and also as a peer support experience for people who were often not able to pursue their usual highly social practice while socially distancing.

The group all found the experience useful, and there were several new ideas and partnerships as a result within Blackpool. The nationally based artists said they felt more interested in working in Blackpool and Fleetwood and were keen to explore that further, ideally in partnership with the rest of the group and LeftCoast.

There was also a strong wish to move from the virtual to the 'real' although regrettably a planned 3-day shared residency session in

⁵⁵ <https://leftcoast.org.uk/corona-lockdown/>

Art BnB needed to be cancelled when Blackpool entered Tier 3 of lockdown. However, there are plans for this network to continue.

5.1.2. New Queers on the Block and Meanwhile sessions

There were further examples showing how LeftCoast ensured that Blackpool has a range of new and exciting programming by developing and supporting the local arts sector to do this even across lockdown.

LeftCoast hosted two new queer performance events in February – ‘The Gloop Show’ was presented at Blackpool Fylde College and poets Jackie Hagan and Mandla Rae performed at Art B&B to a sell-out audience. This was the third time LeftCoast hosted the New Queers programme and there are plans to develop this further.

In partnership with Abingdon Studios, the Grundy Art Gallery and Blackpool School of Arts, LeftCoast also supported the presentation of a programme of artist talks, exploring practice before, during and after Covid 19 lockdown. This took the name “Meanwhile”, referencing the fact that Blackpool as a destination was closed, and four guest artist speakers were invited to share their work in whatever way they saw fit. The shared approach for all artists and partners was conversation – the wish to remain connected, through the promotion and support of artists, and to help each other explore solutions to understand the world through a new lens and multitude of perspectives. There was very positive feedback from participants, addressing a sense of isolation that many felt at the time, but the events also strategically played a wider role in supporting the arts ecosystem locally.

5.2. Strengthening the local arts sector through skills, opportunities and networks

5.2.1. Feel respected and supported

Artists who work with LeftCoast nearly all feel respected and supported in their work:

My ideas have been discussed at all times with LeftCoast and they have always helped to form and improve things. They are great at helping to hammer down details and thoughts that are unclear by contributing artistic knowledge and helping me to reflect on my own thought process. Also, they have been very supportive in suggesting places to look for inspiration as a socially engaged artist, broadening the pool of knowledge. Importantly, their support gives me added confidence to work with my practice in the community.

Gillian Wood, Artist in Residence, survey response

LeftCoast is a massive support to artists; they understand very well the need for socially engaged artists to be present and working within the community, using art as a vehicle to visibly facilitate change. LeftCoast also facilitate support amongst artists, who are then able to form good working relationships.

Respondent, artist survey 2020

Blackpool is fortunate to have LeftCoast as an art organization with local artists being introduced and enabled to develop their own practice and be inspired by visiting creative practitioners. The town is sometimes trapped in a traditional seaside tourism-based value; LeftCoast has

enabled respectful questions and in turn, local artists are creating their own responses and work based on personal experiences of their home which feels very empowering.

Respondent, artist survey 2020

Most artists involved with LeftCoast also benefitted hugely from the networks and other support offered during lockdown. This came both formally through the Small Radical Acts collaboration, but also informally through the experiences of working together on various projects.

5.2.2. Refining and exploring what quality means in a socially engaged practice

Artists who have worked with LeftCoast over the Phase describe benefits to and shifts in their understanding of how they understand quality within their practice. Sarah Harris talks about how, as a result of the residency, she is now more able to articulate quality as being about how it makes people feel, as well as the output.

Sarah describes the feel of this art working with communities as having a definite LeftCoast style – something with quality but also with a DIY feel, which is something created with an artist but which is still really accessible. The smaller community events give a feel that the community members can make it themselves, and is a more intimate, doable activity – it becomes less taxing and has space to be larger than the art produced, being about the process and experience of creating the work together itself.

It was the most difficult part for me, just letting go of what my art looks like aesthetically and just saying that isn't the aesthetics isn't the most important thing about the work. It's

the impact on the people who you work with at the time that you create it and afterwards.

Sarah Harris, Artist in Residence

The quality also lies in the effect it has on emotions. Sarah describes making portraits of people during lockdown and mentioned that one resident came to her and asked if she could have the portrait of her very close friend, another resident who had been in the group recently passed away. The friend was delighted to receive the portrait after the exhibition, messaging the artist to tell her how happy she was. These moments have meant a great deal to people.

Quality within community-created work can mean something different for an artist than quality within their own solo work. For Sarah, within the residency the quality arose from really listening to people and finding out what they wanted to do, but also in shifting roles where needed when working alongside another artist. In this, one person would be the person who arranges the practicalities of the art itself, to 'broker' the project, while the artist themselves could then concentrate on the art and the connections amongst the people creating it.

From this we can develop a model for the skills an artist would need for this work – to be able to 'put yourself out there a little bit' and be resilient, perhaps especially when sometimes people would not immediately see the value in the art that would be happening. There was a need to be flexible about what would and would not work, and to re-imagine what could be made, especially as people's ideas changed.

5.2.3. Developing approaches and learning which work for other projects

The residencies have allowed artists to develop approaches and partnerships they can use in other projects. Gill has been able to use the way she learned to connect with residents in her new project elsewhere in Blackpool:

That's something for me that I've learned, how to communicate with people and be able to bring my skills to people...it's a really interesting exchange...if I'm going to work on a film, I'm doing it for the film, and I'm doing it for myself. But it's a bit different when it's about somebody's quality of life. It's a different exchange, and that's something I've never done before.

Gill Wood, Artist in Residence

Furthermore, both Gill and Mark developed their understanding of the implications of place design and its impact on lives through their residencies:

Sarah has since been commissioned by someone else to work on a similar occasion to the Bostonway Halloween event. She also made recordings of people reminiscing and sharing stories during lockdown, which she felt was needed as it was important for people to hear their own words in the way they say them, not an artist interpreting them differently. It was part of the way people felt close to each other again during the isolation of lockdown. This is an approach which she has carried on in her practice since.

In addition, she has been asked by different people to recreate the work created in the ITV ident she developed during her time at LeftCoast and, importantly, says this made a difference to her self-belief in herself as an artist.

I think it gave me a lot of confidence to think oh, I can be an artist full time.

Sarah Harris, Artist in residence



5.2.4. Recognizing the intensity of doing artist residencies – you can't get away

The artist residency can feel, for the artist, very intense, and Sarah feels she ended up giving a lot of herself to it – and as someone who lives in that community, this sense of giving and working can carry on during evenings and weekends, feeling like a very involving experience. There wasn't always the opportunity to take some time off.

For example, when there's a Jubilee party in my street, or those parties in lockdown, I would never ever go – but if I'm

working, I'd be the one that would be organizing it! So sometimes I feel like, is that really me? ... That's where I think that's the hard bit for me. I feel like I can create work with people but sometimes it takes a lot of energy. You know, for me.

Sarah Harris, Artist in residence

As well as being able to learn more about managing socially engaged practice in this way, Sarah gained other insights as well. She never felt particularly settled in the house provided, but says she is actually moving house now because she loved having the downstairs of the house as studio space while the upstairs was 'living space' – the transition into work and being productive was much quicker with that arrangement

5.2.5. Developing ambition and adding in quality

LeftCoast plays a role with all its partner artists in adding challenge and supporting ambition. One good example is the additional thinking and level of quality – of curation and design – which Laura Jamieson added into the Inside Out exhibition, which could otherwise have been presented more like a church fete than a gallery exhibition, meaning that the quality of the work wouldn't necessarily have come across as strongly.

This is also evident in the role Laura has taken in an idea for collaboration between Fran and Jack, where she recognised the quality of the idea and invested in it as part of the exploration and understanding of what collaboration means – adding ambition into the proposal while supporting both artists to deliver.

Former micro-residency artist Fran is developing a new piece of work with Jack, the Bostonway resident artist. Together they have developed a really beautiful idea of a series of

remote encounters where they make a series of works together. For example, using light sensitive ink at the beach, or Jack teaching Fran knot tying techniques from his time in the navy using grasses in the park... LeftCoast has put some money into this collaboration as it's a really interesting way for them to explore and talk about the alchemy of the process that happens when two people share skills and wisdom through a creative process.

Laura Jamieson, notes from Slack

In the end this idea didn't go ahead in the form discussed but LeftCoast arranged for a group of Bostonway residents to attend Abingdon Studios to see her exhibition – a first time visit for all of them.

5.3. Shifting belief in value of high quality socially engagement practice as an approach and a career route

LeftCoast offers something unique: ... the level of quality is amazing, the level of ambition is high.

Annie Kerfoot, Head of Blackpool School of Arts

Blackpool College value the opportunities that LeftCoast give to their students, many of whom come from Blackpool itself. These include specific examples, like the two students who gained placements into SpareParts which offered them the chance to really develop their production skills, or the support given to Jack from Bostonway, who is also a student at the college.

With an increasing need to focus on technical skills development for careers, the college also values the opportunities offered to all

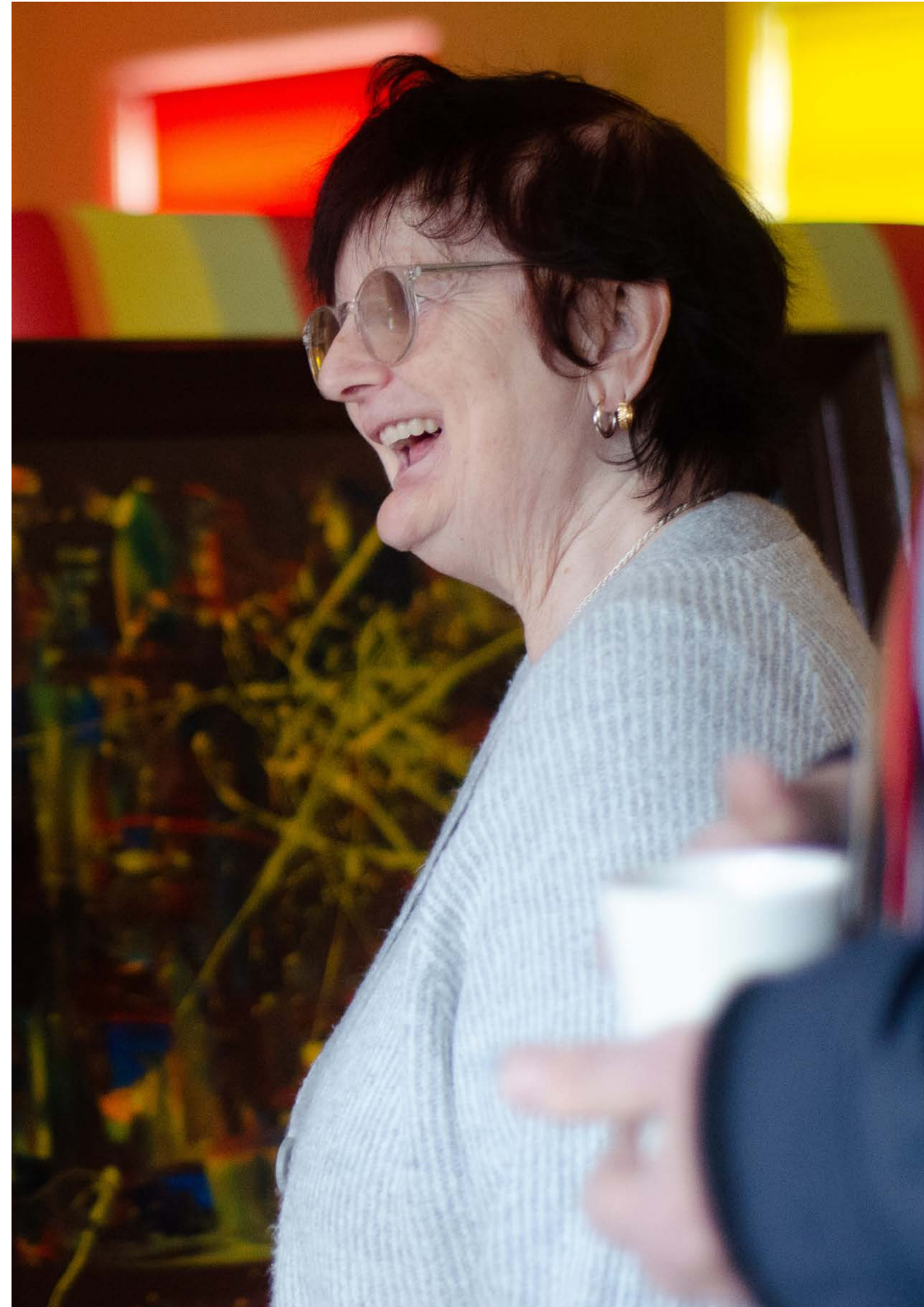
students through the chance to respond to callouts, and to see high quality socially engaged work in practice - this raises their ambitions and aspirations within that artform:

It's the ... intentionality, it's outstanding... [LeftCoast's] quality is by design, not by accident – listening to people and responding to their needs.

Annie Kerfoot, Head of Blackpool School of Arts

LeftCoast's flexibility and willingness to keep going through the lockdown has enabled them to retain and build partnerships in the sector. The partnership with the new Blackpool Museum project – Showtown – is very strong, with Showtown drawing on LeftCoast's relationship with Blackpool's communities, one of their key target audiences. They collaborated closely on 'Get Dancing', a year-long dance engagement project which both reached new audiences and raised awareness of Blackpool's dance heritage locally and nationally, as well as built a sense of place. Showtown's team see LeftCoast's role in defining Blackpool's culture as crucial artistically as well as in terms of engagement – highlighting the 'grit' as the other side of the glamour and 'frivolity' which is part of Blackpool's offer.

Showtown value LeftCoast's commitment to doing engagement well, using a high-quality approach over long periods to fully take communities on the journey. This has influenced Showtown's engagement strategy, and the partnership has helped to add ambition and confidence in taking this approach through showing where it can work.



Case Study: Creating opportunities to create, Claire Walmsley Griffiths

Claire is a locally based photographer and socially engaged artist whose practice has developed alongside the development of LeftCoast

Claire grew up on Hawes Side in Blackpool, leaving to study Fine Art in Northampton, but returning in 2001 on graduating, because of family illness. Back in Blackpool, she found there seemed to be little opportunity to develop her artistic practice:

“There was nothing really creative in Blackpool... I wasn't really aware of anything you could sort of tap into. And I had thought I would probably move...”

She ended up getting a role in recruitment - a good job that lasted for years and seemed to be her job for life. As things went on, the pressurized nature of the job and a zero hours contract started to make her feel unhappy.⁵⁶

She had been photographing and writing a bit for Blackpool Social Club as part of her volunteering. Eight years into working recruitment, a job came up at LeftCoast and she thought she'd apply. She didn't get it but met the (then) Team and they offered her a small commission to do some photography.

“They just like ring me up and say, ‘Could you photograph this?’ And I was like ‘Yeah, I'm available’. I just made myself available.”

This regular work was one of the things that gave her the prospect of developing her photography and eventually going freelance.

“I never dreamt it was going to happen [going freelance] ... LeftCoast ... in many ways gave me the opportunity and confidence to be self-employed”

From here the relationship grew and she has continued to photograph LeftCoast's work.

LeftCoast choose to work with her because she understands what they intend and how they work, she has become trusted as a partner as she relates well and sensitively to participants and local residents, and her work is always high quality.

As well as commercial work taking photographs for events, she has also established herself as an artist with a photography practice which explores “the possibilities of human connection through photography”.⁵⁷ It was very much working with LeftCoast's own socially engaged practice which helped shape Claire's approach to photography and echoed that of photographers she admires (Nan Golding, Richard Billingham).

“The Estates project... Ocean's⁵⁸ piece of work was like the best piece of socially engaged community work I've ever seen... The fashion show and making clothes inspired by local people... and making clothes that incorporated letters offering to take out credit and things... I thought that was really brilliant.”

In April 2020, Claire was one of ten selected artists, local and national, invited by LeftCoast to take part in Small Radical Acts. During six online sessions the group came together to explore the idea that little acts of change can be as radical as large ones, as well as how shifts in work-life boundaries had affected their practice. She feels this experience really opened her up to a wider range of conversations and approaches to socially engaged art, as well as giving her networks beyond Blackpool.

⁵⁶ From interview and also <https://openeye.org.uk/blog/a-spotlight-on-claire-walmsley-griffiths/>

⁵⁷ See <https://clairewalmsleygriffiths.com/>

⁵⁸ Ocean Farini, LeftCoast Artist In Residence 2018/19, see <https://leftcoast.org.uk/ocean-farini/>

In May 2021, Claire was herself commissioned by LeftCoast to undertake a six-week micro residency in Boston Way informed by her socially engaged practice. This explored residents' connections to the area as well as her own strong ties to that part of Blackpool.

"I felt close to Bostonway. I grew up really nearby. I'd probably walked past that area every day to get to Junior School. I know the area really, really well. My mum and dad, you know, they split up when we lived locally so I have strong memories of that area."

She also feels strongly about how you engage with aspiration around art in the local context, speaking as an explicitly working class artist herself:

"I wonder about working-class attitudes of not feeling that you have a right. Aspirations are thin on the ground when you have perhaps been told you can't, or you feel you are too old, that creativity will not pay your gas bill. Creativity feels like a middle-class pastime - often inaccessible."

As part of the project she set up a community darkroom and invited residents to borrow cameras to document the area and develop film. Over the weeks, she collected conversations, recordings, film and photographs.

"I just thought, well, I'll pitch this idea. I've got an analogue enlarger for photography. It would be great to set it up in the space. There's enough space and just really hold conversations with people and perhaps encourage the use of a camera or encourage individuals to share negatives or domestic family albums to create conversation and connection."

The results can be seen in the film she then made with residents⁵⁹. This was shown in the window of the front room of the residency

house on Bostonway, with people able to view the film through one of the windows.

"Claire put a card through the door about an open day there (the artist house). I decided to go over and have a look and they had this film playing...I watched and got quite emotional and ended up leaving but then I came back later and she showed me how to do photography...never thought I'd ever get an experience like that, amazing, I loved that, to see the pictures in the end, I thought, 'No way! I did that! Wow!'. I thought that was absolutely brilliant...I could do that again."

First time participant and long-term resident – quoted in the PRU report

It brought together many memories, images and stories, some of which were extremely challenging to experience:

"[We were] knocking on doors to find a man who'd been really into photography. He was looking after his wife with dementia... He took a camera and photographed and he made this amazing sort of image through his window of her waving goodbye to him... I've never shown the image anywhere because when I asked what had happened or if he was around... I'd been told his wife was taken into care, then he gone into care quite quickly afterwards. Then the next thing I heard was that they both had passed away."

It is clear that Claire's practice has developed alongside and through the work of LeftCoast, showing the fruits of their approach of working with locally based artists who are keen to develop skills in working with communities. As a result of their input – and Claire's own work and talent, they now have a connection with a locally based artist with a strong socially engaged practice she wishes to develop further with the residents of Blackpool.

⁵⁹ For more details and watch the resulting film, see <https://leftcoast.org.uk/claire-griffiths/>

As LeftCoast moves into a new phase, as someone who has been involved for many years, Claire is well placed to comment on what they mean to Blackpool:

“We definitely benefit from having LeftCoast... I don't think it's always been an easy journey for them. I don't think people have always agreed with what they have done. But I have benefited and I think the town genuinely benefits from having an alternative sort of creative culture organisation here”

For details of Claire's work, see clairewalmsleygriffiths.com



6. Developing social capital

LeftCoast have continued to build on their strong foundation of developing social capital by reducing isolation, increasing social connections, developing pride in place, increasing agency and uncovering hidden talent, all of which has had a significant and lasting impact on local communities.

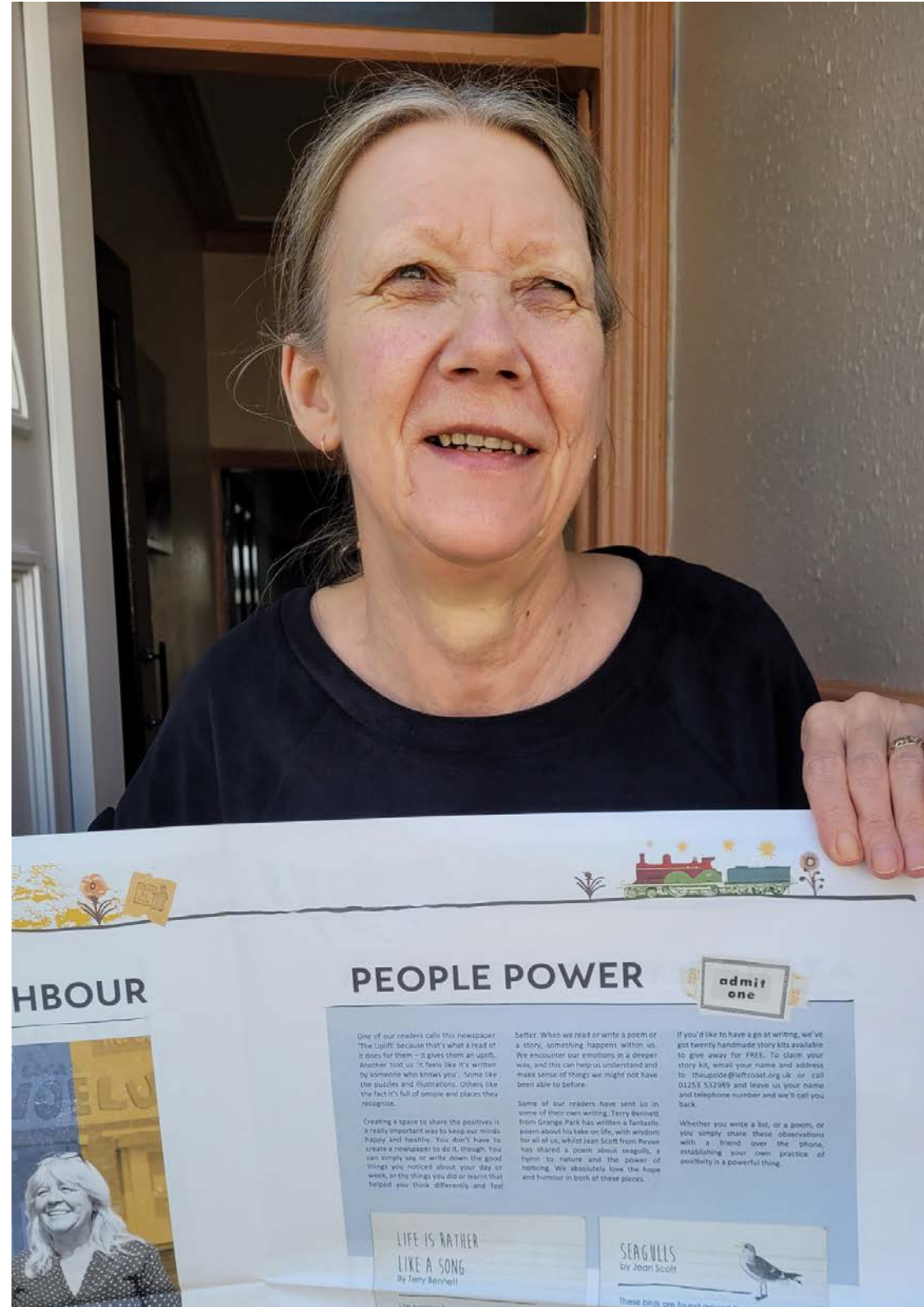
Through a range of activities, and arising from intentional and well-planned activity, LeftCoast has:

- Reduced isolation and supported people to return to social interaction and connections following lockdown.
- Increased pride in and connection to the places people live.
- Increased people's confidence to speak up or take action in their neighbourhoods.
- Uncovered hidden talent and developed people's confidence in making and showing their own art.

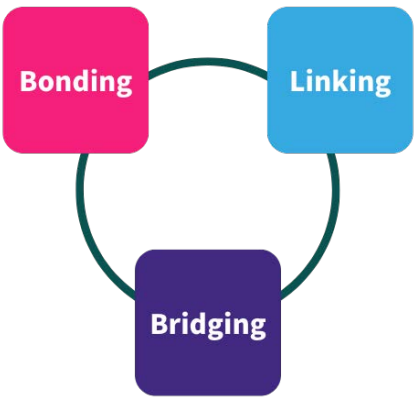
6.1. What is social capital?

Social capital is about the relationships people make, the value placed on these, and the opportunities they offer. Karen Smith writes about this broad subject in the context of the Creative People and Places programme, identifying three key areas: bonding, bridging and linking⁶⁰. Here we will use this model to

⁶⁰ For more on Social Capital in the Creative People and Places programme, see Karen Smith's (2018) *Persistent Encounter* <https://www.culturehive.co.uk/resources/persistent-encounter-social-capital-and-creative-people-and-places/>



evaluate the overall development of social capital in Phase 3 of LeftCoast.



Characterised as the bonds made between people, the bonding branch of social capital covers social networks, in-group relationships and those brought together by a strong bond such as families or members of the same ethnic group.

Bridging describes groups who have more distant social connections, such as between different ethnic groups,

Figure 14 Social capital model for CPPs

acquaintances or friend-of-friends, bridging the gap between 'us' and 'them'.

The final stage of social capital outlined by this model is linking, which is defined as connections between people and those in a position of power, such as a government official or elected leader.

6.2. Challenging isolation

LeftCoast has been very successful in challenging isolation. It has done this by providing a wealth of experiences to local people which were designed carefully to lead to these outcomes. Through both the offer and the style of delivery of these, communities were enabled to create and develop social connections and were able to come together to fight isolation.

Working with LeftCoast has helped the Trust to engage with Fleetwood residents in a new and creative way using the building differently whilst it is in development; we have loved every moment of the exhibition. Working with LeftCoast on this project has also brought to life the vision and ethos of the Trust. It's been a difficult time for many during Covid and this project has been a breath of fresh air and allowed the community to work together.

Charley Wilkinson, Fleetwood Trust CEO, via press release

65% of respondents to the ACE diversity and wellbeing survey felt they had more confidence to try new things having been involved with LeftCoast⁶¹. Half felt they had new ideas about the future, and almost a fifth made new friends. There was also strong evidence of increased social connection, with 86% feeling a stronger sense of belonging with their immediate neighbours, 86% feeling if they needed help from their neighbours, they would be able to find it, and a huge 89% felt they had more people to call on if they wanted to socialise or have some company. There was also a clear effect on loneliness, as 100% of respondents felt less likely to lack companionship, less likely to feel left out, and less likely to feel isolated or lonely.

It's the loneliness, you see. It's nice to have someone to talk to. I am going to bring my secateurs tomorrow and start on the fence. Well, what else have I got to do?

LeftCoast Participant

This has got me out today to see others I have missed.

⁶¹ 38 respondents to ACE Diversity and Wellbeing Survey during Phase 3

Respondent to ACE Diversity and Wellbeing Survey

Engagement of communities in projects had inevitably been affected by Covid 19 and had had an effect on the mental health of people. For that reason, LeftCoast projects which brought people together were more intensely needed than ever, and the success of these projects in overcoming isolation was important. Cath Powell felt that 'the anxiety levels over Covid, the anxiety levels of just coming out and engaging' were now stronger for people during lockdown and also as they tried to readjust as society 'opened up' again. Many of these residents were likely to be classed as vulnerable due to age or health status.

They were so anxious. They've been locked down for two years - and nobody gave a stuff about them.

Cath Powell, Groundwork, LeftCoast partner

This sense of vulnerability and sense of anxiety was echoed in the Upside project, where reaching out to people on their doorsteps brought knowledge of people locally who were feeling very alone. Later, work after lockdown continued with them. Simon Lawton of Revoelution says of these locals:

Some of them are now coming to the craft club. [Two residents mentioned are] very isolated [with] mental health problems, and gradually we've managed to coax them out. Now they're regularly coming to the to the Craft Club so it's reaching out into other areas.

Simon Lawton, Revoelution, soon to be partner during Phase 4

It has taken time to build up trust in doing so again, and the careful design and delivery of the projects in a way that creates that trust has been more important than ever. One thing Gill Wood also says

really struck her is how much loneliness there is for people on the estates, even aside from that caused by Covid.

The biggest thing I learned from my residency, and has stayed with me, is how important it is for people to connect. Even if it's a chat about your artwork over a cup of tea, it's the loneliness and people living on their own is quite astounding...everyone was aware of how horrible it is to be confined through the lockdown. Some people live like that, all year round. That absolutely stayed with me.

Gill Wood, Artist in Residence

The depth of need felt by people locally comes through, and their enjoyment of joining with others in these community-based activities which bring people together.

Evidence of just how meaningful the creation of social cohesion in communities during Phase 3 programmes has been often came directly from residents in their individual comments to artists and in surveys, and these often reveal the depth of impact that taking part in residency activities had on their lives. One resident shared comments with LeftCoast artists which showed that effect on them had been deeply significant.

I got the first of what are now several experiences of someone 'new' simply accepting me for me and gently encouraging me to try things I would never have dared to, telling me positive things they see in me, teaching me that some good people do exist and can be trusted.

Local resident talking about experience of Artist in Residence

From a place where isolation and a sense of 'otherness' in a new community had been acutely felt, that person was able to take part

by joining in the activities online with local people and the artist, and be accepted for who they were with 'kindness and friendship' (the resident). This experience was a starting point and since reaching out and experiencing this, the person has grown in confidence and has regularly joined in activities. It is clear how important this has been – a hugely valuable outcome for the resident which has also meant a great deal to LeftCoast staff to bring about.

Please do not be surprised if I cry. It is an overwhelming nice gesture, and that stuff is a bit new to me still.

Resident who took part in Artist in residence programme.

This sense of bonding within communities helped to enable social connections to develop, both during lockdown and afterwards as lockdown eased.

The artist in the house has played a big part in getting people together, and Rachel has helped and done things. I never go out, I've not been out for a long time in the evening, so I went out with Rachel to Art B&B (LeftCoast office, venue and hotel) for a supper evening and comedy performance, and information about what was going on in the town. I met a lady from Mereside involved in the library-laundrette, and a man from Bispham Court who is growing things there. I learnt so much, it was really interesting, a good evening.

Long term resident, Artist in residence area, UCLan final report

6.2.1. The Upside

The Upside is a prime example of LeftCoast developing social capital during Phase 3. Borne from a desire to provide communities in Blackpool with something uplifting to fight social isolation in the time of Covid 19 lockdowns, The Upside was a series of beautiful, limited-edition, accessibly designed newspapers created by Creative Director and Writer Alex O'Toole and hand delivered to Blackpool residents by volunteers during April – June 2021. The Upside contained uplifting stories from neighbours, as well as advice and support from local partner organisations. Furthermore, it was specifically designed to mirror the stages of opening up from lockdown so that it supported people to take those first steps back into social interaction after so long isolating.

The Upside has been celebrated by the people of Blackpool as a resounding success, and vital lifeline. In many instances, field reporter Steve Fairclough was the only person participant contributors spoke to in a day, providing social connection at a time when it was needed most. Further to their brilliant work, Alex and Steve were able to identify needs and offer support and referrals to local organisations to create real social change for their readership.

The paper is informative and lets people know that there is help out there. It is personal with a community focus.

Upside reader

Revisiting the CPP social capital model, we see clear evidence of bonding and bridging from this project, providing opportunities for residents to maintain their close community bonds and also connect with new people via the uplifting and inspiring community stories in The Upside. It provided insight into the lives of others and bridging the divide the pandemic had created between them.

For more on The Upside, see the full report in Appendix 2: The Upside report.

6.3. Pride in, and connection to, their locality

LeftCoast projects improved residents' pride in their locality and their feeling of connection to it. There were a number of initiatives which focussed on the shared spaces in estates. As PRU found⁶², there is growing confidence to alter green spaces in both Bostonway and Flakefleet, and residents in Bostonway see their areas in new ways following their work there. Residents now feel greater involvement in taking care of their places. For example, new growing beds and improvements to existing gardens were made in Greenfields, and the Mereside launderette, which offers also a library and other facilities, has now opened.

I think it was very successful because they wanted to be outdoors, and they wanted pride in their outdoor space and that is what they got at the end of the day. They're very active and very focused on it.

Artist in Residence Gill Wood talking about the Greenfields gardening project.

Artistic activities have also promoted a locally based cultural imagination. Exhibitors in the Inside Out exhibitions also described their connection to the locality and their pride in it, both in discussion and through their art. The programme has also been hugely valuable in encouraging ownerships of and new uses for spaces. The Old Fleetwood Hospital, already known well locally but

in need of rescue, has undergone some clearing and refurbishment and this also enables connection.

It's the first time I've exhibited; to begin with it was very stressful, I was very anxious about it. I dropped in at a later stage. With more time, I would have drawn more on my experiences of Fleetwood. It's nice to realise there are others like me, appreciating the beauty of the place around you. Local people can feel pride at the work exhibited.

Inside Out participants, via UClan final report

LeftCoast's Get Dancing programme also achieved this aim by causing people to think differently about Blackpool's dance heritage and offering an opportunity to share their love of the town.

6.4. Increased self-confidence to make changes happen on their estate

As evidenced by PRU⁶³, residents now feel more able to make changes to their localities themselves. The report describes how during the period where the country was affected by Covid 19, 'the imposed restrictions and uncertainty led many to reach out to other people in their communities and to seek out opportunities to make a positive contribution' – something which may in the end have partly contributed to the outcome.

The report finds that new community-initiated actions, initiatives and activities were stimulated by engagement with the programme in all the Real Estate areas, for example on Bostonway where

⁶² UClan Real Estates final report Appendix 3: Real Estates report

⁶³ UClan Real Estates final report Appendix 3: Real Estates report

residents were very keen to be involved in the discussions about the next Artist in Residence and even take part in the recruitment.

Secondly, people who used and contributed to the networks reported an enhanced sense of agency and aspiration as LeftCoast commissioned and supported artists to develop activities which increased residents' confidence, leading them to feel more able to make changes and reach higher.

Thirdly, there are many examples of increases in social and cultural capital throughout Phase 3, for example where networks have developed more strongly between people in communities, and also between the residents and the artists and staff of LeftCoast.

6.5. Uncovered hidden talent and developed confidence

People were also able to develop further confidence through developing new skills, or making new work and developing skills they rediscovered, during lockdown. Later, this enabled 'bridging' to happen as those people were able to share their work with other people they had not met before but who had also been developing work over this time. Being able to find and showcase the hidden talents that exist in local residents during lockdowns also helped develop their sense of being artists – and that art was not something distant and unattainable, but something that everyone could take part in.

Claire put a card through the door about an open day there (the artist house). I decided to go over and have a look and they had this film playing... I watched and got quite emotional and ended up leaving but then I came back later and she showed me how to do photography...never thought

I'd ever get an experience like that, amazing, I loved that, to see the pictures in the end, I thought, 'No way! I did that! Wow!' I thought that was absolutely brilliant...I could do that again.

First time participant and long-term resident, UClan final report

At the same time, the lockdown period for many enabled them to develop their own practice in making the artworks that they made, bringing forward both their thinking and what happened in the work itself.

6.5.1. The Inside Out exhibitions

The first Inside Out exhibition took place in June 2021, after being postponed twice due to Covid 19 lockdowns, and successfully brought together many local artists to show their work in the old Fleetwood Hospital building. In the same building, Gillian and the LeftCoast team hosted the Craft Council in Autumn 2021. This included craft workshops and was also held at Fleetwood Hospital, and it included four of the artists from the recent exhibition who were also paid for their work. Some of the work created by the public at these sessions was then included in a second Inside Out exhibition at the hospital which ran during November and December 2021.

Comments from people who took part showed a pride that they could exhibit their own work in this way, and that it happened locally to them. Fleetwood Hospital itself is at the centre of the Fleetwood area and is a place many of the residents are familiar with through use of medical services during their lives – the building had become largely unused, and to be able to use it again for this purpose felt like a strong local connection.

Exhibiting my work and doing it more, I'm not gonna say professionally, but more, not just as a hobby, but as more of an outlet, because especially lately, I do feel like I need some sort of creative outlet for my own mental wellbeing, and sometimes I don't get that through my job and other things. And doing stuff like this now has been brilliant... you don't have to have been to college and studied art for four years just to get involved with something like this... Before, I could just say it was a bit of a hobby whereas now I can say, 'I've been in two exhibitions.' I didn't sell anything, but that wasn't my aim to, it's not for the money, but to think that someone looks at something of yours and thinks, 'I want that on my wall'.

Inside Out participant, UCLan Real Estates final report

In the second Inside Out exhibition, artists were able to place and hang their own work, and choose their own locations, as confidence and ownership over the way their work was presented as well as the work itself developed. The exhibition was successful, and also new people came forward to show their work. Gill Wood, the organising artist, still gets phone calls from people wanting to know if they can show work in the future – it has captured imagination and creative development of people.

People need to staff it, as a whole, for Fleetwood to have places where people can go... I think people would volunteer to help make more of this happen. I have now met my neighbour and their partner, at the private view. I find the other artworks inspiring, and there are others out there, it doesn't have to be perfect

Inside Out participant, UCLan Real Estates final report

6.5.2. Showcasing Jack, a local artist

Jack is an artist who lives on Bostonway; ex military, he is a mature student at Blackpool School of Art. Coming across him during the residencies, LeftCoast made a point of supporting and showcasing his work, culminating in organising an exhibition for him.

The opportunity LeftCoast has given me has been wonderful. I'm very, very lucky, not many people get these sorts of opportunities. So I'm grabbing onto it with both hands, of course I am, and hope to be working alongside LeftCoast if I can in the future.

Jack, Bostonway resident and local artist

Jack is now looking at setting up a studio with other Blackpool artists. LeftCoast also recognise the importance of supporting Jack, who has mental health issues; although excited by the opportunities that work with LeftCoast offers, he will need additional support to be fully part of anything else. This highlights the 'cost' – in terms of care, time and skills – of working in this particularly in-depth way with communities which may be vulnerable.

These are the realities of creating an authentic and real connection with someone from one of the neighbourhoods we are working - people are brilliant and colourful but they are also complicated and we do a lot of evaluating where our boundaries as arts organizations should be. How much does Jack need us to protect him - what work arounds do we need to find? I wanted to flag this process because t's a really good example of the sharp point of the engagement triangle.

LeftCoast Community Engagement Manager Laura Jamieson

Case Study Scrub Hub – Handle with Care

An artistic and community response to the pandemic

The Fylde Coast Scrub Hub⁶⁴ was set up in April 2020 by Gillian Wood, local Artist in Residence with LeftCoast in response to the Covid 19 pandemic.

The aim was to provide scrubs for local NHS workers working with those affected by Covid 19. It quickly gained support from local people keen to help others in their community.

Within three days we had orders coming in from medics in hospitals GP surgeries, and we already had a sewing team established. In the end we made over 400 sets of scrubs and raised £4860, all of which was spent on fabric to make the scrubs and some money for petrol.

Gillian Wood

21 volunteers spent 420 hours making scrubs, and the total value of their contributed hours was £3662.

Another local artist, Tina Dempsey, was commissioned to work alongside Scrub Hub to tell the stories of those who did the sewing and of the NHS recipients of the scrubs. She spoke to participants about what it meant to them, and found that conversation soon turned from the practicalities of the work to the wider issues.

The project itself, the Scrub Hub, was massive to all of them... They had a purpose again, and they were helping other people. Nearly all of them said, 'we're helping other people, but in turn, that makes us feel good and it gives us something to focus on' so they weren't thinking about their own concerns about this lockdown.

Tina Dempsey



Figure 15 Screen grab from the Scrub Hub film

Tina soon found that though sewing had been a huge part of some of the scrub makers lives this was a new way of using their skills for them.

These are incredibly skilled people who'd made all sorts of different garments, but it was fascinating to hear how they navigated making scrubs, something they'd never made before.

Tina Dempsey

For Tina and for the group, a new purpose began to develop beyond making scrubs.

Throughout the conversations, we'd all said, 'Oh, God if we could just meet up! Just see the other people, talk, have a cup of tea!'

Tina Dempsey

This work was written up in the book *Handle with Care*.

⁶⁴ A network of Scrub Hubs across the country (Scrubhub.org.uk) developed after lockdown began to provide equipment for their local NHS workers and some relief from lockdown for those who helped create them

The book was a way of the meeting each other, a sort of remote meeting where they could get a sense of each other from reading their stories.

Tina Dempsey

A film⁶⁵ was made by Gillian and the scrub makers about the Scrub Hub itself to accompany the book.

Those who received the scrubs found them invaluable. One recipient said that due to the fluctuations in supply 'many staff wanted to have certain items that were "personal" and thus guaranteed to be available'. However, stocks had run low, disappeared, or become hugely expensive – or led to possible scams.

Hopefully, when all this is clear...we'll all meet up for dinner, and get to know everybody...It's been a little community and that's been very sound. I think we should be very proud of ourselves.

Participant, Scrub Hub

Scrub Hub improved participants' wellbeing during lockdown:

- Connected them when they felt isolated and gave them someone to talk to.
- Allowed them to feel proud of their work and the impact they had locally.
- Gave them a purpose – helping others (NHS) at a time of national crisis.
- Created a sense of community where they could share stories.

⁶⁵ See <https://leftcoast.org.uk/scrubhub/> for full details on Scrub Hub and a link to the film.



7. Conclusion

This section includes our conclusions and outlines the emerging LeftCoast 'model' – exploring [ACE Research Question 3: What works?](#), explores challenges arising for LeftCoast and lists our recommendations.

7.1. Conclusion

Phase 3 has seen a strong development of LeftCoast's confidence and effectiveness as an organisation. They have a clear brand and a huge range of partners from across sectors and across Blackpool and Fleetwood with whom they can deliver programmes and embed learning and legacy.

The Phase has seen a massive increase in number of engagements (over 7 times more in Phase 3 than 2) which aren't all due to increases in digital engagement and include a big increase in physical participants. The people who they engage come from the areas of the towns where poverty and deprivation are highest, and from groups least likely to engage in the arts. Participants and audiences have fun and also experience deeper outcomes of connection, pride in place and enthusiasm in the arts.

The approach taken has become more focused and clearer – strengthening their brand and raising the potential for work to have long term legacy. The commitment to add quality and ambition into partnership projects runs through the design and delivery, to the levels of engagement and the quality of the outcomes.

LeftCoast are clear in what works and have designed their 2022-25 programme to build on this learning in terms of who they partner with, the places they work and the approaches they take. They



continue to build in action research and learning, relying on an extremely good data collection and reflection model which helps with understanding and flexing to what works in each location and each relationship.

LeftCoast offers a successful model for Blackpool, and, hopefully, for continued work in Fleetwood although funding is needed to enable the depth of work which is needed. The challenges for the next three years are:

- To roll out and embed the model in new communities across Blackpool and Wyre
- Develop approaches which lead to sustainable funding models beyond ACE CPP funding
- Look for ways to share the model across the country as a good practice example.

7.2. The LeftCoast model

The LeftCoast model has been evolving over the eight and a half years of programming and partnership building to date. Phase 3 marked a shift in focus from lots of programming to development – of partnerships, innovation and socially engaged practice.

The model has evolved over time through trying different approaches and seeing what works. Socially engaged practice lies at the heart of it, but a gradual explicit recognition has grown over the last few years of the importance of community development commitment and experience within the on the ground staff – particularly within the residencies. This draws on but isn't 100%

aligned to the Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) approach.⁶⁶ The valuing of socially engaged co-creation as a route into engagement, as well as a mode of engagement which can sometimes push people to take that first step of engagement can move communities faster than a strict adherent to ABCD would espouse.

The shift to partnership delivery brings real opportunities to multiply impact and value arising from the work. Partners continue, and replicate, the work started by LeftCoast. As a result, the impact is felt not just by those who directly come into contact with LeftCoast or one of their residencies or commissions, but also by people who live and work with any partners or artists who use this approach. This is potentially a far more sustainable approach and offers the possibility of mainstreaming, and thus multiplying, impact.

The approach relies on LeftCoast's skills and experience, and on the **core principles** by which they work:

- **Genuine care and working alongside:** LeftCoast explicitly and politically position themselves to work alongside – *with, not for* people – and this brings a sense of “travelling together”
- **Commitment to high quality socially engaged work,** a standard which they challenge both themselves and their collaborators to meet
- **Belief in ‘the currency of doing’** – from working with artists who ‘think by doing’, to developing partnerships through working together, achieving by what Director Tina Redford

⁶⁶ For example, see. <https://www.nurtureddevelopment.org/blog/asset-based-community-development-5-core-principles/>

calls 'pounding the streets' – getting on and doing things to work out how to do them

- **Taking risks and trying new things:** Politically and locally resonant work can feel risky at times, but it pays off. It attracts and enthuses audiences, develops new partnerships, challenges assumptions and leads to longer term changes and deeper engagement with local residents
- **Blackpool and Fleetwood to its core:** LeftCoast's work echoes Blackpool itself – the spectacle and 'glitz' alongside the real life of residents

The elements of the model are:

7.2.1. Know how to partner

LeftCoast has worked out how to partner well, this comes down to three 'tips'.

- **Find and cultivate brilliant individuals who understand and embody the LeftCoast approach.** These can be brought in to work on specific projects, these might be former members of staff like Sarah Harris, now a freelance artist who is developing ideas with LeftCoast, or regular partners like Alex O'Toole a freelance producer and writer who was brought in to develop and lead the work on the Upside as LeftCoast knew she'd completely understand what is needed and could be trusted to deliver. This 'wider team' as Tina Redford describes it are key to supporting a small core team.
- **Find and develop organizational partner with shared aims and style.** It is as important how they work and that they are prepared to put the work in on the ground as their aims. Furthermore, shared aims and style are a lot more important than sector: apart from during Get Dancing where both

partners were arts organisations, in the main LeftCoast's long term partners don't have arts as a core, or even as any of their aims. Fleetwood Hospital Trust want to develop a community space, Revoelution and Groundwork at the Grange are looking at developing community within neighbourhoods.

- **Don't do one offs.** This is a key principle which may have been taken for granted before, but the experience of Covid particularly drew out. Other organisations completely changed their ways of working and their target audiences during lockdown, returning to 'business as usual' afterwards. LeftCoast's work adapted completely in terms of delivery mechanisms, making it accessible for non-digital audiences while staying safe, but it completely built on existing work, and was part of an ongoing journey in the programme approach moving towards more work in local areas. Even bigger projects like Get Dancing weren't 'standalone' from the wider programme, Get Dancing linked into the Real Estate neighbourhoods through Doorstep Dance and were part of an ongoing developing relationship with Showtown.

7.2.2. Understand what works for community-based arts residencies

- **Think by doing,** trying things out and adapting rather than researching and 'thinking' then producing at the end
- **Develop partnerships by working in partnership.** Work out who you can work with on major projects by starting with small-scale collaboration
- **Work with individuals, person-to-person,** in small groups, and by sharing yourself as a person, not just 'a job'.

- **Share feelings and connections to place to increase a sense of agency.** Making opportunities for people to share their feelings about a place is very effective in developing their sense of ownership of the place
- **Mixing the approaches and values of Asset Based Community Development with arts practice.** This is needed in places where agency has been particularly low in the past.
- **Be in it for the long-term.** Good relationships take time and investment of commitment.

7.2.3. Keep the quality

LeftCoast plays a very important role in most of their relationships as the driver for ambition and quality within the work. It is regularly commented upon both by the team and partners and is done in a way that is really inclusive and positive so it feels welcome. Quality and ambition are added by putting the time in, focusing on the feel of things, building quality in by design, not accident

7.2.4. Everything is a chance for learning

LeftCoast has really valued and built on the spirit and drive for action research to be embedded through all of the CPP delivery. Work and outcomes are never taken for granted but are discussed and planned, then reflected on and learnt from. This is a huge part of how the quality is kept high.

This has been particularly the case through adversity moments, with the Covid 19 lockdown actively reflected on by the team as an important point for learning.

Covid really sharpened the pencil of our socially engaged practice.

Tina Redford, LeftCoast Director

7.2.5. The personal commitment of the team

The small size of the team and the level of co-working that had taken place before lockdown helped them adapt well to working online at a distance. They quickly moved to Slack and had the typical workplace discussions, side jokes and updates on general life there.

Decisions are discussed and shared from a very early point, ideas passed around and refined, rather than sitting in one area of the team alone. However, there is a clear sense of responsibility for certain areas and although naturally things do fall between the gaps, there is a warm and no blame culture within the team which means it is soon picked up.

This closeness and care – which extends within the team as well as without – is strongly fostered by the leadership of the Director.

The team is notable for their personal commitment – socially, politically, emotionally and in terms of their time. This doesn't tend to stray into over-commitment and working beyond set hours, but it does help in building relationships as individuals genuinely care and feel commitment and that comes across in interactions with residents, partners and artists.

7.3. Challenges

7.3.1. Working with people in-depth

Working with people during times of challenge (Covid 19 lockdown, cost of living crisis) and in areas of deprivation – including small areas of particularly high need like the sheltered housing in Bostonway – is challenging for staff. During delivery of the Upside, and also during Doorstep Dance – both at the height of lockdown – the team were often the only people locals spoke to all day or all week. They heard a lot of difficult stories and had to make judgement calls on how to respond. The team dealt well with this as they are a close and supportive group, but it does take time.

Added to the challenges of the groups with which the project engages are the issues arising from the level of involvement artists and team members have in people's lives through the longer term more personal approach taken. For example, Sarah Harris worked with individuals over a long period in Bostonway, got to know them well and made 'portraits', Claire Griffiths collected photos and stories. For both artists, at least one of the people they worked closely with died during their involvement.

Although the team manages this well, the challenge of working in this environment can't be forgotten and needs to be taken into account in thinking about time needed for support, debrief and general in person time together.

7.3.2. Operating in Blackpool

Blackpool is a challenging and unique environment to work in, as brilliantly articulated by Kerry Vasiliou, LeftCoast Board member and Engagement Lead at Showtown Museum of Blackpool.

... the problem with Blackpool is... it has a motto of progress and it's had that for over a hundred years and I can totally see how that is a benefit to Blackpool ever changing trying to keep up with the latest trends, trying to always bring something new to our businesses so they come back and we are ever evolving to attract more people and that the town needs that. But at the same time there is a fight to be the best and to have the most people and... it's a fight to survive the last few years to get people through the doors and bums on seats. And so it is a difficult landscape to survive in. And so for a cultural organisation who isn't necessarily there to make profit it's an interesting conversation to start being part of... it is a balancing act and then when you're, you know, you're an organisation with values that is about, you know, openness, integrity, engaging with, with people and you know, having an impact on their lives.

LeftCoast can't do anything about this but needs to continue to bear it in mind when developing partnerships, and messaging about their aims and, in particular, showing good practice in how they work can help be a nudge towards more collaborative approaches across the town.

7.3.3. Balancing act – and how to communicate your aims

Building on the Blackpool setting challenge, LeftCoast has had to work hard to get a clear message to the communities, media and particularly to locally based artists as to what their work is about and who it is for. This is still a work in progress and requires an excellent communications approach which is now in place with the appointment of Abigail Gillibrand.

As they enter Phase 4 with both a clearer focus on key areas (and on Blackpool alone), and a better communications approach, it should be easier to make this message clear. But it is also key to continue communicating what is happening in the focus communities to the wider Blackpool setting (as well as further afield). This not only allows people in the town as a whole to see the value of LeftCoast's work, but will also mean that potential partners for that work come across it and engage. These might be partner organisations or funders, or might be artists interested in delivering and developing their socially engaged skills.

7.3.4. Finishing things off – make sure there's enough finance to do the legacy work

A recurrent theme for LeftCoast's work is to generate amazing ideas, but not then have the time and money to take them to full fruition. This is partly a function of funding as CPP funding is more focused on the creation of the work in partnership, and sharing to local audiences. However, by not adequately resourcing the next stage the team to miss out the opportunity to 'sweat the assets' and potential for commercial partnerships and longer term finance. This is something which needs to be considered in the role of the Director during Phase 4.

7.3.5. Keeping the ambition going

This will be financially challenging – cost of living crisis, reduced funding around, scale back in Wyre. But still there is a need to keep pushing to be better – this is natural for LeftCoast, but there are ways it can be helped, for example working with new evaluation teams, plus look for a critical friend, or possibly a range of them, to bring challenge – particularly around the quality of socially engaged practice and how that is embedded in partners' wider work.

7.3.6. ACE disinvestment in Fleetwood

Due to the slightly higher levels of arts engagement across Wyre as a whole, it is no longer eligible to receive CPP funding so LeftCoast CPP funding doesn't reach there. However, this is unlikely to relate to Fleetwood as by far the most deprived part of Wyre, and there is still a need and value to LeftCoast working in the area. Regenda Housing – local social landlords in Fleetwood – are working with LeftCoast to find new funding for a partnership approach.

This should be a priority for LeftCoast during the early part of Phase 4 as the momentum in Fleetwood is very positive but is unlikely to be maintained without any support from a strong organization. The work can almost certainly be less intense in Flakefleet after three years of successful residencies, but support to community groups and residents in the area, continued impetus on Regenda to embed the good ideas started, and also support for some of the initiatives at town level would be very valuable.

7.4. Recommendations

LeftCoast delivered on all our recommendations from Phase 2, showing a commitment to learning from evaluations which will hopefully continue into the new phase.

For this phase we recommend:

- Continue with the focussed approach, and apply the learning in who to partner with and how to deliver.
- Continue to be committed personally, socially and politically, and maintain the high standards expected of partners in terms of integrity and willingness to put in the work.
- Continue to work in partnership at a strategic level to raise the ambition and perception of Blackpool.

- Build in enough space and funding to enable full realisation of the legacy of key projects.
- Continue the improvement in communications, particularly online – sharing what you are achieving enables and supports new partnerships.
- Work with the new evaluators to ensure the outcomes of the work continue to meet the aims.
- Develop relationships with critical friends for support and challenge in developing and sharing your practice and models – as well as ensuring the team retain the benefits of space and time to reflect and adapt practice.
 - Specifically – write up the LeftCoast model to share with a practice and academic audience nationally and internationally.
- Work in partnership with partners, invest significant efforts in looking for funding to make the LeftCoast funding sustainable beyond ACE CPP funding, allowing the work to expand into areas where it can make the most difference, and work across the Fylde Coast as needed.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Get Dancing report

This is the report on Get Dancing prepared by RMR.
Link to be added when published.

Appendix 2: The Upside report

This is the report on The Upside prepared by Alex O'Toole with RMR. *Link to be added when published.*

Appendix 3: Real Estates report

This is the UClan Real Estates Final Evaluation Report, published in May 2022 from Hugh Ortega Breton and Alastair Roy of the Psychosocial Research Unit of the University of Central Lancashire.

<https://sphelps.dyndns-home.com:9000/index.php/s/MYmAhWXWwiC44LO>

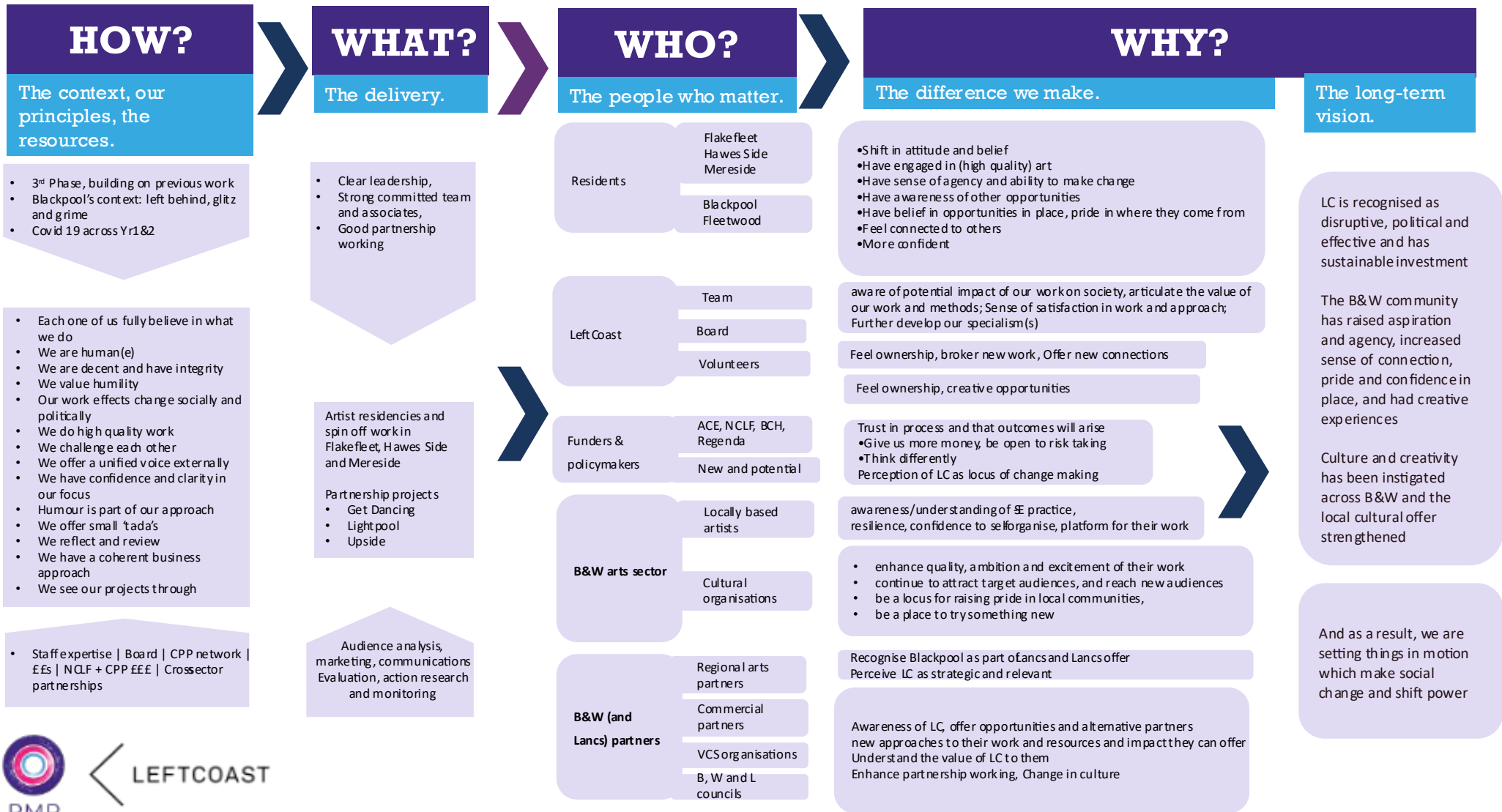
Appendix 4: Full participant reach and profile report

This is a report on LeftCoast Phase 3 participant reach and profile, prepared by Helen Corkery for RMR.

<https://sphelps.dyndns-home.com:9000/index.php/s/YotpN2ECSBNTXGW>

Appendix 5: LeftCoast Phase 3 Story of Change

See next page for full Story of Change.



Appendix 6: Methodology and data gathering

Approach

For this Phase, the evaluation was led by Ruth Melville Research (RMR), taking over from MB Associates who carried out the evaluation for Phase 2. However, this does not really mark a disjuncture as the RMR team had the same lead researcher (Ruth Melville, Director, RMR) and many of the key staff of the MB Associates evaluation. For this reason, many of the methods and all the analysis has been able to be neatly transferred across under GDPR guidelines.

RMR makes use of an embedded form of evaluation which is carried out across the whole period of a programme. The approach includes team reflection and review and thus the evaluation impacts on how programmes are delivered as well as evaluated. This is a good fit with the action learning and socially engaged approaches employed by LeftCoast in their own programme.

We cover the three Arts Council England Research Questions developed for all of the Creative People and Places (CPPs):

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?

In addition, we look at the impacts LeftCoast has had in terms of its core aims and explore the working model which it is beginning to develop.

Our data gathering routes have included regular conversations between the evaluation lead and Director at LeftCoast, formative feedback of statistics and initial analysis on key areas, interviews and discussions with stakeholders and sessions which allow both gathering of data and reflection on findings. This report brings together learning from reflective, quantitative and qualitative data gathering, with analysis on impacts of LeftCoast as they are emerging. Due to its interim nature, in many areas the findings are a work in progress, and further analysis and development of learning will be included in future years' reporting.

Story of Change

This evaluation builds on an evolving Story of Change, developed initially in 2018 with the LeftCoast team and building on previous work within the Phase 2 business plan. This Story of Change was reviewed twice in 2020 in response to changes to programming brought about by the need to adapt to the Covid 19 pandemic.

A Story of Change is a shared, logical plan (or review) of the difference an organisation wants to make and how. There are four sections:

- o Why (vision and outcomes)
- o What (activity)
- o Who (people who matter) and,
- o How (commitments, investments and resources).

The Story of Change is a working document in the sense that it is reviewed regularly to check that it is as it should be. The evaluation framework was developed from the Story of Change.

Adapting to Covid 19

The first Covid lockdown was five months into Phase 3, and early in terms of delivery. The amount of delivery was scaled back to reduce risks of physical contact between participants, artists and audiences, and events were largely moved online.

The modes of operation and what the Programme did were altered, but without fundamentally altering who was worked with and why (the outcomes).

This led to some alterations in evaluation methods, as below.

Area of evaluation	Programme changes due to Covid 19	Original evaluation measure	Adapted evaluation measure
Volunteers	No use of volunteers in the programme	– Volunteer survey and focus groups	– No need for volunteer survey and focus groups
Artists	Work moved online largely after April	– Artist and commission numbers and outcomes – Artist online survey, focus groups and interviews – see below on ‘artist embedded research’.	– Online survey and interviews went ahead. – Online focus groups where appropriate.
Participants	Work moved online largely after April – however, some socially distanced delivery continued ‘on the ground’.	– Participant focus groups, participant surveys (online and face-to-face) and research using LeftCoast’s community researchers. – Event numbers and demographics. – Postcode analysis	– Participant focus groups were no longer possible. – Event numbers and demographics continued. – Postcode analysis continued
Audiences	As above but vast reduction in audience-based events.	– Use of data from online and face to face surveys – Event numbers and demographics – Audience Finder questionnaires for large scale events	– These did not take place. – Event numbers and demographics continued. – Largely discontinued
Partners		– Interviews	– Took place
Population	LeftCoast Happy-o-meter population surveys (door to door) no longer possible	– Use of data from Happy-o-meter surveys at beginning of programme and at intervals	– Initial data collection (pre lockdown) only, acting as baseline for later years.

Artist embedded research

For the developmental approach taken by LeftCoast in the Artist in Residence strands, an approach was taken that draws on the fact

that artists’ practice is inherently reflective and self-challenging, lending itself particularly well to assessing the second ACE National Research Question around approaches to quality of art and quality of engagement. The approach taken was to support each artist to

develop the Story of Change of their residency or commission, as discussed above, reflecting on who they felt it would affect, and what the difference they wanted to make was. Artists asked themselves what their key approaches and values were, and from that, developed the 'what' of the planned delivery. Finally, from this they asked themselves how they know all this is working – and develop evaluation measures, often journaling but at times quantitative outputs – for these.

This process began before lockdown so initial Stories of Change were developed. Following lockdown, we moved from a quarterly 'in person' discussion to a monthly zoom discussion of experience and outcomes which has been shared with University of Central Lancashire research team and has greatly shaped understanding and analysis for both evaluations, as well as providing space for action research and reflective learning for the artists themselves.

Director and team reflection sessions

We ran team reflection sessions on a quarterly basis to gather data on outcomes and learning on what worked and why. This also was helpful for the ACE quarterly reporting and following discussion between evaluator and team we moved it to suit this timing. The sessions are very useful in terms of practice and rethinking this so form a crucial part of the action learning cycle.

In addition, regular catch ups are held with the Programme Manager and University of Central Lancashire evaluation team for Real Estates to ensure link up of data collection and learning. And regular one to one challenge and reflect sessions between Ruth Melville and Tina Redford, LeftCoast director are held every 6-8 weeks as needed.

Primary data collection record

Data was collected by the evaluation team through a range of methods listed in the table below. NB Case studies based on interviews and observations.

Monitoring engagement and demographics

Information on ACE monitoring gathered by LeftCoast team. Used to show total engagements often known as 'Big Numbers':

1. ACE quarterly reports
2. ACE quarterly narrative reports
3. Engagement numbers and demographics were derived from figures captured at events in Phase 3 by the LeftCoast team for submission to Arts Council England, comprising of 4,346 responses.
4. Indices of deprivation - A report was prepared on behalf of RMR by Helen Corkery, using monitoring data and postcodes collected by the LeftCoast team at Phase 3 events. This included analysis of 3051 valid postcodes.
5. Audience Spectrum analysis – yearly analysis completed by The Audience Agency on postcodes provided by LeftCoast totalling 3,363 responses across the Phase.
6. Mapping reach of LeftCoast in Phase 3 using software to plot audience and participant postcodes – 3051 valid postcodes

Observations

1. RMR observations – Observations at three events, many informal discussions and regular reflection and catch-up calls with the Director.

2. Team observations – Team recorded observations and qualitative feedback via messaging app Slack which were analysed by the RMR team.

Data collection method	Collected from	Base (number of respondents)
Artist Surveys		
Developed for artists who had worked with LeftCoast in any capacity.	Artists	18 responses
Local area population survey - All houses in the direct vicinity of the residencies: around Greenfield Rd and Lingfield road in Flakefleet, around Bostonway and the intersection of Powell Avenue and Loftos Avenue in Haweside and around the site of the Launderette/ Wash your Words project in Mereside	Residents as listed	554 responses
ACE Diversity and Wellbeing Survey	LeftCoast participants	38 responses
LeftCoast team reflection workshops	LeftCoast team	8 workshops
Artist in Residence embedded research, including phone calls and discussions via email with 3 AiRs	AiRs	Approx .20 reflection sessions
Reflection workshops (Small Radical Acts/ SRAs)	SRA artists	3 workshops with 12 SRA artists
Stakeholder Interviews - Interviews were carried out with key stakeholders in the process, adding depth and range to the stakeholder workshop mentioned above. These included input from both local authorities, the lead organisation, housing, commercial, culture, community and leisure sectors.	Key stakeholders	22 interviews
Participant interviews (Upside participants)		14 interviews
Analysis of artistic outputs and other secondary data Including: 'Handle with care' film and 'Scrub Hub' film from Fleetwood Artist residency, PRU UClan Real Estates report May 2022 by Hugh Ortega Breton and Alastair Roy		