



Arts Lab

A creative wellbeing programme for young people in Cornwall

Impact Report 2022



Background

Arts Lab has grown from connections made possible by the recently formed Creative Health and Wellbeing Partnership, which seeks to use creative and cultural opportunities as a way of improving the health, wellbeing and life chances of individuals and communities in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

In response to this vision, Headstart Kernow, FEAST and Arts Well saw an opportunity to pool resources and experience and build a bespoke creative wellbeing programme for young people aged 10 – 16. The need amongst young people after lockdown for fun, connection and exploration was evident. Creative activities could unlock this.

HeadStart Kernow funded the programme via a National Lottery Community Fund grant. FEAST, part of Creative Kernow, led the artist commissioning and Arts Well ensured the '5 Ways to be Wellbeing' was embedded into the programme design. An Open Call went out to artists for their project ideas, and to young people's groups and schools to register to take part, and the programme got underway...

Arts Lab Aims

The priorities for each project were:

- To give young people **agency** to work on the project idea and development with artists
- To have some connection or visibility in the young people's **local community**
- To support young people to feel more **confident, happy, alert, resilient** and **connected** to the world and each other

The programme in numbers

39 projects commissioned

63 artists involved

Over **1,100** young people took part from

2 special schools

3 alternative provisions

15 primary schools

8 secondary schools

11 youth or community centres

147 teachers and/or youth workers supported on projects

100% of staff said projects had a positive impact on the young people's wellbeing

248 workshops and **16** community events delivered

(Plus digital engagement, running into the many tens of thousands)

£100,500 invested in local artists to deliver projects

80% of the grant invested in direct delivery

Programme timeline

FEBRUARY

Young people's groups invited to register interest sharing what art forms they are interested in and what personal goals they have // Artists submit project ideas

MARCH

Arts Lab team matches groups and artists based on artist expertise, group interest and location

APRIL

Training delivered in '5 ways to Wellbeing' and 'Trauma-informed Practice' to 46 artists working on the project // Demand is so strong that a 45% uplift in the grant is offered by HeadStart Kernow to commission more projects

APRIL – AUGUST

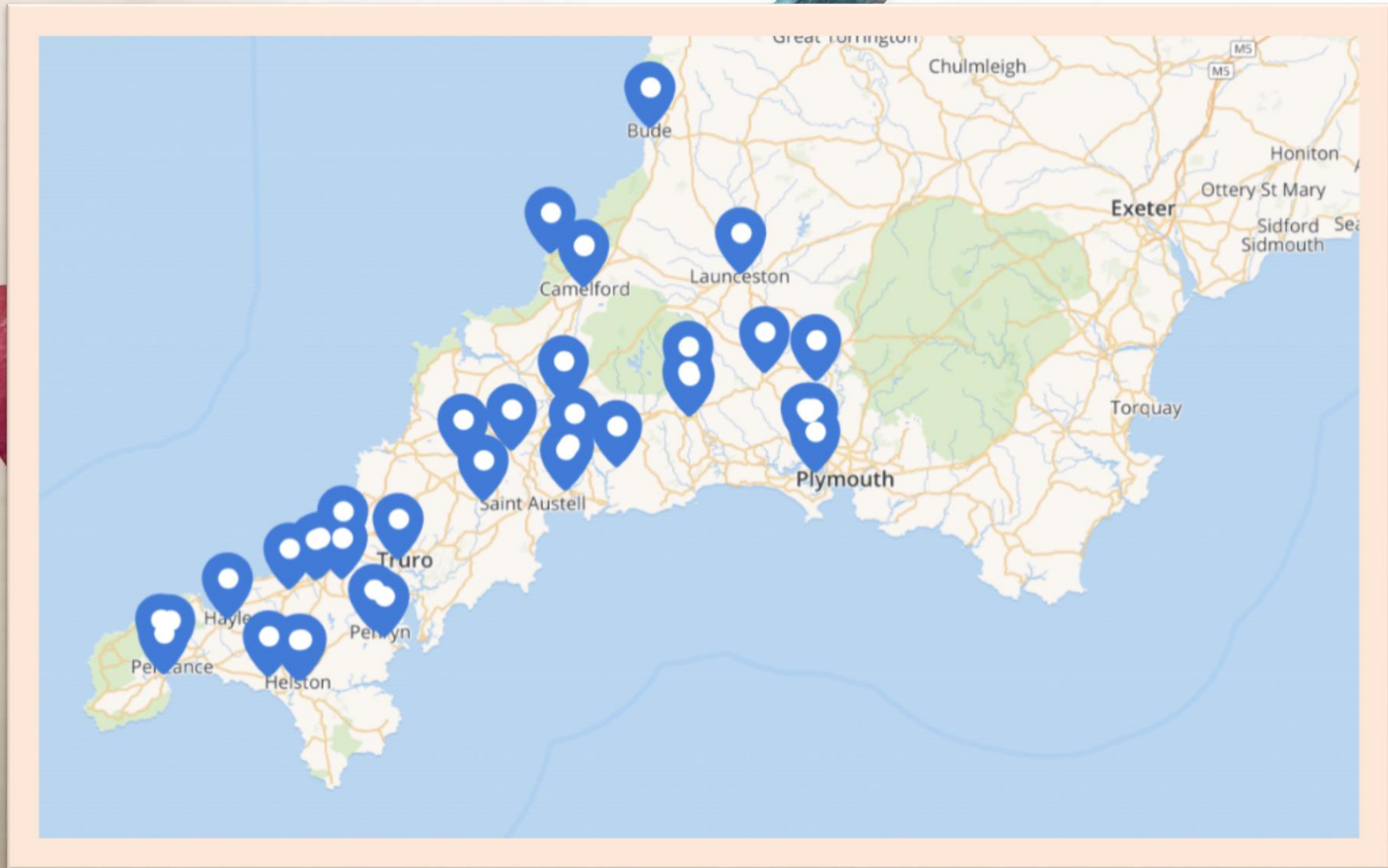
Projects take place (most offer 4 – 6 workshops), some end with a sharing, e.g. performance, exhibition

JULY – AUGUST

Evaluation with artists and groups via feedback forms and an artist reflective session to assess impact // Documentation – photographer and filmmaker engaged in July to capture the programme // Funding from Public Health Cornwall confirmed to run the programme for another 3 years



Project locations



Explore the map here:

<https://maphub.net/IZZYB/arts-lab-2022>



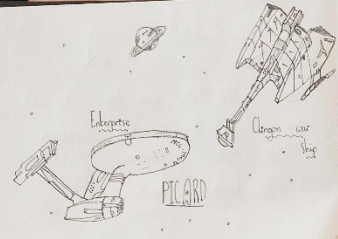

Wann-it Earth

Freddie*

He took the ball past the halfway line, he took the ball past 2 defenders..... and fired the ball at the back of the net at the last minute and the score was 2-1 to the other team. And he lost.

Wann-it going to lose either ways!

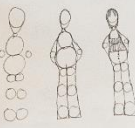
Wann-it!



Lobster

PICARD

Dragon car



TAKES About RIGMES

1. The first step is to draw a line...
2. To the middle of the line, draw a 'V' shape...
3. Draw a line from the top of the 'V' to the middle of the line...
4. Draw a line from the bottom of the 'V' to the middle of the line...
5. Draw a line from the top of the 'V' to the bottom of the 'V'...



POPULAR GAMES

1. The first step is to draw a line...
2. To the middle of the line, draw a 'V' shape...
3. Draw a line from the top of the 'V' to the middle of the line...
4. Draw a line from the bottom of the 'V' to the middle of the line...
5. Draw a line from the top of the 'V' to the bottom of the 'V'...

SPLANN-



Wann-it going to lose either ways!

SPLANN-IT EARTH



Wann-it going to lose either ways!



ASTROWEIBR



Wann-it going to lose either ways!



Wann-it going to lose either ways!

SPLANN-



Wann-it going to lose either ways!

Art forms and Skills

Artists, teachers and youth workers referenced a range of skills that they felt the young people had gained from taking part in projects, including:

Everyday Skills

- Articulating ideas
- Collaboration
- Communicating ideas
- Dementia awareness
- Emotional awareness
- Experimentation
- Listening
- Mindfulness
- Patience
- Problem solving
- Time management
- The process of progressing ideas
- Understanding of how to support good mental health
- Using bio-metric data as creative tools
- Using unusual materials (soil, moss) to create with

Creative Skills

- Ceramics
- Choreography
- Collage
- Colour-mixing
- Construction skills
- Drawing
- Film-making processes including camera techniques
- Gardening
- Instrumental knowledge
- Lantern-making
- Music-making
- Painting
- Performance
- Photogrammetry
- Poetry
- Press-printing
- Research
- Sculpture and fabrication techniques
- Sewing
- Singing
- Sound art
- Writing
- Zine-making

Final pieces

It wasn't necessary for artists to work towards a final product with the young people and showcase it, though some did. These included:

6 animations

5 films

4 exhibitions

4 zines

2 murals

9 public performances/sharings to friends and families

2 moss graffiti walls

2 banners

1 sunflower garden

1 sculpture

1 installation

3 displays in schools or local spaces, including an empty retail unit and a local Memory Café





Young people's feedback

Feedback from young people was overwhelmingly positive. There was a sense that young people felt **heard**, built **social bonds** and were able to **input** into the project ideas:

The art sessions were my favourite part of the week as I could express myself in different creative ways.

[The sessions were] Stress relieving because we don't usually get to do things like this at school.

This is the most fun thing I have ever done in school.

When you work together you make bigger things and it helps you bond as friends.

Young people also shared their enjoyment in **discovering new skills:**

I didn't realise I liked art so much. I hope you can come to my new secondary school and do an art project there.

Great, because I found out I'm actually good at art which shocked me.

It was new for me to do work and have fun.

[I enjoyed] learning that things don't need to be perfect.

The weavings took time but I learned how to make knots and I love them hanging in the trees.

I liked the breathing exercise because it helps me to concentrate.

Exploring their environment in new ways to find creative inspiration was also something they enjoyed:

In my 11 years of living I have never noticed the angels with banjos in the town.

I loved being outside and by the sea and the words we made in the sand were all about feeling calm, relaxed and inspired.

[The art we have made] will brighten up the area.

It's so good not to be rushed and being in the woods was calming, peaceful and fun.

Inevitably, not all young people wished to fully engage. As the nature of the funding and projects was short-term, **participation was challenging for some** and some initial reactions to some of the artists were not as positive.

*This is s***.*

This is boring.

*What the f*** is this?*



Teacher & Youth Worker feedback

Staff at the young people's settings shared a range of benefits gained from the projects for the students and for themselves.

*It has **instilled a sense of curiosity** in the pupils (and me!!). They have **engaged their senses in a more mindful way**, from experiencing the sounds and vibrations that plants make, to smelling earth, they **now have a greater sense of wonder at the world around them** ... Most of all for me, seeing how non-traditional materials are being used to create artwork and thinking about what Art is and what can influence your work, has **prompted me to think about how I can create a similar sense of awe and wonder in projects** we plan for pupils in school.*

*This project has allowed natural discussions for students to **talk about wellbeing and own how they feel**.*

*We saw an increase in participation and confidence with most children...The class groups were separate bubbles until this term, **the sessions***



allowed children to meet for the first time in over a year. In improvisation 2 boys who didn't know each other were enjoying communicating gesturally through dance, the teachers were extremely pleased as they move into a class together next term.

It was lovely for them to look at what makes them feel happy, and to focus that energy into creating artwork. **The reflective practice of looking at self-motivators has helped to identify strategies students can use when feeling dysregulated.**

Self-pride in their outcomes and sharing their animations with family & friends **boosted students' confidence.**

All students within this space have their own needs and struggles which impact their education. They all have struggled with meeting new people. This project has allowed them to build their confidence and **experience success with new people** who have **allowed them to be them and not be judged.** This has had a truly magical impact on our young people.

There was **lots of laughter, lots of joy,** and a lovely atmosphere.

It was lovely to see the **learners interacting with each other and striking up non-verbal dance 'conversations'** so easily and comfortably.



100% of staff felt that projects had a **positive impact on the young people's wellbeing**

Case studies (names of settings have not been provided for confidentiality reasons)

A young person who generally does not outwardly acknowledge his peers, spontaneously placing a hoop over the head of another learner (who was walking in his vicinity) who had been in his class the previous year. Another would be two learners who previously did not know each other, having a several minute long 'conversation' through movement who are now going to be in the same class next year, and have now already begun to build a friendship through dancing together.

Special Educational Needs School

L struggles socially and with anger. L was very engaged and asked to come along to both group sessions. L was able to engage with the artist and found ways to express his hobbies in print form. L sometimes struggled with his drawing, and developed tools to navigate this more positively.

Secondary School

One of our children was a selective mute. He had improved a lot over the year, although still struggled with unfamiliar adults. However, working with [Artists] he was openly sharing ideas and highly engaged with the project. Being able to have successfully engaged with this will then give him confidence when engaging with new and unfamiliar adults when he transitions up to secondary school, so this will give him a real boost.

Primary School

M is unable to attend mainstream school due to a variety of mental health issues and low self-esteem; she also experiences anxiety, dissociation and dysregulation. M is currently undergoing assessment for ASD.

At the start of the project, M had not been with us for very long, and I was still developing a relationship with her. M was very quiet in class, not wanting to share ideas or engage in social interactions.

The activities [Artist] worked on with the students engaged M immediately, and she became more willing to share ideas with [Artist] and I, and eventually the others in the class. C created some beautiful pieces during the project, and it was lovely to see her self-esteem grow as she shared poetry and crafts with others. M was able to use these to talk about how she was feeling, her likes and dislikes. Through the project, she has developed relationships with her classmates, and with me.

The project enabled C to develop her social and emotional literacy through the activities, and supporting her in developing her self-esteem and self-confidence. This has enabled C and me to work together on progress in subsequent lessons.

Alternative provision

Students worked in pairs on the project, and I was able to see such creativity in them, one student created an animation linking to smoking, it was really hard hitting and personal to them, they were able to share this, and heal from what they had experienced.

Secondary School

A young chap who was new to the group that has autism and has never been to any 'mixed' clubs before really benefited from these sessions.

As a result of this he now attends every week and he was originally support by his mum to attend youth club, but she now waits in the car. He has found a place where he fits in, and his talents can be nurtured!

Youth Club



Things to improve

The Arts Lab team brought artists together at the end of the programme to get an insight into what worked well and what could be improved. Below are the main themes that came up from these discussions, their feedback forms and from the team's own reflections.

Project design – longer lead in time for artists to prepare sessions in collaboration with schools and/or youth groups.

Call Out stage – ensure the Call Out to schools and youth organisations is reaching a broad range of demographics, including home educated young people and that there is clear evidence of commitment from the school or the youth group.

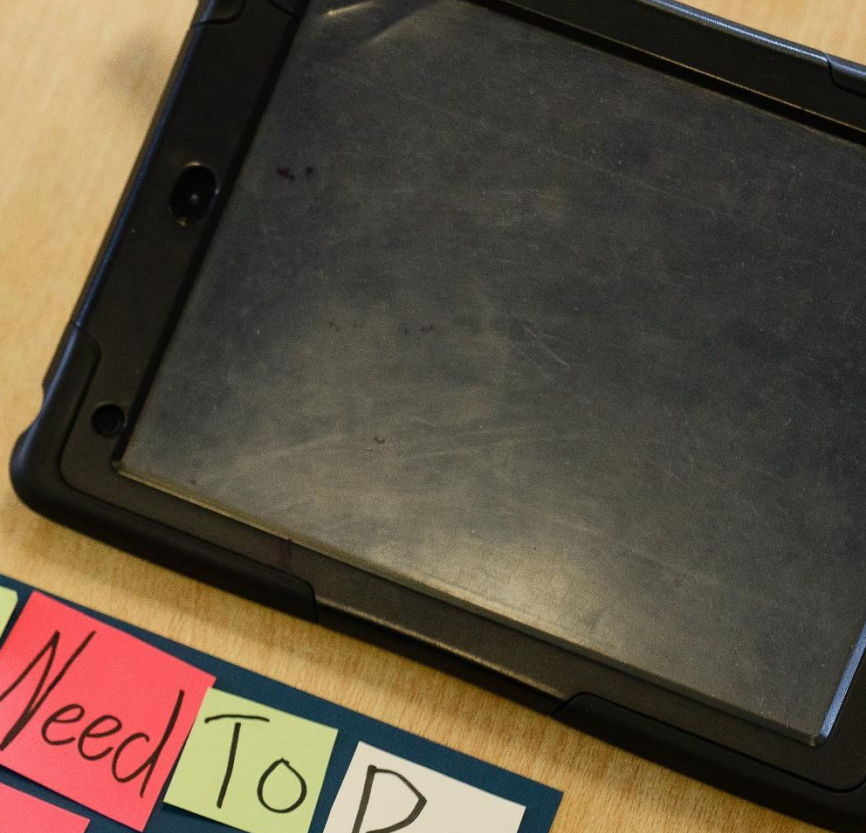
Planning once groups are matched – offer artists a paid planning meeting with groups once matched to test the viability of the pairing; offer sufficient support to artists with regard to safeguarding and risk assessing.

Delivery – offer the option of project extensions for schools and youth organisations that would like longer-term projects and can resource the additional time themselves.

Legacy – support artists to manage the endings of projects; provide resources and/or opportunities to young people who are interested in progression routes.

Study Time
H A L K O P
W V C
L A C
M A R

It Doesn't Need To Be
Perfect To Be Good!!!



Conclusion

This pilot year has demonstrated:

- the **need** for creative wellbeing projects for young people who over recent years in particular, have experienced disruption and loss.
- the **power** of the arts as a tool for positive emotional and social change.

Arts Lab has been successful because of the high quality and experience of the professional artists and the enthusiasm of the groups taking part. It has also been crucial that a clear ethos informed the programme:

- young people had **agency**, voiced what they wanted and with the artists devised project content and direction
- the framework of the **Five ways to Well Being**: Connect, Be Active, Notice, Keep Learning, Give
- **collaboration** with young people creating together and connecting with their community where possible
- **space** for positive feelings – joy, pride, calm – to thrive

There was one finding we had not anticipated:

You can't get it wrong can you? What the young people fed back was that the **process was more important than the final product**. They lost themselves in the act of being creative, which made them relax and live in the moment...in fact they were artists for those hours in which they were engaged with the project. The lack of external targets was mentioned again and again as positive for both young people and artists.

Being heard, letting creativity happen organically, seeing with new eyes and working together, has proven key to developing positive wellbeing.

The success of Arts Lab is evidenced by the fact that we have another 3 years funding confirmed from Public Health Cornwall which we will be seeking to match fund. This pilot has given us much that the team can work on over the coming years, to take Arts Lab Year 2 to new heights.

Watch the Arts Lab film here – https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bSYq_Trz0H4



Partners



Photo credit: Steve Tanner (pages 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 11, 12, 14 bottom photo, 17, 18, 20)

FEAST is part of Creative Kernow Ltd registered in England & Wales - Charity no. 292138

CREATIVE
KERNOW

Funders

