

The Cultural Spring



ANNUAL REVIEW 2022-2023

“Being creative gives me a good sense of wellbeing and achievement. I also got to know some new people.”

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The 12 months between April 2022 and March 2023 marked the end of **The Cultural Spring's** third phase.

It also marked a change in the area in which we work as from April 2023, South Tyneside was no longer eligible for Creative People and Places funding due to the Active Lives data which is the metric used to determine support for Arts Council England's (ACE) Creative People and Places programme.

However, we're continuing to deliver projects and programmes in South Tyneside through The Cultural Spring Charity, which we established in 2020.

The Charity team has been working to raise funds through Trusts and Foundations, as well as commissions, to ensure work continues in South Tyneside.

This review outlines the work we've done over the last year as well as introducing you to members of our team who've joined us over the last year.



The year 2022-2023 has been our busiest yet in terms of projects and programmes delivered.

The Stephenson Trail - Hetton Colliery Railway 200th Anniversary Celebrations

We completed our project work with Sunderland City Council celebrating the 200th anniversary of Hetton Colliery Railway, the first railway in the world to use only steam and gravity power. We were commissioned by the council to help mark the date with a spectacular programme of events and activities.

Exhibitions of work produced during the project were held in June and July 2023, with a further planned for September.

The railway was used to transport coal from Elemore and Hetton pits to the River Wear in Sunderland. The Stephenson Trail traces the route of the railway from Elemore Park and with our support, Sunderland City Council celebrated the importance of the railway.

Our programme included: a resource pack for local primary schools; a photographic project; a banner and flags project led by artist Pauline Taylor; a trailmarkers project and a music programme. The latter included a beautiful song from Marty Longstaff, who worked with Sunderland Male Voice Choir and Houghton Brass Band to create Stephenson's Engine - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IBaqX97WWO8&t=13s>

Funding for the celebration of the Stephenson Trail came from Neighbourhood Funds from Sunderland City Council's East, West and Coalfields areas.

For more information go to

<https://www.theculturalspring.org/stephenson-trail>



Bangladesh Independence Day

In the summer of 2022 we worked with The Customs House and two South Tyneside primary schools to create artwork that will decorate shop and restaurant windows to celebrate Bangladesh's Independence Day (August 21) - and the country's rich heritage and culture. The success of the event led it to being repeated in 2023.



Covid Memorial Project

We collaborated with South Tyneside Council on a project to recognise the impact of the Covid pandemic on our communities. The council memorials were installed in South Shields, Jarrow, Hebburn, Cleadon, Whitburn and Boldon. We worked with artist Lesley Wood on community consultation sessions across the borough and then with Claire Finlay and Lindsey Grieves who worked with community groups to develop bespoke wording for each memorial.

Claire and Lindsey were selected by a community panel and as well as working with the groups on the wording they supported local people in developing an artistic response to their Covid experiences. Lindsey led workshops in Shields and Jarrow, while Claire worked with people in East Boldon, Cleadon, Boldon Colliery, Hebburn and Whitburn.

The work created in Lindsey's sessions went on display at Jarrow Hall and Ocean Road Community Association. Claire's groups focused on creating rainbows made up of hearts they'd created. The rainbows then went on display at various venues around the borough. The memorials were unveiled at services held at each location on March 12.



Barnes Park Family Fun Day

Last summer we also supported Sunderland City Council by organising a bandstand programme for Barnes Park Family Fun Day. Some of the groups involved included Lisa Clinton School of Dance, Youth Almighty Project and all-women Samba drumming band The Bangshees.

Our Bitesize performances

Our largest programme during 2022-2023 was our Bitesize performances, which was planned and developed during the year April 2022 to March 2023. This project was very similar to one we ran in 2018 and involved commissioning four very different performances at community venues not normally associated with theatrical performances across Sunderland.

The commissions were:

Sweet Caroline and the Football Boots

We Make Culture produced an interactive, music-led performance for children and families based on Sweet Caroline a young girl desperate to be a footballer. Venues included Hetton Primary, the Millennium Centre, Monkwearmouth Academy, Back on the Map and Grindon Community Church.

The Foodbank Generation Game

Theatre Space North worked with Sunderland Community Food Bank to highlight the huge problem of food poverty through a 'game show' theatrical performance. Venues included 17Nineteen; Thompson Park; St Paul's, Ryhope; Easington Lane Community Access Point (ELCAP) and The Forge in Washington.

Milk, Two Sugars

Theatre company Woven Nest developed an immersive, multi-sensory show for older adults in care homes or community centres. The production was set around a tea trolley, a popular feature in care homes. Venues included The Old Rectory in Houghton-le-Spring and Pallion Action Group in Kayll Road.

Redcoat

Theatre group The Six Twenty worked with Sunderland College based Cozmic 3piphany a group that gives young LGBTQ+ people in the city a voice. Together they developed and adapted Redcoat, Lewis Jobson's one-man show about identity and belonging, based on his experiences of being a Redcoat at Butlin's. Venues included ELCAP; The Volt, Pallion; Columbia Village CA; 17Nineteen and Red House Community Centre.

Feedback from the project was exceptionally positive and a repeat of 'Bitesize' is planned for next year in both Sunderland and South Tyneside.



Metro's 40th Anniversary

Artwork produced in a project led by artist Laura Brenchley appeared at three South Tyneside Metro stations. In partnership with Nexus, we produced artwork for three South Tyneside stations to mark the 40th anniversary of the Metro.

Laura worked with community groups, schools and members of the public to produce tiles which formed a larger collage for Bede, Chichester and Hebburn stations.

The project was a partnership with Metro's operator, Nexus, and was funded by Arts Council England, as part of the big Metro Takeover project marking the network's 40th anniversary.

The artwork is in the form of large collages made up of individual tiles created by members of the community groups, and can be seen in Hebburn, Chichester and Bede stations.



Summer Streets

The free Sunderland music festival started as a Cultural Spring project, but in recent years Ross Millard's fantastic event has been funded by Arts Council England and Sunderland City Council, among others.

Last year we worked with Ross, Pauline Taylor from Infinite Arts and local primary schools to decorate Cliff Park for the festival.

Participant Quotes

"It is really good for me to forget about all my problems and go into my own little world while learning a new skill."

"Excellent way to learn new skills with a group, develop new social contacts, help to de-stress and distract, if necessary."

"It was very mindful and it helped my mental health."

Phase 3 Evaluation

Management consultants Colibra completed evaluation of our third phase, ending in March 2023.

Colibra's report was very positive and complimentary. In a nutshell, Colibra concluded we had:

*Three more years of successfully engaging the least engaged in arts and cultural activities across South Tyneside and Sunderland – in spite of the challenges presented during Covid-19 lockdowns.

*A third of people involved had with no previous arts engagement in the preceding twelve months and a further 43% had only engaged between 1-3 times in the previous twelve months – no mean feat after the six previous years of CPP delivery.

*A successful pivoting during Covid-19 to ensure continued programming, delivery, access and engagement.

Furthermore, Colibra said the impact of our work over Phase 3 resulted in:

*Arts and culture more embedded within communities of place, interest and identity – leading to increased appetites for more – resulting in more diverse participants, audiences and co-creators.

*Improved wellbeing amongst those involved – especially important during Covid-19 when mental health took its toll on many.

*Enhanced Community cohesion and self-reliance

- * Economic benefits amongst artists and commissioned organisations
(Images of headline stats attached...)

Description	Target	Achieved	Difference
Workshop participants	3500	7679	+ 119%
Go and See visits	500	602	+ 20%
Creative practitioners commissioned	30	36	+ 20%
Commissioned organisations	10	10	100%
New companies commissioned	2	2	100%
Audience members	8000	5278	-34%
50 Community Arts Champions	50	44	-12%
Volunteers	20	106	+430%
Commissioning Forums	10	18	+ 80%

Meaningful & genuine arts engagement

- ▶ *'We are never made to feel like a token community input....our opinions are always valued' – Community member'.*
- ▶ *'Made me feel really special to be receiving a pack of treasures and treats to create. It really changed my mood and gave me something worthwhile to do' - Participant.*
- ▶ *'I've been able to work with a different group of participants and had to adapt my practice to best suit their needs and interests. I've undertaken training on first aid for mental health, which was useful and practical' - Artist.*
- ▶ *'Seeing participants smile and build in confidence is always a joy! Likewise, seeing them achieve wonderful things is a privilege - and more so, when new friendships form, and they are all rooting for each other - supporting each other in their creative pursuits! I am happy I could have been part of that' – Creative practitioner.*

Engagement demographics

- 30% disability/limiting health condition.
- 45% aged under 16 years.
- 9% ethnic minorities.
- 58% resident in the top 30% of most deprived areas in Sunderland and South Tyneside.
- 22% male.
- 77% female.
- 1% non-binary.

Notable successes in reaching increasing numbers of young people, families, men and minority ethnic groups.

Outcomes - the difference made to those engaging

- 👍 99% would recommend the activity to others.
- 👍 99% reported an appetite/intention to engage in future arts activities.
- 👍 98% felt a sense of achievement.
- 👍 93% reported learning something new.
- 👍 93% valued the social aspect of their engagement and feel more socially connected.
- 👍 92% reported that engaging in programmed activities made them feel happy.

Our Seasonal Programmes of Workshops

The number of workshops within our programmes of activity accelerated during the year March 2022 to March 2023.

Workshops were hosted at new venues in Sunderland and South Tyneside and we worked with artists we've not worked with before to introduce new and exciting activities to our programmes.



Large Scale Research and Development Projects

In September 2022 we launched commissions for research and development projects that could scale-up to major productions in Sunderland in Autumn 2024.

A panel led by some of our Community Champions chose two commissions – for a Sunderland light festival, and a major music and dance production celebrating Sunderland's industrial heritage.

Award-winning folk and hip hop dance company Breaking Tradition will bring people from across the city together to create the latter, while artist Sara Blackburn was chosen to work with local communities and groups to produce artwork for a light festival.

Both projects are ongoing, with community groups being consulted in regular workshops regarding the final project next year.



Warm Spaces Programme

As well as our own programme of arts workshops and activities we worked with Sunderland City Council to help deliver a programme of workshops funded through its Warm Spaces programme. This workshop programme was supported through Community Led Local Development (CLLD) and European Structural and Invest Funds (ESIF) funding.

We engaged 110 participants during January – March 2023. The programme delivered 20 activity packs and 44 face-to-face arts sessions across six new partner venues/organisations in Sunderland. The workshops engaged new people in the arts, helped people learn new skills and develop skills in creative enterprise. Artwork and crafts produced led to involvement in Arts Centre Washington's Craft Fair April 1.

The programme culminated in artwork and products being created for a craft fair at Arts Centre Washington.



Go and See Visits

We also had a busy programme of Go and See visits. This programme aims to ensure that people living in our communities get the chance to experience the best arts and cultural events happening across the North East and beyond.

We work with theatres, galleries, festivals and artists to gain access to special events, back stage tours and discounted tickets for people living in our wards.

The Festival of Thrift was the destination of a Go and See in September 2022. Later in the year (October 29) we also organised a trip to see The Pitmen Poets at The Fire Station. Other trips were organised to the Empire pantomime in Sunderland and The Customs House panto in South Shields; a National Theatre of The Ocean at the End of the Lane, also at the Empire, and a visit to see the Lindisfarne Gospels at the Laing Art Gallery.

Another trip was to see Grayson Perry's Vanity of Small Differences at Sunderland Museum & Winter Gardens.

March 2022 to March 2023 was also a year of new appointments at The Cultural Spring.

First of all our friends at Young Asian Voices (YAV), based in Sans Street, Sunderland, joined us as a core partner. YAV's Executive Manager Kumareswaradas Ramanathas, known as Ram, now represents the organisation on The Cultural Spring's Steering Group.



Catherine Scott joined our Charity as Development Worker, a role created to help make the Charity's work in South Tyneside is sustainable in the long-term. An experienced arts professional Catherine has worked with arts organisations across the North East, as well as nationally, as a fundraiser, project manager and digital marketer. She works closely with the Cultural Spring project team and the Charity trustees to support the work in South Tyneside.

Meanwhile artist Claire Finlay also joined the Charity as Projects Officer. Claire was well known to us as she's worked with us on our seasonal workshops for some time.

While Emma Biggins also came on board, first as our Empty Shops Coordinator and later as our Community Engagement Coordinator. Emma was a driving force in our Warm Spaces programme and has been a great addition!

We were also joined by intern Megan Disken. Megan is helping us with our workshops and artists, with our marketing, and also with our admin and finance. Originally from Dewsbury, West Yorkshire, Megan studied Fine Arts at Newcastle University. She is interested in sculpture - particularly working with metal, wood and recycled objects - but also enjoys collage, drawing, photography and textiles.



Community Champion

We asked one of our Community Champions **Andrea Errington** about her journey with The Cultural Spring. This is what she said:

“I was suffering from an ailment that compromised my immunity, making it impossible for me to work or interact with others. I learned about The Cultural Spring and its incredible offer to deliver craft packs to community members who couldn’t attend programmes in person. The projects were enjoyable, and it seemed like I had been given a lifeline.

I started to feel better and wanted to help others, so I volunteered to be a Community Champion and offer my support. Since then, I have participated in many in-person and online decision-making panels for both small and large-scale projects. I accepted the offer to act as a guest judge for the associated photography competition in order to promote the Stephenson Project.

Additionally, I have assisted a Cultural Spring film commission by interviewing prospective media companies. I’ve recently been participating in online catch-up meetings to talk about the development and progress of active projects that are in their R&D phase. The We are Sunderland initiative from Breaking Tradition, which celebrates regional heritage through song and dance, is one of two projects. The other is the Sunderlight project by artist Sara Blackburn, whose commission will create a light trail in Barnes Park in co-operation with local communities.

I recently had the privilege to attend an Arts Council reception at the House of Commons owing to the efforts of the Cultural Spring, where I had an opportunity to network with other volunteers and project managers.

I’m happy to help out whenever needed as a photographer, proofreader, and all-around supporter. I have participated in a number of the available workshops, where I also provided feedback, such as family clay sessions, watercolour painting, and mindful zentangles.

I’m eager to promote the advantages of The Cultural Spring’s initiative and always try to encourage others to learn the benefits of participation.”



The Cultural Spring is part of the Creative People and Places programme, initiated and funded by Arts Council England through the National Lottery. Creative People and Places projects are about more people taking the lead in choosing, creating and taking part in art experiences in the places where they live.

With £108 million investment nationally in the programme since its launch through Arts Council England in 2012, Creative People and Places projects have empowered communities across the country to take the lead in deciding what creative activities they want and need.

The projects have a wide-ranging, positive impact on individuals and communities in parts of the country where involvement in arts and culture is significantly below the national average. There have been over 7.5 million engagements with the programme – 86% of which are from groups with low to medium engagement with arts and culture.

The Cultural Spring works in Sunderland and South Tyneside and our core partners are University of Sunderland, The Customs House, Sunderland Music, Arts and Culture (MAC) Trust, and Sangini, a women's health organisation which operates in both boroughs; The Cultural Spring Charity and Young Asian Voices in Sunderland.



The Cultural Spring team was deeply saddened to hear of the passing of Lucy Mackie (pictured above), one of our Community Champions and a great friend to the project for many years.

Lucy passed away last Spring at St Benedicts Hospice after a short illness.

Emma Horsman, our Project Director, said:

"Lucy was one of the loveliest people you could meet and a huge supporter of The Cultural Spring. She attended many of our workshops and sessions, helped with selection panels and became a much-valued Community Champion and member of our Steering Group.

"Lucy was one of our very first Community Champions and I remember meeting her in 2014 in the cafe at Souter Lighthouse when we started to have conversations about The Cultural Spring and what we should be doing in the communities we serve."

We publish a monthly newsletter. If you would like to receive a copy, email us at info@theculturalspring.org.uk.

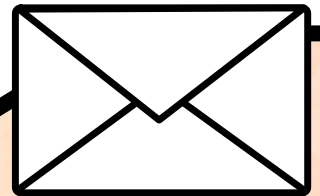
You can also keep up to date with what we're doing through our social media channels:

Twitter: [Cultural_Spring](https://twitter.com/Cultural_Spring)

Facebook: facebook.com/culturalspring

Instagram: [@theculturalspring](https://www.instagram.com/theculturalspring)

Or through our website www.theculturalspring.org.uk



The Cultural Spring



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