

# CREATE CHURCH STREET

ARTS & CULTURE FUNDING

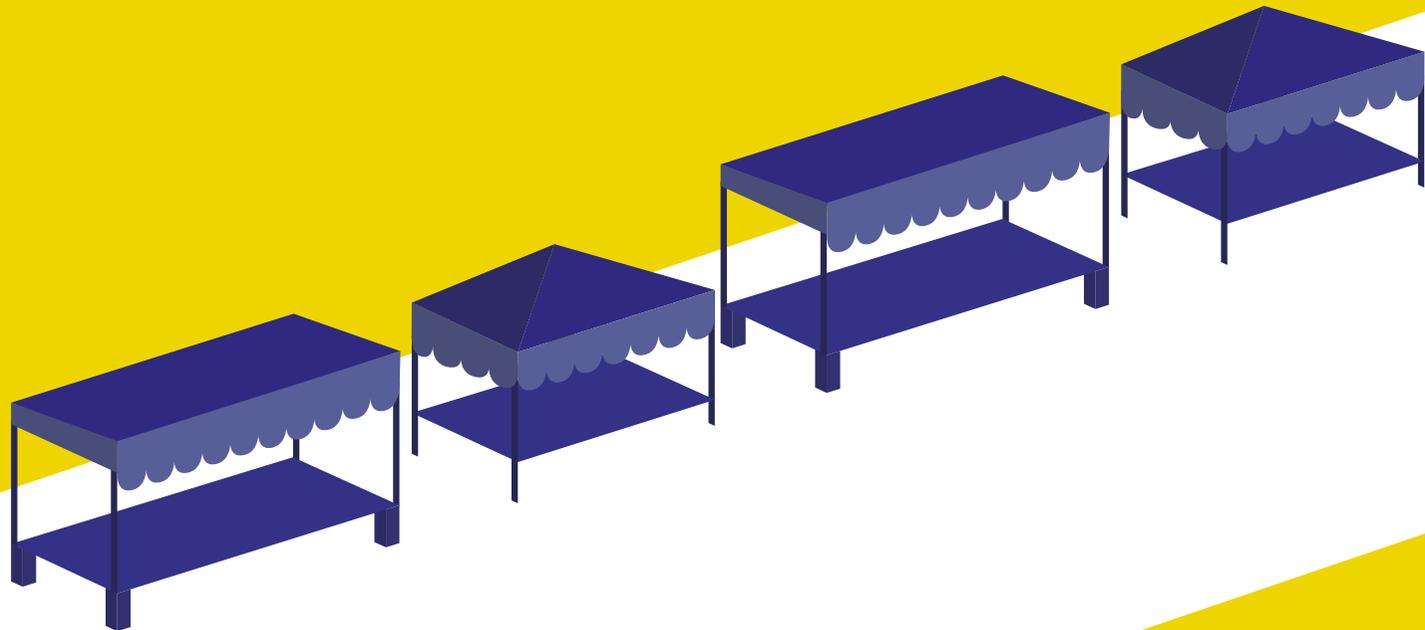


City of Westminster

## EVALUATION OVERVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Research and reporting by  
The Audience Agency  
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 the audience agency



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# BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Create Church Street was one of the recommendations of the Arts and Culture Working Group. This was a sub group of the Futures Steering Group and met from 2013 to 2016.

*The arts and cultural group stressed that supporting on-going and new projects will foster partnerships and creative opportunities for the neighbourhood. It was also felt that there were infrastructural issues which could be addressed in terms of facilities which could be considered as part of the renewal programme. And that a local funding and communication infrastructure will enable collaborations and innovative partnerships to thrive in the lead up to the area's regeneration, and beyond.<sup>1</sup>*

**The Church Street Masterplan**, launched in 2017, creates a framework for all development in the Church Street area and renewed focus for the area's regeneration. Westminster City Council's (WCC) vision is to create a great place where people want to live, where communities will thrive and businesses will prosper.

The Church Street Ward within Westminster City Council in London, is nestled between Marylebone Road, the railway lines out of Marylebone Station, Regent's Canal and Edgware Road.

The Ward has a population of around 12,000 which is younger than the average for Westminster (a higher proportion of under 20 year olds) and of diverse ethnicities (particularly characterised by its Bangladeshi and Arab communities).

It boasts a theatre, galleries, an antiques quarter, a whole range of community groups and organisations, a secondary school, two primary schools and City of Westminster College close by.

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<sup>1</sup> Report on Church Street Arts and Culture, September 2014, commissioned by WCC from Beth Cinnamon.

# CREATE CHURCH STREET AIMS

Create Church Street was devised to benefit the community in light of the upcoming neighbourhood renewal as set out in the masterplan. However, the fund recognised the intrinsic impacts which creativity can bring to individuals and their communities, as well as the benefits such experiences could have at a time of change.

Create Church Street offered the opportunity to enhance the existing arts, cultural and creative activity going on in the Ward, and encourage more people to engage with arts and creativity, and benefit from it.

Of course, this comes at a time for Church Street when it is beneficial, both for the community and WCC, that residents are encouraged to:

- Express themselves effectively.
- Interact with their neighbours and other residents to build a sense of empowerment for a community.
- Focus on what is important to them in their area and for their community.

It is recognised<sup>2</sup> that there are certain barriers to effective involvement in local strategy and planning experienced by communities. The literature suggests that the way to overcome these barriers is to support citizens to become active in their communities through involvement in projects relevant to their lives and communities. If training and mentoring is involved this kind of activity can be particularly effective. Create Church Street invited residents to get involved, develop skills, broaden their experience and cooperate or collaborate.

While other funds, such as Neighbourhood Keepers<sup>3</sup>, support activities which promote health and wellbeing, Create Church Street recognised the broader social impacts of participating in the arts.

*There is strong evidence that participation in the arts can contribute to community cohesion, reduce social exclusion and isolation, and/or make communities feel safer and stronger.*

The Value of Arts and Culture to People and Society an evidence review, Arts Council England 2013.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> *Resident Involvement and Community Action: Theory to Practice (Policy & Research)* (1998) by Charlie Cooper (Editor), Murray Hawtin (Editor). The issues are summarised in the following: *Changing places: how can we make resident involvement relevant?* (2015) by Family Mosaic <https://www.peabody.org.uk/media/9759/2015-changing-places.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.westminster.gov.uk/neighbourhood-keepers-programme>

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Value\\_arts\\_culture\\_evidence\\_review.pdf](https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Value_arts_culture_evidence_review.pdf)

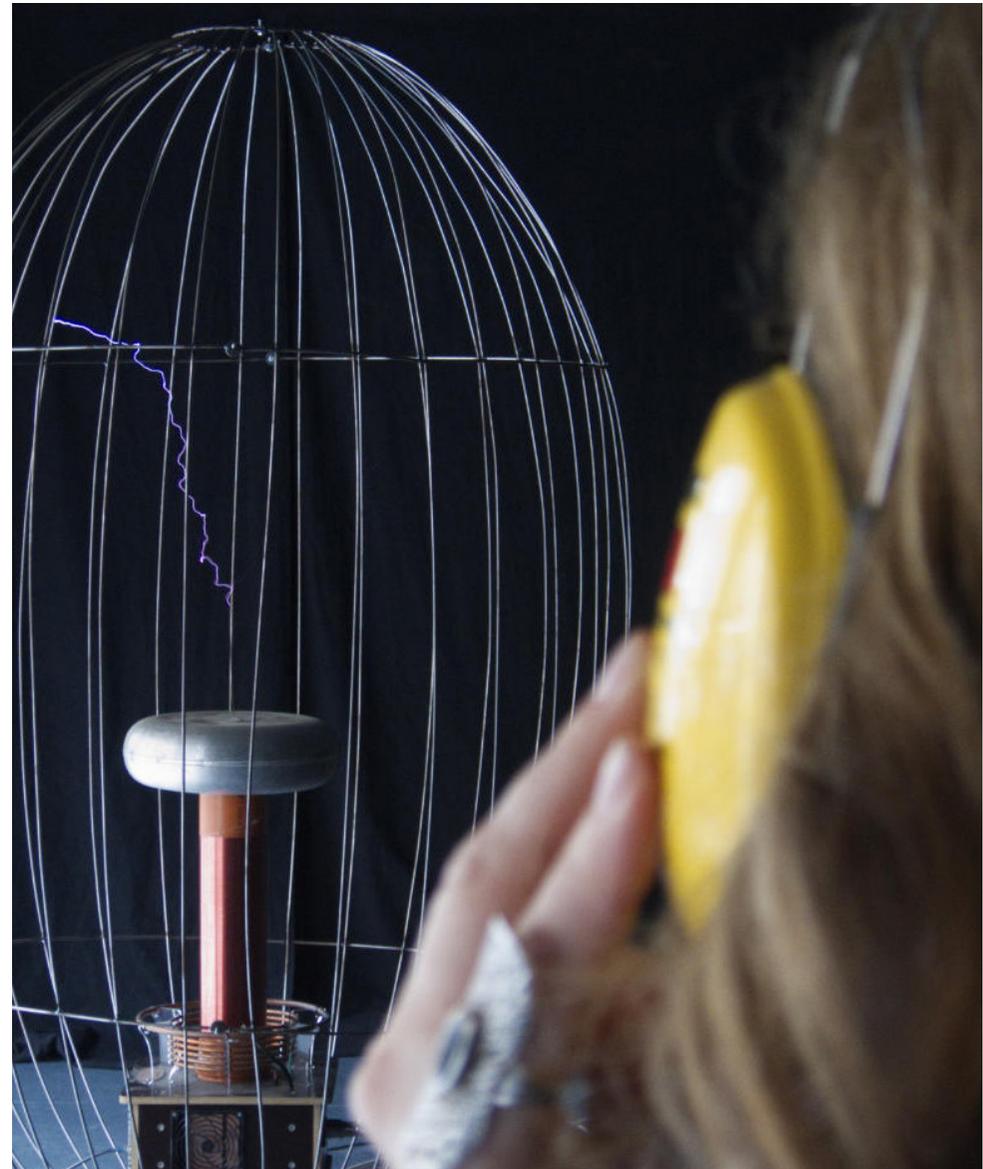
## EVALUATION

This evaluation took place following the end of the Create Church Street programme. It uses a mixed methodology including document and assets review, interviews and conversations and an e-survey for project leads.

Interviewees included Westminster City Council culture and regeneration teams, The Showroom, four members of the Create Panel and five Project Leads.

The Project Lead Survey was completed by 17 of the 29 projects funded and was live from 20th March to 11th April 2019.

This document is a summary of the evaluation report which examined the ambition of Create Church Street and how it achieved its impacts and outcomes, the process for applicants and its accessibility. The evaluation also assessed and makes recommendations for what could come next. The full report is available from Westminster City Council.



*Bright Spark: from bookbinding to science, how Michael Faraday influences our everyday lives, Fitzrovia Noir Community Interest Company*

# CREATE CHURCH STREET AMBITION

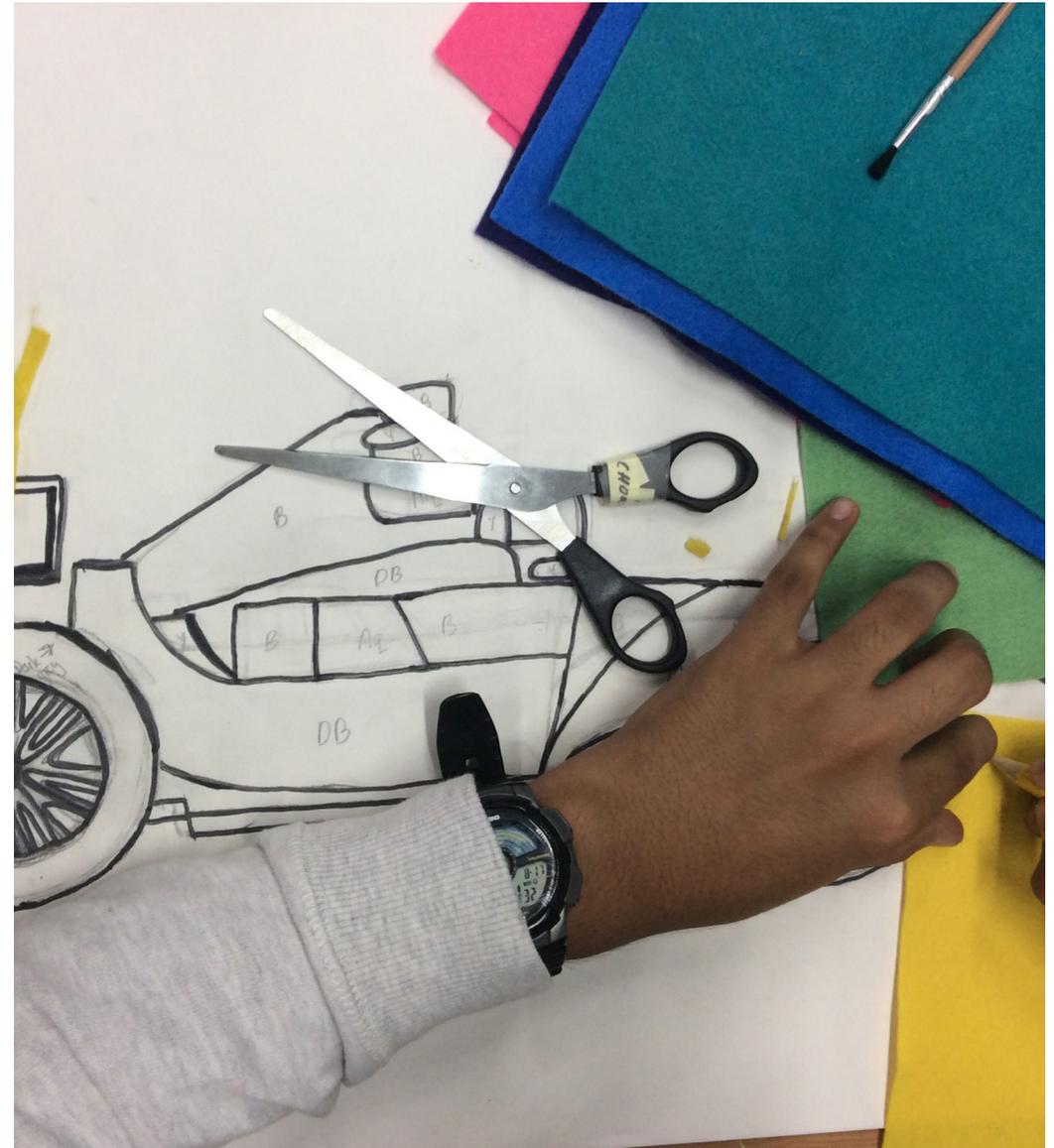
The fund invited applications for creative projects, with a budget of between £200 and £10,000, and encouraged innovative project proposals which:

- Directly benefitted and involved the local Church Street Ward and its residents.
- Encouraged greater local engagement with art, making or culture.

Projects were expected to focus on outcomes which developed:

- A sense of belonging in an area.
- Confidence to access cultural events.
- Social value in a tangible and accessible way.

The Create Panel of local residents and artists assessed applications for funding. Westminster City Council culture and regeneration teams were on hand to coordinate this process and offer advice to potential projects preparing funding applications. In the third round of the programme, The Showroom was also co-opted to support artists and organisations to prepare funding bids.



Art Classes, Marylebone Bangladesh Society



DIY Gallery, Olivia Chessell

## Assessment of applications

Overall the accessibility of the programme was rated as good by project leads, although it is difficult to judge who did not apply and for what reasons. Some adjustments in process and language would ensure that the widest range of potential applicants felt that the fund was for them. Those projects which were successful had a good understanding of the area and its residents or had made local connections. These projects aimed to develop their work specifically for and with the participants. Successful projects did not just understand or engage the community, they were 'of' the community, in that they made space for participants to shape projects, develop their skills and tell their stories on a very personal level. These successful projects were not over-ambitious, nor did they profess to be for everyone, and as a result they achieved their objectives.

*My motivation, what I was constantly thinking about was how does this benefit the community, what's the legacy of this project. And what can people learn from it, but also what the community at large can learn from this expression.*

Create Panel Member

*Is it just something that drops in and drops out, or is it something that's embedded? It doesn't need to be a local artist, it just needs to be embedded within the locality.*

Create Panel Member

Striking the right balance for a small grants programme between accessibility and due diligence is important. Some grantees, less experienced in applying for funding, financial management and delivering community projects, encountered challenges. It is also suggested that some potential applicants were put off for reasons of lack of experience.



City of Westminster

# CREATE CHURCH STREET

ARTS & CULTURE FUNDING

## Create Church Street delivered *a burst of creativity*

- CRAFT
- SEWING
- STORY WRITING
- AUDIO-VISUAL ARTWORKS
- ART
- COMEDIA DELL'ARTE
- DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY
- GARDENING
- PORTRAITURE
- LITERATURE
- THEATRE
- ELECTRICITY
- FILM-MAKING

- IMPROV DRAMA
- PUBLISHING
- VIDEO
- PANTOMIME
- SPOKEN WORD
- PHOTOGRAPHY
- PUPPETRY
- BOLLYWOOD DANCE
- STREET DANCE
- FASHION
- MUSICAL THEATRE
- FAMILY SHOWS



### COMMUNITIES INVOLVED:



# CREATE CHURCH STREET IMPACTS

## Residents and communities

Projects were successful in achieving their creative and social aims. Participants reported increased confidence as a result of the activities they were involved in, most of which encouraged self-expression in some form. Working alongside neighbours, meeting new people and talking about their own identity and that of where they live increased pride in the area and in themselves. The skills learned were practical for life, learning or careers.

Through creativity and exploration, residents were introduced to new activities, artforms and perspectives. The majority of participants were enthusiastic to continue with projects and develop their work and some have carried on exploring cultural opportunities. Create Church Street was successful in demonstrating that creative projects bring people together and provide a space for conversation and communal endeavour.



Cloth of Dreams, Debbie Guneratne



Cloth of Dreams, Debbie Guneratne

*The residents feel ... more secure and safe to know that they are part of a group of diverse communities within Church Street and no longer feel socially isolated.*

Project Lead

*Young people were thrilled to have a space to call their own. They were sad it was only temporary.*

Project Lead

*[participants] said that the project showed the diversity of the area and made them feel proud of it.*

Project Lead

*I created a bag from recycled newspaper and then actually sold it. I did not imagine that I could ever do that. This makes me feel proud*

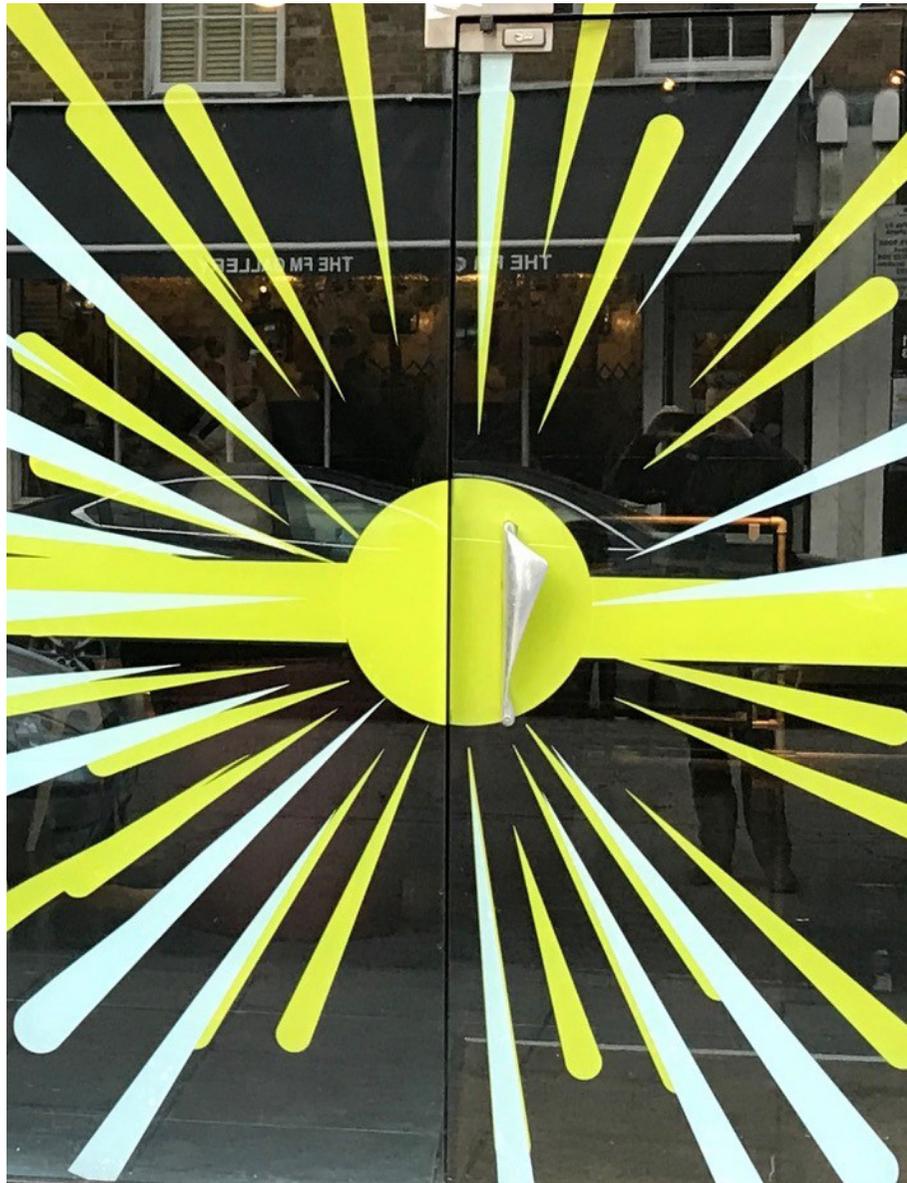
Project participant

*... for most of the children the exposure to theatre and puppet workshop activities was a completely new experience.*

Project Lead

*I learned that my everyday thoughts and ideas can become art. I feel like we created something that I was a part of*

Participant aged 12



*Bright Spark: from bookbinding to science, how Michael Faraday influences our everyday lives, Fitzrovia Noir Community Interest Company*

*After a long lie down I've recovered from the excitement of last week. Not only the pleasure of learning new things but the friendship among us all is great. I can't wait for the next adventure.*

Project participant

*It was lovely to feel as though the workshop was an extension of the bustle of the street and lots of curious passers by came in. The atmosphere could not have been lovelier.*

Project Lead

*I am sure I speak for our ... Group when I say how much we all enjoyed participating and how very pleasant it was to work as a group with people one might not have met before but we built up a rapport and it showed in the results.*

Project participant

*I've never used a sewing machine in my life. I really enjoyed the course that I went out and bought a sewing machine myself. Now, I practice what I learned in the class. I really wish and hope that the classes would continue.*

Project participant

*Wonderful exhibition of our local creative and hardworking community*

Project participant

## Artists and organisations

Create Church Street awarded funding to projects which were both tried and tested and new. All of them integrated the practice of community engagement into their delivery. Whether this was a designed process or a more involving or co-designed approach, project leads took care to respond to the needs of the participants. All the projects offered their artists and lead organisations an opportunity to learn about the communities in and around Church Street. Artists and organisations involved reported learning about how to deliver projects effectively in the community context.

Projects did fill in gaps of provision – for families, for dance and film-making skills – all identified as missing from the existing offer in and around Church Street.



Church St Portrait Project, Rosalind Hobley

*A whole new audience - young families*  
Project Lead

*I now know how much time it takes and would budget for that accordingly*  
Project Lead

*We have applied for more projects in the area*  
Project Lead

*This project changed things for us and created an opportunity for us and others in the Church Street Area.*  
Project Lead

*It's a great stepping stone for the company and we feel encouraged to develop more projects in a similar mould.*  
Project Lead

While the programme did not require collaboration between projects, a certain amount emerged or developed with partnerships between projects and local organisations, co-use of spaces and sharing of skills. Some project leads and organisations have gone on to be successful in applying for funding from the Church Street Ward fund or the Neighbourhood Keepers Fund to continue or develop their work in the area.

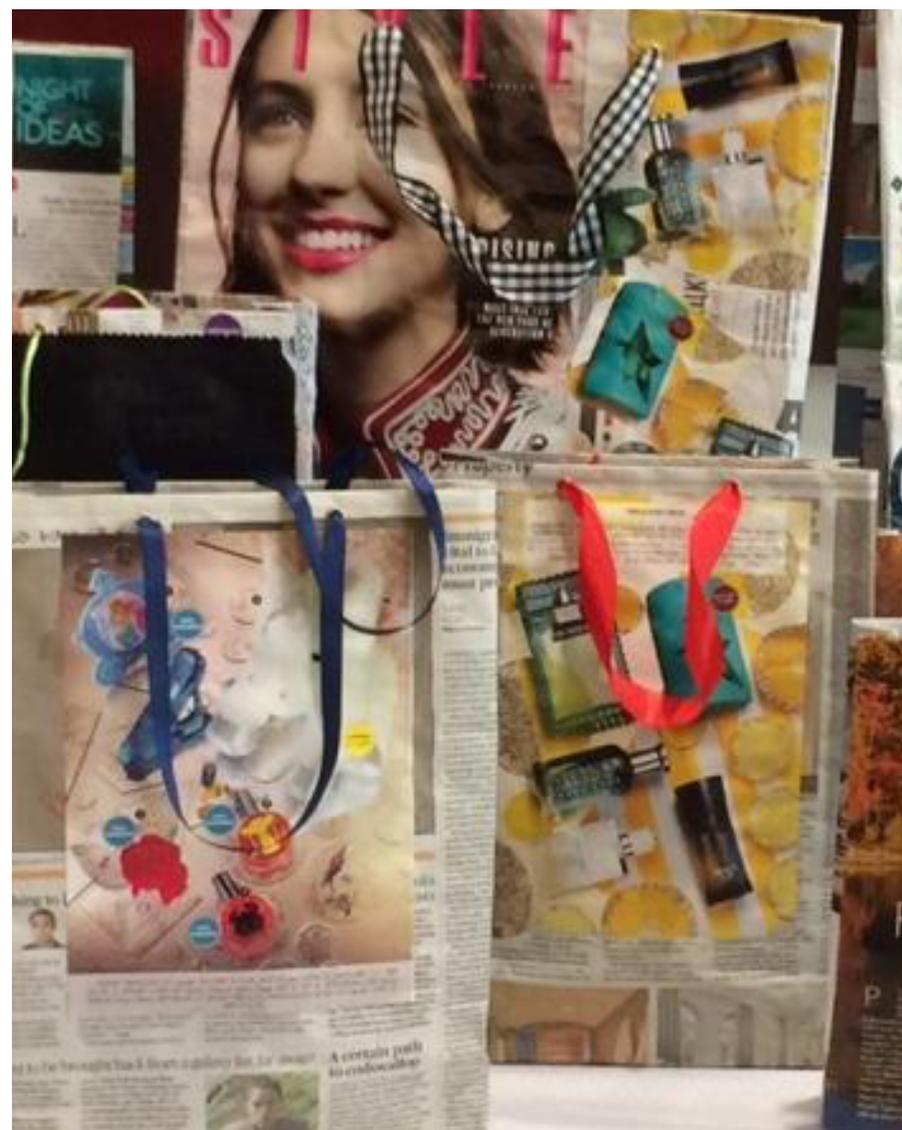
Westminster City Council culture and regeneration teams were pivotal to the project in terms of guidance, connecting people to venues and, to an extent, promotion. However, given the resource available it was not possible to support all projects in all the ways required or requested.

It was clear that the most challenging aspect of delivery was the initial engagement with the community, particularly where projects or project leads were new to the area. While it was important to the programme to support local organisations and artists, those from outside the area successfully diversified the range of projects. However, these projects needed more time to build up their local understanding and connections.

*I now know how much time it takes and would budget for that accordingly, as well as being more strategic in planning so that things were streamlined and things that took too much time were not included.*

Project Lead

For smaller projects, impacts on confirmation or timescales can have large implications for budget and capacity to deliver. Delays in the administrative process can therefore be detrimental to projects. However, those which were flexible in response to changing circumstances, did discover new ways of working or new partnerships.



Mosaic Church Street Women's Recycling Enterprise,  
Mosaic Community Trust

## Spaces and places

In terms of longer-term investment in facilities and infrastructure, the 2014 report by Beth Cinamon outlines the scope for the development of facilities and spaces for cultural activities as part of the renewal programme. Create Church Street was a clear demonstration of how different spaces would or could be used. It highlighted that a range of types of spaces is important – whether for more intimate activities, exhibitions and presentations or adaptable so that particular communities can make a space their own. For instance, the ‘shop front’ approach appears to have been particularly effective for encouraging interaction with the community. These ‘neutral’ spaces worked well for projects involving younger people.

It appears that most spaces had the appropriate equipment or accessibility (although there is room for some improvement for some of the host venues) although the costs of preparing the empty shop units for activity were higher than expected.

Church Street Library was an important space for engagement, and Create Church Street demonstrated that further investment in the Library as a cultural hub would reap rewards. As a space open to the whole community it hosted some work. The Library would have been the ideal place for a final celebratory exhibition of work from across the projects (even if the work then went back to a community organisation).



Communal Knowledge at Work, The Showroom

The contributions of local cultural organisations such as Cockpit Theatre and The Showroom were vital - as spaces, project coordinators, mentors and as a means to connecting with the community. Likewise, the local community organisations, Penfold Community Hub, Fourth Feathers and Portman Early Childhood Centre, King Solomon Academy, Gateway Academy and Christ Church School, alongside City of Westminster College were also hosts for projects as well as partners and beneficiaries.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

The seeds have been sown, Create Church Street gave a taste of the possible as well as having tangible impacts for the participants, artists and organisations involved.

Now is the time to capitalise on the sum of its parts.

**The evaluation suggests the following areas are particularly important for improvement and development of the programme:**

- Streamline the system for applications and assessment, including a more flexible structure for submitting budgets.
- Stick to timescales for assessment and awarding grants.
- Ensure those who receive grants are clear on what further support they can expect in delivering and promoting their projects from Westminster City Council, and ensure that this is suitably resourced.
- Encourage and facilitate collaboration and partnerships between projects pro-actively.
- Identify a suitable moment to celebrate the sum of the parts in a public way.
- Provide mentoring to attract applications from those less experienced in applying for funding or delivering community projects.

**Using the learning of Create Church Street, projects should be supported and advised to:**

- Invest in getting to know the community and developing connections and partnerships.
- Consider the best time of year to deliver a project for the participants and effective promotion.
- Build in flexibility to the project to respond to new ideas, specific needs and opportunities.

# CREATE CHURCH STREET 2019

Throughout the evaluation there was a suggestion that Create Church Street could be more than an open grants programme. This reflects recommendations by the Arts and Culture Working Group in 2014.

The open programme was clearly successful, however, it feels like it was a catalyst or a pilot, the learnings of which could now be more effectively capitalised on. Many projects also felt that by the end of their project that they were just beginning in terms of the potential for longer-term impacts for participants, communities and the area.

A more strategic or curated approach could continue to support those who have already been funded to develop their work, to mentor prospective applicants, support successful applicants more effectively, and to commission projects to a specific purpose. This purpose would either be to fill in perceived gaps, realise more collaboration and partnership and/or to connect Create Church Street more directly to the regeneration programme (in terms of developing public space and facilities or working with specific communities who are not engaging with the changes).

The recommendation, therefore, is for a hybrid programme which incorporates a strategic approach alongside an open programme. Such a programme would clearly signal the value of creativity for its own sake as well as bring communities together in the face of change. The legacy for the individuals and communities of Church Street would therefore be far reaching and Create Church Street would be at the heart of the renewal programme. A more varied programme would also afford opportunities to attract funding from different sources.

To deliver a curated programme, it is suggested that a coordinator is engaged, as recommended by the original Working Group. Ideally, this would be someone already embedded within the area – possibly working for or hosted by a local organisation, so that the knowledge and learning stays in the area. Their role would be to connect across the communities, encourage networking, identify opportunities, mentor, support and ultimately shape the full programme.

## A hybrid approach Strategic development:

- Identify which Create Church Street projects could continue.
- Outreach and networking to identify needs and interests across existing cultural, community and educational organisations.
- An open creative consultation session in the library.
- Match-making of projects with community groups or creation of new collaborations - invite project proposals.
- Commission projects more closely connected to the regeneration e.g. for public art or larger festivals or events.

## An open call for projects, with support programme:

- Introduction and networking event for prospective applicants.
- Full set of guidelines and advice and clear timescales.
- 2 strand application process – strand 1 for full projects and strand 2 for R&D of creative ideas.
- General one to one advice and support for applicants.
- Assessment for both strands by a community-led panel.
- A 'training' programme for the R&D strand to support project development, a project plan and funding bid.
- Workshops for all projects and a networking event for successful applicants.



Jessica Ogden: *Still*, University of the Arts

# PROJECTS

## Rounds 1 and 2

- Impro for Elders & Lifegame, Improbable Theatre
- One of My Kind (OOMK), The Showroom
- Communal Knowledge At Work, The Showroom
- Greenside Pantomime, Lisson Green Tenants Association
- Identity and Belonging, Paddington Arts
- Film Making Workshops , Third Sector Media
- Art Classes, Marylebone Bangladesh Society
- Puppet Theatre Barge, Art of the Puppet
- Street 2 Stage, Dream Arts
- The Cockpit Family Shows,Cockpit Theatre
- Acting Mature, Age UK
- Bollywood Dance for Children,  
Central London Youth Development Trust
- A World In A Suitcase, Timuchin Dindjer
- Contemporary Art, Farrells London LLP
- Jessica Ogden: Still, University of the Arts
- Cloud Castle, Rain Crew Ltd

## Round 3

- Woodland Tribe – Play Build Dream, Woodland Tribe Community Interest Company
- Mosaic Church Street Women’s Recycling Enterprise, Mosaic Community Trust
- Church Street Tales, London Print Studio
- E-Road: Passages, Mehryar Golestani
- Commedia for Elders, Dende Collective
- Focus inside: boosting creativity in the age of digital distractions,  
Anastasia Dedyukhina
- Cloth of Dreams, Debbie Guneratne
- Avant Gardening Church Street!, Carole Wright
- A Day In The Life Of..., Dream Arts
- DIY Gallery, Olivia Chessell
- Expressions, Rebecca Buckman
- Bright Spark: from bookbinding to science, how Michael Faraday influences our everyday lives, Fitzrovia Noir Community Interest Company
- Church St Portrait Project, Rosalind Hobley
- Feminist Library, Anna Pigott

## Thank you

Thanks to all the interviewees:

**Dale Thomson, Arun Plumb,**

Regeneration, Westminster City Council

**Valentina Wong, Charlotte Fergusson, Debora Gambera,**

Culture team, Westminster City Council

Members of the Create Panel and Project Leads.

And all those who responded to the Project Lead survey.

