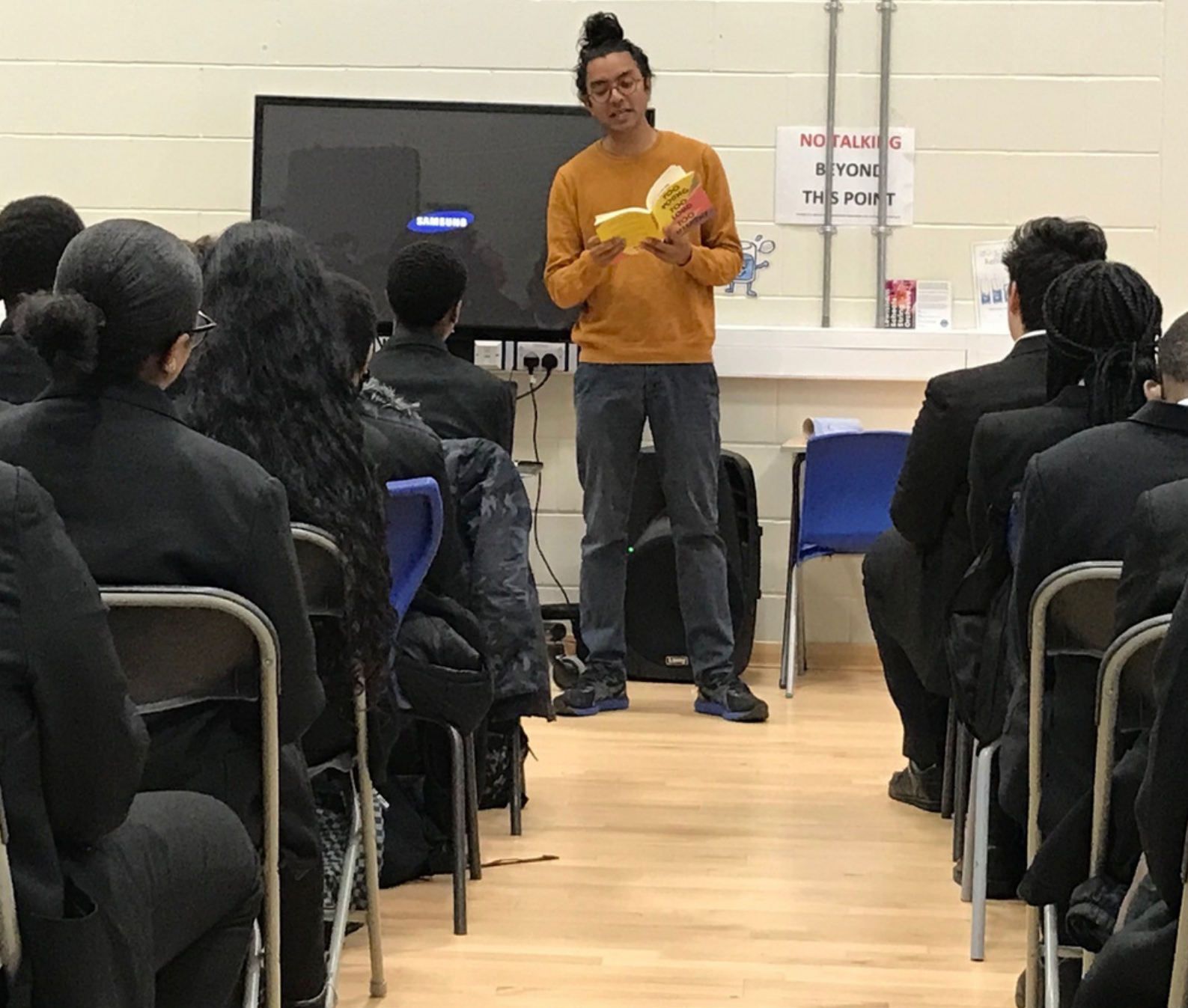


# /LEAN

Lewisham Education  
Arts Network



# Army of Creatives

April - May 2022

A LEWISHAM EDUCATION ARTS NETWORK PROJECT

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## Introduction

Between the 19th April and the 8th June 2022 an “Army of Creatives” flooded Year 9 lessons and assemblies in 12 secondary schools across the London Borough of Lewisham. The 30 creatives involved had jobs from across the creative industries. Each had connections with Lewisham, most were persons from the Global Majority and together they engaged with around 3,300 pupils.

This report will examine the impact of the project on the pupils, their teachers and the creatives involved and will reflect on how it may shape the development and delivery of future projects created by Lewisham Education Arts Network (LEAN).

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## Background

Lewisham Education Arts Network (LEAN) is a small charitable organisation based in the London Borough of Lewisham. It has been operating for over 20 years and was created to support all those working with children and young people in Arts Education in the borough.

The Army of Creatives project was devised in response to findings from LEAN's *Discussions on Creative Careers* report 2020 - a series of detailed consultations undertaken by LEAN as part of the New Cross & Deptford Creative Enterprise Zone (CEZ) initiative.

LEAN consulted with arts teachers, career leads in schools, arts organisations and young people, about their views on careers in the creative industries. Their responses highlighted the following:

- Schools can struggle to connect with creatives or to find useful information about creative careers
- Young people want to hear about creative careers from people who live in their local area and/or share their lived experience
- Parents and carers are often wary of creative careers and see them as unstable

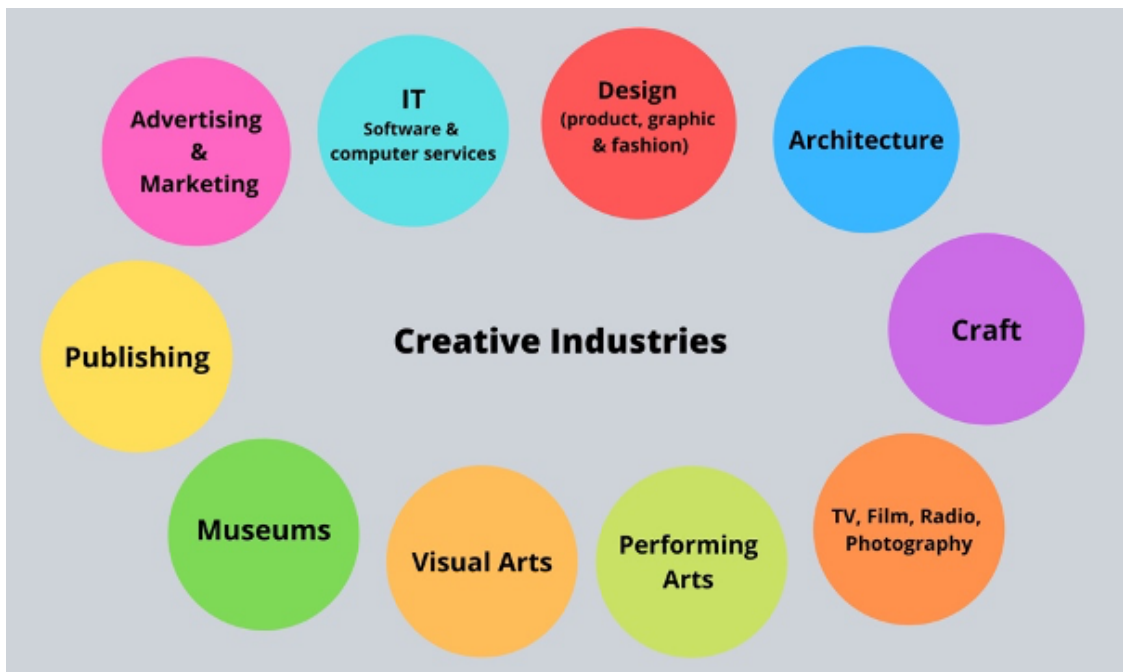
As will be explored in this report, the Army of Creatives project attempted to tackle these three key findings head on and LEAN used them to inform the development, pre-production and delivery of the project.

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## The Creative Industries

First, let's have a look at the UK Creative Industries and why creative careers as well as providing exciting, fulfilling and cutting edge opportunities, might also be considered important to the UK economy.

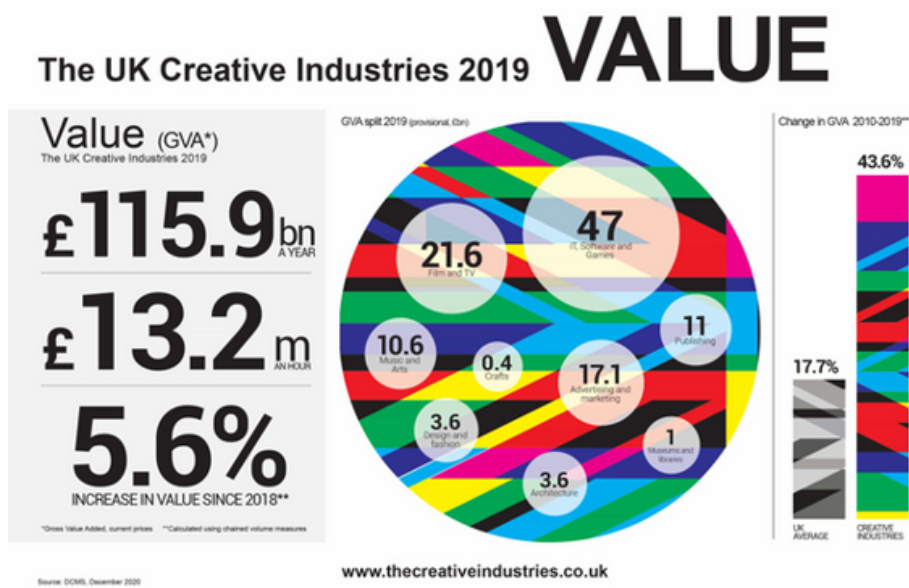
The Creative Industries are broadly made up of these 10 sectors. Naturally there is often cross-over between sectors and there are dozens of different jobs within each sector.

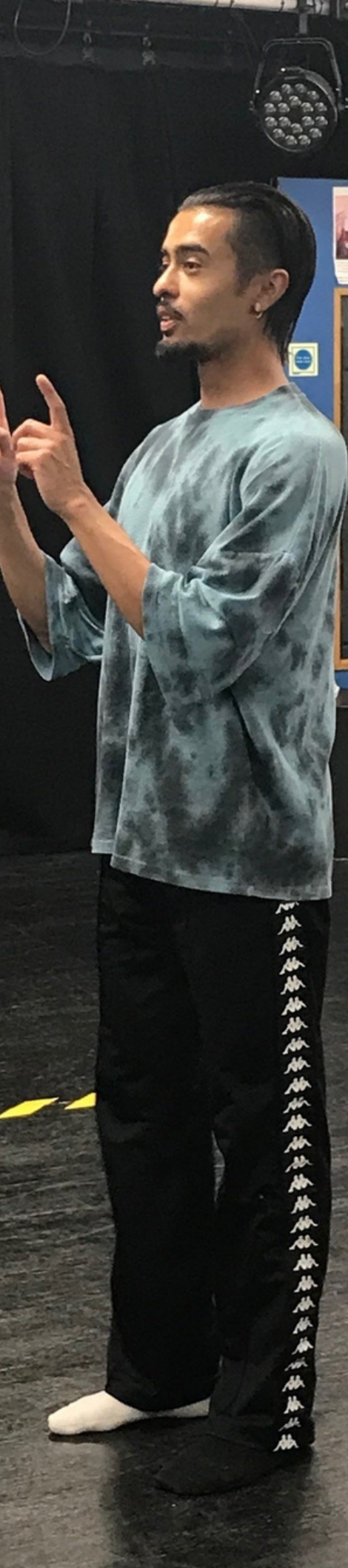


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In 2019 the UK Creative Industries contributed over £115 billion to the UK economy. Jobs in the creative industries are growing at four times the rate of the UK workforce as a whole.\*

\*Source: DCMS Sector Estimates: Employment & Trade, July 2017





## Pre-Production

Pre-production for the project started in December 2021 and ran until 19th April 2022 when school visits began.

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### Schools

**Aim:**

**Project should involve all Lewisham Secondary Schools**


**Result:**

**12 Lewisham Secondary Schools were involved**

Lewisham secondary schools were told about the project in multiple ways including direct emails to career leads and teaching staff, newsletters to Cultural Connectors (a list of named contacts in schools that LEAN has established as education partner for Borough of Culture 2022), a post on the Lewisham Services for Schools website and an article in the Services for Schools Headteacher Bulletin. The latter methods were particularly useful in attracting two non-mainstream schools, Young Women's Hub and New Woodlands School.

Schools were offered the chance to have free creative visits to Year 9 pupils between 19th April – 27th May, either as part of an assembly or during lesson time. Year 9 pupils were targeted as they were in the process of deciding their GCSE options and were also not catered for by any of the other creative careers offers happening in the borough at the time.

Twelve Lewisham secondary schools (75%) responded enthusiastically to say that they were interested in participating.



Deptford Green	Bonus Pastor	Sedgehill Academy
Prendergast School	St Matthew Academy	Prendergast Ladywell
Forest Hill	Prendergast Vale	Young Women's Hub
Haberdashers' Hatcham College	Addey & Stanhope	New Woodlands

In order to get a clearer idea of what participating schools might be looking for from visiting creatives, interested schools were asked to complete an online Google Form questionnaire which set out the options available for the project i.e. numbers of creatives, type of session etc. This proved a useful way to collate and store information from schools that could easily be referred to when planning visits. However, a recommendation for future projects would be to pin schools down at this point with regards to preferred dates and times for creative visits as this information took a long time to gather from some schools and held up planning and allocation of creatives.

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Once schools were signed up, a telephone conversation with each of the main contacts was arranged to get a more in depth sense of what each school was looking for, what their expectations were and what their available dates and times might be. This was also a useful opportunity to develop our relationship with the schools, answer questions, manage expectations and trouble-shoot any potential problems.

We invited school contacts to tell us about their Year 9 pupils, where they were in their school journey, what struggles they may be confronting etc. Some of this was covered during our telephone conversations and we also had a dedicated zoom conversation with representatives from two of our participating schools. This insight helped inform our training for creatives to get them prepared for school visits.



Teachers told us that Year 9 pupils had struggled during the COVID pandemic lockdowns and were still struggling to adapt back to school life in some cases. This partly manifested itself in a lack of confidence and curiosity about the world creatively and culturally, along with increased cases of poor mental health.

Nationally, mental health referrals for children and young people have increased by 77% since the pandemic.\*

*\*Source: NHS Confederation Analysis: the rise in mental health demand May 2022.*

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Some schools described their Year 9 pupils as “tricky” with some classes within the year being likely to display bad behaviour, possibly to the exclusion of their participation in the creative visits.

We were informed that many of the pupils that creatives were visiting would have already chosen their GCSE subjects with some of the participating schools already engaged in a three year GCSE course. During the pre-planning and delivery stages, we were told by some schools that our project arrived too late in the year because pupils had already chosen their GCSE subjects. However, schools still saw the validity and benefit of the visits in the absence of information about creative careers from other sources.

In relation to the content of the visits, schools asked that the assemblies and lessons be age-appropriate, engaging and interactive and they did not need to shy away from conversations around mental health, racism or gender issues.

Finally, arts teachers described the pressure of teaching a creative subject. Lack of resources and an emphasis on English Baccalaureate (EBacc) subjects made it harder to persuade pupils to choose a creative subject as one of their GCSE options.



## Creatives

### **Aim:**

**Recruit an army of 35 diverse local creative professionals.**

### **Result:**

**Recruited 30 local creative professionals. Estimated 70% global majority with jobs from across the creative industries.**

At the beginning of pre-production the parameters for recruiting creatives were established. In order to respond to the findings of the *Discussions on Creative Careers* report, it was vital that the Army of Creatives should, as much as possible, come from the local area, should mirror the diverse heritages of pupils found in Lewisham secondary schools and should as much as possible understand and share their lived experience.

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Currently around 76% of Lewisham school pupils can be described as being from the Global Majority.\* The Global Majority is defined as people who are Black, Asian, Brown, dual-heritage, indigenous to the global south, and or have been racialised as 'ethnic minorities'.

\*Source: *Lewisham Learning School Improvement Framework June 2022*

It was important that we tried to recruit creatives with jobs from across all of the creative industries in order to offer the best possible breadth and depth of knowledge and experience to pupils.

In order to fulfil these requirements, we actively sought out creatives; using existing contacts, contacts shared with us via local partner organisations and wider research.

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We contacted over 70 creatives by email inviting them to be part of the project. From that list, 30 creatives made up our final army, an estimated 70% of whom were from the Global Majority. There were more creatives who expressed an interest in being part of the army, but work commitments prevented some of them from taking part during the dates available.

In a similar way to schools, interested creatives were asked to complete a Google Form setting out how they would like to be involved e.g. in assemblies, lessons or both (this also included contributing to the digital resource) and their availability. Again, this proved a useful way to collate and store their information, which could then be easily transferred to a series of working documents that were used and shared during pre-production.

The recruited creatives were weighted slightly in favour of the performing arts possibly because historically LEAN has had more contact with creatives who deliver performance-based arts education in schools.

It is worth noting though that some of the performing arts creatives had portfolio careers, which meant they also covered other sectors such as craft or visual arts. Despite our best efforts, we were unable to recruit a creative from the Creative Tech sector, something that for future projects of this nature should be seen as a priority, particularly as some schools specifically requested it.

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## Training

We ran two training sessions for creatives in order to help them to prepare for their school visits.

Armed with information from our consultation with teachers, we offered an insight into Year 9 pupils, some general practical advice and tips on how to structure a session.

However, time was short for the training session and general comments reflected this with creatives particularly missing the opportunity to meet everyone not just the small groups they were working with and wishing they had more time to share ideas.

We asked attending creatives from both training sessions to complete a feedback questionnaire:

### Training Session 1 – Laban Centre

Creatives were asked to complete a written questionnaire at the end of the session. We had 17 responses.

100% of participants agreed that they enjoyed the training (71% fully agreed and 29% agreed)

100% of participants agreed that they had found the training useful (82% fully agreed and 18% agreed)

94% of participants agreed that they felt more confident talking to young people about their career (59% fully agreed and 35% agreed) with 6% neither agreeing or disagreeing

94% of participants agreed that they would seek out more opportunities for engaging with young people with 6% neither agreeing or disagreeing

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***"Meeting the other creatives and hearing of past sessions made me feel confident to tell my story to the children."  
(A Creative)***

## Training Session 2 - Zoom

We had 3 responses from the zoom training that were completed online.

100% of respondents agreed they had found the training enjoyable (67% fully agreed and 33% agreed)

100% of respondents agreed they had found the training useful (67% fully agreed and 33% agreed)

67% of respondents agreed they felt more confident talking to young people about their career (33% neither agreed or disagreed)

67% of respondents agreed that they would seek out more opportunities for engaging with young people (33.33% fully agreed, 33.33% agreed and 33.33% neither agreed or disagreed).

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***"Some previous examples of sessions we could watch via video would be very helpful - even if this is in our own time outside of the training."  
(A Creative)***

### ***Recommendation***

Overall, feedback suggests that the training sessions were successful but if repeated it might be worth allocating longer time for creatives to all meet each other and perhaps an invitation to a creative who took part this time to come and discuss how their sessions went and what they learned might be useful and reassuring, particularly for those creatives with little or no experience of working in schools.

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### Creative Career Digital Resource

Another key part of the project was the production of a creative career digital resource accessed through the LEAN website.

The aim of this was to provide a place for career leads in schools, parents and young people to find out more about creative careers from local creatives as well as links to other useful sites and resources.

During the pre-production period we developed the idea to create two “explainer” videos to introduce the creative industries and what a creative career is and to offer some broad advice on what Year 9 pupils can do right now to help towards a future creative career.



Two Lewisham based creatives Keme Nzerem (a broadcast journalist and producer) and Yasmin Ali (a spoken word artist) presented the resulting explainer videos that were filmed and edited by mobile phone film maker Cassius Rayner. Both Yasmin and Cassius were also part of the Army of Creatives.

As well as this, we asked the Army of Creatives to produce either a written or video description of their creative career along with some top tips on how to follow in their footsteps. A “How To” guide was produced and distributed to the creatives to help with this.



### ***Observations & Recommendations***

This was an ambitious project for LEAN, as it had never delivered a project of this type and scale before. Fortunately LEAN was well placed to deliver it as it had good existing relationships and contacts in Lewisham secondary schools and a wealth of creative contacts to draw on. However, the pre-production phase of the project was by nature extremely admin heavy and the time allowed to complete it had been underestimated. Despite some help from all members of the LEAN team, this meant that the project coordinator who was meant to be working part-time ended up working full-time for large portions of pre-production in order to hit the delivery deadline.

Some systems and working documents have now been created for the project and should reduce the amount of work if this project is ever repeated. However, budget allowing it might be worth investing in a more sophisticated booking system that can be used by both the schools and the creatives as this would greatly reduce the need for emails between the schools, the coordinator and the creatives.



## Delivery

The Army of Creatives visits began on the 19th April, the start of the Summer Term for schools and continued until 27th May, when schools broke up for half-term. One participating school New Woodlands joined the project late and consequently two of the visit days they requested did not fit in to the original timeframe and so took place at the start of the second half of the Summer Term.

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The school visits were divided into sessions; a session was either a visit to a whole year assembly or a visit to a Year 9 lesson. Overall, 79 sessions were delivered across the 12 participating schools with creatives engaging with an estimated total of around 3,300 pupils.

The purpose of the school visits was to introduce local professional creatives from a wide variety of creative careers to Year 9 pupils, to encourage engagement and question asking between pupils and creatives and to pass on useful information about creative careers and tips on how to succeed.

During a session creatives were asked to describe their job or jobs and to talk about their creative career journey, before responding to any questions raised by pupils and teachers. We were not prescriptive about how creatives should do this. For creatives visiting lessons, we also asked that they prepare some activities for pupils to try. Creatives were encouraged to plan for an assembly or a lesson with examples of how to structure both given out at the training sessions, but again we left it up to creatives to decide how best to present the elements of their visit.

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The type and level of engagement varied between schools with some signing up to assembly visits, whilst others asked for creatives to visit lessons, sometimes over a series of days and weeks. We'll explore how these choices affected the impact of the visits later in the report.

In order to get a good understanding of the success and impact of the school visits as well as gain insight into what we might change or develop for future projects, we devised a variety of methods to gather feedback from teachers and pupils in schools and from the creatives who visited them.

## Feedback from Schools

Our participating school contacts were sent a link to a specially created online survey. They were asked to complete the survey themselves and to share it with the teachers present at the school visits.

8 schools responded to the survey and we received 12 completed surveys in total.

Given the lack of outside visits to schools during the height of the COVID pandemic and its associated lockdowns, it is gratifying but perhaps not surprising that 100% of respondents completely agreed that they found the Army of Creatives' visits enjoyable and that 100% also completely agreed (75%) or agreed (25%) that pupils had found the visits enjoyable.

### Summary of Responses:

Question	1	2	3	4	5
On a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 is "totally disagree" and 5 is "completely agree") how much do you agree with the below statement:"I have found this Army of Creatives visit enjoyable"?					100%
On a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 is "totally disagree" and 5 is "completely agree") how much do you agree with the below statement:"Pupils found the Army of Creatives visit enjoyable"?				25%	75%
On a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 is "totally disagree" and 5 is "completely agree") how much do you agree with the below statement:"As a result of the visit, I understand more about creatives careers"?			18%	27%	55%
On a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 is "totally disagree" and 5 is "completely agree") how much do you agree with the below statement:"As a result of the visit, my pupils have learned more about creative careers. "			8%	33%	58%
On a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 being "totally disagree" and 5 being "completely agree"), rate the following question:"I have a better idea of how to access information about different creative careers to share with pupils"			25%	42%	33%
On a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 is "totally disagree" and 5 is "completely agree") how much do you agree with the below statement:"I am more likely to want to invite local creatives into the school in the future."				8%	92%

Responses indicate that in the main teachers felt they and their pupils had learned about and had a better understanding of creative careers. However, it is interesting to note that 25% of respondents felt ambivalent (neither agreed or disagreed) about whether they had a better idea of how to access information about creative careers to share with pupils.

Although some visiting creatives offered links and resources for follow up research, this was not the case universally and it tended to depend on the type of session and the time allowed. It had also been hoped that the creative careers digital resource on the LEAN website would be up and running alongside the school visits. However, the launch of a new website coupled with the slowness of creatives to provide digital materials meant that this was not available for the first few weeks of the school visits and LEAN was not able to direct teachers and pupils to this resource either during or immediately after the visits, which may also have contributed to teachers feeling that they were still unsure how to access further information for their pupils.

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Finally, responses to the question posed seem to indicate a clear appetite for future creative visits of this sort and this is echoed in some of the comments respondents left as part of the survey.

***"The visits were great- the only thing to make it better would be to have more visits offered and to have these offered to younger years as well!"***

***(A Teacher)***

*'Truly grateful for the workshops. With a shortage of school funds it is difficult to have outside professionals coming in. It was so beneficial for the children, and gave them a fantastic opportunity to try new skills and discuss the Arts beyond school lessons.'*

*(A Teacher)*

*'Having this opportunity really was superb - thank you SO much for organising it! It was really beneficial for us having 4 sessions, where (the creative) was open to feedback about what worked well and how we could adapt the session as we went along so that students got the most out of the experience. The more contact the creative and the school can have in this way, the more productive the sessions are. Really hope we would be able to have a similar experience in the future, so that our students continue to see that careers like this ARE accessible to them.*

*With the pandemic, it has been so difficult to have people in to inspire our students, so this was indeed, really valuable time. Thank you.'*

*(A Teacher)*

*'It was a nice experience for the students and it was really good for the students to be aware of different careers that are available to them. It was nice to have such a variety of professionals who are passionate about their careers and enjoyed sharing this with our students.'*

*(A Teacher)*

## Verbal Feedback from Teachers and Career Leads

In addition to the online survey, there were numerous occasions when teachers and career leads gave us verbal feedback, expressing surprise, delight and interest during and after the creative's session at the reaction and engagement of individual pupils, the whole class or year group. A common response being: *"Oh I've never seen X behave like that before, they are usually quiet/disruptive/lacking in confidence"* or *"This group usually don't behave well/are very quiet, but they've really taken to the session"*. Teachers seemed to enjoy seeing pupils in a new light and in some cases learning new things about them. Some even made notes or quietly researched online the band/singer/artist the pupil(s) had mentioned during the session.

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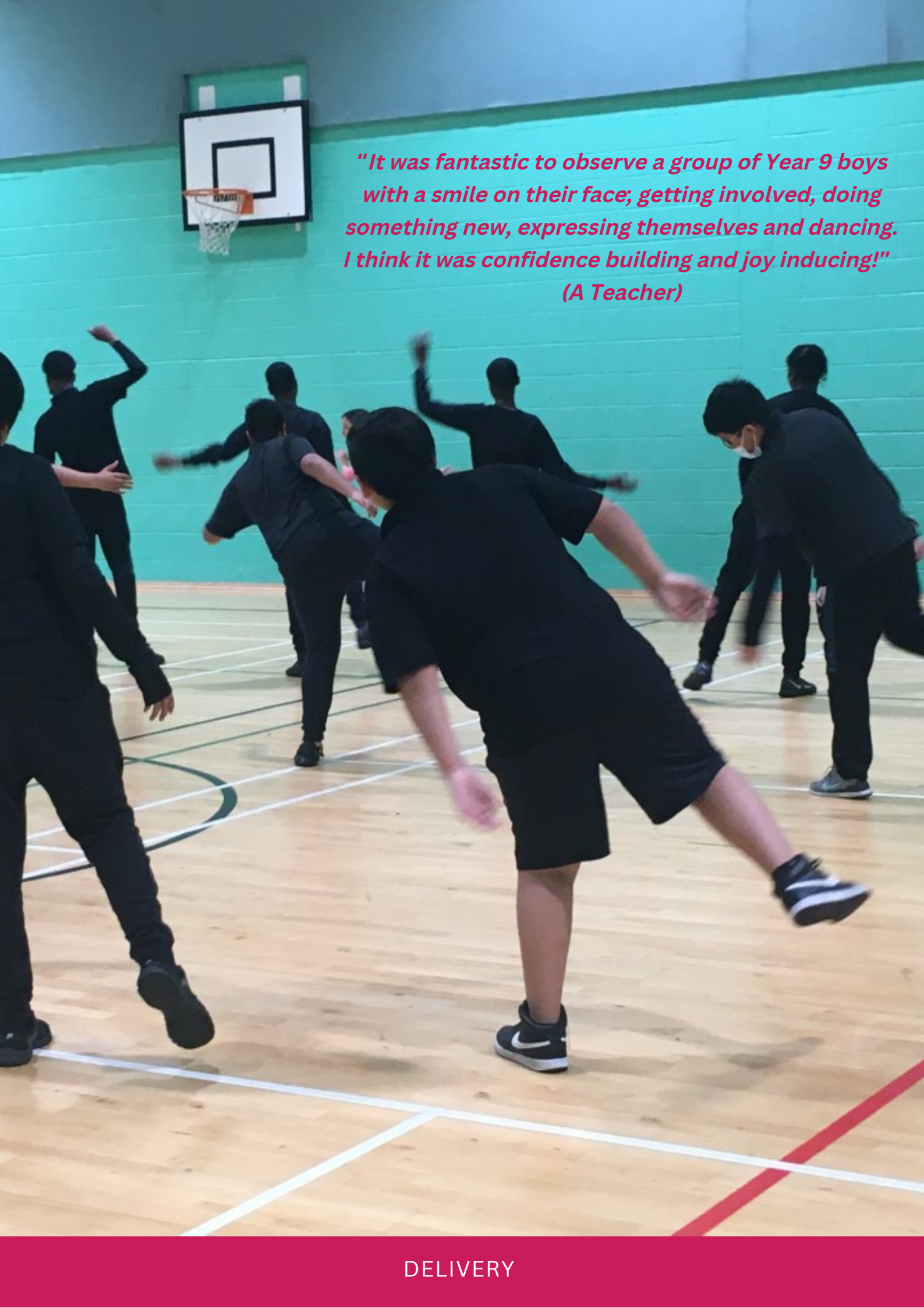
We can also see this reflected in the online survey. When asked what they had found most useful/interesting about the school visits. Responses included:

*"Spoken Word workshop built cohesiveness with class members through games and allowing to be silly! Creator was fun and engaging! Well-pitched for our pupils - even the most reluctant gradually joined in. Great careers talk for our pupils - encouraging them to explore the creative arts. Creator's performances of spoken word was a pleasure for everyone to listen to."*

*"Students having the opportunity to do something they don't normally do and experience a new form of expression."*

*"Seeing a real practicing artist speak about her career and how she got to where she is. Seeing examples of her work. Having a workshop attached to the talk that is relevant to the talk."*





*"It was fantastic to observe a group of Year 9 boys with a smile on their face; getting involved, doing something new, expressing themselves and dancing. I think it was confidence building and joy inducing!"*  
*(A Teacher)*

Others saw activities offered in sessions as an opportunity to extend or inspire work in future lessons.

*"Watching how the students engaged with her (the creative) and the work they created was a truly wonderful experience and the way some of them were really inspired to write from the heart about issues that actually matter to them was gold dust! This will certainly be something I hope to refer back to for future drama lessons with Year 9."*

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In several schools, staff were pleased to report the continued impact of sessions on pupils. One verbally reported that pupils had been:

*"Talking about the assembly and trying out their rapping in the lunch hall."*

and another commented:

*"One student who is part of a university mentoring programme had a mentor meeting the day after the session and the first thing she told her mentor was that she had done some dance and loved it, she was so animated and happy about it. She told me " I have done a bit of dance before and did not think contemporary dance was for me but I loved this and I want to do it again and take part in the Mass performance."*

### ***Observations & Recommendations:***

Another important verbal feedback point from schools was around the timing of the visits within the school calendar. Many arts teachers and career leads mentioned that it would have been more helpful if visits had happened in February i.e. around the time Year 9 pupils were choosing their GCSE options. Arts teachers particularly felt that this would have helped them to advocate for their creative subjects. Therefore, a recommendation if the project is repeated is that the schedule is shifted so that school visits start in February.

Overall, teachers were very welcoming to visiting creatives and the LEAN staff members who accompanied them and most ensured that their visitors felt supported, particularly around issues with behaviour if they arose, but this was not universal and certainly and probably inevitably some teachers were better briefed and/or more engaged than others.

***"Arriving and diving straight in was quite scary - think that's schools though...one teacher didn't even speak to me initially - not sure how you can improve that - unless a quick chat with teacher before the lesson?"***

**(A Creative)**

As a rule of thumb, we observed that the more engaged and proactive the teacher was, the more pupils took a positive lead from them, threw themselves into the creative visit and got the most out of the experience. In order to increase the number of engaged teachers in the future, it might be worth considering enhancing the information pack that schools are sent about their visiting creatives and what to expect from an Army of Creatives visit. This may help to ensure that all teachers involved are well briefed, have a clear idea of what will happen and understand how their participation can help to make the visit a success.

Teachers are extremely busy and so with hindsight it was probably ambitious to ask them to complete an online survey after their creative visit. Although the feedback we did receive was very valuable, in order to get a broader spread and of feedback in the future, it might be more productive to ask teachers to complete a paper survey during or at the end of the lesson or assembly visit.

## Feedback from Pupils

Understanding the effectiveness and impact of the Army of Creatives' sessions on the pupils they visited was vital in order to properly judge the success of the project. We felt it was important that we try to capture not just reactions to simple questions around enjoyment and understanding but also that we ask participating pupils to reflect on their feelings and impressions of the visit and what they would take away with them.

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## Lessons

Visits to lessons made up the majority of the Army of Creatives sessions. Pupils were visited by creatives from a wide variety of creative careers including architectural lighting designer, graphic designer, leatherworker, spoken word artist and music producer. Lesson times varied considerably from school to school; some lasted 45 minutes and others 2 hours with the average being 50 minutes. For all of the sessions, the primary purpose of the visit was for the creative to talk about their career and their personal journey and to offer tips on how to follow in their footsteps. In all of the lesson sessions, pupils were given an opportunity to ask questions and to join in with activities ranging from designing a park, creating an animation, free writing, creating patterns on naturally dyed fabric, making a leather keyring to playing drama games, writing poems/beats and dancing. All the activities required pupils to step out of their comfort zone in one way or another and pupils found some activities more challenging or uncomfortable than others.

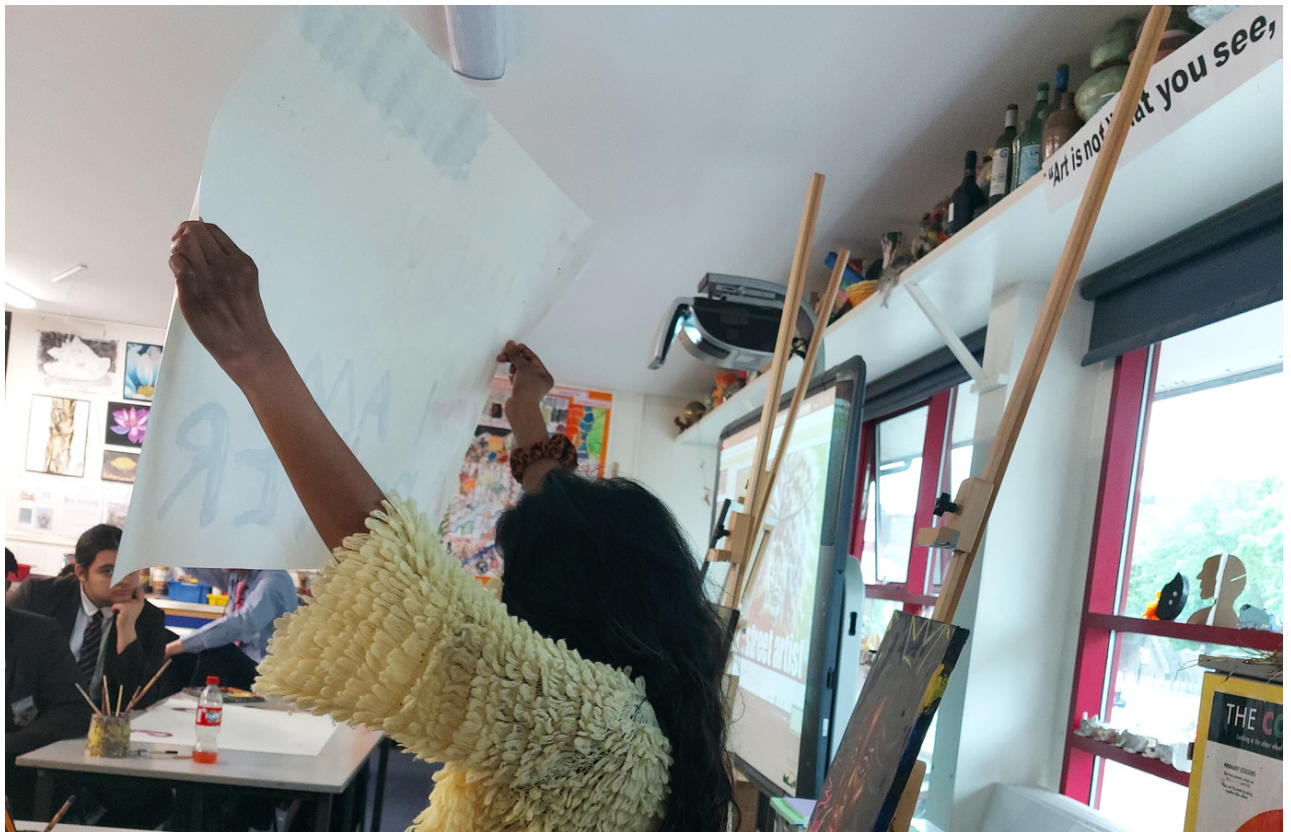
In order to capture pupils' feedback from the sessions, we produced a colourful double-sided A5 form (Appendix A) that we asked pupils to complete at the end of each lesson.

### Summary and analysis of feedback from the “target” side of the sheet

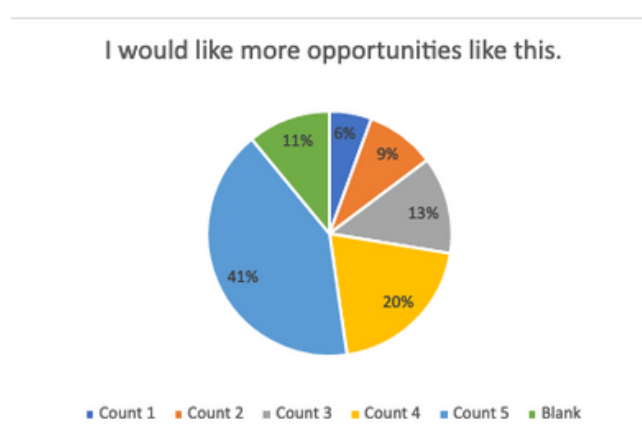
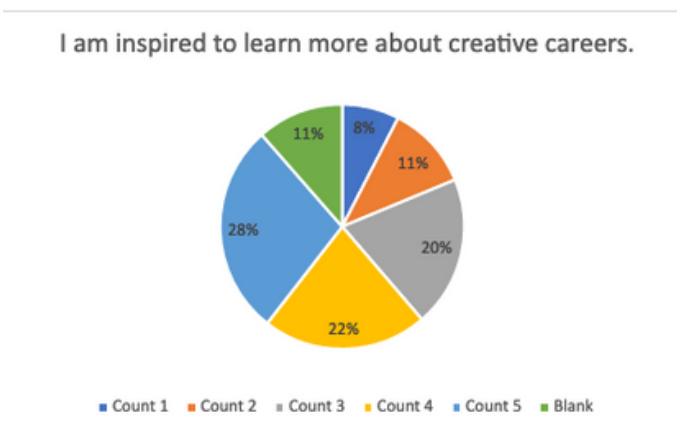
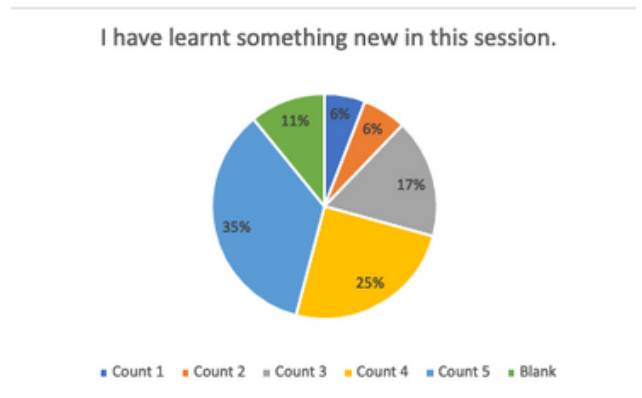
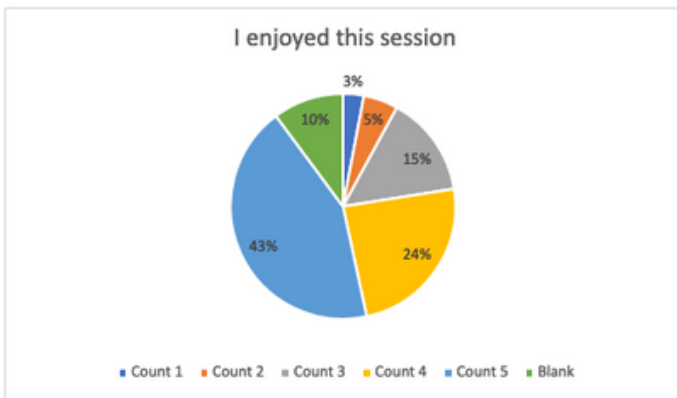
Some pupils needed an additional explanation of the “target” side of the feedback sheet but most seemed able to complete it without help.

Four statements were posed, each with a corresponding target. The closer to the bulls eye the pupil marked the more they agreed with the statement i.e. marking in the bulls eye indicated the pupil completely agreed with the statement.

The results from each session were then tabulated with a score of 5 for a bulls eye mark through to a score of 1 for an outer circle mark.



Overall figures collected from all of the sessions are as follows:



What we see from these results is that with nearly every statement, around 60%+ of pupils responded positively scoring either a 5 or a 4 on the statement's target. This dips to 50% for the score against the statement "*I am inspired to learn more about creative careers*", with 20% of pupils seeming to neither agree or disagree with this statement. The timing of the creative visits i.e. in April and May when most Year 9 pupils had already made their GCSE choices may be relevant to this result.

It is interesting to note that a significant 10-11% of pupils left some or all of the questions on this side of the feedback sheet blank. In some cases pupils were rushed at the end of the session and chose to either focus on the other side of the sheet or not to complete the sheet at all. As mentioned before, some pupils were confused by this side of the sheet and unsure how to complete it, so as a result may have left it blank. Also, we noticed that pupils' enthusiasm for completing the feedback forms waned when they had more than one creative visit and were asked to complete a feedback form after every session.

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### Summary and analysis from the “person” side of the feedback form

The other side of the feedback form featured the outline of a person. At different points within the outline could be found some reflection points e.g. “Something you have felt”. Pupils were asked to write something under each of the reflection points.

Their reflections were later collated in a session table alongside their target comments. Because of the varied and emotive nature of the comments, we have created some word clouds to give a sense of themes and common words associated with some of the reflection points:



Something you have thought about:



The creative visits seem to have captured the imaginations of the pupils involved in a fun and positive way and also got them thinking about their future and a potential creative career. Nice to note too that some of the pupils answering were very focused on the activity they'd been given i.e. writing about a tense or suspenseful situation such as *kidnapping*, or were thinking about a taxidermy *meerkat* (a Horniman Museum artifact brought along to one of the sessions that proved very popular).

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***"I felt the blood through my veins my heart pumping with passion!" (A pupil)***

Something you have felt:



WordItOut

It is great to see a profusion of positive feelings here. We have mentioned before that all the activities asked for pupils to step out of their comfort zone in some way and interestingly it was the physicality of the dance activities that made participating pupils feel the most vulnerable and therefore provoked the strongest negative feelings like “embarrassed” and “uncomfortable”. However, we observed that more often than not, those most reluctant to dance at the beginning did join in as the session progressed, particularly if encouraged to by teachers, and some who professed to have felt “embarrassed” also indicated that they had enjoyed the session.

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*"I felt more calmed down, it felt really nice"*  
*(A pupil)*

Something you will take with you:



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A primary objective of the project was to respond to the need for pupils to hear about creative careers from local people who understood and shared their life experience. This was reflected in the creatives we invited to be part of the project and the feedback from pupils suggests that this did have an impact:

***" Made me feel more comfortable about wanting to be a writer and a lawyer."***

***"I felt free and able to be myself"***

***"I thought of doing an activity like this when I leave school"***

***"I liked the way we were taught a lot of secrets we needed"***

***"I can do it"***

***"(I felt) understood"***

***"I could relate to what the lady was saying"***

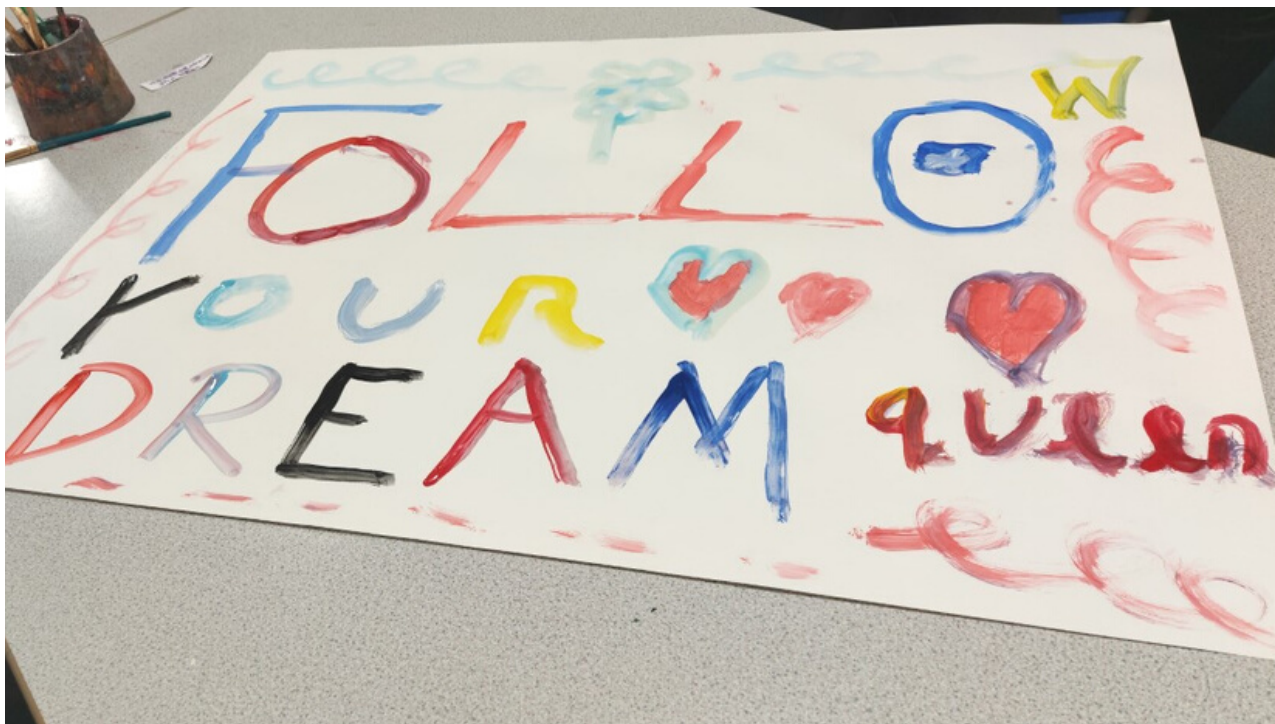
We asked pupils to also respond to two other statements:

*"Something you would kick out"* This was meant to relate to the creative visit, but the majority of pupils who responded here saw this as a personal reflection and answered accordingly with common statements including: 'fear', 'negativity', 'my nervousness'; an interesting insight perhaps into the minds of these young people which echoes the observations of their teachers.

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Finally, we asked pupils to respond to the question *"What's your next step?"*.

Answers were too varied to quantify in a meaningful way, but common answers showed aspiration and included statements such as "move forward with dance", "research", "be determined", "take aspirations seriously" and "be more creative".



### ***Observations & Recommendations***

One of the main observations of the project as a whole but the creative sessions in lessons in particular, is the gift of agency that creatives gave to the pupils they engaged with.

There was something very powerful and inspiring about having a local professional creative in their space, sharing with pupils the truth of their jobs and the industry they worked in as well as their personal stories and sometimes their struggle to make it.

This, coupled with a chance to try activities, ask questions and hear tips and suggestions, gave pupils an unique insight and appears in a lot of cases to have made a creative career feel more tangible and achievable.

As pupils commented:

*Everyone is creative  
in their own way*

*I believe everything  
in the workshop was  
needed and very  
thought through*

*She opened my mind and  
I might start writing  
my thoughts*

*Your organisation is a good  
influence for young people*

*(Something I have thought about is)  
knowing that you can make  
a living out of a creative career  
and have great  
opportunities*

*(Something I have felt is)  
It's fine you can do it.  
Don't think, just do it -repeat!*

***"I really enjoyed this lesson today. Thank you for telling us about how you made books. Writing gives you a lot of amazing opportunities" (A pupil)***

Care was taken to assign the right creatives to the right schools based on what teachers had spoken about or requested. We achieved a high success rate but the mere presence of a creative in a classroom session offered pupils something outside of the normal school curriculum with different targets and a more personal focus and even if they didn't wholeheartedly enjoy the experience most pupils responded with curiosity and general willingness.

An interesting observation was that in some cases pupils in classes that were deemed to be "higher achieving" or "better behaved" tended to be more self-conscious, less willing to go beyond their comfort zone or explore the freedom the session offered and were less likely to ask questions. Equally, it was great to see those moments when "lower achieving" or pupils with "behavioural problems" were able to shine and feel a sense of achievement and success amongst their peers during the activities.

In one school I spent the day with a spoken word artist who did a series of sessions in lessons with so-called “higher or “lower” achieving pupils. As part of his delivery, the creative introduced different games including one that required group thinking and collaboration. It was fascinating to see that in the class identified as “lower achieving” the pupils understood the need to work together much more quickly than a previous “higher achieving” class had and were much more successful at the game. Even more interesting was the fact that amongst the leaders of the class in this task was at least one pupil whose behaviour had been identified as challenging.

The feedback forms that we created hoped to capture a slightly more in depth understanding of pupils’ thoughts and reflections than simply whether they had enjoyed themselves or not. However, the length of lessons meant that there was often a lot to pack into a short space of time and completing the feedback forms was often rushed at the end meaning that pupils sometimes had little or no time to reflect.

Some further thought on how best to capture meaningful feedback from pupils in lessons may be needed if a project of this nature is repeated in the future.





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## Assemblies

Three of our participating schools chose to have assemblies given by creatives to the whole of Year 9. We decided for practical reasons not to attempt to get feedback from whole year groups after an assembly. However, one school had a pre-existing internal feedback system and they offered to incorporate our feedback questions and kindly shared the results with us.

This is what the feedback from their Year 9 pupils tells us:

Statement	Percentage (%) strongly agreed/agreed
I enjoyed this session	85%
I have learnt something new in this session	78%
I am inspired to learn more about creative careers	79%
I would like more opportunities like this	82%

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Pupils were also asked to respond to the following statements:

***Please tell us something you will take with you from this assembly.***

5% answered "music" to this question

Responses included:

***"Continued ambition to get better at guitar "***

***"To always chase my dreams"***

***"I should really follow my passion and do what I do"***

***Please tell us something you have felt during this assembly.***

10% answered "inspiring"

Responses included:

***"It was very interesting to expand my choices of creative careers"***

***"Curious"***

***"Excitement because there a lots of different jobs"***

***"I felt joyous and gained knowledge"***

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***Please tell us something you would take from this assembly.***

6% answered "jobs" to this questions

Responses included:

***"not all careers have to be practical"***

***"It made me discover new jobs that I did not know about before"***

***Please tell us something you have thought of after this assembly.***

4% answered "creative career" to this question.

Responses included:

***"I thought how if you follow your dreams and commit you will get somewhere"***

***"Whether architect is something I can do"***

***"How do you get reflective lights that emit a display"***

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This particular school allowed students to ask questions and gave an hour to the assembly which meant creatives had longer to speak and to respond to pupils. In other schools that had assemblies the pupil reaction was very different. In one school the year group were allowed to ask questions but didn't generally (although teachers remarked that they were discussing the creatives' visits amongst themselves at break and lunchtime) and in the other school, pupils were not allowed to ask questions at all. Despite this, the head of Year 9 at this school was very enthusiastic about the assemblies and pleased with the pupil response particularly as we had sent three creatives who had attended the school themselves:

***"It was really inspiring for students to hear about creative careers and the different routes that people had taken. It was also great to have old students (of the school) speaking to the students- it really resonated with the students." (A Teacher)***

## *Observations & Recommendations*

Although the assemblies were undoubtedly a success and the participating schools gave positive feedback, the difference in the level of engagement between assemblies and lessons was marked, with lessons providing the opportunity for more in depth discussion and engagement that enabled the creatives and pupils to share those “gold-dust” moments of connection and importantly encouraged pupil agency and allowed them to have a voice.

As you will see, feedback from the creatives themselves seems to corroborate this and it is therefore recommended that for future projects where possible, creatives visit lessons rather than assemblies .



## Feedback from Creatives

As well as verbal feedback during and after their visits, we asked our creatives to complete an anonymous online feedback survey. We had a total of 19 responses. Here's what they told us:

We asked them what stage of their career they were; 63% said they were experienced, 21% said very experienced and the remaining 16% identified themselves as early/emerging. 68% of respondents also described themselves as from the Global Majority.

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100% of the creative professionals agreed or strongly agreed that they had enjoyed the school visits and 79% agreed or strongly agreed that they were more confident about delivering assemblies and workshops to young people in the future, with the remainder neither agreeing or disagreeing (possibly these were those creatives who already had good experience of working in a school setting or with young people). Finally, 100% responded that they agreed or strongly agreed that they would like to take part in a similar project again.

Creatives also had the opportunity to share thoughts and experiences with us. We asked them what they had found most useful or interesting about the visits:

*"I found the young people's questions about my career most useful/interesting. I also felt giving them advice on whatever they choose to do career-wise was very useful."*

*"I found that each class of the year group I taught I had different attention spans. Some were very engaged and others were very disconnected and didn't want to get involved."*

*"The varied response from the children and how they engaged. What caught their attention and what didn't. Also every single lesson and assembly chose the same song for questions or break down etc. Good "research" for me and what sound and writing to use moving forward."*

*"Great staff to lead the way and help us, being supportive as staff is key. Teaching different year groups/ and different dynamics between mixed and single sex classes and responsiveness was interesting to learn."*

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Our army of 30 creatives were drawn from across the creative industries. Some already had experience of delivering to young people in secondary schools or in other community settings whilst others were either emerging artists or had jobs that up until now had not involved engaging with schools or young people.

We have already discussed the importance of the training sessions in providing a framework for delivery for the school visits and this was particularly true for the less experienced and emerging creatives. As a follow up to the training we offered the opportunity to share their lesson or assembly plan with us and to chat through what they were proposing as well as what materials they might need if they were offering activities. Some creatives took us up on this offer which enabled us to work with them to ensure that they felt comfortable and that schools were aware of what to expect and could make sure they had any materials necessary for activities.

*"I found it a good experience needing to prepare for the lesson and assembly and figure out what to talk about and how to talk about myself to young people." (A Creative)*

For some of the creatives being part of the project had an immediate effect on their practice. One creative was inspired to set up a new initiative aimed at training young people as part of his studio offer and has had work experience students from two of the schools he visited, another was asked back to deliver to Year 7 students at one their schools. Two others have since put themselves forward to run workshop sessions with young people in other settings and one has become a mental health mentor for young people.

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### ***Observations & Recommendations:***

All of the creatives involved were thoughtful and planned what they wanted to deliver carefully. We were careful not to be prescriptive, asking only that creatives talk about themselves, their creative career and how they came to be doing it.

***"It's very tricky to talk about yourself, when you're used to putting on a character or directing the focus to others" (A Creative)***

Interestingly, it was this aspect (talking about themselves) that many of the creatives, regardless of experience, verbally told us they found the most challenging and often made them feel the most vulnerable as they had to step out of their professional persona in order to share personal details of success and struggle. However, generally they were rewarded for their honesty as often it was this truthfulness that pupils responded to and learned lessons from, particularly when they could see their lives and experiences reflected in what the creative was saying.



Although the schools (and some pupils) reported back that they were pleased with assemblies, it was a less satisfying experience for the creatives delivering them - particularly in those schools where pupils either did not or were not allowed to ask questions.

Some creatives were positive about their assembly experience:

*"It was great to see the students and talk to them, it was also very clear that some found the assembly very valuable."*

*"Pairing up was a great idea for the assembly."*

*"I think putting poets into a assemblies is a high impact affair. The young people saw great poems performed and they also discussed the joys of working in facilitation."*

However, others had clearly found aspects of it frustrating. When asked how we could improve things they responded:

*"We could have some more time during assemblies, or have a longer time period for Q & As."*

*"Allow more time for Q&A with the students or an opportunity for students to come speak to the creatives 1:1 after the assembly."*

*"Perhaps by making things more interactive, if time would permit."*

*"It was mentioned by the teacher after the assembly that even though the young people didn't ask questions at the time, they did hear them over the rest of the day talking about the visit and the person who had been speaking to them. Maybe it be useful to have a process where the young people can submit questions if they have them later in the day or in the week and then the creatives can answer them via email or something like that (I know I wouldn't mind doing this!)"*

As mentioned before, the experience of the creatives who visited assemblies and those who visited lessons was very different in some aspects, with assemblies in the main not being as satisfying or meaningful to deliver for the Creatives, which again gives weight to the recommendation that schools be encouraged to arrange classroom workshops over assemblies.



## Digital Resource

As mentioned before, the creation of a digital resource was in direct response to findings from LEAN's consultation around creative careers i.e. that schools and young people find it difficult to access relevant information about creative careers and that parents/carers are wary of creative careers for their children as they see them as unstable.

The two explainer videos created for this project attempt to give context to the creative industries and to highlight their substantial contribution to the UK economy and then to offer some practical advice for young people at the early stages of thinking about a creative career.

Both these videos form part of LEAN's creative career offering on its website and provide a useful introduction to the individual careers and top tips submitted by local creatives that also feature.

Currently 18 creatives have submitted their creative career stories and tips and this resource will remain in place and be added to over time.

In addition to this, some useful links to other creative career resources will be added to help with further research.

### ***Observations & Recommendations***

The pre-production period for the project was relatively short and because of this most of the focus was on the school visits rather than the digital resource. This meant that we were unable to direct schools and pupils to a fully updated digital resource during school visits and perhaps contributed to the feedback from some teachers that they did not know how to access further information about creative careers. It also meant that we were not able to offer pupils the digital resource as a further research opportunity as part of their “next-steps”.

If the project is repeated the existing digital resource can be shared at a much earlier stage and may even prove useful as a tool to prepare staff and pupils for their creative visits. However, care should be taken to make sure that the resource is updated and that all information remains relevant.

Although we have had a good number of submissions (18) from creatives, it may be worth exploring whether a small payment for these can be made to creatives in the future as this is likely to increase the volume of contributions.



## Publicising & Celebrating the Project

As well as the mail-outs mentioned during pre-production, LEAN highlighted the project during its AGM, at Borough of Culture "Cultural Connectors" meetings, through newsletters and on the LEAN website.

Key stakeholders within the council were also kept up to date with a project headlines document that LEAN circulated.

LEAN attempted to publicise the project in the Council's quarterly magazine "Lewisham Life" however the timing of the project fell between two publications and the publication was already focussing on Borough of Culture activity.

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It had been hoped that there would be some celebration of the project on social media during the delivery period. However, team capacity and the importance of ensuring permissions were sought for images of young people meant it proved difficult to capture and share the project in real time.

LEAN celebrated the project with drinks with some of the creatives involved. This was an enjoyable event as many of the creatives had asked to meet each other and exchange stories.

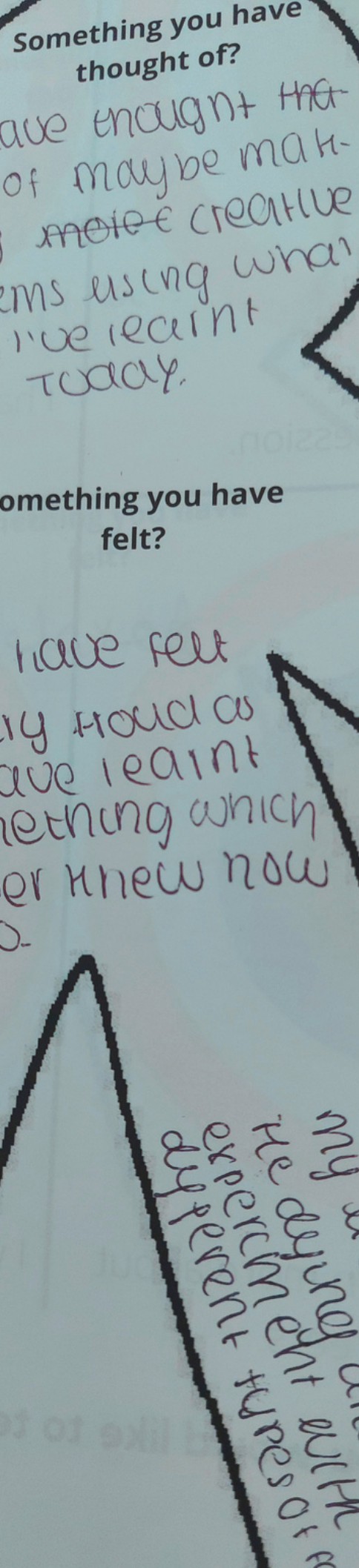


### ***Observations & Recommendations***

LEAN had hoped to publicise and celebrate Army of Creatives more extensively in local press and on social media but organising and delivering the project within the time scale proved all-consuming for such a small organisation particularly given the other commitments of its staff members, the lack of existing Instagram presence and the teething problems around the new website that hampered attempts to raise the project's profile.

The nature of the project and concerns around safeguarding of young people also meant it was difficult to capture and share creative visits as they happened.

This is something that may need to be addressed if the project is repeated with a communications strategy developed during pre-production and a clear delegation of duties regarding publicity on social media etc. established within the organisation.



## LEAN

Since its inception in 2000 LEAN has worked with all those involved in the provision of creative opportunities for children and young people; artists and arts organisations, the youth sector, non-arts voluntary and community sector, health sector, early years practitioners, primary and secondary teachers and further and higher education. Early on, LEAN built close relationships with schools and spearheaded needs-led programmes between schools and cultural organisations.

More recently, LEAN has renewed its focus on building closer relationships with schools, continuing to collaborate with other organisations to deliver large-scale activity (such as Lewisham Live Festival) and leading on consultations and pilot activity around creative careers that informed this project.

In 2021 LEAN was also named as the official Education Partner for London Borough of Culture 2022. This has meant increased direct engagement with all Primary and Secondary schools across the borough. Army of Creatives is the first time LEAN has facilitated a creative careers project going into multiple schools on this scale.

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As well as supporting creatives, LEAN staff members were also there to observe and help with evaluation of the project. Once school visits were completed, staff members gave their feedback and shared their observations.

## The Project

LEAN staff members acknowledged that the project period had been very busy and that they had felt stretched at times, particularly the project co-ordinator. When asked for feelings about the impact of the project to their workload some of the responses included:

*"Managing lots of moving parts constantly"*

*"Lots of time out of the office meant other projects fell behind"*

*"A bit stressful not knowing how things will go and wanting everyone to have a brilliant time"*

*"Very busy for small team so difficult to shout about what we were doing 'live'"*

*"Felt challenged but in a good way"*

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## Schools

For some LEAN team members this was the first time that they had engaged with schools in classrooms and assemblies. General observations about schools from the team included:

*"Proud and emotional at some kids' reactions"*

*"Schools were excited to have us there"*

*"Felt an important opportunity for schools/young people"*

*"Opportunity to connect with schools we didn't have links with"*

*"Schools didn't always have our backs-therefore it made the session difficult to manage "*



## Teachers & Pupils

Thinking about the impact of the project on teachers and pupils the LEAN team's observations included:

*"Novelty of our visit provided a platform to back up what teachers are already talking about with pupils"*

*"Teachers able to see pupils in new light"*

*"Opportunities where Young People felt seen, when everyone felt equally listened to and when teaching staff could pull on that and use in their future work. This is when it works at its best."*

*"Teachers felt listened to"*

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*"Pupils felt listened to"*

*"(Interaction between Creative and young people created) Moments when Young People just became joyful and creative. Their armour came off."*

*"Sense of agency felt by pupils in most sessions"*

*"(Something that made me think was) Creative's session so knowledgeable and watching those students have the truth spoken to them. Watching the penny drop and really understanding the flimsiness of what Young People think."*

*"Overwhelmed that actually more children really enjoyed the session than perhaps we expected"*

## Creatives

Turning to the impact of the project on the Creatives involved, team members' observations included:

*"Creatives found it a good experience"*

*"Felt like Creatives took steps to develop their skillset and felt empowered to share their stories"*

*"The less experienced creatives were learning on the job, which was great but sometimes made their sessions harder for them"*

*"Sense of giving back from Creatives"*

*"(It was an) Opportunity for creatives to change their delivery in order for the young people in the session to see themselves reflected"*

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When asked to reflect on problems and concerns, comments included:

*"Sometimes difficult when teachers took over and tried to make the session "on brand". It took away the novelty and the focus on creatives telling their story"*

*"When teachers are engaged and model behaviour and good engagement it sets the tone for the session"*

*"Sometimes communicate to school better so we can manage their and our expectations"*

*"Concerned when I heard that arts and creativity were being used as a crutch to explore 'difficult issues' that weren't led or encouraged by the young people."*

*"Sharply aware of the range of schools' experiences across the borough which I found quite difficult"*

*"Hard to capture and share the sessions due to safeguarding young people"*

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Reflections on what the project had meant for LEAN included:

*"Sense of LEAN making a direct impact"*

*"Raised LEAN's profile"*

*"Positive: = Linking professionals to young people in the borough"*

*"There needs to be more of this"*

## ***Recommendations***

Many of the recommendations raised by LEAN staff members are echoed throughout this report but with regards to LEAN operations for future projects of this nature, what stands out is that Army of Creatives' success was in part down to the good will of staff members to help with the delivery stage of the project despite their own work loads.

LEAN is an organisation that tends to "punch above its weight" when delivering projects. Although LEAN's ability to deliver multiple projects and meet deadlines successfully is admirable, if a large project such as Army of Creatives is to become a regular part of LEAN's output, careful consideration should be paid to ways of avoiding or mitigating the potentially detrimental affects of involvement for busy staff members.

Perhaps this could be achieved through careful scheduling of other commitments and deadlines, or by hiring an additional member of staff to help share responsibility during the pre-production and/or delivery period .



## Conclusions

This was undoubtedly a successful project for LEAN that raised its profile and confirmed its position as a crucial link between Lewisham schools, young people and creatives, able to respond to gaps within arts education and to deliver high volume and impactful projects that directly address identified need.

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Looking at the aim of the project to respond to the key findings from LEAN's consultation around Creative Careers, we can conclude that Army of Creatives successfully:

- Addressed the need to help Lewisham secondary schools connect with creatives and access information about a broad range of creative careers
- Provided opportunities for thousands of pupils to hear from and engage with local creatives who understood their lived experience
- Developed a digital platform for school career leads, parents and young people to learn more about creative careers and how to be successful in the creative industries.

However, the impact of the project seems to have extended beyond its initial aims:

- Allowed teachers to see their pupils in a new light and in some cases inspired them to develop their pedagogy
  - Gave pupils a freedom and sense of agency sometimes lacking in the curriculum
  - Pupils felt seen and listened to and appreciated being given the “truth” about the creative industries
  - Creatives found their visits inspiring and informative with some developing their practice as a result
  - Developed and enriched LEAN’s relationship with schools and local creatives
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There is clearly a substantial need for projects such as Army of Creatives. Several schools asked if we could extend our offer to other Year Groups and were disappointed when we were not able to. All asked if we were going to repeat the project in the future.

If the project were to be repeated yearly, particularly if it was delivered in February when pupils are making their GCSE choices, we can see that schools would embrace it and that the Army of Creative visits could become a key part of their yearly curriculum offer.

Army of Creatives gave 30 high quality local creatives the paid opportunity to develop their practice and make new connections in Lewisham schools and with fellow creatives in the area. However, we were only able to secure the number and quality of creatives we did because we were paying them, including a fee for attending training sessions. These payments are ethically and practically essential if the project is to be repeated in the future and will need to be in line with the cost of living.

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It is clear from conversations with the schools involved that they would not be able to contribute towards the costs of any future creative visits despite the overwhelming need for them. This threatens the sustainability of the project going forward as funding sources are limited and under pressure. Sourcing a key partner or sponsor for the project may therefore become critical to its ongoing success.



# Appendix A

Here is an example of the form used to gather feedback from pupils:

A feedback form divided into four quadrants, each featuring a target graphic with concentric circles in yellow, blue, and green, and a red center. The quadrants contain the following text:

- Top-left: "I enjoyed this session."
- Top-right: "I have learnt something new in this session."
- Bottom-left: "I am inspired to learn more about creative careers."
- Bottom-right: "I would like more opportunities like this."

At the bottom of the form, there is a text prompt: "Anything else you would like to tell us?"

A feedback form shaped like a person, with the following text prompts:

- Head: "Something you have thought of?"
- Right arm: "Something you will take with you?"
- Left arm: "Something you would like to see?"
- Torso: "Something you have felt?"
- Right leg: "What's your next step?"

The form includes the logo for "/LEAN Learning Education Arts Network" in the top right corner.



## Acknowledgments & Thanks

Army of Creatives arose from a vital piece of consultation carried out by LEAN who had the vision to ask questions of key stakeholders about Creative Careers and then to collate it all into a report (*Discussions on Creative Careers*), which ensured their views were heard and represented.

This meant that the development and delivery of Army of Creatives was based on demonstrable need and was met with support by schools, pupils and creatives alike.

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Huge thanks must go to all the participating creatives whose passion, enthusiasm and belief in the project was humbling to observe and whose hard work and talent was integral to its success.

Thank you too to the schools for welcoming LEAN and the creatives so warmly, the teachers who supported the project and informed its development and the pupils for listening, contributing and joining in with such trust and brilliance.

Final thanks to Lewisham Council and Shapes Lewisham for funding Army of Creatives.

**Report prepared by Katherine Perry**  
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