

## History of the project



In 2020, Lewisham Education Arts Network (LEAN) completed a series of consultations with participatory arts organisations in the borough, teaching staff and career leads in local secondary schools, and groups of young people engaged in cultural activity.

The subsequent report '[Discussions on Creative Careers](#)' provides a snapshot of the views held by these groups on;

- how the creative industries are perceived
- the role of schools in promoting creative careers
- work experience and placement opportunities in the creative industries
- creative development opportunities that are led by creative organisations outside of school settings

Key findings from the report include:

- Young people are **unaware of the breadth of roles available in the creative industries**
- Many young people (especially those from a Global Majority background) state that they feel **careers in the creative industries are 'too risky'** and that parents prefer them to opt for 'safe' options such as doctors, lawyers and financiers.
- School **staff lack knowledge of different routes into creative careers**, they have little access to creative professionals and **work experience opportunities with arts organisations are unavailable or oversubscribed.**
- Creatives that do engage with schools (in career days or as speakers) **do not reflect the diversity and lived experiences of Lewisham's students.**

*“I am not sure what people mean by the creative industries. You instantly think of performing because that’s what you see but never the other roles or people working them.”*  
(Young Participant)

*“I haven’t seen anyone who is local, you know that looks and sounds like me coming to talk to us about a creative job. Maybe they are harder to find, or not signed up on the list or something, but I think maybe I would relate more if their story felt more like mine and I could feed that back to my parents.”*  
(Young Participant)

The key findings from the Discussions on Creative Careers report informed the development of *Army of Creatives*, with the main aim to challenge some of the perceptions held by young people and teaching staff about careers in the creative industries.



## Army of Creatives pilot project



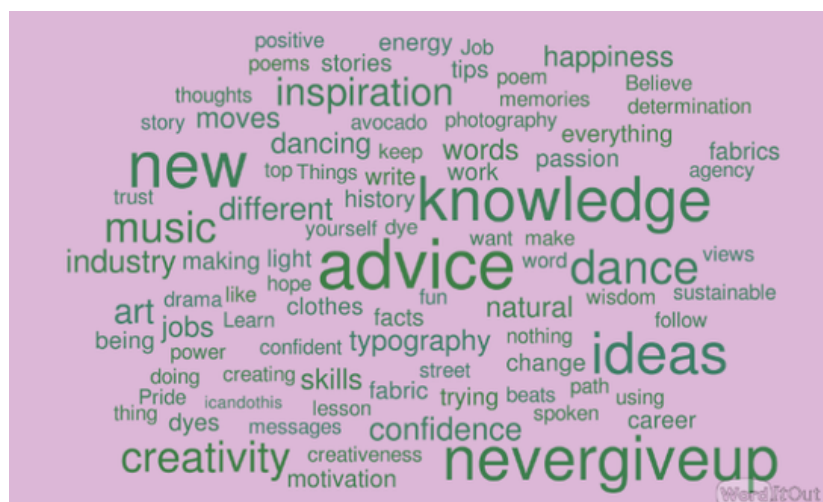
In response to the findings from the Discussions on Creative Careers report, LEAN secured funding to run a pilot of *Army of Creatives* in Spring 2022.

- **30 local creatives** were recruited - **70% of which were from a global majority** background
- Creative **professionals spanned many sectors** such as performing arts, literature, marketing, music production, museums and crafts
- *Army of Creatives* provided approximately **86 hours of paid work for local creatives** during the early recovery after the Covid pandemic
- **79 sessions** took place in **12 Lewisham secondary schools**
- Creatives **engaged with over 3300 local students** in year 9
- Two professionally made 'explainer' videos were created, and top-tips from creatives have been turned into **downloadable resources on the [LEAN website](#)**

Feedback on the pilot project was collected from young people, teachers and the creatives involved. Students completed evaluation forms after each session which not only asked them to rate the experience, but to share things they liked best, would change and what learning's they would take away with them.

The majority of young people stated that they would *'like more sessions like these in schools'*.

When asked *'What would you take with you from the sessions?'*, young people shared a variety of answers which we have compiled into a wordcloud:



“ *It made me discover new jobs that I did not know about before* ”  
(Young person)

“ *Something I have thought about is knowing that I can make a living out of a creative career and find great opportunities* ”  
(Young person)

Teachers completed online surveys and shared anecdotal findings after sessions.

**100%** of teachers stated that they and their students enjoyed the visits by creatives.

**92%** of teachers said they were now more likely to invite local creative professionals to engage with their students after this project.

**92%** of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of the workshops their students had learned more about the creative industries.

**“ We are 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.*** ”

(Teacher)

Creatives professionals completed an online survey and joined LEAN staff for a group feedback session.

**79%** of creatives agreed or strongly agreed that they felt more confident about delivering talks and workshops to young people in the future.

**“ 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. ”**

(Creative professional)

Since taking part in the project, creative professionals have gone on to:

- Offer work experience opportunities to students in the schools they visited
- Set up a new training initiative for young people as part of their music studio's offer
- Deliver further workshops at the school they visited and other schools in the trust
- Sign up with larger organisations to deliver workshops outside of school settings
- Taken up further training to support their work with young people, including Understanding Young People & Mental Health



From the wealth of information collected, LEAN created a [detailed evaluation report](#) highlighting the impact of the project and drawing out recommendations for future development.

This insight has informed our planning, with many of the recommendations received from creative professionals, teachers and young people being directly incorporated into this latest version of the project (examples below).

#### **Recommendation:**

Teachers told us that young people were very interested in CreaTech and it would be great to have professionals who work in sectors that combine creativity and technical knowledge.

#### **Development for Army of Creatives 2024:**

LEAN will actively recruit creative professionals in an even wider breadth of industries. Leading games developer Creative Assembly have confirmed their involvement, providing diverse games designers, testers, and technical managers to run workshops in schools.

LEAN will also use new partnerships to recruit creatives from the online marketing, streaming and digital production side of the recording industry.

#### **Recommendation:**

Young People and Teachers flagged the need for more work experience opportunities locally in the arts and cultural sector, saying this would help to develop new skills and build on the creative workshops in schools.

#### **Development for Army of Creatives 2024:**

LEAN in partnership with local organisational partners will pilot a facilitated group work-experience for 15 students from Deptford Green School, focusing on the different roles within the theatre industry. The week-long work experience will incorporate facilitated workshops, careers talks and hands-on project activity in local theatre organisations, led by staff in various roles within the sector and supported throughout by a trained facilitator.

The learnings from this pilot will help to shape a replicable and scaleable group work-experience model that can be delivered within the limited capacity of arts and cultural organisations, whilst still increasing career development opportunities for young people.

#### **Recommendation:**

Creatives said that they found the training element very useful and would be interested in more opportunities to train together and further develop their skills facilitating activity with young people in schools.

#### **Development for Army of Creatives 2024:**

LEAN will develop the training offer for creatives. Working with teachers to ensure that the information covered is relevant and supports the work taking place in local schools, the training sessions will explore how to plan an engaging workshop, and will be supplemented with more intensive training on how to make workshops more accessible and how to work within a trauma informed approach.

The training sessions will support creative professional's personal development and leave them with tools that can be used in future schools settings or in any participatory work with young people.