

ARTS CONNECT

Evaluation Summary 2014–2017



THE STORY OF ARTS CONNECT SO FAR

Arts Connect was developed to address social isolation, lack of creative opportunities and under-engagement with existing cultural offers for people with learning disabilities in East Sussex.

The programme was created by Culture Shift with the aim of:

- ➔ Developing a sustainable arts offer for people with learning disabilities that would build confidence and skills, and improve health and wellbeing;
- ➔ Creating a more connected community, with groups and individuals supporting and learning from each other;
- ➔ Enabling arts venues to engage better with people with learning disabilities, and connect the social care sector more effectively to the arts sector;
- ➔ Provide positive role models for people with learning disabilities, and raise awareness of the work of learning disabled artists.

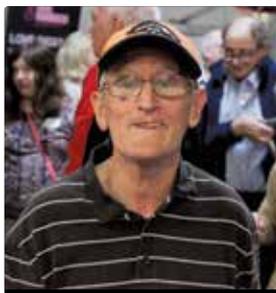
After a year-long pilot, East Sussex County Council commissioned a three-year programme. Further funding was secured through grants from Arts Council England, East Sussex Arts Partnership and Hastings and Rother Health Inequalities Fund.

In 2016 a grant from Arts Council England enabled Culture Shift to expand the programme, to include a wider range of courses, and further Get Connected events in West Sussex.



WHAT IS ARTS CONNECT?

Arts Connect consists of several strands of activity:



GET CONNECTED events are lively, interactive networking events for learning disabled people, carers, parents, staff and management from learning disability support organisations, as well as

artists and cultural organisations. Get Connected events take place in arts and cultural venues and offer a chance to find out about opportunities and resources in the local area, while sharing skills and information, and showcasing the talents of learning disabled artists.



GET CREATIVE courses are short courses (usually delivered over about five weeks) that are run in cultural and community venues. They offer people with learning disabilities the opportunity to try out

different creative activities, develop new skills and form new friendships. They are delivered by artists in partnership with venues including Towner Gallery, Railway Land Lewes, De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill and play a valuable role in introducing people with learning disabilities to these venues.



ARTS CONNECT AMBASSADORS act as reference group for the project whilst developing their own confidence and skills. They provide greater visibility and profile for learning disabled project

leaders and have been active participants in research led by Brighton University. As a result of this work they have travelled to conferences in the UK and in Europe.



GET INTO LIBRARIES is a network of library-based supported book groups for learning disabled adults, run by volunteers, and supported by Culture Shift.



EVERY SORT OF PEOPLE is an accessible, community arts and music festival which took place on 13 May 2017. It was delivered in partnership with a wide range of arts and community partners

in Lewes, and brought together a range of organisations working in the field of community arts and learning disability, along with other community organisations. Every Sort of People is inclusive and celebratory, offering an accessible space to showcase a range of local music and community activities.



DELTA 7, a band of learning disabled musicians, was formed during the pilot project and continues to thrive. The band was the subject of award-winning short film *We Rise*, shown at Picturehouse cinemas across the country. Delta 7

released their first single in 2017 and regularly play live, performing at a number of public events including Every Sort of People. Delta 7 are "advocates for the learning disabled community disguised as rock stars!"

THE BENEFITS OF ARTS CONNECT

Advocacy and visibility for learning disabled people in the community **Outcomes for people with learning disabilities, their families and carers**

- ➔ Get Connected events have offered people with learning disabilities, their families and carers, more opportunities to find out about what's on offer in their communities, while also providing a platform to showcase the work of disabled artists.
- ➔ People with learning disabilities have been inspired to try creative activities at Get Connected events and on Get Creative courses.
- ➔ The programme has contributed to reducing the social isolation experienced by people with learning disabilities, their families and carers, and to improving self-reported wellbeing.
- ➔ People with learning disabilities have developed new skills and increased their confidence.
- ➔ Through the Ambassador's programme, people with learning disabilities have developed confidence, presentation skills and leadership skills, while developing ownership of and influence over the programme.
- ➔ People with learning disabilities have increased their awareness, skills and confidence around using libraries and visiting arts and cultural venues.

Creativity and connectivity within the care sector **Outcomes for the adult social care sector**

- ➔ Arts Connect has enabled care sector staff to develop new creative skills, while supporting managers in adult social care to identify gaps in provision, and explore innovative solutions.
- ➔ Get Connected events have provided a platform to connect arts and community organisations with those working in adult social care, and develop new partnerships.

Building skills and confidence, developing new audiences and dissemination **Outcomes for arts organisations and other venues**

- ➔ Arts Connect has supported arts organisations and other venues, including libraries, to develop new partnerships with the adult social care sector.
- ➔ Artists and volunteers in the arts sector have developed new skills and have become more confident working with people with learning disabilities.
- ➔ The programme has supported staff in arts organisations and other venues to become more skilled at providing services to people with learning disabilities.
- ➔ Arts organisations and other venues have reached out to new audiences.

BETWEEN 2014 AND 2017 ARTS CONNECT HAS:

Delivered **24 Get Connected events**, attended by a total of 1,062 participants including people with learning disabilities, learning disability support organisations, carers, parents, arts organisations and other community organisations.



Provided **16 Get Creative courses**, attended by a total of 185 participants with learning disabilities.

Run **100 Get Into Libraries sessions**, across **5 areas**, and attended by **105 participants**.

Empowered **14 Ambassadors** to develop and promote the programme.



Involved and supported **30 volunteers**.

Employed **13 artists** to deliver arts courses in the community.

Supported **1 learning disabled rock band, Delta 7**, who were also the subject of **1 award-winning film**, played in Picturehouse Cinemas across the country.



Created **1 amazing community festival**, Every Sort of People, which was attended by **1000 people** with and without disabilities.

THE FUTURE OF ARTS CONNECT

Arts Connect represents an ambitious and highly successful programme, offering a wide range of opportunities for people with learning disabilities to benefit from participation in the arts at multiple levels.

The programme has impacted on both the adult social care sector and the arts sector and given rise to several 'spin-off' projects and activities, including the band Delta 7, and the development of the Every Sort of People festival (along with the community partnership that made this event a reality).

Moving forward, Culture Shift is investigating new delivery models, including providing training and mentoring to the arts sector and adult social care sector so that values and working methods developed through can become more fully embedded into these sectors.

Funding is being sought for the future development of Arts Connect, building on the successes of the programme, so that through the arts, people with learning disabilities can be more visible, more connected and more celebrated in their communities.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Arts Connect was developed and delivered by Culture Shift. The programme was commissioned by East Sussex County Council Adult Social Care and supported by several funders including:

