Paul Hamlyn Foundation ArtWorks Evaluation Interviews with Artists

Art Works
Paul Hamlyn Foundation
Special Initiative

Developing
Practice in
Participatory
Settings

phf Paul Hamlyn
Foundation

Contents

Executive Summary

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The ArtWorks special initiative, funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation (PHF), is investing in a range of activity to explore how artists could be better supported in developing their practice in participatory settings. This study was undertaken as part of the evaluation of ArtWorks, and it builds upon research and consultation undertaken by the Pathfinders which are part of the special initiative. As such, this study is seeking to: test and clarify some of the findings which have already emerged from the special initiative; understand further where relationships may exist between key characteristics and experiences; and provide the evaluation with a clearer understanding of the immediate beneficiary group for the special initiative, and their needs, perceptions and motivations of work undertaken in community, participatory and socially-engaged settings.

This is the second element of a two-part study, the first part of which is a survey with UK-based artists undertaking at least some work in community, participatory and/or socially-engaged settings. This summary offers a brief overview of the main findings from this second phase of the research:

- The artists who participated in interviews practice in a range of artforms. Respondents included students and emerging, mid-career and established artists. Some artists predominantly present their own art work, others focus upon work in community, participatory and socially-engaged settings, and some balance both areas of focus.
- Artists vary in the ways they articulate their practice, but some strongly relate their practice not only to their artform but also to the settings and/or groups which they regularly work with. This is reflected in the way artists seek work and develop their expertise in specific settings.
- Respondents often express strong personal motivations for their practice, and this includes the work they undertake in community, participatory and socially-engaged settings. On the whole, artists describe their role as facilitating the experiences of participants in those settings.
- Most of the artists contributing in these interviews had not previously been participants in the kinds of work they now undertake in community, participatory and socially-engaged settings. Only one participant selected an undergraduate course because of the introduction it offered to this type of work; other respondents learnt about this kind of work through work placements, contacts with other artists and through freelance opportunities to undertake the work.
- Whilst 'on-the-job' experience is considered crucial, several respondents could identify experiences of undertaking work in community, participatory and socially-engaged settings in which they felt vulnerable or under-supported.
- Responsiveness and personal integrity are considered important skills by artists working in these settings. Respondents also discuss artform skills, and a range of administrative, planning and evaluation skills which are necessary to build a career and undertake work. Several artists have some experience of working across different artforms; for a few artists, some element of interdisciplinary work (whether across artform, or with people from other sectors) is considered very important to their work.
- Generally, there is a sense that practice in different settings contributes to a collective and shared practice, and that work in some areas is growing alongside the development of practice. Nonetheless, artists also report having to individually navigate the requirements of different settings.
- Artists refer frequently to the value of personal contacts, word-of-mouth recommendations and individual champions within commissioning/funding/employing organisations. Sometimes work is understood as taking place as a result of individual intervention, in opposition to a policy or operational context, rather than as a result of it.

- Beyond individual recommendation, artists seek work through formal applications and approaches, and often look for particular types of opportunities as a way of developing their practice and portfolio. Experience of formal application routes is not always positive, but artists who have received significant support or advice from such routes have found it to be particularly beneficial.
- In engaging with employers/funders/commissioners, artists appreciate clarity of both requirements and responsibilities. The role of other staff in the setting can be a key issue, as well as the ability of a commissioning partner to understand what they have requested. Artists are seeking, where possible, to influence employers/funders/commissioners to consider developing work in different ways, to build upon existing knowledge and support artists and participants to identify need and design the work together.
- Artists see work in community, participatory and socially-engaged settings as achieving a number of positive outcomes for participants. This study did not focus upon these, but common benefits include the opportunity for participants to do new things, to achieve something which they had not done before, and to express themselves.
- Respondents report regularly engaging in evaluation processes, and understand the importance of articulating the value of the work. There is less confidence that these processes and any shared recognition of the value of activity actually significantly effects the ways in which future activity is commissioned.
- Artists report developing their practice through a number of routes, including observing and sharing practice with other artists, personal reflection and research, undertaking training and going to events. Significant barriers to more development focus upon practical issues, such as the cost of opportunities and the cost of taking the time out of paid work. There are also, for some artists, issues about the relevance, availability and value of some opportunities.
- Respondents discuss the importance of networks and opportunities for artists to get together. Several respondents are involved in leading or supporting networks, and some based in organisations also support wider training and development programmes for artists. In some cases, networks are being developed into more substantial structures as a way of collectively developing the practice and seeking work opportunities.
- Membership organisations are considered important for a range of practical benefits, such as insurance, job listings, information and courses; some organisations are also considered important in speaking for artists, though not all feel well-represented.
- On the whole, most respondents feel positive about the future and value of arts practice in community, participatory and socially-engaged settings. However, artists are also aware of specific, day-to-day issues in relation to the availability and type of work, and the effect of 'demand' (and associated policy and operational contexts) upon the type of practice which can be developed.

Introduction

1   Introduction

This study has been undertaken as part of the evaluation of the ArtWorks Special Initiative, funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation. It also builds upon research which was undertaken by the ArtWorks Pathfinders as part of their projects. The primary purposes of these interviews were to:

- Explore further and in more depth the findings of the first phase of this study, which was a survey of artists who work (at least to some extent) in community, participatory and/or socially-engaged settings;
- Add to the survey in providing some broad proxy measures which the Evaluation Team for ArtWorks can use for assessing the potential efficacy and value of activities undertaken by the Pathfinders in the second and third years of ArtWorks; and a context against which plans for activity post-ArtWorks can be assessed.

This report looks at the findings from these interviews. The conclusion and executive summary bring together the key findings and areas of learning.

Survey Design

The key areas of enquiry for the survey were:

- Asking artists to explain and articulate their current artistic practice, and the different kinds of work which they undertake;
- What motivated artists to pursue their career, and particularly what the drivers are for undertaking work in community, participatory and socially-engaged settings, and what routes they have taken into their career;
- What their experiences are of working in different settings, including their preferences or expertise for specific kinds of work/settings, and their views of the purpose of the work;
- If and how artists go about developing their practice, including ways in which they engage with peers, interact with employers or commissioner, undertake training and use other formal approaches such as guidelines or codes of practices;
- If and how they would like to develop their practice in the future, including what kinds of training and other support they are interested in, how they think the area of work will develop in the future, and what barriers and motivations there are for developing practice.

Response Sizes

Interviews were undertaken between 22nd August and 23rd September 2014. 11 interviews were undertaken, all with artists who had completed the survey and had indicated that they were willing to be contacted and invited to take part in a further stage of the research.

Given the spread of distribution routes for the original survey, it seemed likely that respondents would be those with some significant interest or engagement in this area of work (in community, participatory or socially-engaged settings). The interviewees are, therefore, a small group taken from a larger, self-selecting sample. In selecting potential interviews, a range of characteristics were used to provide a group who represent, to some extent, those artists who responded to the Phase 1 Survey. Artists were interviewed from each of the major artform groupings, from different career stages and with different levels of self-identified engagement with work in community, participatory and socially-engaged settings. Within these selections, an attempt was made to ensure some degree of geographical spread also.

Findings

2   Findings

2.1   Current artistic practice

2.1.1   What artists do

All the interviews begin by asking respondents to talk about their practice at the moment. The majority of respondents in these interviews are freelance artists. A further three run artist-led organisations specialising in work in community, participatory or socially-engaged settings, and two work for organisations/projects running programmes in those settings. Of those who worked with organisations, three also reported undertaking freelance work in addition to their employment.

Some respondents predominantly work in community, participatory or socially-engaged settings, others balance this practice with presenting their own artistic practice and some focus predominantly on developing and presenting their own artistic practice.

Respondents report working in a wide variety of settings/groups, including: criminal justice; health, mental health and care settings, including work which focuses on particular groups (e.g. those with dementia); educational settings for both children and young people, and for adults; in specific community settings, such as with youth groups; older people; and intergenerational work. The circumstances and framing of the work varies significantly, from formal 'teaching' to shared creative production, from therapy to leisure activities. In one example, a project with dementia sufferers is part of a formal research programme.

In terms of balancing their working lives, several respondents discuss how different elements of their practice fit together. For those artists primarily presenting their own work, they talk about some of the challenges of building a career through exhibitions, performances, through commissions and other activities. One respondent articulates the importance of presenting their own work as follows:

> 'I think there's also a need to make work that is, sort of, universally . . . you know, it's possible to put out there in a universal form, rather than specifically to the actual community you're dealing with, you know?'

For others, activities with and without the direct involvement of communities may be less distinguishable:

> '. . . those two strands are quite inter-related so when I'm making a production often I'll explore, as part of the creative process, I'll develop ideas, explore ideas, with people for whom that question or theme is particularly relevant.'

Some respondents are clear, however, about the need to balance different kinds of activities:

> 'I do find when you're out teaching all the time you definitely need to say that's enough, okay I need some refreshment from this.'

2.1.2   Motivations for practice

Respondents were asked to think about what the motivations are for what they choose to do. Interestingly, several respondents in this small sample had already pursued a career in a different sector before re-training/developing their practice as artists.

One respondent talks about having worked in a different sector in a project management role and had been involved in their artform for several years, both as an amateur and increasingly through paid work (both presenting and in community/participatory/socially-engaged settings). The death of a family member who was also an artist prompted the interviewee to make the move from their existing job into building a career as an artist. Another had also come from a significant career in a different sector, and had engaged in art through a local arts centre, through informal teaching sessions; eventually the respondent wanted to bring together their original professional interest with an emerging artistic practice:

> '. . . but quite often I was told, 'Oh, this isn't art; this is environmental studies.' You know, 'You shouldn't really be doing this.' And I kept thinking that the role of the artist is so . . . can be so subtle in presenting the image of something that people immediately understand.'

Another respondent who had previously had a career in a different sector, and had been put off developing their artistic practice by a parent who was an artist, describes deciding to retrain as an artist in vocational terms:

> 'I've felt different ever since - this is what I'm meant to be doing. I'm born for this - born for it.'

All the respondents who report coming to their practice as a second career placed emphasis on previous professional and life experiences in shaping and supporting their artistic practice. Sometimes family changes prompted certain developments. One respondent reports focusing on their degree as a mature student in a period in which they were caring for a family member; another reignited an interest in arts practice with children through having a child of their own.

In terms of their own artistic practice, several respondents discuss their practice as something which is in development, and which it can take some time to understand and articulate:

> 'I feel like I'm getting a feel for what my work's about at last.'

A few respondents articulate their motivation to practice as being particularly linked to what they perceived as a need in their geographical area, or as a particular response to their geographical area. Several also see a broadly defined role in going beyond the everyday, or challenging potential audiences or recipients:

> '. . . we need artists to, sort of, remember the cutting edge, to remember about different qualities in their work other than either nice or weird.'

2.1.3 Motivations for working in community, participatory and socially-engaged settings

The artists interviewed in this study were also asked to reflect upon what prompted them to pursue activity in community, participatory and socially-engaged settings. Some respondents express a broad principle which is about ensuring that their work is relevant:

> '. . . the main purpose of really developing that practice [is] as a means to communicate with the wider world, rather than purely as an artist developing . . . the art . . . I'm much more interested in really working with people, to explore what's happening on the ground.'

> '. . . it's also about community engagement, my work, because of about individual identity. And it's what the world needs.'

Others report being motivated more by specific life experiences. One artist who had initially worked as a teacher and then left the profession, continues to undertake work in community, participatory and socially-engaged settings because they did not want to lose the contact with 'education' activity. Another artist reflects on their desire to work with children and young people from the area they grew up in, and those groups are more likely to feel that certain sorts of artistic experiences might not be affordable to them, and working to make those experiences accessible and available. This respondent's experience is chiefly framed by not coming from a particularly well-off background.

For some other respondents the general motivation of ensuring 'access' to opportunities is also an important driver:

> 'I've been doing the work ever since mainly based around the idea that everybody has a right to dance, but many people are denied that and trying to find ways of giving people access, particularly those who wouldn't normally get it.'

Two respondents particularly refer to experiences with political activism as having been important in prompting their work. One who had a background of political campaigning expresses their practice as important in enabling individuals and communities to tell stories, which in turn was perceived as something which could support change to happen. The notion of enabling agency for participants through giving a platform/outlet for individual stories is important for a few of the artists who were interviewed in this study.

Some artists situate their motivations within the context of being frustrated by work which was already taking place in community, participatory and socially-engaged settings:

> 'I felt quite dissatisfied by, kind of, low quality . . . I found that a lot of the productions that went into schools were really low quality.'

> '. . . this I was teaching for [local authority] and I became increasingly frustrated because we had to audition the kids and do all these listening tests, etc. To me it seemed there were too many hoops for the kids to jump through before they were ever given an instrument . . . Learning to play an instrument should be learning about enjoying music rather than focusing on the technical.'

In some cases, respondents are clear about having to look for specific avenues to develop the kinds of practice they are interested in. This strong sense of what kind of practice is required and appropriate was apparent from all the interviewees, who all demonstrate strong views about their

own practice and other practice which they have witnessed (both good and bad). Within this, there are significant variations in terms of the different conceptions and motivations for practice across different interviewees. As the quotations above indicate, some emphasise ideas of the quality of the final output, others are particularly interested in the notion of empowerment through the process of the activity. Often, these approaches do not suggest that different kinds of practice sit clearly in opposition to each other; rather, they suggest different emphases or (indeed) different artform contexts, settings and objectives for the work. These kinds of differences are sometimes manifest in problems respondents report with articulating their practice to others, for example:

> '. . . for quite a long time, I found it quite difficult to identify what I did and to forge an identity, because I found that there were lots of people who were artists and classed themselves as artists, and I never really felt comfortable with that tag.'

> 'I don't like using the term community theatre because there is quite a lot of cross-over with what I do . . .'

The uneasiness about particular terms is often focused on issues to do with the role of the artist or practitioner, and the relationship between the practice and those participating in activities. All the respondents discuss and consider these issues in some way when asked about their practice.

Finally, one respondent makes a very practical point about work choices available to artists:

> 'Not being sexist or stuff, but I would say probably sixty percent of people who are in the network . . . have gone doing freelance workshops, sort of, as an artist and stuff because they've got children [and are female].'

As noted in the survey report which precedes this report, whilst the majority of artists we surveyed are female, it is difficult to tell how representative this is of the broader population of artists undertaking at least some work in community, participatory and socially-engaged settings. However, this respondent reminds us that artists (like other workforces) will be in some way shaped by practical, social circumstances. The extent to which this potentially significantly affects the demographic balance of the workforce is, however, not something which this study can ascertain; this would be an interesting area for future research.

2.1.4   Why work with particular groups

In discussing motivations for working in community, participatory and socially-engaged settings, some artists specifically discuss working with particular groups of participants. For some, the experiences of the participants themselves are particularly important:

> 'I personally like working with prisoners – I think there is something about the exploration of story through drama and through their own personal life histories that makes it very potent, engaging and powerful and so I'd like to think I'd never stop being able to do that.'

> 'I just loved the project - loved the environment. It sounded really exciting – really enjoyed the, kind of, capacity that the guys had to create something great.'

Conversely, some respondents also report experiences in particular settings where either the restrictions of the setting or the particular experiences of the participants were challenging. Reasons for not wanting to work in some settings range from (for example): issues with school settings,

where schools wanted large numbers of pupils to be involved; to a respondent who had found working with patients with serious and terminal illnesses emotionally difficult to continue with.

Other respondents make some more general points about working with different groups. Several talk about the requirement to work with 'new' groups on different projects, and talk about seeking opportunities for longitudinal engagement with the same group:

> 'There are definitely groups I would like to return to and having felt like I met them and got a sense of what they have to say about the world and I want to go back and develop something further.'

> '. . . doing things that are more strategic – where you get to develop relationships over a longer period of time, where you can actually facilitate that and see the real outcome for them and see how they've progressed over the course of a project – those, kind of, meatier projects interest me, where you can, kind of, see it through to the end and see the outcomes.'

Respondents also discuss wanting to work with specific groups of beneficiaries, and often had quite specific views about why they wanted to engage with different groups, for example:

> '. . . lower secondary school. To get them while they're still a bit optimistic, but they've got a bit of edge.'

2.2   Becoming an artist

2.2.1   Early experiences and initial training

Only a couple of respondents report having, as a young person, experienced as a participant the kinds of work they are now involved in, one of whom had come to artistic practice through engaging as an adult whilst already professionally working in another sector. One respondent reports having trained to teach students at FE in their artform, and particularly teaching them skills to run workshops, and eventually deciding to stop teaching in order to actually begin running workshops themselves. For a small number of respondents, opportunities either through final projects/work experience as part of a degree course, or work experience arranged outside a degree course, provided first introductions to work placing artists in community, participatory and socially-engaged settings.

In terms of initial training, respondents have had a range of different experiences. Just over a third had undertaken a first degree directly relating to the artform within which they predominantly practice, with one artist undertaking a degree with a specific focus on FE teaching. Only one respondent particularly cites their undergraduate degree as being a strong source of development and knowledge about work taking place in community, participatory and socially-engaged settings:

> 'I really liked the fact that I got a base level in, kind of, performance training but also learnt a lot about running workshops – quite a lot of experience, kind of, hands-on running workshops and putting together projects.'

The majority of respondents report a less direct route, either undertaking a degree in a general humanities area and developing work in their artform whilst at university alongside studies, or training in an entirely different area and pursuing a career in another sector before later changing.

Two respondents had subsequently returned to higher education to retrain in a traditional artform degree. One respondent had begun, but dropped out from their undergraduate degree.

For one respondent, who had changed career to develop their artistic practice, an undergraduate degree undertaken through distance learning was important, though it also came with some challenges – not least, being relatively isolated as a distance learner. Others report challenges in emerging from 'traditional' courses into a career:

> 'You come out of music college and for about the first couple of years you think orchestral playing is the 'be all and end all' of all playing cos that's what the music college system in this country seems to be set up for . . . after doing it for a couple of years I twigged fairly early on that playing in an orchestra was not going to suit me as a professional or as a player. From then on it's been trying to get the right mix of some orchestral playing, 'cause I do quite enjoy it – and teaching became more and more interesting.'

> 'Nothing in terms of vocational training on the undergraduate degree at all. There was a little bit of what you might call 'professional development' . . . '

One respondent had undertaken a relatively new MA looking at artistic practice in the context of society. The respondent praised the value of elements of the course which encouraged students to articulate their position on key issues as artists:

> 'So, it was, like, just the perfect platform for me to say, 'Right, come on -- pin your colours to the mast. What are you about?' You know?'

2.2.2   Getting into the area

Interviewees were asked to talk about the first experiences they have had of developing their work in community, participatory and socially-engaged settings. One artist who has worked in different settings for many years, now runs their own organisation specialising in work in a range of settings. They had worked initially with a large arts organisation as a presenting artist, subsequently developing their practice in other kinds of settings, through 'an education splinter group' who were part of the organisation. The respondent describes developing the idea for the organisation from early work experiences picking up tenders and contracts.

Others have sought to move from initial training straight into this area of work. Several respondents talk about taking work on in the early stages which required significant personal commitment, including travelling significant distances for the work, low or poor payment and so on. One respondent who had changed career to become an artist particularly describes the leap from relative financial security to working from project to project, and working long hours in order to build up the necessary experience and volume of work.

One respondent whose organisation employs artists discusses the experience which is required to work in a particular setting:

> 'Really we can't put just anybody there - maybe three years' experience in the field and quite apart from good references and all the rest of it. We do have regular student placements and secondments in terms of that kind of thing who work with assistants with us and get a fair amount of training as they go along. That's the level at which we, kind of, would have less experienced people.'

All those artists who either run organisations, or who run programmes in organisations, discussed the importance of developing work experience and development programmes for artists who wanted to work in community, participatory and socially-engaged settings. One artist running an organisation talks about a range of different approaches they use to develop emerging artists who wanted to work in the settings which the organisation specialises in, including minimum-wage internships and work experience opportunities. Two respondents also discuss working with students and early career artists, and the importance of understanding personal motivation to work in different settings:

> 'I have less time for people who spend a lot of time talking about how marvellous the experience was for them without necessarily talking about what was the experience like for the people involved. I think there is a difference and occasionally you do come across that but I feel quite good at sniffing those people out.'

> 'When I've taken on placement students and things like that -- I've always said to them, like, I don't think . . . that it's not enough to be doing it for the greater good of somebody else; you need to be getting as much out of the work as they are. Because it's not a selfless experience; it's not about you being a great person and giving all . . . '

Several respondents express frustration at the challenges of trying to pick up work in the early stages of their careers:

> 'I must have made, certainly thirty, you know, serious applications in the last three years that haven't yielded anything really. You know, the whole market feels very swamped and I'm not sure that there are masses of opportunities there . . . I just feel like, yeah, I'm getting nowhere.'

> 'I feel as if I've got so much on board to contribute and nowhere to go with it.'

For some, applications processes are particularly challenging, and respondents report feedback on unsuccessful applications as being limited or (sometimes) non-existent. Many respondents place very particular emphasis on the opportunity to 'learn on the job' as a key way of establishing themselves, although some also acknowledged how challenging this was:

> 'They asked me if I've ever worked with children before and I said no and they said you'll catch on . . . Right at the beginning of my career I was suddenly faced with 30 sometimes quite challenging young people in schools in quite challenging areas delivering long term projects.'

> 'I'm going off to people's homes and doing these recordings, and it's all a trust, you know, from both sides, but it would be quite nice to at least be . . . have pointed out, maybe, the types of things you should think about when you're setting up. You know, from the client's point of view but also from your own . . . you realise, suddenly, you are quite visible; you're putting yourself in . . . you're making yourself vulnerable.'

Two respondents particularly cite the value of grants and support from creative and social enterprise agencies early in their practice, supporting them to undertake work and build their experience up. For some respondents, the relative isolation of being an individual practitioner is a particular challenge:

'I think it's quite common with freelancers that you don't have that career progression. You don't have anyone to mentor you and push you, that you kind of feel a bit insecure in what you're doing; and I think you kind of feel other people know what they're doing far better than you . . . it's taken years for me to build that confidence up.'

'[Following a successful project] I felt, 'God, you know, now I'm on a roll!' But that's where it ended, you know? There was . . . even though I've promoted it as much as I can and attempted to generate more opportunities, there haven't been any, you know? There's a strong will, but you can't do it all on your own.'

2.3   What is required from artists

2.3.1   Skills and approaches required by artists

When thinking about the kinds of skills and approaches required by artists working in community, participatory and socially-engaged settings, some respondents discuss technical artform skills which are required, but many focus on the ability to reflect and respond to the needs of participant groups.

'What I've learned is that you start from where people are – it's no good expecting them to fit in with what you want to do – they have their own priorities and pre-occupations.'

Some respondents place particular emphasis on elements of personal integrity in their practice, such as being honest with feedback.

Whether they run organisations or operate as freelancers, almost all the interviewees discuss the importance of having a range of 'non-artistic' skills, such as project management, making applications, raising funds, evaluating their work and undertaking financial administration. Given this range of activities, it is unsurprising that several respondents discuss the challenges of balancing their workloads, as well as managing the challenges of work which is often not steady, or which can cease because of external circumstances. Most respondents report focusing their work in their immediate region, and often sub-regionally. Only one respondent worked predominantly on a single project.

2.3.2   Artform and non-artform experiences/collaborations

Unprompted, several respondents mention working in settings with artists from other artforms. In some cases, whilst the overall project might cover different disciplines, artists describe working fairly independently from each other. Two respondents report developing their own practice by stepping into a different artform from their main practice, and developing a set of skills in a second artform. In other cases, the opportunity to collaborate on practice with artists from other artforms is seen as an important way to develop practice:

'I'm a film-maker, but I'm really interested in doing stuff with drama and, actually, I want to work with musicians and all of these things that they . . . I think can be really fruitful when people meet.'

One artist made the point that, whilst these experiences can be very valuable for the development of practice, they are often not specifically included to do so:

' . . . there has to be that kind of negotiation as to how we co-lead this project . . . you really have to get under the skin of it. That for me has been a really rich experience – it rarely comes about through the commissioners who kind of think this is going to be a learning opportunity for these artists – it is more like we need this person or this person – it ends up being a rich experience.'

2.4   How does the work happen

2.4.1   Experiences of different settings

The artists who took part in these interviews report working in a wide range of settings and with a wide range of groups, including; criminal justice settings; care homes; hospitals and other health settings; adult classes; community settings, including youth groups and groups for older people; and schools. Interviewees talk about different approaches required by different groups or settings, and one respondent describes a sense of apprehension in dealing with new groups:

'Every time I start with a new group I get this little quiver when I say I would now like you to write a poem - I fear they are going to say 'no, I'm not going to' and I'm going to be really stumped. It hasn't happened yet but one day . . . I still get that – I enjoy challenges. Otherwise I wouldn't be doing what I'm doing now.'

Several other respondents discuss the kinds of tools required to respond to different groups; overall, what is worth noting is the degree to which individual practitioners report developing these approaches for themselves through work experiences. One interviewee who employs artists in projects in criminal justice settings suggests that different kinds of practitioners could be accommodated in challenging settings, provided the support and the way in which a project is designed is appropriate for the type of practitioner.

Two respondents who have worked in a range of settings for a number of years both discuss how setting-specific practice has developed over time, and suggest that (on the whole) there is more knowledge about what is required from different settings. One artist particularly contrasts this with their early experiences in those settings:

 'We went out and tried and did what we thought was right and kind of learned as we went along, there really wasn't anywhere to go and train, it just didn't exist so after a number of years you become an expert in it. Obviously there's a lot of information around now, lots of research and all sorts of things that contribute to that, but essentially the basic work we did by trial and hopefully not too much error.'

Some respondents talk about some of the specific practical requirements which come with working in different settings. Those respondents who have worked in criminal justice settings, for example, particularly refer to the range of precautions and regulations which an artist needs to understand and work within. One respondent talks about the way in which appropriate guidelines simply become part of their practice when working with vulnerable groups. All those artists who are familiar with these kinds of requirements understood why they are in place, and several place value upon the way in which these requirements delineate different kinds of responsibility, particularly where activity may be supported by staff from the setting. Some artists report both good and bad experiences of engaging with staff from the setting in which they are working:

'To me it is far better to be working in the context where the group needs support and support workers there who are expert and I'm there to engage with them as an artist and of course with that comes an ability to be sensitive and responsive and flexible.'

' . . . you know, for all the supposed safeguards that are supposed to be in place, it is remarkable how you sort of just get left . . . suddenly get left with a whole load of children . . . you know, despite the fact that the teachers are supposed to be there, you know?'

On the whole, whilst they all worked in more than one different setting, artists who were interviewed do describe personal preferences for different types of work and settings. Some also show particular awareness of their own strengths and weaknesses in different environments:

'Most of my work is about, kind of, marginalised groups, as opposed to, kind of, your mainstream work -- I'm not great at working in schools. I'm more comfortable in non-education environments, I guess.'

2.4.2   Where does the work come from

For individual artists looking for work in community, participatory and socially-engaged settings, there are a number of challenges which interviewees report. Building contacts (particularly for students and early career artists) is seen as difficult to do, as is finding a way into organisations who already deliver work in a broadly similar area:

'We've got a well-established music service that has been going for years -- and anybody who was involved in music in [area] *has* been through the music service at some point -- it, to me . . . and, even though they've got the funding to become the Music Hub and stuff, they're still quite elitist. And it's very hard to get involved in there.'

As already noted in the discussion about 'getting into the area', open application processes are something artists are familiar with. One respondent who has applied for several programmes/projects talks particularly about the absence of detailed feedback, and about the question of whether the people assessing the applications understand the work. This combination of application processes, work through contacts and so forth is frustrating for some respondents, one of whom describes the process of getting work as 'more luck than judgement'.

Those artists who run organisations which bring in artists to work in different settings discuss the importance of both individual experience, and the value (from an employer's perspective) of knowing that an artist is able to work in a particular setting:

' . . . some of those artists we worked with early on, we are still working with partly because we know they are comfortable in working in that environment.'

From a freelancer's perspective, the fact that work can often depend upon employers and commissioners knowing the artist or their work is difficult for those artists who are relatively early on in their career. However, for some more established artists there are advantages in potential employers and commissioners being familiar with their work:

'[the commissioning organisation] showed the film and there was somebody from the NHS that was there that said, "This is fantastic," and took my details. And then my details have been passed around. So, it's more been word of mouth, which has been fantastic because

I'm starting off from the perspective of people who are already interested in what I do before I have a conversation with them.'

For many of the artists interviewed in this study, work which comes through knowledge of an organisation, broader contacts or 'word of mouth' is simply part of how they build a career:

'Because I've be doing this for 13 years now most of my work comes from people I have worked with before.'

'. . . [another artist] just kept work continuously, because they know her and they just use her over again.'

The importance of personal contacts is stressed by some interviewees who discuss the importance of individuals within some settings and commissioning organisations:

'The prison work . . . they have lost their funding and I miss working in prisons so I just wrote to the Governor of [specific prison] and he said why don't you have some creative writing for you guys and it was a very forward looking prison and so that one was just off my own bat!'

' . . . even though you might go to the same prison over several years the actual changes in the system mean that you end up being reliant on individuals. We have sometimes followed individuals when they have moved from one prison to another . . . You try to maintain the same relationship with the prison where they have left but that has not always been possible because there isn't the support inside the system.'

As these experiences demonstrate, this reliance on individual contacts has both benefits and issues. One artist particularly talks about building collaborations with arts organisations in different artforms, as a way of developing their work:

'Approaching [arts organisations] and collaborating with other organisations has been something that I had to develop more confidence with . . . it's kind of happened little by little.'

Two respondents who have worked in a range of settings for a number of years both comment on the growth of activity – both artists wanting to work in settings, and settings wanting to work with artists – in a number of different areas. Despite this apparent growth, significant changes in policy and delivery relating to settings like criminal justice, health and education can significantly affect the ways in which work is commissioned, and the willingness of potential commissioners to bring in artists:

'I think at the moment the present justice system is in such a state of chaos it is not a reliable environment to try and work in.'

'In our own borough the [clinical commissioning group] is now quite forward looking, trying hard to be innovative and commission and to involve the third sector with the statutory bodies so it's looking good.'

One artist working a lot in education and learning settings with children and young people talks about the value of 'taster' sessions, so that teachers can view and understand the work, and the

artist is able to make contact face to face. Other respondents discuss a range of different ways in which they market activities, or look for profile with funders and commissioners.

2.4.3   Employers, commissioners, funders

A number of respondents also specifically talk about the ways in which they seek to shape work with commissioners and funders, and particularly about looking for opportunities to enable work to come from the needs of participants:

> 'We took a view that projects starting from the artist or artists working in association with participants will always have more integrity but they are harder to do.'

Respondents discuss the challenges with, on the one hand wanting to develop work very specifically for a group (rather than have it imposed from elsewhere) but also to transfer models which artists know work. Several respondents discuss problems with either funders or with potential venues (both in specific settings and arts venues) in replicating models or 'touring' work around:

> 'We've really wanted to replicate that at other places we are going to tour to and it's been really tricky to deliver that . . . obviously venues get everyone very pressured and all are very committed or can be committed to engage with the community they are interested in engaging with, but because it has not been dreamt up by them it feels like it is quite hard to get them to buy into it.'

> '. . . we have a model that we have developed and we applied for money to do some more of that and we didn't get it – there seems to be this constant need for innovation – that to me is a bit of a nonsense.'

One respondent describes trying to encourage commissioners to 'move away from a supply model', so that artists can come forward with informed ideas which meet need, and look for the funding in partnership. For another respondent, a key element of delivery is to persuade a major presenting organisation to contribute to work with a particular group.

Some respondents also reflect particularly on their relationships with employers, commissioners and funders. One artist reports receiving early work through another artist, who already had a project and needed a partner to help deliver it. The respondent discussed negotiating about the project with the fellow artist:

> 'she . . . said, you know, 'Would you be interested in doing this?' And I said, 'Well, I would but I wouldn't do that with them.' So, then, as a result of that, I sort of managed to, sort of, put in place something that I'd wanted to do.'

Another artist reports needing to assert their intellectual property ownership over a project and materials, where a commissioner had not paid for preparation time for a project. On the whole, artists placed significant emphasis on clarity of requirements from those they work with and for, particularly in terms of the different responsibilities of different partners.

2.5   What is the work for

2.5.1   Benefits of the work

Almost all the artists participating in the interviews briefly discuss the perceived benefits of the work they do in community, participatory and socially-engaged settings for participants. It is worth noting that the interviews did not focus upon the question of participants' experiences on the whole, and so the responses here are (at best) broad indications of the kinds of experiences which artists might be able to reflect upon.

Several artists talk in broad terms about the opportunity for individuals to do something different. In some cases, this is understood as being providing beneficial relief from other problems:

> 'With the groups I work with, it changes people's lives and always sounds dramatic when you say that, but it does. For example one of my favourite quotes - I was working with one of these GP surgeries and there was this lady with very severe depression and she said 'for two hours a week I'm not depressed' . . . It's just wonderful to be able take your mind off – your mind can be taken away – without you having to.'

> 'One of the things they couldn't do often when they [prisoners]had visits was, you had to sit in a chair and your family sat in the other two chairs and you weren't allowed to move out of that position. These visits were about the father being able to sit at a table with his children and help create something with them – an interactive process where you are both sides of the table.'

> '. . . to the school children it was, like, one of the very few opportunities they had to actually get outside in the school day. And it was remarkable seeing how they were just running around, and yet, when they'd sort of had that, sort of, release of energy.'

Some artists focus specifically on the idea of participants undertaking something successfully which they would not otherwise have done, and the importance of participants recognising ownership of that success. In some cases, this can be difficult:

> 'I try very hard with the evening class group but they tend to come from the viewpoint of here's a picture I want to do that, whereas I want to say, take something you want to own. A lot of people find that very, very hard because it means you've got to take risks and that's probably quite alien for some people.'

> 'I want to sort of build up workshops and stuff to show the young people that they can get involved . . . it's that whole thing of that sense of . . . sort of, not sense of belonging but sense of achievement – that they can achieve something really simple.'

Several interviewees discuss the benefits of this kind of introduction to new activity and opportunity to 'achieve' something, and many identify improving confidence and self-esteem as key benefits of their work. For some interviewees working with particular groups to support these kinds of developments is a key part of validating their work:

> 'they've been so moved when we've moved forward, and I've stayed with them when they've got blocks and moved them forward, talked them forward through that. I realise I have something to offer, you know? . . . So, every bit of it seems to link in and form this kind

of web round about me that has suddenly made my work have substance, whereas, previously, it was just an idea.'

Some artists place a very particular emphasis on providing participants a way in which they can tell their own stories, connecting their practice very closely to ideas of individual identity and experience:

> '. . . just enabling people to tell the stories that are personal to them . . . so be it the patient being able to articulate some of the experiences that they've had, so that that can better inform service provision -- that that, in itself, is quite transformative and quite empowering.'

> 'I think I'm always interested in artistic ambition of the work that I make with people who are not professional performers and I'm really interested in the opportunity those projects give to tell a story that is not being heard.'

These quotations give a range of examples of the ways in which artists position their work in relation to participants, and what outcomes they are seeking for participants. Some respondents relate experiences of very different types of projects and approaches, where different kinds of outcomes for participants are sought and a different kind of value is placed on the work. One respondent stressed the value of these differences to their practice:

> 'It has been really interesting thinking about that and seeing that in practice and has really influenced my thinking and opened up other ways of working that I suppose kind of expand my practice.'

A few respondents also focus particularly upon the question of how 'artistic' outcomes sit alongside or are part of outcomes for participants. Some emphasise the importance of high quality production in the activity, or the involvement of significant producing arts organisations. Another respondent discusses the issue of work led by participants which can end up being limited in terms of the artistic ambition, and argues that it is 'really important for the artist to be challenged as well'.

Most respondents also talk about the relationship between the benefit to participants and the value which they derive from undertaking the work:

> 'So every week I think I've made somebody's life a little bit better – how many people can say that? It's a real privilege – I feel very lucky, very privileged for what I do.'

2.5.2   Valuing the work

As part of these interviews some respondents also discuss the ways in which the work they undertake in community, participatory and socially-engaged settings is understood and valued by different stakeholders. A couple of interviewees reflect generally on the ways in which the value of bringing artists into different settings is understood:

> 'It's very difficult to get them [prisons] to engage in any kind of medium or longer term thinking about things. The arts organisations that work in the criminal justice system will have all those individual connections with people, but I think generally there is a better awareness of the value of arts processes as being useful within a prison. I'd like to think that after doing that kind of work over 25 years that has filtered down, but because the pressures

are so great in order to deal with the day to day 'can we feed everyone?' it just doesn't feature in peoples thinking.'

'Our experience here is looking hopeful at the moment . . . the value the contribution of the arts can have for health is getting out there. I don't think too many people doubt it - although the energy to actually make a difference in funding is not always there.'

Both these interviewees make the specific point about the difference between recognising the value of work, and being prepared to invest or divert funding to it. Several respondents specifically discuss the ways in which artists are involved in 'making the case' for funding, through contributing to or leading evaluation processes, or engaging in research. Respondents report experiences of both good and poor evaluation processes, but several are clear about the importance of developing 'evidence' which articulates the value of the work which they undertake:

'We can all do anecdotes but actually saying this is what has happened and what that needs is long term follow-up . . . '

A couple of respondents talk about evaluation as being valuable not just for negotiations with funders or commissioners, but as a useful process and source of information for practitioners:

'I think any artist who is working out a deal is convinced by the effectiveness of at least a large part of what they do, but it's another matter having enough evidence to convince commissioners and all the rest of it - so that's definitely critical. Obviously we do hope it produces some results which impact on practice as well.'

Whether evaluation material is acknowledged and acted upon by different parties is a cause for concern for some respondents, who are unclear about whether the process of regular evaluation really impacts upon commissioners, funders and others. One respondent also made the point that this does not necessarily mean that artists and commissioners are interested in the same things, such as 'value for money'. Several respondents talk about the importance of understanding whether activity is having an effect, and whether a project is 'worthwhile'.

Despite the interest in evidence, a couple of respondents also place significant emphasis on the unknown or potentially risky nature of the work, and on the difficulty of explaining possible outcomes:

'Artists are . . . should be patted on the back because they're always knitting in fog. You know, we just don't . . . we just don't have a clue what we're doing, but we have to believe in it while we do it in the dark before you can even explain it to anybody, you know? Then, suddenly, suddenly it starts to form something that is visible and unique and, 'Thank goodness we believed in it!''

2.6   Developing practice

This section looks at the range of different approaches artists report using or needing in order to develop their practice.

2.6.1   Observing other people's practice

Some respondents talk particularly about taking inspiration from seeing other artists undertaking work in community, participatory and socially-engaged settings. In one case, an artist also cites an

example of bad practice by another artist, as being particularly helpful in developing their thinking. In particular, the opportunity for some artists to work on projects alongside other artists is felt to be valuable by some respondents:

> 'From time to time during the course of my career I have had opportunities, alongside delivering projects that I'm leading, to work with other artists or support other processes and I think that has been the richest seam of my learning, and understanding different approaches which work with different groups and seeing the different challenges and opportunities of working with different groups.'

2.6.2 Role of Reflection

Several respondents discuss informal and formal methods for reflecting upon their work:

> 'I don't always get it right but for every session I have ever run I write a diary – it might only be a couple of sentences. But if something has gone wrong I do sit down and think why that work didn't – did I try to do too much or was I expecting too much from them? I try to analyse it to see what I can do better next time.'

> 'Every time I, kind of, come out of a project, I'll look back on it and go, 'Okay, well that bit wasn't quite right, but this bit really excites me; I need to go back and do this more.''

Those respondents involved in running organisations, or programmes within organisations, discuss facilitating review processes with artists they employ, and the interaction between these processes and things like evaluation. The importance of reflecting upon practice and specific experiences, to enable artists to develop their practice – to 'challenge' themselves, as one respondent put it – is widely referenced across all interviewees.

A few respondents discuss the importance of developing their own knowledge of different aspects of practice through personal research - from how to manage your accounts and finding funding, to changes in the national curriculum. This kind of personal, professional development is considered important, but quite challenging for some artists who have to identify resources/reading and work through these materials on their own.

2.6.3 Courses and events

All the artists who were interviewed for this study discuss the role of training courses and events in developing their practice. Three respondents who work within organisations also discuss developing work and training opportunities which their organisations offer to artists. One respondent describes this specifically as a way of ensuring that emerging artists can benefit from the experience of the previous generation:

> 'There are things you can learn and put together in the training package that are just really useful tools and you don't have to make all the mistakes we did.'

When asked to think about what kinds of development opportunities they would like to access in the future, several respondents refer to specific types of training for working with different groups. All the respondents refer to these kinds of opportunities as things that they need to identify and pursue for themselves:

'. . . if I want to concentrate more on early years then it would be incumbent upon myself to find the right training and then ask for support to do it.'

Two respondents are in the process of completing MA courses relevant to their practice at the time of interview, and several others have specific ideas about courses or events which they would like to attend. In a couple of cases, respondents also report going for particular work opportunities which included specific training for working with that participant group.

Unsurprisingly, given the responses to the survey in the first part of this study, challenges in terms of accessing training and development included: the costs of training; the costs of taking time out of paid work to undertake training; the location of opportunities (particularly for artists who were based outside major cities); and funding for support stopping when artists were older than 25.

'I get loads of emails offering 'out of work' training or go on this training day that is exploring arts participation and there is a limit in your ability in how you are able to attend them because it's classic double loss – you may consider investing money in that in my own training, but equally lose a day off work when I'm earning.'

One respondent specifically indicates that they wanted to undertake a course which was, until recently, available as a shorter course and was now no longer considered suitable by the respondent because it had been amalgamated into a full degree course. The format and availability of certain types of training makes a difference to several respondents' sense of choice and opportunity.

Several respondents discuss experiences of courses or events where many of those attending seem to come from organisations, and question whether those running these activities understand the difference in terms of resources available to individuals as opposed to those based in organisations. Whilst a few respondents report positive experiences of receiving training through individual projects or through employed positions, one respondent refers to the challenge of encouraging funders to recognise the importance of training in project costs:

'. . . when you're trying to get a project and . . . you want them to fund you, you want them to pay you, you want them to think you're the right person for it – it's quite tricky to go, 'Well, actually, can you give me some training to do that?'.'

One respondent also discusses the frustration of events focusing on particular groups where, in their experience, there was actually less work available with those groups at the moment. Overall, artists report a range of problems with the potential mismatch between the kinds of training which available work might require them to have, and the kinds of training and access to training which is available to them.

Artists who were interviewed in this study discuss a range of different types of training, including both good and poor experiences. Some express preferences for specific learning approaches, from face to face to online learning. In other cases, respondents' preferences can be based on a range of things. One respondent, for example, expresses some concern over the kinds of training which are available for working with particular types of groups:

'My experiences of those have not been very good training experiences – I felt they had quite low expectations of the groups that I worked with – and really over emphasised cautiousness and problems with things that won't work, and actually my experiences of going on to deliver those projects . . . that all of those aspects have been more limiting and

based on assumptions about the type of people. And so I have quite mixed feelings about those very specific types of training. Because sometimes I feel it is important for me to go into community contacts without a mantle of expertise – I feel very uncomfortable going in to work with a group and claiming to be some expert in their lives and who they are and what they need.'

The question of what role the artist should take – and what training is appropriate to support that role – concerns a number of interviewees. Two respondents particularly refer to the opportunities to access a range of training and information about different approaches through their employers, so that the individual artist has been able to make an appropriate choice for themselves about what kind of approach they might practice and pursue further training on in the future. One respondent talks about a new training programme which was bringing in both artistic practitioners in the specific artform in question, and health and caring practitioners also, and the value of this combination of course participants.

Whilst respondents have had some poor experiences of training and events, a couple of respondents discuss the fact that sometimes activities can turn out to be better than expected also. Interviewed artists discuss courses and events which they would like to engage with in the future, which include: postgraduate qualifications, to allow respondents to develop their thinking and practice; online resources on working with specific groups, to help prepare respondents; activities available with a choice of learning/training methods; guidelines on the practical issues of setting up as a freelance artist working in different settings; online toolkits; mentoring; and opportunities to develop artform skills in another area.

In addition (and reflected also in the section on networks) several respondents stress the value of courses and events as opportunities to get together with other artists and exchange views and experiences. Some respondents particularly emphasise the value of events which have a practical element, rather than just 'talking shops'.

Despite significant discussion with all the artists interviewed about formal and informal courses and events, for many the importance of learning opportunities which take place in a working environment is paramount:

'I get graduates getting in touch asking 'how do I do more?' In the end artists will only be empowered when they are empowered to do it themselves . . . Artists need to be able to have the opportunity to make mistakes and to have failures because generally you learn a lot more from that.'

2.6.4   Role of networks

Whilst artists report positively on opportunities to meet and engage with other artists through training courses and events, several respondents also discuss the role which informal and formal networks (without an explicit 'training' element) play in developing their practice. A number of the respondents belong to or take part in networks, in some cases instigated by the network members themselves, and in other cases facilitated externally or attached to a specific project. For one respondent, the network comes through using a co-working space, where users are encouraged to engage with each other through informal events and activities.

The reported benefits of these networks includes: the opportunity to share problems, and hear suggested solutions from different artists; developing shared/collaborative work, including

interdisciplinary/cross-artform activity; prevent the isolation that some individual artists report experiencing, and particularly where artists are geographically isolated also; build up contacts, particularly where networks include members from other sectors (e.g. education, health or the wider creative industries); useful listings and best practice examples; and providing support by attending each other's events. One respondent is particularly clear about the value of developing networks amongst the communities that they work with regularly, as well as with other creative practitioners.

Where artists are involved in running their own networks, there is also a strong sense of artists doing things for themselves where other agencies or funders are unlikely to. In two examples, the respondents are also particularly aware of geographical/local issues which, they feel, mean that artists are less supported and recognised than they could be:

> 'I'm secretary now because we've had to set up a constitution because they lost the funding from the county council. So, we've had to set up independently . . . we're now, sort of, got to the stage where we can start getting more people in and, hopefully, we'll spread it across the county a bit more. But, again, it's that thing . . . if everyone knew it under the county council, and now we're, sort of, waving our arms going, 'Yeah, we're still here. Hello.''

One respondent involved in running their own network also talks about the possibilities of developing the network as a brokering organisation, supporting artists to apply for funding and work together to seek the support and opportunities which they need.

Some artists discuss what they would like to get from future networking opportunities. One artist particularly focuses on the value of face-to-face meetings as a way of supporting different kinds of engagement. Another respondent is keen on both in-person networking, and online forums, and stresses the importance of ensuring that opportunities are valuable given the cost of time for freelance practitioners. Respondents are interested in sharing practice, learning from other people's practice and discussing theory and learning from other sources.

One respondent, when asked to talk about networking activities, reports having attended the ArtWorks conference in Scotland. The respondent discusses the experience in positive terms, but made an interesting point about the stage which ArtWorks is at, in terms of its 'offer' to artists:

> 'I think it was the second day, when I realised, 'Ah, there isn't actually anything in place. This is sort of like a project to find out or, you know, explore the possibilities.' So, I sort of felt a bit like, 'Oh, so it's still being sorted?' So, I would definitely love to see . . . see it continue.'

2.6.5 Membership organisations

The majority of artists interviewed in this study report being a member of at least one union/membership organisation; a few interviewees report being a member of more than one organisation. The perceived benefits of membership include: access to relevant insurance (the most commonly mentioned benefit); access to training and information sessions; access to jobs listing and opportunities pages; free courses and events; useful online information/articles; opportunities to make contacts through membership activities; the role of membership organisations in lobbying and fighting for the rights of artists.

A small number of respondents report frustration with the current offering across different membership organisation. One particularly refers to a union in their artform being unable to properly represent artists who work in community, participatory or socially-engaged settings, as the

union was perceived as not really understanding or reflecting this kind of work. Another respondent talks more generally about wanting membership organisations to facilitate an online forum, somewhere to share problems and solutions.

2.6.6   Standards and Guidelines

One respondent specifically mentions the NOS in their work, and describes aligning a course their organisation delivers with the NOS in Dance Leadership, as well as a code of conduct from a membership organisation. On the whole, few respondents mention specific codes or standards which they use in their practice. Some refer to specific guidelines from individual settings. One respondent running an organisation reports establishing guidelines for a particular type of setting for all the artists the organisation employs in those settings, so that artists understand what is expected of them. The respondent points out that:

> '. . . the main thing is about them understanding the environment in which they are about to go into, so we do our own security brief because we are also conscious that whilst they are there we are the ones who have brought them in or enabled them to come in, so if they mess up that potentially has an impact on our ability to do the work as well.'

Other respondents talk in general terms about needing an awareness of things like 'safe-guarding', but without specific reference to a particular set of guidelines or standards.

2.6.7   Future of the Practice

Some respondents also considered how they feel practice in community, participatory and socially-engaged settings is likely to develop in the future. On the whole, respondents are positive about the value of the activities they undertake and several are able to identify areas in which they feel both practice and the opportunity to do work is developing, as well as sectors where perhaps work is less available than was previously the case.

Artists demonstrate day-to-day awareness of the challenges of engaging with work where policy developments beyond culture often significantly affect the ways in which work is funded and commissioned. Two respondents discuss trying to encourage schools who individually buy artists in to consider more joined-up approaches, and different ways in which teachers can be made aware of things which artists can do, as well as wanting to develop artist-led initiatives which could act as 'brokers' or a 'one-stop-shop' for teachers and schools looking for projects. Another respondent highlighted two groups with whom they feel that there is significant need and opportunity for more work to take place, but that at present training provision to prepare artists to work in those areas does not really exist. One artist also talks directly about the way in which artist-led companies which specialise in this kind of work are supported through revenue funding with arts councils, and the issue of trying to marry a 'very specialist remit' with core funding.

Finally, one respondent particularly reflects upon the availability of any kind of work for artists:

> 'One of the sadder advantages is that there is actually more regular work working in this than there is in being a theatre dancer, for example, which I regret. I think it's at our peril that we lose the sort of complete art side of it as well as the community side of it - I think they're completely linked and my life has all been about linking them, but there is a lot of opportunity in the area [working in community, participatory and socially-engaged settings]. I think young people of necessity must look at that so I'd say generally yeah I think there's a lot of good young people beginning to emerge.'

Conclusions

3   Conclusions

These interviews with eleven artists represent a range of experiences, across different artforms, from different artform and practice traditions and disciplines, and reflecting a wide range of both practice and working lives. Respondents' employment circumstances vary, with freelancers, employees who also freelance and artists who run organisations all included in the sample. Some artists focus most of their practice on work in community, participatory and socially-engaged settings; others are predominantly 'presenting' artists. Despite this diversity, there are also common issues which many or most of those interviewed raise and which are discussed in this report.

Current artistic practice
- Whilst artists report working in a range of different community, participatory and socially-engaged settings, some artists strongly articulate their practice as being specific both to particular artform, and also a particular participant group or area (e.g. in criminal justice, or with children and young people in education settings).
- Some artists see their artistic practice as bringing together both traditional, presenting concerns and the needs of participants in a single approach to work; others see these two elements as more separate, though related.
- Respondents express strong, often quite personal motivations in pursuing their practice. Several respondents have had careers in other sectors and subsequently re-trained as artists. Many describe an ongoing process of discovering the purpose of their work.
- When considering their motivations for working in community, participatory and socially-engaged settings, artists raise a range of drivers which are specifically about sharing opportunities with people who may not normally have the chance to try things out or express themselves. The way in which artists articulate their own role varies, but there tends to be a focus on facilitating those opportunities.
- As might be expected, given the first point in this section, respondents express clear preferences for working with particular participant groups or in particular settings, or (in some cases) preferring not to work with some groups.

Becoming an artist
- Relatively few of the respondents had been a participant when they were younger in activities similar to the work which they now undertake, with the exception of those whose current work includes formal teaching in some way. Some were introduced to work in community, participatory and socially-engaged settings through their degrees or work placements separate from degrees, or through post-graduate qualifications; others became aware of the work after they were already pursuing a career as an artist, largely through other people's practice.
- Only one respondent had specifically selected their undergraduate degree as a route to learning about this kind of work, and several undertook initial training which either focused upon artform practice in a traditional sense, or in an alternative subject.
- Some artists had spent some time in the early part of their career as 'presenting' artists, and have subsequently moved across to focus on work in community, participatory and socially-engaged settings. Three respondents had some kind of formal teaching background, but are now pursuing a wider range of participatory practice.
- Respondents widely cite the importance of 'on-the-job' experience, but also the challenges in getting those opportunities. In addition, several artists talk about early experiences of practice in this area in which they felt quite vulnerable and underprepared.

What is required from artists
- Respondents place significant emphasis on being responsive to the needs of different participant groups and on expressing personal integrity in their practice. Alongside their artistic skills, a range of other administrative, planning and evaluative skills are reported as being required.
- Artists report a range of practices and experiences in engaging with artforms outside their primary artform. One artist identified themselves as working cross artform; others discuss the value of working alongside artists from other forms, sometimes sharing creative processes or simply learning from each other's practice.

How does the work happen
- Whilst artists report a significant degree of learning 'on-the-job' which takes place, and particularly with regard to experiencing different settings and groups, there is also a sense that there is a collective knowledge and development of practice taking place which reflects the sector's ongoing work with different groups.
- Individual settings and groups pose particular challenges, which include the characteristics of both the group and the settings, any regulations or guidelines which are specific to the settings, and the role and behaviour of staff members from those settings.
- Developing a career in this area is not particularly straightforward. Artists seek work through a range of routes, including formal applications for projects and to funders, informal contacts and formal developmental routes.
- Personal contacts and word-of-mouth recommendations are very important routes for artists to seek and develop work. Some artists find it difficult to make these contacts or get into the right 'networks'. This reliance upon individuals in funding/commissioning/ employing organisations can also make work quite fragile for artists, as when individuals move on organisations do not necessarily continue with the work.
- Whilst work in some particular settings seems to be growing, there are complex policy and operational contexts for some settings which can make it difficult to develop and sustain arts work. Artists working in these areas often have to engage with and navigate these contexts.
- Artists appreciate clarity of requirements and responsibilities from employers, commissioners and funders. Several discuss trying to work with those organisations to develop work in different ways, so that new projects can be based more clearly upon good ideas, previous experience and the needs of participants.

What is the work for
- Across a very broad range of work which interviewees discuss in this study, common perceived benefits for participants include: supporting participants to try out something new; providing relief from or an alternative to existing issues in participants' lives; supporting participants to achieve something, and to 'own' that achievement; and enabling participants to express themselves and their experiences, which they might not normally get the opportunity to do.
- Working with participants, and the perceived effects of the work upon participants, is a key motivation for work for all the artists who were interviewed in this study. Artists think it is important to really consider and articulate what they feel the relationship should be between the artist and participant, and what the role of the artist is.
- There is an acknowledgement that work in community, participatory and socially-engaged settings has been taking place for several years and that, as a result of this, recognition of the role and value of the work has improved over that time. However, the degree to which this is perceived to have significantly affected the investment in work varies, with some

artists citing constant change in policy and operational contexts for certain settings as an ongoing barrier to long-term development of arts work in those settings.

- Artists are familiar with and engage in evaluation processes regularly; where artists lead companies specialising in work in community, participatory and socially-engaged settings, evaluation is seen as an important part of demonstrating the value of the work to future funders and commissioners, as well as having the potential to provide useful reflection on the practice itself.

Developing practice

- Artists report developing their practice through a number of different routes, including: observing other artists practice, including the way in which other artists engage with different groups or settings; reflecting upon their practice, either on their own or through project review/networking opportunities; developing their knowledge of different practices/approaches/policy contexts through personal research; attending/undertaking courses and events, including formal and informal training; engaging with their peers through networks; using the resources of membership organisations; and engaging with the requirements of standards and guidelines for different settings/areas of practice.
- Common barriers to artists developing their practice include the cost of taking up opportunities (both paying for opportunities and taking time out of paid work to engage in them), and the relevance and availability of opportunities. Artists are also keen to consider carefully what kinds of training and development are appropriate to the role which they want to take in the work they do.
- Opportunities for artists to come together to discuss issues and share practice are important, and several respondents were keen to be able to do this more. Artists are, in some cases, taking the lead in establishing networks and opportunities to meet and engage with each other. There are examples of artists also seeking to develop these arrangements beyond networking, to establish artist-led structures for developing the work.
- Membership organisations are considered important, and many artists focus on the practical aspects of insurance offers and jobs listings as the benefits of membership. Others discuss more broadly the role of membership organisations in sharing information and practice, and in speaking on behalf of artists to different stakeholders.
- Artists' experiences of formal guidelines and standards varies significantly, and there are no examples of either guidelines or standards which artists report using universally. Often, guidelines are specific to settings or particular types of practice.
- On the whole, most respondents feel positive about the future and value of arts practice in community, participatory and socially-engaged settings. However, artists are also aware of specific, day-to-day issues in relation to the availability and type of work, and the effect of demand upon the type of practice which can be developed.

Overall, the interviews suggest that – whilst artists who undertake work in this area are able to see the value of the work which they undertake on the ground – the ability of individual artists or small companies to effect other issues relating to the practice is limited. Some artist-led companies are able to develop the training offer with significant insight and experience of practice; there are also examples of both companies and individuals finding ways in which to instigate work which they feel takes practice forward, and to undertake activity which develops the capacity of individuals. Artists are interested in and do organise their career development, both individually and (in some cases) through collective and shared structures. There is a very strong relationship between the way in which work is available, and the way in which that career development takes place and can be supported.

Finally, several artists mention being pleased to be asked to contribute to the research, and one artist specifically refers to participating in an ArtWorks event. More generally, artists are interested in the way in which they articulate their role, how value is understood in the work which they undertake and how the practice can be developed. There are several examples in this brief study of artists taking a very active lead in developing themselves, their own practice and the practice of other artists. The willingness to engage in considering and developing the future of arts practice in community, participatory and socially-engaged settings is a significant opportunity for ArtWorks as a project, and for other agencies, organisations and individuals who are interested in supporting this practice in the future.

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