# **National Creative Learning Network Report**

# **2015-16 – structured by theme**

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**Introduction**

The National Creative Learning Network (NCLN) is a strong community of practice with a leadership role in championing and advocating creativity across learning both nationally and in local authorities across Scotland. It consists of the group of coordinators leading the Creative Learning Networks (CLNs) for each local authority. Creative Scotland and Education Scotland are building on their strong partnership with continued support for the development of Creative Learning Networks in local authority areas across Scotland. The overall purpose of the Creative Learning Network fund is to help support the development and sustainability of new and already established CLNs within local authorities across Scotland. In 2015/16, the sixth year of the fund, 28 local authorities applied for funding to deliver on that year’s intended outcome: *increased levels of creativity skills being recognised, articulated and valued by educationalists, practitioners and learners.*

**CLN Activity**

Creative Learning Networks have grown considerably over the past six years. In 2010/11, 7833 people participated in 189 CLN funded activities. In 2015/16, 23,413 people participated in 626 CLN funded activities. Over that period the range of participants has broadened to include local authority senior managers, employers, managers and staff from Higher and Further Education, and a broad spectrum of educational and creative professionals from local authorities and the third sector.

‘CLN has made a huge difference to my practice, on a professional and personal level. My mind-set has completely shifted from one that focused more on the end product to one which focuses on the process

and the journey to completing a piece of work’.

(Teacher, Dundee)

One of the strengths of CLN activity is that it varies across authorities, taking account of local context and need. Collectively they aim to increase awareness, understanding and value of creativity skills and their application in teaching, learning and creative change. Examples include CLPL training, Creative Conversations, Network meetings, creativity themed conferences and events, creative learning programmes in schools and informal learning settings.

**Impact on Education**

The CLN in East Renfrewshire aimed to create a foundation for a community ‘makerspace’ for creative learning that bridged community and education. Staff and pupils in P6 in the local school, within an area of significant deprivation, ‘redesigned’ their school, the use and the physical design, and made a 3D print of their design. Pupils used their digital expertise to teach teachers, and teachers used their learning expertise to coach and facilitate pupils, resulting in a shift from teacher led learning to everyone learning together.Pupils could demonstrate new strengths in specific areas, including problem solving, entrepreneurship, imagination, curiosity, design and team work. New partnerships across sectors have been formed and the project served as a foundation to build upon and to assist schools to make a broader, more creative use of 3D printers. Creative learning has an increased profile locally and the project has improved the understanding of the potential of using technology and creativity in projects. There is also recognition that such projects are easier to initiate now there is a successful example.

A collaborative, creative learning project delivered by creative learning experts working with the staff and pupils at Harlaw Academy (Aberdeen), focused on an underused outdoor space. During all stages, the pupils reflected on the creativity skills they were using to complete the activities, exercises and discussions. This allowed the pupils to consider how the process enabled them to think more freely and make their own connections. The project enabled staff to explore how creativity skills can support pupils in their learning and was an effective way to get genuine buy-in from pupils about the context for their own learning.

Through encouraging experimentation and inspiring opportunities, CLN activity in Argyll and Bute has increased levels of creativity skills being used confidently by learners. A partnership project built on the successful *Young Creatives scheme* *(not just for artists!)*. Teachers and pupils were encouraged to develop their creativity skills through hands-on problem solving, investigating and reviewing possible solutions, communicating ideas to peer groups and providers. As a result, participants relied less on traditional teaching methods, with learners taking the lead. They became increasingly motivated and ambitious, confident in the validity of their own viewpoint, able to apply a creative process to situations and able to work well with others. The subsequent film and report has been used to further increase an awareness of creativity skills and their impact on employability with senior managers and practitioners across the authority.

Creativity across Learning events in Dundee highlighted the context for “creativity in the classroom”. Primary and secondary school teaching staff participated in creative learning events, exploring expressive art techniques. Sixty-five newly qualified primary and secondary teaching staff (across subjects) worked to develop their creativity skills using practical activities within the classroom and were inspired and energised, developing their understanding about ‘risk-taking’ and challenge. Cultural partners showcased collections that support interdisciplinary learning in the sciences, mathematics, health & wellbeing and social studies as well as the expressive arts. Having gained inspiration and further developed their confidence, many are now including reflection, experimentation and self-evaluation more regularly in class activities, valuing both process and outcome. A number have applied for career enhancements such as GTCS skills recognition in creativity and a V & A @ Dundee primary teaching secondment.

**Raising Attainment**

The small test of change, developed in partnership with Kirkcudbright Primary School (Dumfries and Galloway) focused on raising attainment through creative approaches to teaching and learning new mathematical concepts. This work has developed a shared understanding between the pupils, the class teacher and the head teacher of what creativity skills are and how they contribute to non-arts areas of the curriculum. The class teacher and children recognise, apply and value learning from mistakes. As a result, there has been an increase in problem solving, use of imagination, open mindedness, curiosity and applying creativity skills and improved Mathematics Assessment for Learning and Teaching (MALT) assessment scores.

In Eilean Siar, creativity has been included as an essential element in all Raising Attainment for All (RAFA) projects. During the initial RAFA training for primary and secondary teachers, staff were reminded of key documentation (the 3-18 Curriculum Impact Report, Creativity Across Learning; HGIOS 4) and provided with an overview sheet of creativity skills, to be used to audit those elements which had been incorporated into their RAFA projects. During follow-up networking opportunities, all participants provided their project outline or *Driver Diagram, Run Charts* to show progress and the *creativity audit* which, along with creativity case studies from the Creativity 3-18 report and the creativity skills posters, (<http://bit.ly/creativityskills>) formed the displays. Practitioners presented their projects to colleagues and all could clarify their understanding and begin a new planning cycle. There was clear evidence of improved opportunities for creative learning and teaching, of improved attainment and achievement for the most disengaged young people. Teachers had opportunities to develop more creative learning and teaching and practitioners had an opportunity to share and support practice.

**Learning/Teaching/Assessment**

Creativity features in more school improvement plans in Edinburgh/East and Midlothian. Some teachers talk about Creative Conversations in their PRDs and describe their impact within their submissions for Professional Update. The creation of the Creativity Skills progression framework ([http://bit.ly/creativityplanning](http://bit.ly/creativityplanning%20) ) provides teachers with a way of planning and assessing creative learning in all curriculum areas and embeds creativity across learning - particularly when used in conjunction with the Significant Aspects of Learning.

This is great because it is so closely aligned with the Career Education Standard and is making the links really explicit, creativity and employability, for teachers and learners” (16+ Manager, Edinburgh)

Teaching staff in Forth Valley worked in partnership with an education consultancy to develop their understanding of creative learning. The challenge was to introduce creative learning strategies to compliment and support existing curriculum-based work on ‘food and farming’ through a concentrated five-week intervention. Pupils designed and operated their own farms, allocating themselves roles and responsibilities. At 6 and 7 years old, the pupils were able to articulate that they understood the project was open, and without a pre-existing ‘correct solution’ to be arrived at through instruction. The pupils’ concentration, industriousness and negotiation skills indicated that the pupils had engaged deeply and meaningfully with a project that had an authentic sense of purpose, to the benefit of all involved.

“…the creativity lay in the pupils’ response to disruption, challenges and dilemmas, requiring them to think, negotiate, act, and experience the consequences of their own decisions.” (Evaluation Report)

The NCLN creativity evaluation tools were used to support teachers and educationalists to reflect on learning activities. As part of the Borders Science Festival more than 40 teachers and over 1200 pupils assessed the workshops and projects using these evaluation tools.

The Science Festival provided a vehicle for the facilitation of creative learning projects for schools and a way in which to assess creativity skills. Many schools in the region including high school science departments were engaged, a cohort that the CLN programme had not connected with in previous years.

The evaluation tools were adapted for use in relation to a 10-week Portfolio Art Course which involved senior secondary pupils from three high schools in the region and portfolio taster workshops which took place in five high schools in the region. The use of the creativity evaluation tools allowed the highlighting of the work and aims of the NCLN whilst asking the teachers and pupils to closely consider their learning experiences within the framework of creativity skills development.

The course was outstanding, a super opportunity for pupils to broaden their horizons and experience a huge variety of approaches not always compatible with the confinements of the SQA. (Teacher)

I wasn’t giving them enough credit for the sort of stuff that they could pull out of nowhere... There’s genuinely such a positive impact on all those skills and more, just because I shut up and took a step back. I can’t believe it. It really has made a difference in a number of ways’.

(Teacher, Glasgow PwC)

The Glasgow City CLN introduced twenty teachers to Philosophy with Children (PwC). The CLPL sessions improved understanding of creativity as a higher order thinking skill, increased confidence in teaching creativity and increased levels of creativity skills being used confidently by learners. The programme supported development of creativity in curricular areas beyond their ‘natural home’ in Expressive Arts and Technologies. Focus was on allowing yourself to make mistakes and knowing which ones to keep and inventing, experimenting, growing, taking risks, breaking rules, making mistakes and having fun. The teachers noted that creative teaching was about promoting collaboration and that this meant sharing thoughts and ideas, ‘building on others’ thinking’ and ‘agreeing and disagreeing with a variety of viewpoints’.

In partnership with an independent creativity skills specialist, two secondary schools in East Dunbartonshire explored the role and impact of creativity. The intensive action based research project worked with staff and pupils to discover how best to implement future funding and provision within the local authority. Key themes emerged including creativity as an ‘unlocking’ or ‘reimagining’ tool and as a support to people to move through a process of play/questioning/disruption. Participants considered how creativity can ‘interrupt’ patterns of behaviour and, through a creative mind-set, can support change within different areas of a school helping to discover new approaches to teaching and learning. The experience allowed pupils to think critically and creatively about their school and, in doing so, challenge the status quo constructively.

Inverclyde CLN events led to an increase in the number of practitioners, children and young people delivering and engaging in activities which promote creative learning and thinking. The Big Event and Skill Up activity stimulated and developed creativity skills in learners and practitioners, enhancing the learning and teaching experience and supporting learners in achieving their aims. Practitioners were equipped with ideas and an increasing understanding of creativity as a cross cutting theme, embedded in curriculum areas including health and well-being and science. The pupils who took part in The Big Event programme were continually generating new ideas, finding innovative and creative solutions and had complete ownership of their own learning. Through discussions and exercises the pupils could form opinions and were confident in making decisions. Keyworkers and teachers were exposed to new creative experiences delivered by creative specialists that raised their levels of creativity in learning and teaching in both formal and community learning contexts.

Teachers in Perth and Kinross were offered the opportunity to trial different models of delivery through CLPL sessions and then encouraged to put this approach into practice. This included the ‘What’s in the Box?’ activity.

I have found children have been much more engaged in their learning and enjoy having leadership of their own learning.  Children are still asking about the box. Even members of staff and other classes are curious to know what’s inside.  I will definitely do this task again! (Teacher, Perth and Kinross)

A whole school creative learning approach was supported by modelling enquiry based learning, by having a consistent presence and by being flexible and listening to pupils while working in partnership with both teachers and pupils to visualise learning. Across the year, the CLN has evolved into a stronger partnership of educators from a wider sector of teachers and artists who have all fed into and shared their practice. This sharing of innovative and good practice has deepened participants’ understanding of the principle of the CLN approach.

**Employability**

In Highland, the (Anti) Careers Day Road Show sessions were delivered using an immersive format, allowing for active engagement to stimulate the participants’ creativity. Using NCLN evaluation tools baseline scores were taken before the Road Show session began and a second score at the end of the session, the outcome demonstrating an increase across participants’ understanding and recognition of their own creativity skills. Feedback was very positive, with 100% of schools identifying that the event raised awareness of the core creativity skills, the links with employability and positive destinations and developed an understanding of the current job market. The event highlighted what employers are looking for and provided an introduction to the future job market and how careers might look in the future.

An initial one-day “Creativity Conference” in Moray was held for senior leaders in educational establishments, key strategic partners and local employers, to explore and develop their understanding of creative learning and the importance of developing creativity skills.

A common understanding and definition of creativity was discussed and agreed. The event stimulated discussion about the importance of creative learning, its use in effecting change and developing skills with children and young people. Participants considered the link to employability and closing the attainment gap. As a result of engaging in professional dialogue, new cross-departmental working is emerging from connections made at the conference. There is increased interest and support from Senior Managers for Creative Learning. Every school in the authority invited a local employer partner to the conference and had the opportunity to network and hear from guest speakers that had engaged with schools about the benefits that were perceived from the employer’s perspective. Schools now have at least one employer partnership established to take forward the Developing the Young Workforce agenda. Moray has also produced a Skills Framework for schools and creativity has been included as a core skill to develop with learners.

**Leadership**

A series of four ‘social studios’ was held in Angus, aiming to broaden the conversation about creativity and learning with staff from Community Planning, Community Learning, Resources, Communications, Housing, Social Work and Health, Leisure and Culture. Significant progress was made in broadening the pool of stakeholders involved. The programme produced a significant shift in thinking demonstrating that creativity is relevant and important for everyone. The creative consultation and engagement tools offered by the external facilitators are now used in planning, training and development contexts across the Council. As a result, a community has been created, a conversation started and perceptions changed.

**Creativity**

The CLN programme has established working relationships with targeted learning communities in North Lanarkshire that harness imaginative thinking, unlock creativity, promote confidence and ultimately unlock participants’ potential. Key activities included participatory workshops promoting creative play and imaginative thinking delivered across early years centres, allowing children to harness their imagination and suspend disbelief by interacting with fictional characters in imaginative worlds where they solved problems, showed initiative and thought inquisitively.

A full day interdisciplinary event for children and their carers within the Families First service supported and developed creative capacities through messy, sensory and creative play as well as arts and crafts, storytelling, active movement and dance. These activities encouraged participants to develop their own creativity skills whilst understanding the methodology behind fostering these skills in others by providing ideas and resources that could be later applied in a home situation.

CLNs across five authorities used Artworks Scotland funding to explore the role of artists/creative practitioners within the education system. The programme worked across West Lothian, Perth and Kinross, Falkirk, Stirling and Clackmannanshire. One of the key learning outcomes that emerged from three days of training was the importance of artists and teachers being in the same room and finding a shared language that unites them as learning practitioners. As a result of the training seven artists are working differently in schools. Through this the network of schools has strengthened and grown. The teachers who partnered with the artists are keen to learn more and have indicated they have adapted their practice following the collaboration.

In Paisley, The Untold Story is a set of ambitious plans to use the town's internationally significant cultural and heritage assets to turn it into one of the key destinations on Scotland’s tourist map.  This ambitious ten-year plan seeks to transform the cultural landscape of Renfrewshire. By working with colleagues from Planning & Transport, key staff from the CLN have been able to ensure that creative learning will be a key stream in this development over the coming years, helping to build a consistency of involvement from the classroom experience to the on the ground redevelopments.

The CLN in South Ayrshire trained a core group of young educators who created and delivered training sessions entitled “What is Creativity and Why Does It Matter” to peers, youth workers, health and pedagogical professionals and parents. They also trialled NCLN evaluation tools to find ways of better measuring the impact of creativity in different settings. This group unlocked ideas in young people and changed their perception of creativity from being purely about forms of art to being an approach to life and a way of thinking. These young people have represented a different outlook and this has provided a refreshing new approach for some more experienced youth work and arts practitioners.

Work with creative learning experts in South Lanarkshire developed creative approaches to learning across the whole school in two primary schools. The project encouraged establishments to question approaches to teaching and learning, challenged staff and pupils to take risks and unlock a creative thinking process. The project supported establishments to positively self-evaluate their experiences acknowledging the risks they had taken and this has now influenced their approach to planning and teaching within the classroom embracing a whole school approach.

A Culture and Creative Learning Strategy for West Dunbartonshire was developed in partnership with the Youth Alliance Hub and ‘Your Community’ groups. This provides a framework for the continued development of creative learning in West Dunbartonshire. The priorities include establishing a creative programme based on local need, developing summer and winter activities, increased quality and quantity of STEAM resources for primary schools (and associated CLPL), and further development of West Dunbartonshire’s Youth Theatre and Arts Award.

**Literacy and Numeracy**

Working in partnership with South Ayrshire Community Learning and Development the CLN delivered a literacy project with the Marr and Prestwick cluster primary schools linking literacies through creativity to P2 pupils and parents together. Parents could see, in practical ways, how creative practice could enhance their children’s literacy skills. By delivering this as a longer term practical experience, parents learned how to use approaches themselves at home. Participants found the project valuable and they hope to continue with the programme next year.

A collaborative project between an education consultancy agency and two primary schools in West Lothian explored and measured how applying creativity could impact on a chosen priority area for the school - literacy. Applying the Scottish Criterion Scale, there was a significant and measurable improvement in the pupils’ writing based on two pieces of text at the beginning and end of the project. Word counts were significantly greater in the writing produced at the end of the residency. Pupils had more to say, have enduring knowledge and *‘ideas are everywhere’*. The enhanced desire to write has been facilitated through the pupils’ increased vocabularies, and improved competencies with adjectives in extended descriptive sentences. Pupils’ achievements have been recognised by their class teacher and head teacher, which has served to generate invaluable self-esteem for all.

“We believe the legacy of our creative intervention is twofold: for the pupils, an enhanced appetite for writing and a receptiveness for the continued acquisition of more literacy skills. For staff, an understanding through first-hand experience of the value of creative approaches to learning and teaching within the curriculum for excellence”. (Hidden Giants, Williamston – Tasting a Storm)

**Distance Travelled**

The Creative Minds Learning Network (CMLN) in East Ayrshire has grown in numbers and scope of activity with key achievements highlighted in the Council’s excellence awards. Building on the experience last year of evidencing impact, the scope of evaluation has been extended to include the gauging of core skills for work as well as creativity attributes. The CMLN is working closely with the attainment adviser and challenge schools to research more tangible measures that link the evaluation frameworks to the monitoring and tracking systems set out by Education Scotland.

North Ayrshire worked to further develop the CLN and further raise awareness of the importance of creativity across learning, through sharing information, supporting small scale projects to evidence the impact of creativity in relation to pupil attainment. The Network works more closely with local businesses and chamber of commerce and several small-scale events have taken place building towards the delivery of a large scale, pan-Ayrshire event.

**Conclusion**

Creative Learning Networks have had significant impact in championing and advocating creativity across learning and on the intended outcome of helping to unlock learners’ creativity. When the CLNs first came into existence, there was no clear definition of creativity in a learning context, the core creativity skills were yet to be defined, and there were a lot of myths and misunderstandings around creativity. Without a shared understanding or common language, talking about and evaluating creativity was problematic. Eric Booth referred to the ‘linguistic barrier’ that happened when people heard the word creativity - they switch off if they perceive themselves not to be ‘creative’ or think you are talking about the ‘arty’ people and not them. Significantly, there was, initially, no shared understanding across CLN Coordinators. A number are now Creative Learning Managers.

CLNs are a major delivery mechanism of Scotland’s Creative Learning Plan, helping to ensure that key messages from that Plan, the 3-18 Curriculum Impact Report – Creativity Across Learning, and from HGIOS 4 are embedded in their work with educators, practitioners, partners and learners. CLNs have contributed to the creation of a range of creative teaching and learning resources (<http://bit.ly/creativityNIH> ) designed to help educators and learners plan for creativity, identify creativity skills and reflect on their learning including ‘What are Creativity Skills’ and ‘Planning for and evaluating Creativity’.

The work of CLNs has significantly influenced the development of the common language that has furthered the shared understanding of creativity and creativity skills that underpins the creative practice of educators, practitioners, partners and learners.

The network has grown considerably over the past six years, developing participation from 7833 people involved in 189 CLN funded activities (2010/11), to 23,413 people involved in 626 activities in 2015/16. Over that period the range of participants has also grown to include local authority senior managers, employers, managers and staff from Higher and Further Education. A broad spectrum of educational and creative professionals from local authorities and the third sector continue to be involved.

The engagement in CLN funded activities has contributed significantly to a shared understanding of creativity and creativity skills and their role in the development of skills for learning, life and work. 86.67% of survey respondents agreed that creativity skills were recognised, articulated and valued by participants: ‘*Learners have a greater awareness of what creativity skills are due to their experiences and this has informed their approach to their coursework in school.’* (Survey participant)*.*  79.77% strongly agreed/agreed that both learners and practitioners engaged in dialogue about the development of creativity skills.

The work of CLNs has contributed to the growth in the number of schools that are including creativity as a school improvement priority and the development of creativity across a range of curriculum areas. 77.53% of survey respondents agreed that learners and practitioners were transferring creativity skills to new contexts. ‘*The children and staff have expanded their understanding of what being creative is and taken part in learning experiences both on and off site, all of which have added to their skills set and provided a sense of wonder linked to creativity. This has given us opportunities and ideas for IDL opportunities and enabled us to hold wonderful whole school events sharing our learning with parents, families and the wider community. We are focussing as a staff on identifying how these creative opportunities can foster IDL which complements the learning of core skills and building in links with STEAM projects.’* (Survey participant). Similar developments have taken place in further education: ‘*In our college, Creative Learning has been adopted across all departments with amazing initiatives taking place in surprising departments (e.g. engineering).*’ (Survey participant).

**Next Steps**

* Continue to provide opportunities that challenge and develop practitioners to engage with creativity and creativity skills
* Continue to extend the understanding of the contribution creativity makes to the development of skills for life, learning and work
* Continue to extend the understanding of the contribution creativity makes to attainment and achievement