



CREATIVE LEARNING NETWORKS

REPORT 2015/16

A report on the progress and
development of Creative Learning
Networks across Scotland

Commissioned by Education
Scotland in partnership with
Creative Scotland

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Really Useful Knowledge



Introduction

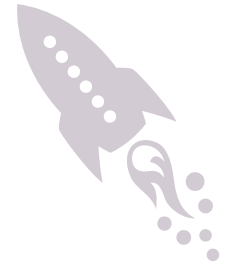
The National Creative Learning Network (NCLN) is a strong community of practice with a leadership role in championing and advocating creativity across learning both nationally and in local authorities across Scotland.

Funded through a partnership between Creative Scotland and Education Scotland, it consists of the group of coordinators leading the authority-based Creative Learning Networks (CLNs). Creative Scotland and Education Scotland are building on their strong partnership with continued support for the development of CLNs. The overall purpose of the CLN 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 were awarded funding to deliver on that year's intended outcome: *Increased levels of creativity skills being recognised, articulated and valued by educationalists, practitioners and learners.*

This report is based on CLN self-evaluation reports and a survey carried out in early 2017 which gathered evidence on the impact of the CLN Fund since its inception in 2010.

“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

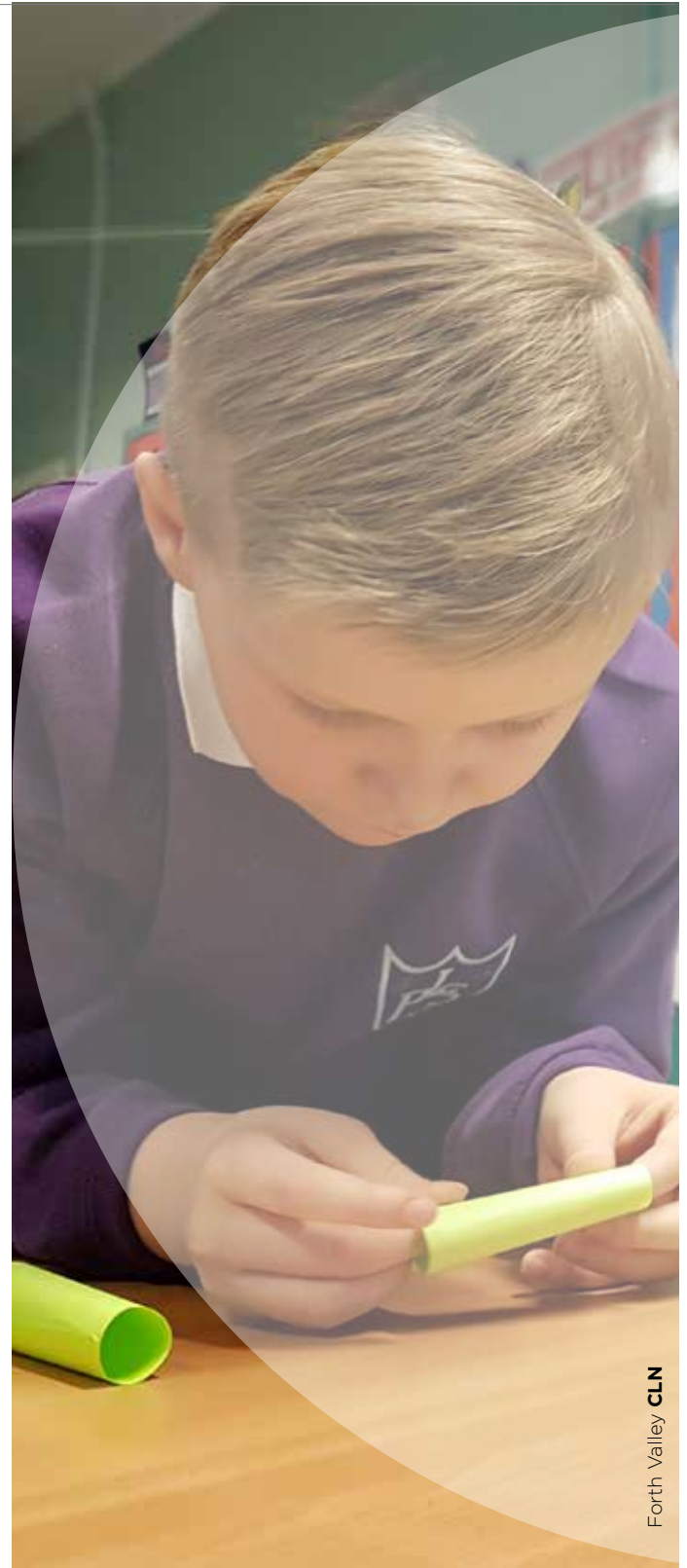


Policy Context

In 2015, How Good is our School? (fourth edition) (HGIOS) was produced by Education Scotland. This new publication focused on the need to continue to improve attainment for all and on making a decisive shift towards closing the gap in attainment and achievement between the most disadvantaged children and their peers.

For the first time, HGIOS referenced creativity in a quality indicator - **3.3 Increasing creativity and employability**. This indicator focuses on a range of significant skills for learning, life and work which children and young people should increasingly be able to demonstrate as they move through their learning pathways. A key feature is learners' ability to apply their skills in a range of contexts, including in unfamiliar settings.

In early 2017, a '**Creative Learning Review**' was produced by Creative Scotland to '*present the key issues, outputs and outcomes to help those in the arts, screen and creative industries better understand the concept of creative learning.*'

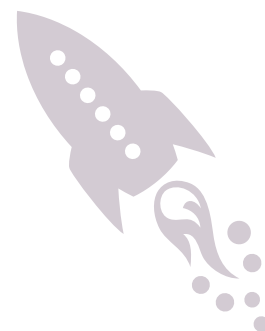


Impact

The Creative Learning Networks have grown considerably over the past seven years. In 2010/11, 7,833 people participated in 189 CLN funded activities across Scotland's local authorities. 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, staff from Higher and Further Education, and a broad spectrum of educational and creative professionals from local authorities and the third sector.

An online survey of the impact of the Creative Learning Network fund was conducted in 2017. The survey asked participants to reflect on progress since 2010 over a number of aspects of the work of CLNs. 92 responses were received from participants from 16 local authorities. The majority of responses, 62%, came from the primary education sector, 14% from the secondary education sector and 16% from the arts and cultural sectors.

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 levels of creativity skills being recognised, articulated and valued, and to apply creativity across teaching, learning and improvement. Examples include career long professional learning (CLPL), Creative Conversations, network meetings, creativity themed conferences and events, creative learning programmes in schools and informal learning settings. A number of creative learning experts work in partnership with CLNs to deliver activity.



Learning, teaching, assessment and achievement

In considering the impacts of engagements in CLN activity, 65% of survey respondents agreed that creative learning took place across all aspects of the curriculum and 69% agreed that creativity is being practically applied as a higher order thinking skill.

Creativity features in an increasing number of school improvement plans. The creation of a Creativity Skills Progression Framework by one local authority <http://bit.ly/creativityplanning> 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.

One CLN introduced twenty teachers to Philosophy with Children. 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 inventing, experimenting, growing, taking risks, breaking rules, making mistakes and having fun. The teachers identified that creative teaching was about promoting collaboration, sharing thoughts and ideas, *'building on others' thinking* and *'agreeing and disagreeing with a variety of viewpoints'*.

Teaching staff worked 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.

A programme for schools equipped practitioners with an enhanced 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 programme generated new ideas, found innovative and creative solutions and had complete ownership of their own learning. Through discussions and exercises they formed opinions and made decisions with confidence. Keyworkers and teachers had new creative experiences delivered by creative specialists that raised their levels of creativity in learning and teaching in both formal and community learning contexts.

“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



East Ayrshire CLN

Survey participants were asked to think about specific impacts on their organisation, resulting from CLN funding. 87% agreed that creativity skills are recognised, articulated and valued by participants and 80% strongly agreed/agreed that both learners and practitioners engaged in dialogue about the development of creativity skills.

“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





West Lothian CLN



Staff and pupils in P6, within an area of significant deprivation, 'redesigned' their school 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.

In many areas, CLN activity has increased levels of creativity skills being used confidently by learners. One project encouraged teachers and pupils to develop their creativity skills through hands-on problem solving, investigating and reviewing possible solutions, and 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.

A collaborative, creative learning project delivered by creative learning experts worked with staff and pupils in a secondary school to refresh an outdoor space. The pupils reflected on the creativity skills they were using to complete the activities, exercises and discussions. The pupils recognised how the process enabled them to think more freely and make their own connections. Staff explored how creativity skills can support pupils in their learning.

90% of survey participants agreed that learners had increased access to creative learning activities, with 83% agreeing that there was a greater diversity in the available activities. 67% agreed that practitioners had improved their practice in supporting learners to develop their creativity skills and 73% of survey participants agreed that partnerships are used to deliver highly engaging creative learning.

“As a P7 class teacher last year I saw the impact that this training had on my class. Their critical thinking skills developed as did their confidence and self-esteem. I believe it also ties in with Rights Education as children find ‘their voice’ and develop the confidence to raise their hand and speak out.”

Survey participant

“Staff have developed their understanding of how to encourage creativity in the curriculum.”

Survey participant

Raising Attainment

In the online survey, 88% of participants felt that CLN opportunities contributed to learners achieving their potential, and 78% agreed that learners and practitioners were transferring creativity skills to new contexts.

A small test of change, developed in partnership with a primary school focused on raising attainment through creative approaches to teaching and learning new mathematical concepts. A shared understanding of creativity skills has developed between the pupils, the teacher and the head teacher. They all recognise and apply creativity skills and value learning from mistakes. As a result, there has been an increase in problem solving, use of imagination, open mindedness, curiosity, applying creativity skills and improved Mathematics Assessment for Learning and Teaching (MALT) assessment scores.

In one authority, creativity has been included as an essential element in all Raising Attainment for All (RAFA) projects. In the training teachers had opportunities to further develop creative learning and teaching, and use materials from the Creativity 3-18 report and the creativity skills posters, (<http://bit.ly/creativityskills>). In their project outcomes, there was clear evidence of improved opportunities for creative learning and teaching, and improved attainment and achievement for the most disengaged young people.



One CLN trained a group of young educators who created and delivered training sessions entitled *“What is Creativity and Why Does It Matter”*. They also trialled NCLN evaluation tools to find ways of better measuring the impact of creativity in different settings. The sessions were delivered to peers, youth workers, health and pedagogical professionals and parents. The experience unlocked

“Creativity is an integral part of our developing curriculum rationale.”

Survey participant



ideas and changed perceptions of creativity from being purely about forms of art to being an approach to life and a way of thinking. The young people presented a different outlook and provided a refreshing new approach for some more experienced youth work and arts practitioners. Work with creative learning experts developed creative approaches to learning across the whole

school in two primary schools. Establishments were encouraged to question approaches to teaching and learning, staff and pupils were challenged to take risks and unlock a creative thinking process. The project supported establishments to positively self-evaluate their experiences and this influenced their approach to planning and teaching within the classroom, embracing a whole school approach.

Literacy and Numeracy

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

Leadership

A series of four 'social studios', aimed to broaden the conversation about creativity and learning, involving 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 creativity as 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 local authority. As a result, a community has been created, a conversation started and perceptions changed.

Employability

A one-day Creativity Conference invited senior leaders in educational establishments, key strategic partners and local employers, to explore and develop their understanding of creative learning and the value of developing creativity skills. 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, new cross-departmental working emerged from connections made at the conference. Support for creative learning from senior managers has increased. Every school in the authority invited a local employer partner and schools now have at least one employer partnership established to take forward the Developing the Young Workforce agenda. The authority produced a Skills Framework for schools and creativity is included as a core skill to develop with learners.



“Creativity has to see beyond any labels. We’re teaching to the potential not the deficit.”

Twitter comment from CLN participant

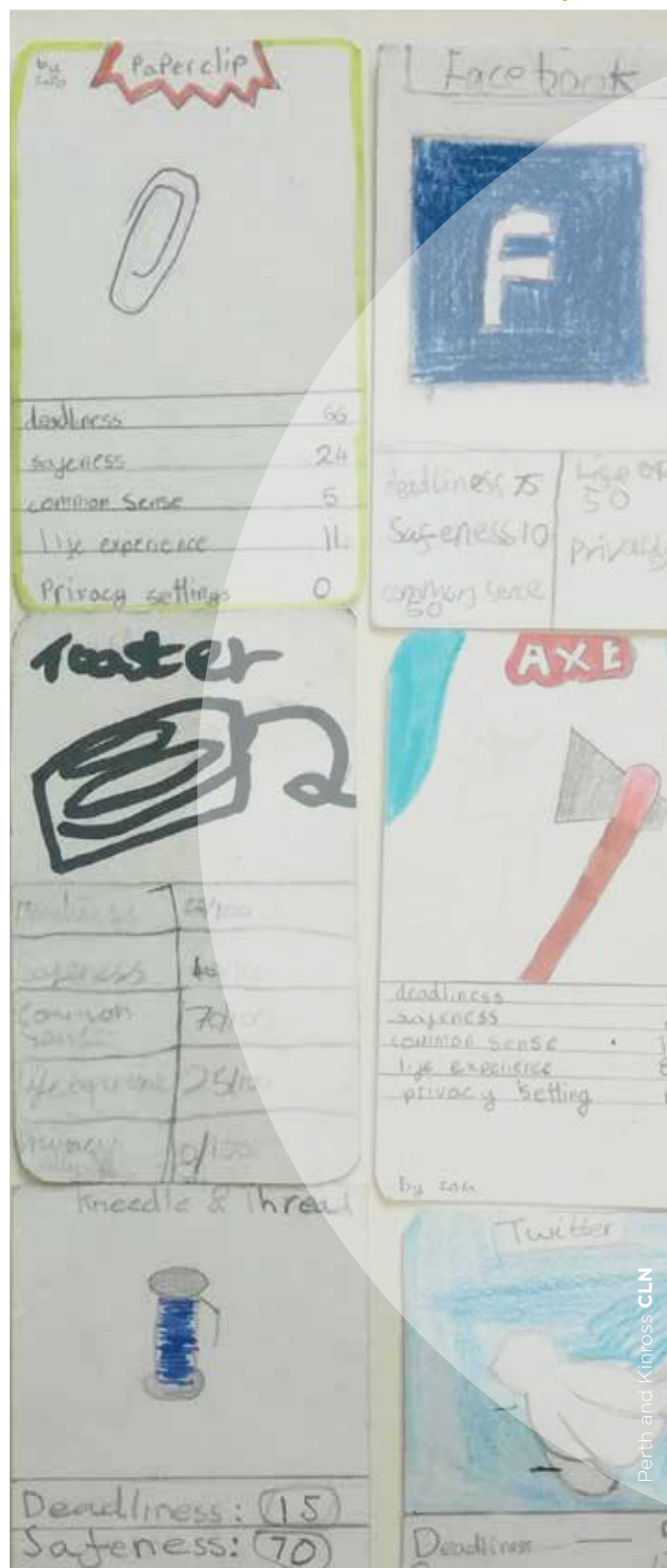
Wider Partnership

CLNs across five authorities used Artworks Scotland funding to explore the role of artists/creative practitioners within the education system. Through this, the network of schools has strengthened and grown. 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. The teachers who partnered with the artists are keen to learn more and have indicated they have adapted their practice following the collaboration.

A full day interdisciplinary event for children and their carers, with a family support organisation, supported and developed creative capacities through messy, sensory and creative play. These activities, included arts and crafts, storytelling, active movement and dance, and encouraged participants to develop their own creativity skills and their understanding of the methodology behind fostering these skills in others. All ideas and resources were designed to be used later in a home context.

“We have very good links with creative partners... Planning takes place together.”

Survey participant



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.
- CLNs are the key 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 are embedded in their work with educators, practitioners, partners and learners.
- The work of CLNs has contributed to the development of a common language and shared understanding of creativity and creativity skills that underpins the creative practice of 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 'Planning for and evaluating Creativity'.
- The network has grown considerably over the past six years, developing participation from 7,833 people involved in 189 CLN funded activities in 2010/11, to 23,413 people involved in 626 activities in 2015/16.
- The fund, only £300,000 per year, has been used to release almost half as much again, in cash and in-kind, to support creative learning.
- The engagement in CLN funded activities has contributed significantly to an increased awareness and understanding of creativity and creativity skills and their importance in the development of skills for learning, life and work. 87% of survey respondents agreed that creativity skills were now recognised, articulated and valued by participants.
- 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. 78% of survey respondents agreed that learners and practitioners were now transferring creativity skills to new contexts.

Next Steps

- **Continue to provide opportunities that challenge and develop practitioners to engage with creativity and creativity skills.**
- **Continue to extend 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.**



Disclaimer

The views contained within this report are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of Education Scotland or Creative Scotland.

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