

# Creative Wellbeing Fund

## A Creative Scotland and Education Scotland Partnership Fund 2021/22 Project Evaluation

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ALBA | CHRUTHACHAIL



# Contents

## Page 03 Introduction

- Page 03 – Creative Wellbeing Fund
- Page 04 – Ambitions
- Page 04 – Purpose
- Page 04 – Aims
- Page 04 – Intended outcome

## Page 05 The Process

- Page 05 – The Call-Out
- Page 05 – Scoring/moderation
- Page 05 – Matching

## Page 06 The Projects

- Page 06 – Tayside Regional Improvement Collaborative - Grange Primary School, Angus, and Helen McCrorie (Visual Artist/Filmmaker)
- Page 08 – Northern Alliance - Gigha Primary School, Argyll and Bute, and Starcatchers
- Page 10 – West Partnership - St Luke's High School, East Renfrewshire, and Culture Junction
- Page 12 – South East Improvement Collaborative - St Columba's High School, Fife, and Articulate Cultural Trust
- Page 14 – South West Education Improvement Collaborative - St Matthew's High School, North Ayrshire, Associated Primary Schools, and Impact Arts
- Page 16 – Forth Valley and West Lothian Regional Improvement Collaborative - Burnhouse Skills Centre, Connolly Campus, West Lothian, and The Book Whisperers

## Page 18 Conclusion

## Page 19 Learning Points

## Page 20 Further Information

## Page 21 Appendix

# Introduction

## Creative Wellbeing Fund

The **Creative Wellbeing Fund**, established through the strategic partnership agreement between **Education Scotland** and **Creative Scotland**, was made available to support schools to take a creative approach to improve learner wellbeing by working in partnership with a creative partner.

A total of £90,000 was available to support six projects across Scotland, one project in each Regional Improvement Collaborative (RIC) being awarded a grant of £13,500 with the remainder of the funds used for other costs.

The funding was used to employ a creative partner who worked with the successful applicant to find innovative solutions to increasing learner wellbeing and a wider sense of achievement, through creative learning across the curriculum and the development of creativity skills. Applications were invited from local authority school groups, including funded early learning and childcare providers.

## The fund had five high level strategic outcomes:

- **Children and young people's access to learning, in and through the Expressive Arts is safeguarded.**
- **The ambition of Scotland's Culture Strategy to improve access to cultural experiences for learners of all ages is supported.**
- **Engagement in culture as a transformative opportunity across learning is re-imagined by education settings, practitioners and creative partners working together.**
- **The capacity of youth arts infrastructure is enhanced through the commissioning of creative practitioners/freelance artists to work in education settings.**
- **The development of sustainable creative communities is supported.**

The fund supported partnership projects which brought learning communities and creative partners together. Learners, creative partners and educators shared ideas, explored new possibilities and generated innovative solutions to a challenge identified by the learning community. They were empowered to change their thinking, practice and approach to continuous improvement, with the overarching aim of improving learner wellbeing.

Creative partners and schools were encouraged to make use of the tools, approaches and resources available on the **National Improvement Hub**. The project complemented the existing work and resources of the Education Scotland's Creativity Team and Creative Scotland's Creative Learning and Young People's Team and the National Creative Learning Plan.

## Ambitions of the Fund

The fund sought to support schools and creative partners who:

- Were keen to innovate and look beyond the COVID-19 recovery phase.
- Were keen to develop and sustain partnerships and relationships over an extended timeframe.
- Prioritised listening, especially to children and young people, in order to ask the right questions before attempting to solve perceived problems.
- Brought open-mindedness, curiosity, imagination and problem-solving to their involvement.
- Were willing to take risks, stop doing things that aren't helping learners' wellbeing and be open to change.
- Were committed to monthly online meetings with the wider project community (across six RICs) to share ideas, challenges and to learn from each other.
- Would work as acceptable to the relevant local authority. During the pandemic, local authorities individually issued guidance on partnership working with schools. This could mean learning with partners took place online, outdoors, in classrooms or a combination of all three.

## Purpose of the Fund

To engage creative partners to work in partnership with schools and services to develop learners' creativity skills and improve wellbeing.

### Aims

- Support increased learner wellbeing and wider sense of achievement.
- Develop creativity skills in and through the arts.
- Build innovative ways of working through partnerships between educators, learners, creative partners, schools and their communities.
- Share learning across Scotland for the benefit of all learners.

## Intended Outcome

Learner wellbeing and wider sense of achievement is increased through creative learning across the curriculum and the development of creativity skills.

## The Process

The fund was advertised in the [Scotland Learns newsletter](#), the [Youth Music Initiative \(YMI\) newsletter](#), Education Scotland's website and through both Education Scotland and Creative Scotland's social media channels. Creative Learning Networks also promoted the opportunity in their authorities.

Schools and funded early learning and childcare providers were invited to apply for a project grant having identified a challenge in their setting relating to learner wellbeing. Forty-four bids were received, and applications were assessed against a set of criteria and one project from each Regional Improvement Collaborative (RIC) was selected. This was followed by the publication of a brief and call-out to Creative Partners, inviting them to express an interest in the Creative Wellbeing project. The call-out was shared through [Creative Scotland's Opportunities website](#), social media accounts, newsletters and networks.

The call-out received 32 applications from prospective Creative Partners who attended online information and training sessions designed to ensure all interested parties gained a good understanding of the project whilst offering them a professional development opportunity. The sessions considered key areas such as Scotland's Curriculum and how creative partners' practice might support specific articles in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, (UNCRC) relating to education, cultural and art activities. The sessions also helped level the playing field for freelancers and smaller arts organisations who had less experience of working in an education setting.

Creative Partner applications were scored on the criteria used for inclusion as a Creative Partner on the [Creativity Portal](#). Following a moderation process, 18 Creative Partners were invited to move to the next stage - an online speed dating-style event. The six successful school project leads each met with different Creative Partners considered good potential matches in terms of creative practice, challenge identified and geography. The schools then indicated who their preferred Creative Partner was and as a result, the partnerships were made which took the projects forward.

School staff, learners and Creative Partners then had a month to get to know each other, the context and to explore the challenge. During this time, partners were invited to keep an open-mind and to allow project ideas to evolve depending on what was learned, and to re-consider, possibly even re-define the challenge. Then, together, they developed an outline project plan, which was discussed with and approved by Creative Scotland and Education Scotland.

Project leads attended monthly online sessions facilitated by Education Scotland and Creative Scotland which provided a platform for the project community to share and learn from each other and for the communication of key information and requirements.

# The Projects

## Tayside RIC

### Community Play Space

**Grange Primary School, Angus, and Helen McCrorie (Visual Artist/Filmmaker)**

Age range: 5 – 11 years

**Project Focus:** Play is the way of improving wellbeing across the community through the ambitious and innovative development of our school grounds.

The school had identified the need to focus more on how learners played and interacted together, to provide high quality play experiences allowing learners to problem solve, innovate and take risks to improve their wellbeing. The available space included a large, grassed area and a wooded area known as the forest, both of which presented supervision and safety challenges.

### **“Working with Helen was a major success” (Teacher)**

Consultation was crucial to the success of the project and involved the whole school community at different points and in different ways. Learners, and the wider community, were involved in looking at how the grounds were being used and how they could be developed to create a motivational play space. Learners were consulted through creative workshops on how they played in the grounds and what would improve the experience.

### **“It’s good that the teachers thought ‘why not speak to the kids and see what they want’, before making the decision. The kids need a voice.” (Learner)**

A P6 group created a film, highlighting the benefits of play such as building confidence, creativity and imagination. They interviewed classes to gather their views on play and the existing use of the play space.

The learners gained a range of film-making skills, including animation, as well as interviewing skills and teamwork.

Learners from P5/6/7 designed and developed a Woodland Behaviour Code, creating poems and characters as signage. These were intended to inspire learners to think about the forest in a different way, to make learners think about risk and to help younger learners understand the various areas.

### **“The project gave us a lot of independence. It helps you collaborate and work together, using everyone’s ideas.” (Learner)**

Working with their creative partner, learners identified a range of themes and ideas, some contributing their experience of Forest Schools. These included a mud kitchen, climbing, football, a reading den/library and a music wall. The project also developed shelters for quiet play which will be supported by peer mediators.

A mural, based on silhouettes of learners designed and decorated by learners was developed from a series of workshops delivered by Helen McCrorie and Scrap Antics and can be seen from almost all the open play space in the school.



The project also introduced ‘loose parts’ play using materials that can be moved, carried, combined, redesigned, lined up, taken apart and put back together in multiple ways. This opened a different way of thinking, promoted creativity, giving an opportunity for adults to stand back and for learners to take charge of their learning.

Coming back to regular school-based activity after COVID-19 presented challenges, with learners identifying that they missed playing and interacting with peers and wanting more time to explore and learn outdoors. Observations since returning to school suggested that many learners found social interaction challenging and that had a negative impact on their wellbeing. Learners had missed important transitions which has increased anxiety for some.

The project therefore aimed at providing high quality play experiences to enable learners to problem solve, innovate and take risks to improve their wellbeing.

The partnership between the school and the creative partner has been ‘a major success’ and learners have a strong sense of ownership of the changes which they have been involved in directly.

There is a tangible legacy for future learners across the school and the potential for longer term outcomes, including the development of a Community Play Space, to be achieved. A ‘Grange Festival’ day celebrated the play developments and the environmental changes. Over 300 parents/ carers were involved in supporting the project development and attending the festival.



Key Successes	Key Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inclusive consultation process</li> <li>• Learners taking charge of their learning</li> <li>• Strong sense of ownership by learners</li> <li>• Effective partnership working</li> <li>• Involvement of whole school community</li> <li>• Tangible legacy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Different ways of thinking</li> <li>• Return to school-based activity after COVID-19 pandemic</li> <li>• Social interaction for learners</li> <li>• Increased anxiety for learners</li> </ul>

Top image: Scrapantics and Infinite Sky, commissioned by artist Helen McCrorie. Photo: Morag Oldham.  
 Bottom image: artist Helen McCrorie, with Dundee Wood Recycling Grange Primary, Angus. Photo: Helen McCrorie.

## Northern Alliance

### Children's Festival

#### Gigha Primary School, Argyll and Bute, and Starcatchers

Age range: 5 – 11 years

**Project Focus:** To unlock children's potential to create change through engagement in intergenerational, inclusive arts practice and in founding a Children's Festival.

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in children from rural communities becoming significantly isolated. The project explored how engagement in the arts and hosting arts events could provide learners with opportunities to welcome and include others, boost their sense of identity and belonging, encourage their imaginations, ingenuity and inventiveness, and reinforce their sense of empowerment and mental wellbeing.

#### The project aimed to reconnect 5 rural schools:

- Achahoish Primary School
- Clachan Primary School
- Rhunahaorine Primary School/Early Learning Childcare Centre
- Glenbarr Primary School
- Gigha Primary School/Early Learning Childcare Centre

#### “Genuinely, so much joy!” (Creative Partner)

Visiting artists were chosen carefully for their skills in delivery, their collaborative approach and, through a series of creative workshops, learners gained skills in performance, music and art. Learners benefited from meeting and working with creative people from beyond their own communities and had a sense of pride in their creations. The process in schools was learner-led and collaborative. Learners had a great deal of choice and influence on the direction of the project.

#### “We did more than we thought we could” (Learner)

The project provided space for exploration and discovery, with the filmmaking, for example, giving an opportunity for learners to take responsibility, make their own decisions and learn from their mistakes. The planning and structuring for each school allowed for different challenges based on each individual. Learners saw their ideas come to fruition and gained from sharing their learning with the wider group. As the project progressed learners responded more positively to challenges.

In developing the Children's Festival, learners were supported to work together, use their imaginations and find solutions. The artists' input throughout the project helped develop ideas for the festival, with music, art and puppetry. Learners developed a festival theme: **Fun, Fairness and Friendship** which provided a framework for all the festival activities.

Through a series of workshops learners explored what a 'festival' meant to them and what they wanted to see in theirs. They designed the festival, the activities and created art works for the day. They wrote their own song, with the help of a musician, which provided the soundtrack for their film. The festival featured live music, drumming, puppet shows and participants created a giant artwork. There were displays of art from each school and Glenbarr put on a performance representing the journey out of the pandemic.

The benefits to the learners' wellbeing included a sense of purpose, of achievement and responsibility. They developed their resilience, ability to face and deal with challenges, and worked outside their comfort zones, persevering and problem solving. The sense of belonging to a group that was creating something special was important.



Staff absence had some impact on communication throughout the project and there were collaboration difficulties due to the pandemic and to geography. Limited forward planning led to a lack of clarity about the nature of the creative partner’s involvement, how their time might be best used and some unrealistic expectations of where their input might be assumed. However, schools were enthusiastic about the project, with wellbeing already high on their agenda. Teachers found it very helpful to meet with other teachers in the area and share knowledge and expertise.



Gigha Primary. Photos: Madeleine Conn, Argyll and Bute Council and Anna Downie, Starcatchers.

**“Continuing Professional Development (CPD) helped schools recognise we do this and do it well” (Teacher)**

For some, the biggest impact came through the interaction with the other practitioners and the opportunity to work together. The professional development input was valued, and the schools’ workforce increased their professional understanding, confidence and skills to engage creatively.

Key Successes	Key Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced isolation</li> <li>• Learner-led/collaborative process</li> <li>• Learners developed resilience, a sense of purpose, achievement and responsibility.</li> <li>• Increased understanding, confidence and skills to engage creatively by staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff absence</li> <li>• Limited forward planning</li> <li>• Return to school-based activity after COVID-19 pandemic</li> <li>• Partnership working</li> </ul>

## West Partnership

**Film/Music on theme of Mental Health**

**St Luke's High School, East Renfrewshire, and Culture Junction**

Age range: 12 years +

**Project Focus:** Support learner transitions, pupil voice and family engagement through creative opportunities.

A steering group of learners from S1 and S2 carried out research with all year groups in the school through a series of pop-up workshops at lunch and interval times and this informed the topics for the project.

### **“It was outstanding, I was hugely impressed” (QIO)**

The learners used digital technologies to create a series of short films selecting their stimuli, creative medium, musical choices, editing and landscape backgrounds. Through a series of workshops learners developed a variety of skills including script writing, storyboarding, acting and character development. Participants also explored the skills used in making TikTok videos.

During script writing learners were able to define problems and identify positive interventions to improve the scenes. They developed their use of questioning, making connections and noticing patterns emerging in their work, becoming increasingly confident at exploring and combining ideas, whilst taking in multiple viewpoints from the information they had gathered from the wider school. Participants were confident when talking about mental health and quickly identified relevant issues and themes.

As the project continued, learners became more autonomous in managing their own learning and developing their own approaches to adapting their script writing, set, lighting and the angles they needed for the filming process.

### **“Mental Health is really in young people’s vocabulary now” (Creative Partner)**

A music therapy group involving learners who found communication and learner/teacher relationships a challenge, designed the backing track for the films. While working independently to craft their musical choices, learners worked collaboratively with others to select and create a St Luke’s playlist across a variety of pop-up workshops.

Learners from cluster primary schools had identified anxieties during the transition phase and starting high school. P7s explored areas of their wellbeing through workshops led by the creative partner to explore their thoughts and feelings around transition. Learners then designed postcards with questions to be asked of S1s in St Luke’s. The creative partner worked with S1 classes to provide answers, which were taken back to the P7 classes, forming the basis for a general wellbeing workshop.

### **The questions also feature in the film. Examples include:**

**How difficult is it to go from primary school to high school?** “It’s a change of course but really good. It makes you feel mature and feels like you’ve grown up.”

**Is high school like the movies?** “High school is nothing like the movies.”

**How hard is the work?** “The work is not the same for everyone, but some subjects can be harder than others feel... and if you’re finding it difficult tell the teacher that is teaching the subject and they will help you. Don’t stress.”

**How brutal is the homework?** “Very brutal. You get at least five different subjects per week but make sure to do it the night you get it.”



Images: stills from the film *I'm Fine*. Fraser MacLeod, Culture Junction.

A learner focus group indicated they felt less anxious about the transition as a result of the workshops.

The project had significant impact on participants. Overall learners increased their confidence and self-esteem, they worked effectively as a member of a team and broadened their range of creativity skills. Some learners became much better at expressing their ideas, some were more able to manage constructive criticism from peers and staff and respond better to dealing with mistakes. Participants contributed confidently when developing ideas and designing scripts. As a result of their experiences working with the creative partner, participants recognised a wider range of career opportunities existed across the creative industries.

**“Creative Writing helps me clear my head” (Learner)**

The film is now being integrated into the school’s Personal, Social, Health Education programme to stimulate conversation around mental health.

Key Successes	Key Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learner-led/collaborative process</li> <li>• Learners taking charge of their learning</li> <li>• Inclusive consultation process</li> <li>• Effective partnership working</li> <li>• Tangible legacy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management of filming schedule/ school timetable</li> <li>• Return to school-based activity after COVID-19 pandemic</li> </ul>

## South East Improvement Collaborative

### Wellbeing Toolkit to support transition

#### St Columba's High School, Fife, and Articulate Cultural Trust

Age range: 11 years +

**Project Focus:** Support learner transitions, using characters developed by learners, raising awareness of SHANNARI indicators (Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible and Included).

A significant increase was identified in the number of S1 learners presenting with anxiety/anxious behaviours relating to the transition from primary school to St Columba's High School, Fife. Participants created a piece of art with their peers focusing on the common topic of wellbeing and used it to discuss issues with new classmates during their transition visits to St Columba's. Seeing their artwork displayed provided familiarity and a link to their primary school. It also gave them a sense of achievement and the feeling of being respected by their peers and teachers, in a new situation. By discussing the wellbeing indicators in relation to moving school, learners had concrete examples to apply in real life situations and to support the development of their emotional literacy.

From initial engagement, the creative partner Articulate Cultural Trust, identified key themes related to the transition period which included:

- General anxiety amongst learners about the move to high school.
- Worries about safety on the journey to and from the high school, sometimes an hour long.
- Family concerns about losing support from primary schools when their child transitions to secondary school.
- Respect and inclusion are concerns from some of the smaller communities who may be perceived as different by other learners from large communities.
- Some schools in the cluster have only a handful of learners going to St Columba's so there are worries about their isolation and a lack of friendly faces.

Articulate, with an animation artist, delivered a series of workshops, in person and digitally, giving opportunities for learners to engage with illustration and animation activities to create short, animated films to represent and raise awareness of the **SHANNARI** wellbeing indicators (**Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible and Included**).

On a theme of journeys, learners developed a character for each of the wellbeing indicators and created a positive story of a journey for each of them based on the indicator they were representing. A good percentage of learners were familiar with the indicators, but the relevance to them and their lives was not always clear. The artists delivering the project reported that young people engaged in dialogue about wellbeing with varying levels of comfort and depth across the schools. The creative activities encouraged more open dialogue. Character design and storytelling supported the young people to engage in conversation more comfortably and in a less inhibited manner.

The discussion in groups was the most valuable part of the process, supporting learners to explore what the indicators meant to them and challenging them to develop their creativity. Artists and teachers observed an increased understanding through the dialogue, observation and creative activities. Learners identified an equal mix of anxiety and excitement about their transition to high school.

Teachers in the workshops felt that using creative activities to encourage dialogue and expression relating to thoughts and feelings was an accessible way to make space for these conversations.

A toolkit has been created to accompany the delivery of transitions work for future years. It includes flash cards to encourage dialogue and to provide activities for families to play at home and discuss the move to high school, providing space for learners and parents to talk about their worries and expectations. 250 parents/carers attended a presentation by learners at the launch of the toolkit. A desk calendar will be produced for teachers and posters of the indicators will be circulated to other schools in the area. The materials will be used in future school documentation. This tangible representation of each of the indicators will ensure a consistency across the cluster.

Throughout the project both St Columba's and Articulate experienced challenges due to COVID-19-related staff absence. This had an impact on the effectiveness of partnership working, particularly in relation to communication, resulting in a varied understanding of the project across cluster primaries. However, feedback from all the schools involved was positive.

Key Successes	Key Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced anxiety for learners</li> <li>• Positive feedback from schools</li> <li>• Tangible legacy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff absence</li> <li>• Effective communication</li> <li>• Partnership working</li> </ul>



Image: KMGYeah, Articulate Cultural Trust (from Safeguarding Toolkit)

## South West Education Improvement Collaborative

### Poetry, Visual Arts and Sound

St Matthew's High School, North Ayrshire, Associated Primary Schools and Impact Arts

Age range: 10 years +

**Project Focus:** To combat the negative impact that powerful words used in social media can have on learners and, in particular, the feelings of isolation they have experienced throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.



Image: Angela Smith, Impact Arts.

The Velcro Poetry Project aimed to highlight and explore how positive and negative language, can affect mental health and wellbeing in children and young people, and to encourage learners to express their feelings in positive, creative ways. Involving St Matthew's Academy, St Anthony's Primary School, St Bridget's Primary School and St John's Primary School, the project was delivered in two phases.

Velcro Poetry involved many creative partners. Impact Arts supplied a team of artists from all over North Ayrshire. This was a collaborative process with many elements, which required all partners to work together cooperatively. The partnership worked well due to the expertise each party brought to the table.

**“I thought poems were just fun, but now I that they are a way of communicating... sometimes serious stuff.” (Learner)**

Poets Simon Lamb, Rab Wilson and Rhonda Tulloch delivered phase one of the project, visiting each school several times. Learners were encouraged to think about how they could use expressive language in their poetry with a focus on Scots language and the use of metaphors to describe and express their feelings. By the end of phase one, every pupil had written at least one poem. Teachers reported that 95% of learners developed their creativity skills during the project.

**“Poetry has expanded my mind! I thought it had to be rhyme. It is fresh feelings.” (Learner)**

Impact Arts delivered the second phase of the project during which visual and sound artists worked with each group of learners using their poems as a stimulus, bringing the words to life and expressing them in artwork and sound recordings. Learners took part in three art workshops and were encouraged to be as bold and creative as they wished. Professional artists visiting schools offered learners a new perspective and brought their wealth of experience in the arts into the classroom. Learners responded well to this. Finally, learners participated in sound workshops, where their poetic words were used to record creative soundscapes.

**“Creative partners worked in collaboration with staff to take Literacy ‘off the page’ for our young learners. As a result, teaching and learning felt engaging, purposeful and vibrant.” (Literacy/English Coordinator)**

All the creative activities were fun, and tutors focused on building confidence and praising contributions, no matter how small. Learners' confidence and wellbeing increased as the project developed, with learners taking pride in their work. 93% of class teachers reported a noticeable increase in learner wellbeing and enhanced achievement through creative learning. Teachers reported that, of the 323 learners that participated in the project, 308 learners (95%) had increased wellbeing as a result. Learners were keen to showcase their creations and those who experienced difficulties engaging in literacy activities were able to participate fully, express themselves creatively and create poems successfully.

A 2-day creative showcase event at the Harbour Arts Centre in Irvine, celebrated the work created by the learners. There was an exhibition of work, including examples of the poetry and visual art. There were also QR codes which linked to the various online galleries. The project used technology and online tools such as Wakelet, Soundcloud and Flickr to share the creative outputs with parents, carers, family and friends. This allowed the wider community to be indirectly involved in the project.

Visitors to the showcase could access all the creative outputs. 160 people attended the event. One month after the launch, the Velcro Poetry Soundcloud account had had over 100 'plays' of the uploaded soundscapes. The Velcro Poetry Flickr account had had 2,800 views. There have been more than 170 views of the PDF version of the Velcro Poetry book, hosted on the Impact Arts website.

**“My favourite part of the project was the ‘you are’ poems because we were talking to ourselves” (Learner)**

The project has contributed to changes in the literacy curriculum which has become more inclusive and engaging for learners. A support pack to assist practitioners was developed, enabling them to sustain the delivery of these lessons independently.

Velcro Poetry will be delivered across S1/S3 with S4 learners undertaking an SQA qualification in mental health and wellbeing. A selection of poems is to be displayed on council vehicles in North Ayrshire, to reach people who were not directly involved in the project.

Key Successes	Key Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learners increased in confidence and wellbeing</li> <li>• Learners developed creativity skills</li> <li>• Effective partnership working</li> <li>• Improved literacy outcomes</li> <li>• Contribution to a more inclusive literacy curriculum</li> <li>• Tangible legacy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engaging with hardly reached learners</li> <li>• Learners' narrow expectations</li> </ul>

## Forth Valley and West Lothian RIC

### Story Writing and Literacy

**Burnhouse Skills Centre, Connolly Campus, West Lothian, and The Book Whisperers**

Age range: 12 years +

**Project Focus:** To enhance the approach to learner voice to inform all aspects of individual curriculum design and increase effectiveness of targeted support.

Burnhouse Skills Centre and Connolly Campus in West Lothian partnered with The Book Whisperers, a social enterprise working to make literacy more accessible and to help people to tell their own story. The focus on literacy was a challenge, but the project successfully raised expectations.

The weekly sessions included imaginative, interactive storytelling performances with staff and learners acting out infamous and imagined roles. The sessions featured nurturing, open-ended, creative opportunities supporting learners to develop their stories over a period of weeks.

#### **“We’re delighted we have been part of it.” (Teacher)**

In the initial sessions, the learners were quite reserved and hesitant. The use of storytelling at the beginning of each session allowed the learners to get into the right mindset – bringing them together and sometimes calming them down to help focus on their own story. As the project progressed the creative partners developed strong, positive relationships with learners and staff and learners became excited every Tuesday morning, anticipating the sessions.

Practitioners effectively explained how stories were made in a number of ways, not all of which involved writing. This has encouraged the learners to use their imaginations to be creative.

#### **“Literacy isn’t always putting pen to paper” (Teacher)**

Where learners remained reluctant, Book Whisperers focused on their personal interests. Engaging with the learners on a one-to-one basis and getting to know them allowed creative practitioners to collaborate with them in the creative process, letting learners lead the project and empowering them to explore their own stories.

The writing process was therapeutic for some learners. The stories speak deeply about their own experiences. Students produced the characters for their stories, as well as the concepts, the storyline, the ideas for illustrations and choosing the words they wanted to use. They then helped to edit the stories, checking for context and refining their story until it was as they wanted it to be.

#### **“It’s amazing! Now I have lots of confidence.” (Learner)**

As published authors, learners grew in self-confidence, resilience and self-belief. They worked individually, collaboratively and achieved success on many levels in different ways - unique to each individual. At the book launch the learners could hardly contain their pride and delight. The work highlighted what they were capable of and exceeded their limited views of what they could achieve. The book provided tangible evidence of the process they had experienced, of their sustained commitment to the whole 12-week project, with no drop-off. Having parents, teachers and family there to witness this had an enormous impact.

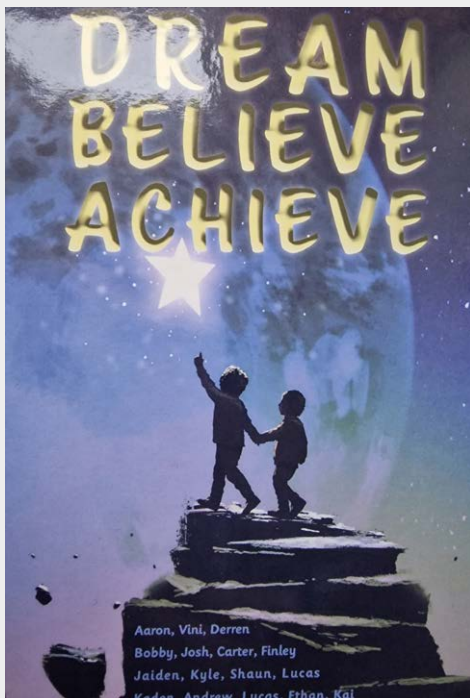
Staff learned new ways to engage with learners, through weekly engagement sessions with the Book Whisperers, they watched, engaged, directed, supported and learned. This learning impacted on their own lessons. The book has been used as part of de-escalation strategies in school. The career-long professional learning (CLPL) delivered by the creative partner developed skills in storytelling and how to engage learners in storytelling.

#### **“On every level, it’s been a really positive partnership.” (Teacher)**



Staff now use this with other schools in the area. All staff have a greater awareness of the importance of creativity in literacy.

Key Successes	Key Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learners increased in confidence, resilience and wellbeing</li> <li>• Learners developed creativity skills</li> <li>• Improved literacy outcomes</li> <li>• Effective partnership working</li> <li>• Increased awareness of the importance of creativity in literacy</li> <li>• Tangible legacy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on Literacy</li> <li>• Learners' narrow expectations</li> </ul>



He started over again from scratch using pillows and pots and pans as his arm

Left and above: from *Dream Believe Achieve*, by the learners of Connolly School Campus. Published by The Book Whisperers CIC.



Connolly Campus, West Lothian. Photo: Gillian Ure

# Conclusion

The Creative Wellbeing Fund supported partnership projects which brought learning communities and creative partners together. Education Scotland, in partnership with Creative Scotland and local authority colleagues provided:

- Online information and guidance to support proposal planning.
- One to one support during proposal planning and delivery phases.
- Identification of creative partners and support in matching them with successful applicants.
- Assistance in connecting projects with local Creative Learning Networks.
- Hosting of monthly, online sessions supporting project/budget planning and evaluation and sharing learning across the project community.
- Hosting of a final showcase event to share learning across the projects and with a wider audience.

In addition to addressing some of the challenges presented by the recovery process from the COVID-19 pandemic, the Creative Wellbeing Project enabled participants to share ideas, explore new possibilities and generate innovative solutions to support learner wellbeing. Learners, creative partners, and educators contributed to a wider sense of achievement through the development of creative learning across the curriculum and the growth of creativity skills.

Projects have raised the expectations of learners and staff, contributed to culture change and provided a tangible legacy for future learners. In North Ayrshire the project has contributed to changes in the literacy curriculum which has become more inclusive and engaging for learners. The development of a Community Play Space in Monifieth has created a strong sense of ownership of the changes amongst learners and created the potential for longer term outcomes to be achieved.

As a result of their experiences working with the creative partner, participants from Barrhead recognised that a wider range of career opportunities existed across the creative industries. In Bathgate, all staff have a greater awareness of the importance of creativity in literacy and staff now use storytelling and other aspects of their project with schools in the area.

For a significant number of projects, the professional development input was highly valued, and the staff increased their professional understanding, confidence and skills to engage creatively.

Across all projects, effective partnership working brought together different elements to support innovative ways of working through play, filmmaking, performance, music, art and writing.

The skills, knowledge, expertise and experience of educators and creative partners were recognised and valued. Although sometimes challenging, different viewpoints were considered and worked through to achieve creative solutions. This open-mindedness enabled partners to consider other perspectives, to try out new experiences and consider a range of options, occasionally pushing the boundaries of what might be possible.

Core to projects addressing their identified challenges was the involvement of learners. Projects developed creative workshops to consult learners, both on their views about the challenges and the possible solutions to those challenges. Learners conducted research across year groups and this research influenced the direction of projects. In some projects, learners' own experiences had a direct impact on the project outputs.

As a result, learners were able to learn new skills, explore new opportunities and develop their creativity skills. For some, this included ways of being in the world other than those they already knew. These new and varied experiences contributed to increased wellbeing and a wider sense of achievement.

# Learning Points

The purpose of the Creative Wellbeing Fund was **“to engage creative partners to work in partnership with schools and services to develop learners’ creativity skills and improve wellbeing”**.

One of the key aims to achieving this was to **“build innovative ways of working through partnerships between educators, learners, creative partners, schools and their communities”**.

In developing innovative ways of working, those involved must open themselves up to change, to allow themselves to have different experiences. That process of change can be exciting, but it can be uncomfortable too, especially when working in partnership. This project has identified that effective project development can be achieved when:

- Partners come together at the earliest possible stage, certainly before the planning is complete, working together from the very start to identify, plan for and achieve an end result.
- Partners value, learn from and build on the different skills, assets, experience and expertise that different people bring. Learners’ views are an essential part of this process, as is a recognition of the skills and knowledge that learners bring.
- Partners have a shared responsibility for supporting learner participation and agency, including in curriculum planning, learning and teaching.
- Partners have shared responsibility for developing solutions that work and are deliverable. This also means sharing responsibility when solutions don’t work first time and taking a joint approach to problem solving.
- Partners have a shared responsibility to ensure that there is a balance between ambition and realism.
- Partners have a shared understanding of risk, and the role risk-taking plays in encouraging innovation, developing confidence, creativity and skills in coping with challenging situations.
- Partnerships are built on trust, support and information sharing. Clear, consistent communication systems can help this.
- Partners demonstrate mutual respect, have equal status with and listen to each other. Every effort should be made to understand where everyone is coming from and the challenges they face.

## Further Information

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# Appendix

## Numbers participating in each project

Area	Primary Learners	Secondary Learners	Staff
Angus	272	-	24
Argyll and Bute	31	-	13
East Renfrewshire	100	12	5
Fife	180	-	15
North Ayrshire	187	136	16
West Lothian	20	7	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>790</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>87</b>

## Links

National Improvement Hub – What Are Creativity Skills?

[Education Scotland | Learning Resources | What Are Creativity Skills](#)

### Creative Wellbeing Project Showcase Event Films:

South East Improvement Collaborative

[YouTube | St Columba's High School and Articulate \(16:46 mins\)](#)

Forth Valley and West Lothian RIC

[YouTube | Burnhouse Skills Centre, Connolly Campus and The Book Whisperers \(19:32 mins\)](#)

Northern Alliance

[YouTube | Gigha Primary and Starcatchers \(19:34 mins\)](#)

Tayside RIC

[YouTube | Grange Primary School and Helen McCrorie \(20:36 mins\)](#)

South West Education Improvement Collaborative

[YouTube | St Matthew's Academy, North Ayrshire and Impact Arts \(21:20 mins\)](#)

West Partnership

[YouTube | St Luke's High School and Culture Junction \(21:31 mins\)](#)

### Project Outputs:

South West Education Improvement Collaborative

[Velcro Poetry Project](#)



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