

# The Mighty Creatives Partnership Investment Evaluation

## Partnerships, impact, ingredients for the future

*Summary findings of an evaluation into CEPs and other investments in the East Midlands*

*Summary Report, 30<sup>th</sup> June 2022*

Commissioned by The Mighty Creatives  
Produced by World Pencil Ltd

This report presents findings from a developmental research project, comprising interviews and surveys with Cultural Education Partnerships (CEPs) in the East Midlands, interviews with The Mighty Creatives (TMC) staff, and analysis of available data related to CEPs and other investments. The report contains recommendations for the future. Description of the research methodology is provided at the end.

The views and findings in the report are not necessarily those of TMC or Arts Council England (ACE), and they do not necessarily endorse any of the views contained within this report.

### **CEPs**

Local Cultural Education Partnerships, were initiated under ACE's Cultural Education Challenge in 2015 as a way to bring together stakeholders supporting, or interested in, children and young people's cultural learning.

There are approximately 100 CEPs across England. They share a name but have diverse structures, organisation, partnerships, focusses, strategies and sit differently in their surrounding context. CEPs in the East Midlands represent this same diversity, as outlined in the table below.

One of the main roles of ACE's region-by-region Bridge Organisation funding has been for those organisations to encourage the development of CEP partnerships, including through partnership investment and organisational/partnership development guidance and support.

## CEPs in the East Midlands

CEP name	Locality	Lead organisation	Coordination	Structure	Description	Partnership Focus	Leadership
Black Shale	Amber Valley & Bolsover	Platform Thirty1	By lead organisation	Lead org leading web of partners, guided by partners.	A web of small or individual arts/cultural organisations and schools led and connected by Platform Thirty1, which develops co-created project activity and local skills/development, in a semi-remote rural area. Large proportion of individual and micro-organisations with little capacity in locality lends structure towards organisation-led web, rather than traditional partnership.	Collaboration / community	Organisation-led
Captivate	Ashfield & Mansfield	Inspire	Has coordinator	Board & action groups	A cooperative of arts and cultural organisations, facilitated/coordinated by a part-time coordinator, with focussed action task groups and successful fundraising for the future, in two towns with high deprivation.	Co-operation	Coordinator-led
ChalleNGe	Nottingham City	Nottingham Trent University	Has coordinator		Operational partnership of principally arts and cultural organisations, hosted by University, with vibrant young people's group, each representing a CEP partner.	Co-operation	Coordinator-led
CCEP	Chesterfield, principally Staveley	Community Growth CIC	Recently appointed coordinator	Board & projects, moving to core group + pool of collaborators + supporters community	A dynamic and passionate partnership and web of small community orgs/practitioners, championed by two leaders at Community Growth, galvanising partnership at many levels, in a deprived former industrial area.	Community / co-operation	Lead org-led moving to partnership coordinator-led
The City Classroom	Leicester & Leicestershire	Spark Arts (until August 2022)	Has coordinator	Board & membership	Subscription-based partnership service for A&C organisations, individual artists and schools, providing a signposting one-stop-shop for schools, CPD, projects, conferences, city passport, comprising mainly the smaller arts organisations. Similar to a mini Bridge organisation, it has a strong focus on building connections between A&C organisations and schools, with A&C collaboration happening in other networks, incl. the city NPO network (19 NPOs).	Co-operation / collaboration	Lead org / coordinator-led
DCEP	Derby City	Derby Theatre (Univ Derby)	Has had producer	Partner group & programme teams	Described as doughnut structure: outer ring is the existing offer of activities that can be brought together and offered out; middle of the donut is bespoke services for schools, e.g. a MAT that wants to develop YP confidence; inner ring is core partners – generally learning managers of the partners – and also a CEOs group.	Collaboration	Producer-led
High Peak	High Peak	Platform3 (shared by Buxton Opera & Festival)	Currently has scoping researcher	Plan for steering group of A&C and business	An emergent CEP led by an already collaborative shared cultural learning department of two A&C orgs, starting with cross-sector consultation, working in a rural area where out-of-school activity is limited by bus timetables.	Plan for collaboration	Plan for coordinator-led
UNLOCK	Northamptonshire	Royal & Derngate theatre	Has had coordinator	Board of partners & micro-commissions	Arts-led arts partnership of county-wide organisations cooperating on their individual opportunities and collaborating on digital micro-commissions targeting areas of need. Sited in a rural, post-industrial county, sometimes described as risk averse and self-effacing, in the middle of London, Oxford, Birmingham & Cambridge commuter corridors.	Co-operation / collaboration (micro-commissions)	Organisation-led -> collectively led
Lincs CEP	Lincolnshire	Lincolnshire Music Service	Has manager	Probably board, partners group and listings for wider membership (providers and	Emerging CEP at the scoping and design stage. Has early plans to incorporate as a CIO, principally so as to have fundraising independence from the local authority, whose services/departments form a significant proportion of the	Co-operation / incorporation	TBC

## The nature of partnerships

One of the most significant differences between the CEPs is their approach to partnership – the purpose and focus of the partnership. We summarise these different focuses below:

**Convenience:** partnerships that come together because they're obliged to, or because of optics, but they aren't particularly innovative or additionally productive in their practice as a result of the partnership nor, often, are they welcoming to newcomers.

**Communication:** the partners, particular arts and cultural (A&C) organisations, communicate their individual cultural learning offers collectively, particularly to schools – a one-stop shop.

**Co-operation:** the joined-up partners, particularly A&C organisations, consolidate and review their collective cultural learning offer, e.g. to ensure there is minimal duplication or super-serving of particular locations, and to ensure provision is targeted where it is most needed.

**Community:** people and organisations coming together more informally to share, learn, grow and develop together, often with projects and activities developing within clusters of the community rather than spread across its entirety.

**Collaboration:** the partners work together to design and deliver cultural learning work together, e.g. so as to be able to combine their individual specialisms and resources to make a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts (synergy), particularly in responding to a challenge or need that they couldn't address individually, or so as to have strength in numbers for funders and commissioners.

**Concomitance:** the joined-together partners develop a shared brand and identity that takes on and fundraises for work of its own, often in place of the work they might have done individually.

**Incorporation:** the partnership comes together to form a new legal entity in its own right, albeit one that potentially becomes a new competitor in the landscape it initially sought to convene.

Whilst there might appear a natural progression through this list, it is not always the case that the later focuses are superior to the earlier ones in a particular context. Indeed in many cases, CEPs have a combination of focuses from this list.

## Overview of CEP and other partnership investment impact

Survey respondents and interviewees were asked to describe impacts that CEPs and partnership investment have had under three headings:

- Impact on children and young people;
- Impact on the partners in CEPs and other investments;
- Impact on partnership working.

The results are shown in Figure 1 – a summary of the impacts, ordered by the number of times they were cited by interview and survey participants. (The number of citations is clearly not an exact indicator of the extent or frequency of one impact compared to another but may give a reasonable illustration of the portfolio of impacts.)

The accompanying Partnership Framework provides further detail on these impacts, and a summary of the factors cited by research participants as having been significant in achieving certain impacts.

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### Impacts cited by participants, by number of times cited

- Developing cultural learning in cultural organisations
  - Developing strategic partnership-working and infrastructure for cultural learning
  - Harnessing cultural learning for social impact and challenging circumstances
- Developing cultural learning in non-arts organisations
  - Direct delivery



## Impact on children and young people and schools

The following analysis of impact on children and young people draws largely on the data collected as part of TMC's Collective Outcomes Tool (COT),<sup>1</sup> and also monitoring and evaluation data from CEPs, and nationally available data.

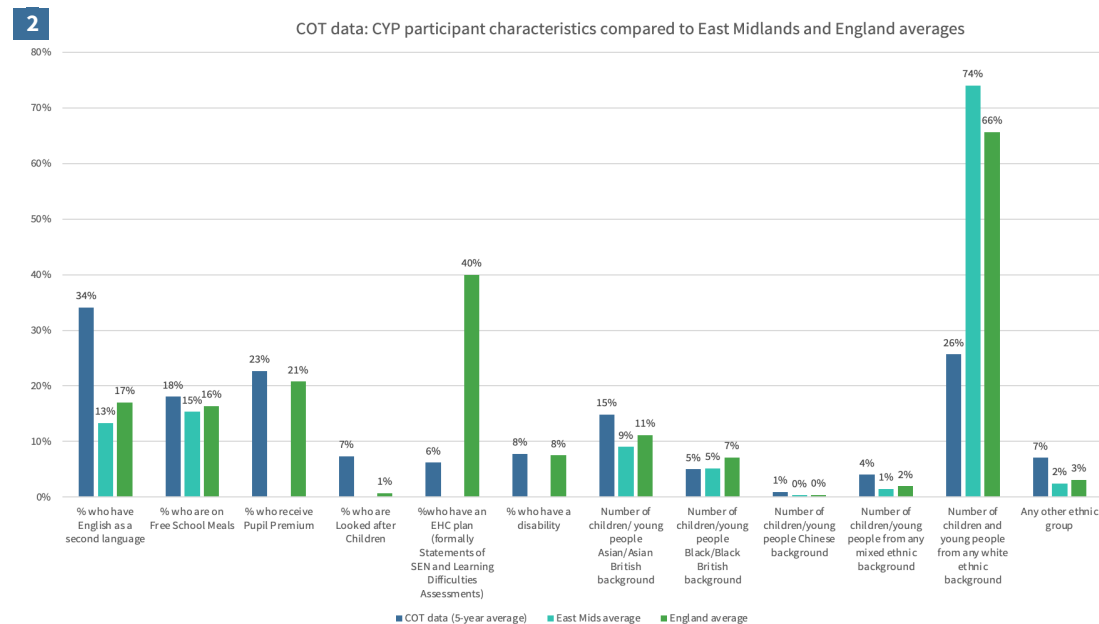
### Age of young people participants

The majority of COT participant data are for primary-aged children. There are also spikes in 2021 for Reception-year and year 4 children.

### CYP participants compared to population averages

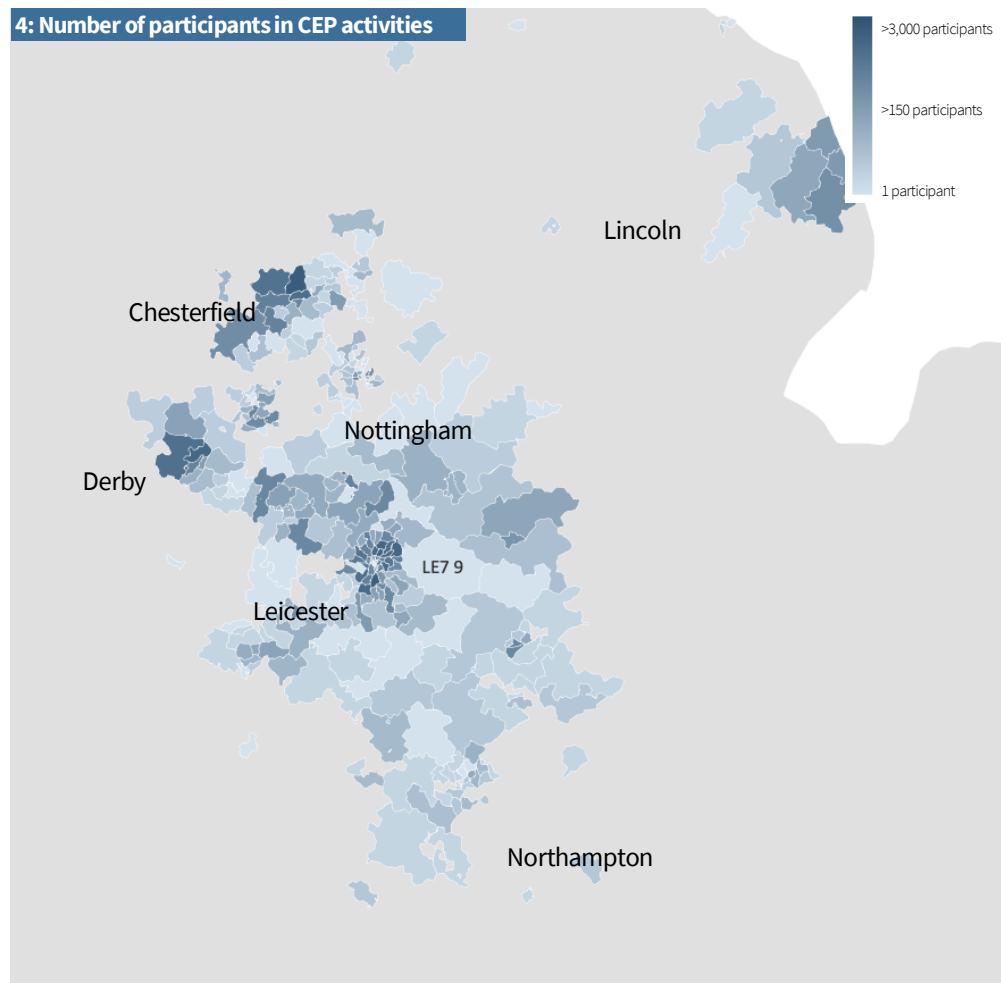
Figure 2 shows the aggregated available COT data for all reporting CEPs and investments, that relate to CYP characteristics, and compares these data to regional and national averages. As these data show, on average, TMC's CEPs and investments appear to be effectively targeting children and young people in minority groups and challenging circumstances in all but one dataset.

The only exception is for CYP with an Education Healthcare Plan (EHC) but this discrepancy may well relate to (a) the difficulty of securing data on this sensitive question and (b) the fact that EHC data have only relatively recently been collected nationally, and, indeed the national reported numbers are increasing significantly each year.

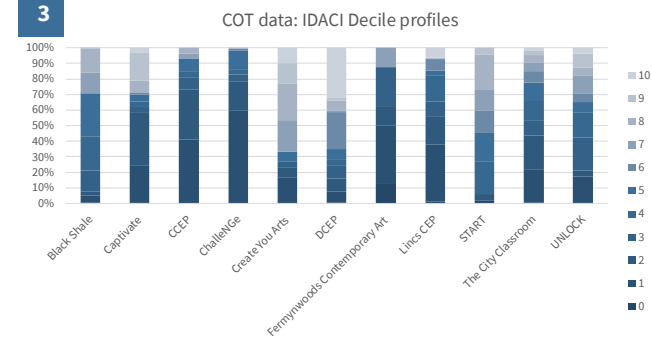


<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that there is significant variation in the number of COT data submissions CEPs have been able to secure.

**4: Number of participants in CEP activities**



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**Deprivation profiles of CYP participant data**

Figure 3 shows the IDACI data (Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index) for CYP participants (COT data) in CEP activities. Lighter colours represent lower degrees of deprivation. As the data are an index, the national data would show an even distribution of dark to light blue.

At a glance, these show that some CEPs and investments (ChalleNGe, CCEP, Fermynwoods, Lincs CEP) have worked particularly with children in the most deprived areas whereas others (START, Create You Arts, DCEP) have more of a spread across the deprivation indices. Of course, these data will reflect to an extent the local area profiles where CEPs are based and operating, as well as the people and places they target within those areas.

**Location of CEP activity**

Figure 4 shows the number of CEP activity sessions (COT data) in a given postal district. There is significant variation in the density of CEP activity: in some districts (the lightest colour on the map) there is only 1 COT participant, whereas in others (the darkest colour) there are over 1,500.

Whilst the coverage of some CEPs might be wide, the bulk of activity and interaction is very focussed on particular areas.

## Work with schools

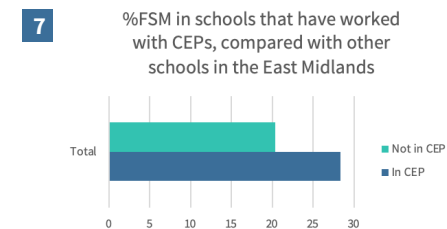
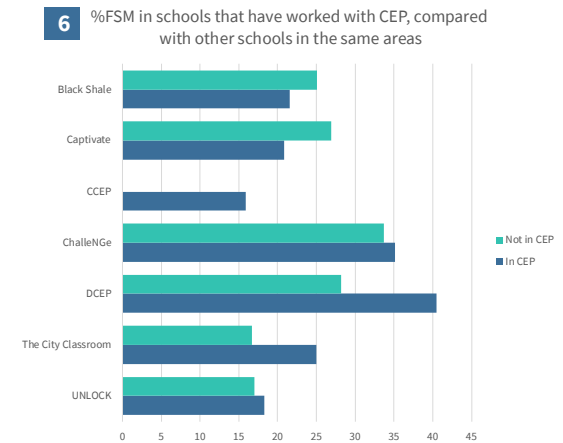
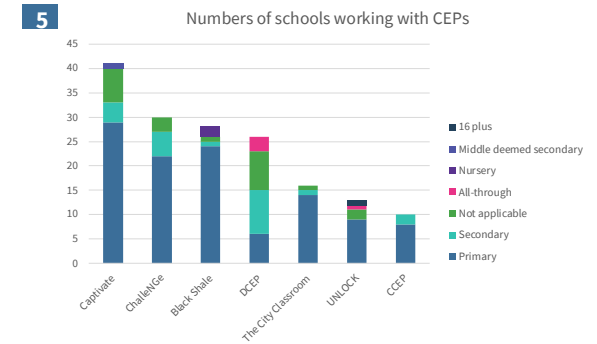
Work with schools, and sometimes other special education institutions (e.g. PRUs and special schools) is a central focus of most CEPs.

Figure 5 shows the numbers of schools, with phase of education, cited as working with CEPs in CEPs' funding monitoring forms. With the notable exception of DCEP, all CEPs have focussed on working with primary schools.

### Which schools are CEPs and other investments working with?

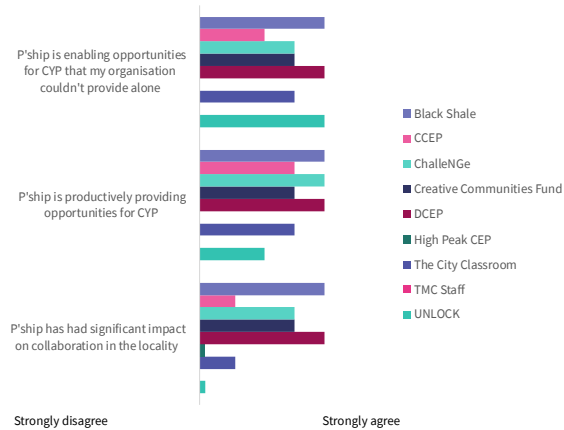
As an indicator for targeting children and young people in particular need Figure 6 shows the percentage of children and young people eligible for free school meals (FSM) in schools that CEPs have worked with, compared to other schools in the same postal districts. As the chart shows, four out of six CEPs for which there are comparative data (UNLOCK, The City Classroom, DCEP and ChalleNGe) are working with schools with higher %FSM than other schools in the same areas. There is a significant difference in the case of The City Classroom and DCEP (8% and 14% respectively).

Comparing the average %FSM of schools that CEPs have worked with, with the same figure for the East Midlands overall (Figure 7) shows that CEPs and CEP localities are those where there are higher proportions of FSM-eligible children.



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CEPs: Survey views on CEP impact



## Impact on partner organisations

### Digital impact

In several cases, one of most appreciated impacts of TMC's investment is the development of digital skills and capacity in CEPs and A&C organisations.

### Cross-arts opportunities

One of the clearest affordances of A&C organisations coming together in partnerships is being able to offer mixed- and cross-artform opportunities.

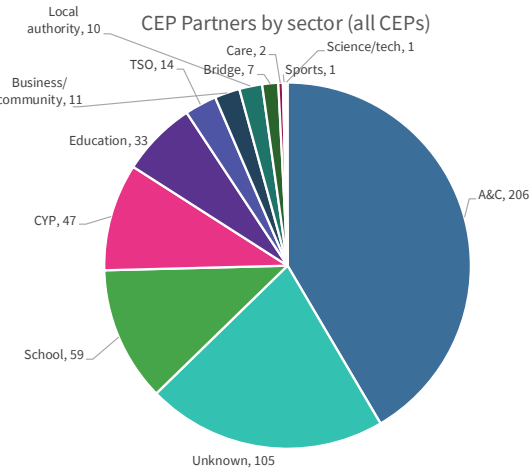
The opportunities in cross-artform working, which can be seen in opera, festivals, film etc., are rich and exciting and that excitement is appreciated by young people. There is an opportunity in some CEPs to make more of this opportunity for cross-arts collaboration. Several CEP interviewees described cross-artform working as not being a significant part of CEP coordinated or collaborative activity.

### Building capacity in smaller organisations

This has clearly been a particular focus in some CEPs where there are large numbers of very small A&C organisations, such as Black Shale, CCEP and the Sector Support Commissions/Creative Communities Fund.

<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that in some cases, CEP partnership, which is taken from fundee monitoring and TMC reporting, includes a CEPs' wider membership or communities of collaborators; in other cases it includes the core partnership groups.

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## Partnership analysis

Figure 9 shows an analysis of the partnerships of the CEPs, collectively.<sup>2</sup>

### Breadth of partnership

Overall, CEPs appear to have a good breadth of partnership, comprising roughly 50% A&C organisations.

### Involvement of the local major cultural learning stakeholders

There is less uniform engagement of the main cultural learning stakeholders. Some CEPs have struggled to engage particularly the larger A&C organisations.

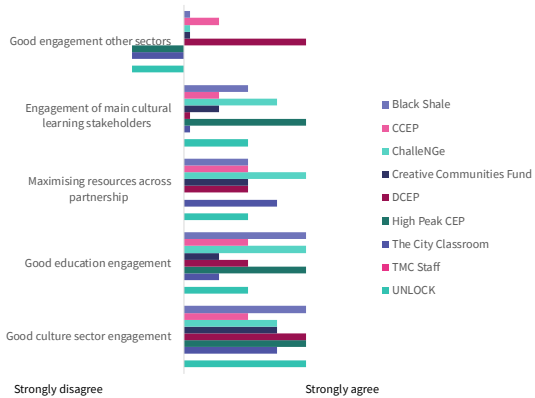
### Involving non-arts partners

As Figure 10 shows, with the exception of DCEP, CEPs are either neutral or disagree that they have good engagement with other sectors. Several interview respondents when asked about non-arts partners replied that this had been an area they had struggled with, or not particularly focussed on, or not had capacity or weight to develop, or were planning to prioritise in the future.

Relatedly, in some CEPs there has been a more of a focus on coordinating and targeting cultural learning provision than on developing new cultural learning work, including for extra-cultural agendas. Relatedly, there is a focus in some CEPs on arts and cultural activity and organisations, rather than how arts and culture might support other organisations and sectors with their agendas (with the major exception of schools, which are a focus throughout).



CEPs: Survey views on partner engagement



## Impact on partnership-working

### Building trust

Trust is in many ways the vital blood stream of partnership working and it would appear that in virtually all cases, East Midlands CEPs and other partnerships have developed this effectively. Through our interviews, there was very little sentiment expressed of lack of trust or grievance between partners and plenty of expression of strong trust having been built up over time.

### Building co-operation

Co-operation between A&C organisations, both around better joining up and coordinating their existing offers, and collectively targeting particular areas of need, has been a strong focus of several CEPs. As well as CEP partners working together to review their collective portfolio of offers and responding appropriately, several CEPs have developed one-stop-shops for schools that describe, showcase and provide listings for their collective offer, in the form of websites and printed magazines.

### Building collaborations within the CEP

Several CEPs have focussed, rather than building collaboration across the CEP, on developing smaller collaborations within the CEP, responding to particular needs, opportunities and funding.

### Building collaboration in the locality

CEPs appear to have had mixed impact on collaboration in their localities. As Figure 8 shows, whilst there is broad agreement that CEPs are providing opportunities for CYP and reasonable agreement that they are providing opportunities that individual partners could not have provided on their own, there is less agreement that the CEP has had significant impact on collaboration.

Potential reasons for this, emerging from interviews include:

- There was already a good degree of collaboration before the CEP (see below);
- The CEP has focussed more on small hyperlocal collaborations than locality-wide partnership;
- The CEP has struggled to build collaboration;
- The CEP has chosen to focus more on cooperation.

### Building on existing strong partnership working

CEPs appear to have had a significant impact on partnership-working in some cases but less so in others, as Figure 8 shows. Even in cases where existing partnership working might have been strong, however, the development of and investment in CEPs has been significant to partnerships.

## Building capacity of partnerships

One of the most significant impacts of CEP investment, of course, is to have developed the CEPs themselves, particularly where they can sustain themselves to continue that development.

### Match funding

Match funding in itself represents a considerable impact achieved by CEPs and other investments, and by TMC in many cases where it has been instrumental in bringing in match funding. Overall, every £1 of TMC investment has been matched by £1.59 from other sources.

Match funding represents in most cases additional funding for cultural learning. It indicates strength of relationship between CEPs and other sectors where they are the match funders (local authorities, businesses, sports sector etc.). It recognises the work that CEPs have had to do in applying for, advocating for and raising funds. It represents the recognition in many cases of the impacts that other sectors understand that cultural learning can have, including beyond cultural outcomes themselves.

### Strength in numbers for fundraising

Strength in numbers is mentioned as one of the factors for CEP impact in the Partnership Framework, and certainly it is a key factor for partnership funding and being commission-ready

## Fundraising

Below is an account of the primary sources of CEP match funding.

**Trusts and foundations:** The biggest source of match is other funders, of which Children in Need, Big Lottery and Esmée Fairbairn are significant.

**Community activity:** This refers to small project funds that have been secured as part of project development work across the partnership.

**School activity:** Several CEPs have received charged-for or other income from schools.

**Membership:** The City Classroom CEP has adopted a membership model, whereby individual and organisation partnership pay an annual fee, from the outset and has recently agreed to sustain the model. The fees vary depending on size and nature of organisation. The fee revenue is relatively small compared to some of the larger project grants, but it is large enough to make a significant contribution to the CEP's coordinator, much of whose role is to serve and support the membership.

## The Future for CEPs: analysis and recommendations

### Partnership affordances

Whilst they are different and individual, the main thing that all CEPs share is that they are partnerships, albeit of different forms. And so, as has emerged in this research, to be worthwhile and, in most cases, to be effective, CEPs must develop ‘partnership affordances’. It is these partnership affordances – the things that only a partnership makes possible – which is really the point of a partnership. Without partnership affordances, partnerships can be hard work with little dividend.

We recommend that CEPs should look hard at their potential partnership affordances and synergies because within them lies the power of the partnerships: the potential for them to be not just mutually beneficial vehicles for collective efficiency but fonts of cultural impact.

### Nature of partnerships

We distinguish above between different partnership natures: convenience, communication, cooperation, community, collaboration, concomitance and incorporation.

In some CEPs there is much more focus on coordinating partners’ existing work (Cooperation) than on attempting for the CEP to deliver its own work (Collaboration, Concomitance). Indeed some interviewees in these CEPs felt strongly that the CEP should *not* try to deliver its own work because this is what the partners are doing. But the risk of a CEP focussing on Cooperation is that, whilst it might be targeting partners’ provision towards areas of need, it is perhaps less likely to be coming up with its own compelling and ambitious vision: “let’s make sure we’re not duplicating our efforts or super-serving” is

important but not perhaps particularly inspiring, nor is it likely to engage non-arts organisations in the CEP.

We recommend to CEPs that they should ensure that their own collective provision is well coordinated and communicated – but then they should look outwards to see how they can harness their specialisms for bigger, needs-informed ambitions.

### Cross-arts working

A related observation around partnership affordances is that there appears in some CEPs to be little, at least as far as we have been told, of cross-arts development across artform-specialist partners. This is one of easiest-to-see affordances, and one with a compelling artistic benefit, as various research participants, including young people, have noted.

### Harnessing cultural learning for social impact

Perhaps the next easiest-to-see partnership affordance of CEPs is how they can bring together their collective specialisms, skills, resources, venues, contacts and connectivity (which is much greater when assembled) to work towards extra-cultural agendas – particularly, in the case of children and young people this is often social and personal impact of CYP – or ‘culture on purpose’.

These agendas tend (a) to be beyond the specific focus of cultural organisations and (b) they are not agendas over which CEP partners need to compete – instead, they lift perspectives up and outwards.

We recommend that CEPs look to identify how they can work towards culture-on-purpose objectives, goals and visions.

### **Engaging non-arts partners**

As outlined above, several CEPs have said that engaging non-arts organisations has not been a particular strength, or a focus, but often that it is now a concerted area for development.

These non-arts partnerships can be vital, yes, for bringing in funding for CEPs and cultural learning but, moreover, integrating them into other and wider societal networks and agendas – helping CEPs to grow, to become integral, and not just wanted but needed.

We recommend that CEPs, having identified their partnership affordances, and possibly their culture-on-purpose agendas, work with non-arts partners on refining those agendas together and then, hopefully, developing new collaborations together.

We recommend that CEPs should consider trying to find cultural learning advocates from non-arts sectors to sit on or chair their boards. This has often been reported as being highly effective in encouraging CEP growth, in integrating with other sectors' agendas and in navigating competition and other sensitivities within the CEP.

### **Development and delivery**

During this evaluation, the debate between delivery activities (broadly, activities working directly with CYP) and development activities (those designed to have a longer and wider impact yield, such as CPD) has frequently emerged, and some research participants have suggested that CEPs should, in some cases, have focussed more on development activities.

This is a difficult conjecture to call. For example, whilst it might be true that spending effort on advocating to local counsellors (development) could have greater net impact on funding than writing a delivery project funding bid (delivery) if the counsellors support local authority funding decisions, it is also true that the

counsellors might be voted out the next May, and the effort would have been better spent writing bids.

Equally, there are times, as many CEPs have noted, when you need to do delivery activity precisely so as to achieve development outcomes. So whilst it might be true that training a school teacher cultural learning skills (development) could have more sustained outcomes than running a session for their students (delivery), it could be that the school teacher needs to see the session themselves (delivery) before deciding to participate in the training (development).

Either way, what is always true is that these things should be done *strategically*: there should always be a focus on development of strategic planning, behaviours and assets.

We recommend that CEPs should strike a strategic balance between delivery and development in their strategy and planning, and that TMC should look at how its staff support these two often distinct approaches.

We recommend that CEPs and TMC together should look at how CEPs can develop stronger strategic behaviours and assets across their partnerships.

(To clarify, this is not to suggest that either CEPs are unstrategic – rather that they need strategic behaviours throughout, and these can be developed as well as recruited in.)

## Epilogue

In conducting this research, we have been granted the opportunity to discuss in some depth, and with a wide range of people and partnerships, the often remarkable work that goes on under the banner of cultural education partnerships. The affordances that these partnerships offer, which have been explored in this decade and that, with these funds and programmes and those, have been shown time after time to have the potential, or the current capacity, to make real, often startling impact on the lives of children and young people, and those around them, particularly where there are greatest and most unrecognised needs.

Therefore, it has been a welcome opportunity to be part of considering how that support could, might and should, be sustained.

The touch paper is lit.

## Research methodology

World Pencil Ltd were commissioned in November 2021 to undertake an evaluation for The Mighty Creatives of the impact of their investment portfolio.

### **Aims of the research**

The aims of this research, from the commissioned brief, are:

- To review the reach and impact of the Cultural Life Fund – funded through Partnership Investment, drawing on partnership reports, ACE evaluations for context, data from the Collective Outcomes Tool and evaluation sessions with funded partnerships.
- To review delivery and impact against programme aims.
- To present insight into the growth, development, challenges and changes of the partnerships invested in.
- To offer a series of recommendations for the future development of the existing partnerships.
- Create a partnership framework to support the development of future place-based partnerships.

### **Methodology**

This research was undertaken through a mixed methodology comprising:

- Background research and data analysis;
- 24 semi-structured 45–90-minute telephone/Teams interviews with CEP leaders, chairs and administrators, representatives of TMC staff and other Bridges (Festival and Arts Connect);
- An online survey distributed to all CEP leads, who were asked to distribute it to all CEP partners.