**The Mighty Creatives Research Brief:**

**What is the picture of Young People’s Voice in Schools in the East Midlands?**

**June 2020**

**Supporting Information**

1. **Background to the charity**

Established in 2009, The Mighty Creatives is a charity which has transformed the lives of CYP through arts, culture and creativity. Based at the heart of the cultural quarter in Leicester, we have served CYP’s communities across the East Midlands, reaching across the UK and Internationally through our partnership work.

**Our Values** are:

* **We know our stuff** - We are passionate and knowledgeable about the cause and the programmes we deliver
* **We Listen** - We are a learning organisation, informed by data and directed by evidence
* **We Collaborate** - We value the right of CYP and their communities to determine their own futures
* **We Act** - We are focused on action, are driven by need
* **We Make a difference** - We reflect on our work to enable, innovate and deliver change with style and ambition

We have:

* considerable expertise and experience in the fields of education, culture and youth engagement and empowerment
* a well-managed, robust and financially sound organisation
* excellent regional and national partnerships
* tried, tested and scalable programmes that contribute to positive, lasting transformation

We work in partnership with CYP, key funders and sector partners to champion, develop, deliver and grow:

* services that can be scaled up, demonstrate reach and result in significant and measurable cultural and social impacts
* inspiring opportunities for CYP to engage with arts and culture
* investment in CYP’s own creative skills, knowledge and practice
* capacity in the cultural and education sectors to support the infrastructure of the region
* programmes of cultural and creative education regionally, nationally and internationally
* models of practice which ensure that the creative voices of CYP are at the heart of all our programmes

Our charitable purpose is to advance the education of CYP and those who work with them in a creative context. Our governing documents are included within our Memorandum and Articles of Association and available in addition to that of our 5 Year Business Plan 2019-2024 in support of brief attached to this work.

Our Vision, Mission and Charitable Services

Our vision is a world where all CYP will harness the power of arts, creativity and culture in order to transform themselves, their communities and their futures.

Our charitable purpose is to advance the education of CYP and those who work with them in a creative context. These constitute our beneficiaries or audiences.

The creative voices of CYP is at the heart of our mission, particularly those of the most excluded and disadvantaged: this is our unique selling point and is woven through our products and services to ensure that CYP will:

* develop the self-esteem and confidence to be themselves
* take risks to challenge, innovate and test the world
* see themselves as active producers of culture, not just as passive consumers
* develop leadership skills
* influence their communities
* take their place on a world stage

To achieve this vision, our mission is driven by six strategic objectives which have CYP at their heart:

* improving access to arts, culture and creativity for CYP
* raising aspirations of CYP
* empowering CYP to make positive social change
* advocating for the power of arts, culture and creativity on CYP’s lives
* increasing investment in CYP’s arts, culture and creativity
* sustaining the charity’s organisational resilience to meet our vision

1. **Making our charitable Case for Support**

*Child Poverty is an urgent need for creative action*

Children’s rights, spelled out in the United Nations Convention on The Rights of the Child, state that every child and young person should have access to provision which enables them to develop their personalities, talents and abilities irrespective of ethnicity, culture or religion, home language, family background, learning difficulties, disabilities or gender. The provision of arts and culture to all young people are fundamental to honouring those rights. However, we know this aspiration is far removed from the real everyday lives of CYP in the UK.

According to the Association of Directors of Children’s Services (ADCS), there were four million children living below the poverty line in England in 2017, two thirds of whom live in working households. Alarmingly, the Institute of Fiscal Studies predicted that the number of children living in poverty will increase to a staggering five million by 2020/21. In the East Midlands child poverty is projected to increase by 7% to 36% of all CYP by 2021. This equates to just over 360,000 of CYP across the region.

*The poverty of cultural education*

Poverty is not just a matter of finance. Many children, young people and families face the poverty of access to opportunities: this includes children with additional needs being squeezed out of mainstream school, children living in rural areas having limited access to essential public services e.g. youth centres, libraries and cultural provision.

Central Government's 'austerity agenda' has seen local authority budgets for the public services including education and culture slashed since 2010. The effects of these cutbacks have been wide ranging: cultural organisation and library closures, the academisation of schools and the decimation of the Youth Service to name but three policy drivers which have had a wide-ranging negative impact on the ability of CYP to engage with culture and creative practice.

*The poverty of opportunity for CYP in the Midlands*

The Midlands has many urban and rural locations which have limited arts and cultural infrastructure, very high rates of deprivation and are struggling to develop their cultural identity and pride of place. All have a range of economic or structural barriers that have made building a vibrant, sustainable arts infrastructure difficult.

In the East Midlands, the ex-mining and steel communities of Mansfield, Ashfield and Corby are blighted by high rates of child poverty. Approaching 16,000 young people live in households with incomes of less than £15,000. The rural and coastal communities of Boston, Skegness, and South Holland in Lincolnshire all face long journey times to the region’s major cities and their associated arts and cultural infrastructure. Skegness has been managing a decline in its tourism for almost two generations and the other rural locations in Lincolnshire are adjusting to significant demographic changes.

*Why the poverty of cultural education matters to the economy*

Whilst the UK Government's acknowledgement that the creative industries is now a world-leading sector that has high productivity, competitive advantage at a global level, there is a massive disconnect between what is needed by the sector and how schools prepare young people for those career opportunities.

In short, if the cultural education for CYP is being impoverished, then there will be no pipeline of talent for the very industries the government are flagging up as part of their growth plans aligned to the industrial strategy.

*How cultural education can contribute to beating child poverty*

There is a wealth of evidence that demonstrates how cultural education can beat child poverty by providing access to personal development, social connectivity, education, social mobility, community cohesion and employment. [*Imagine Nation*](https://culturallearningalliance.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/ImagineNation_The_Case_for_Cultural_Learning.pdf) *– The Case for Cultural Learning* published by the Cultural Learning Alliance in 2017 showed that:

* participation in structured arts activities can increase cognitive abilities by 17%
* learning through arts and culture can improve attainment in Maths and English
* learning through arts and culture develops skills and behaviour that lead children to do better in school
* students from low-income families who take part in arts activities at school are three times more likely to get a degree
* employability of students who study arts subjects is higher and they are more likely to stay in employment
* students from low-income families who engage in the arts at school are twice as likely to volunteer
* students from low-income families who engage in the arts at school are 20% more likely to vote as young adults
* young offenders who take part in arts activities are 18% less likely to re-offend
* children who take part in arts activities in the home during their early years are ahead in reading and Maths at age nine
* people who take part in the arts are 38% more likely to report good health

Furthermore, in 2018, the Royal Shakespeare Company, Tate and the University of Nottingham produced the [*TALE*](https://researchtale.files.wordpress.com/2018/05/overall_school_report_16_05_2018.pdf) (Tracking Arts Learning and Engagement) study: a three-year research programme which analysed 6,000 responses from young people aged 14 – 18.

This shows unequivocally that young people tell us that arts and culture rich schools enhance their lives now, and prepare them for life after school, by:

* developing their critical thinking and capacity to interpret the world around them
* developing a sense of their own identity and personal responsibility in their school and community
* building self-belief, confidence, empathy, appreciation of difference and diversity
* encouraging them to express their ideas, opinions and stories in complex and nuanced ways
* providing opportunities to work both independently and collaboratively and
* acquiring knowledge and skills in using different forms, media and technologies

The study also tells us that arts and cultural learning in school is significantly different for young people because:

* in arts lessons they have more agency, responsibility, independence and freedom to make decisions. They enjoy and are motivated by this
* they often see the arts as a valve for releasing the pressures they experience elsewhere in their lives. They say that this improves their health, wellbeing and happiness
* arts and cultural learning are open-ended and experimental, so there is no right or wrong
* they value having to develop and support their own views and opinions and
* they have a different relationship with their teachers because of the ways they are taught

In summary, arts, creativity and cultural practice have a critical role in contributing to the fight against child poverty.

1. **The Mighty Creatives 5-year Business Plan**

The role of The Mighty Creatives is to lead the cultural and creative fight in the East Midlands for CYP. Our new business plan describes how we will start to address the issues outlined above through the delivery of our six organisational strategic objectives. In practical terms, our Theory of Change will guide our action to ensure make a tangible difference to CYP lives through the delivery of our mission critical portfolio of services and associated projects and programmes.

Our Products and Services

Our portfolio is shaped by the following four key service priorities:

1. Cultural Education – supporting arts and cultural education for all CYP
2. Creative Communities – supporting social and artistic placemaking through the creativity of CYP
3. Creative Careers – supporting pathways into the creative and cultural sectors for CYP
4. Creative Leadership – supporting partnerships, delivering training and events, mentoring and advice to young people and the children’s workforce across the education, community and business sector

This commission is aligned to support the development of this work to ensure its meaningful value and relevance to young people and organisations we work with, and to also support areas in our region to do so.

1. **Artsmark**

Artsmark is the only creative quality standard for schools and education settings, accredited by Arts Council England. Artsmark provides a clear and flexible framework for teachers and schools leaders to embed creativity across the whole curriculum and address school improvement priorities. Schools can engage in the programme at various starting points and use the Artsmark framework and criteria to work towards different award levels: Silver, Gold or Platinum.

Artsmark is open to primary, secondary and special schools, pupil referral units, youth offending teams and sixth form colleges.

There are currently approximately 400 settings engaged with Artsmark in the East Midlands (approx. 18% all schools in region). The majority of awarded schools (approx. 60%) have achieved a Silver award, where the criteria relating to pupil voice is very limited (see below criteria descriptors).

The criteria includes the following areas:-

1. Values and ethos
2. Leadership
3. Children and young people engagement
4. Curriculum design
5. Range of offer
6. Continued Professional Development
7. Partnerships
8. Equality and diversity

3. Children and young people engagementcriteria descriptors:

Silver criteria: Children and young people’s art is showcased and displayed effectively, and planned arts and cultural events have a high take-up in the setting.

Gold criteria: The setting can demonstrate the impact of developing the voice of children and young people by involving them in planning and delivering authentic arts and cultural experiences. Children and young people take ownership of their engagement and personal progression within the arts.

Platinum criteria: The setting demonstrates over time that children and young people are ambassadors for high-quality provision and learning, and take a leadership role in delivering

continued professional development (CPD) opportunities in and out of their own setting.

The setting can demonstrate the effect arts and cultural provision has on outcomes and skills development for their children and young people, in a wide range of arts and cultural

experiences.

All schools are also asked to use Arts Council England’s seven Quality Principles to plan and evaluate activity, including ‘actively involving children and young people’.

The Quality Principles:-

1. Striving for excellence and innovation
2. Being authentic
3. Being exciting, inspiring and engaging
4. Ensuring a positive and inclusive experience
5. *Actively involving children and young people*
6. Enabling personal progression
7. Developing belonging and ownership