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IGNITE IMAGINATIONS ANNUAL REPORT

2020-2021





Ignite Imaginations aims to make every Sheffield community a creative place.

We deliver creative workshops and events that give people the chance to participate, be creative and imaginative, and develop new creative skills.

We work with local communities to help people use the power of arts and imagination to address the things that matter to them – whether health, education or social.

We specialise in visual arts and creative writing events and workshops. Through our professional artists and project coordination we work locally with partners to reach people of all ages and backgrounds, bringing creative opportunity to those who rarely get the chance.

Our work in 2020-21

During the incredibly difficult and disrupted year from April 2020 to March 2021, we were able to adapt our programmes and delivery to fit with Covid guidance and meet the needs of Sheffield communities. We also developed new creative and cultural projects to specifically address Covid and the impact the pandemic and the lockdowns were having on people in Sheffield.

As always, we look to develop work that delivers multiple strong outcomes: our creative skills workshops also help deliver social outcomes through community connection, confidence and well-being; when we create and exhibit artworks in local communities, our artists involve local people in the creation process; we offer training and support to inspire new artists and creatives who participate in our community programmes.

OVERALL, THIS YEAR WE:

**Created
8 art
installations**

**Delivered
2600
creativity
packs to
families**

**Produced 18
pre-recorded
creative
workshops
for children**

**Supported
over 30
people aged
over 50 years
in their own
community
projects**

**Made 5
huge
lanterns**

**Provided
Christmas dinner
and craft packs
to over 300
people aged over
50 years**

**Led 20
face to face
workshops
for children**

**Supported 15
young people
to develop
their Bronze
Arts Award**

**Worked with 16
communities
across Sheffield
and one group
in Rotherham**

**Ran 40 online
creative
workshops
for adults and
children**

**Overall, we
worked with
around 4000
people during
the past year**

**We managed to continue
to deliver our programmes,
with changes to the format and
approach in the ever-changing
reality of life in a pandemic.
Our artists were so reliant and happy
for the work we were providing them,
the participants and partners were so
welcoming of activity that was creative
and took them away from the day to
day.**

REIMAGINE



LAURA PAGE



CHARLIE HILL



SARA
BEAVAN-WIDDOWSON



ALEX BLAKEY

Reimagine

Delivered during Covid-19 lockdowns and funded by the National Lottery Community Fund, Reimagine commissioned 4 of our artists to work closely with groups from four different communities to co-produce community-led artworks. These works became immersive artistic experiences presented in and for the neighbourhoods and communities who created them.

In addition to direct work with local residents and community groups, we worked with partners to distribute arts creativity packs to households in need, containing arts materials and activity ideas to encourage creativity and participation.

Over 500 participants were involved in the co-production of the works, and even with lockdowns restricting audiences, the presentations and exhibitions were still experienced by over 1,300 people.



The Projects

All Things are Connected was an immersive film experience presented by Laura Page representing the lockdown experiences of a retirement village. Residents gathered over zoom with Laura to create postcards responding to the pandemic and discuss their experiences, which were part of the exhibition and screening outside the home in December 2020.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_iBdvgytM6c

“One of our residents who was very social before lock down really benefited from this experience, he was really down and missing his friends and the community we have here, so this really lifted his spirits and was really good for his mental wellbeing.”

Illuminating Experiences was a window installation, presented by Sara Beavan Widdowson, displayed at The Learning Zone, Parsons Cross for ten days in January 2021. The work included a village of lantern houses complemented by animated drawings created by children from Meynell Primary School and people from Parson Cross Memory Café Dementia Forum.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pX0CunBUYEI>

Our Street Shiregreen was an outdoor photography exhibition, presented by Alex Blakey, in Shiregreen. The exhibition was a mock street with windows filled with photographs and artwork by Alex and the community, including children from Beck Primary school.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Atu5Z1yJN-A>

“I hope that it gave the people in Shiregreen a chance to express how they were feeling through art. Sometimes it’s hard to put feelings into words. Art is a universal form that everyone can access.” (Beck Primary School)

Our Happy Place was a secret garden, presented by Charlie Hill, in a quiet area of woodland in Manor Fields Park. The garden was filled with fimo models and bunting created by local groups reflecting on where they found joy during the pandemic. The garden was open to visitors in the park for two days in March during which it was visited by 150 people.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=34mtdzEm_Zg

“It’s refreshing to have colour and art on our walk which has been so ‘samey’ for so long over lockdown. All the sunlight coming through the trees on to the flowers and teacups is really uplifting. It creates a happy space.”

ART AT THE HEART



KATE SULLY



LOIS CONLAN



LIZ VON GRAEVENITZ



ANGIE HARDWICK

Art at the Heart

For this Arts Council England funded project, our artists Angie Hardwick, Liz Von Graevenitz, Kate Sully and Lois Conlan worked with four local communities to translate their thoughts, feelings and experiences of the Covid-19 pandemic into four striking art installations.

The four works include a ceramic cog installation in Darnall, a huge mural in Sharrow, two abstract paintings displayed in the city centre and an eye-catching collection of wooden beehives, bees and flowers in Fir Vale. The pieces transformed a small corner of each community with a chance to reflect, a place to have hope and somewhere to smile, and remain as a legacy to 2020.





The Projects

The project engaged more than 250 participants to share stories and get involved in the development of the artwork through face-to-face and online workshops.

The project also distributed 200 creativity packs to the community. These packs, curated by Ignite artists with arts resources and creative activities, aimed to inspire people to have a go at creating their own artworks at home.

“The idea was for each child to write words of how they have felt during lockdown onto their bees. English is their second language, so it was a good educational tool for the boys to develop their English reading and writing skills. It was also a good tool for starting a conversation and for getting young boys to talk about their feelings and emotions whilst in a supportive and safe environment.” (partner)

“A beautiful work for the community to enjoy and to feel part of has been left for all to enjoy. Everyone I have spoken to says how much they love it and what a surprise it has been to see. It totally lifts the area and makes a rundown area look more inviting.” (community member)

“I think the long-lasting impact will most strongly be felt with the boys at Step Out, Earl Marshall as they have developed in confidence, skill and pride and ownership of the work. They were empowered community members and art makers. I hope it will also enhance long term friendships between the boys and be a special memory for them as they grow up. The bright artwork I hope will also bring a positive impact not only the local community but to also people who are just passing through the area and may have negative connotations with Fir Vale.” (partner)

Full project film: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HLojyXCdq4k>

Fir Vale Beehive <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F8S9vaJLHik>

Cognitive <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tCXp2LG1API>

Metamorphosis <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5WYR3U7U5Ms>

Nexus and Connections <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sCXPo1AB8cY>



Everyday Stories

Thanks to funding from BBC Children in Need and a strong partnership with Sheffield Libraries this project has seen us deliver creative activities directly to families who will benefit most for the last 5 years. This year Everyday Stories gave 340 children access to fun, engaging activities that help develop visual arts and creative writing skills.

Early in the first lockdown of 2020, we piloted delivery of 100 artist-designed creativity packs to vulnerable families in Sharrow and Firth Park, particularly those with no digital access.

Later in the year we were able to deliver some in-person creative writing and visual arts workshops at five libraries across the city (Darnall, Parson Cross, Firth Park, Highfield, Crystal Peaks) as well as a city centre-based course for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities. These sessions were attended by more than 140 children with around half of these attending five or more sessions, and reporting significantly improved confidence, raised aspirations and new and lasting friendships.

"These workshops are very needed in this community – there are not any local art or creative activities available for children" (partner)

"Normally my daughter can't leave the house on Saturdays, but I've told her that its art club and because she has enjoyed them, she has managed to get dressed, leave the house and enjoy the session." (parent)

Artists focused on encouraging participants to help with sessions, giving responsibility for small tasks and encouraging interaction with others. 100% of participants said they would like to do more art beyond the project. Sharing work regularly also empowered participants to develop their understanding of quality and celebration of efforts.

"Child D, aged 7 ...was very quiet and hardly spoke, kept on task but with very little interaction with the other children. She attended 9/10 sessions during which time her confidence grew, she became more vocal in the group and by the end...she was expressing herself on what she wanted to do, how she was going to...continue with her art as it made her feel happy and she loved making things." (Artist)



Start Up

Start Up is one of the Age Better in Sheffield projects managed by Ignite Imaginations. 2020-21 represented the final year of this 6-year programme which aims to reduce isolation amongst older people in Sheffield. Start Up gave an opportunity for local people aged 50 and over to start something new or develop something they were already involved in. The idea was to use small-scale support to spark new ideas, strengthen existing provision, and create new and interesting opportunities for older people in the area.

During this final year, we continued to support the ongoing neighbourhood and community groups as they adapted to lockdown and those that have become community support hubs in their own right.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k3St7OuQWWo>

The programme has supported a wide range of groups, including one-off, short-term activities, and establishing lasting groups. There are at least 150 people regularly attending groups established through Start Up and more than 600 people attended one-off events. The key to it all has been providing the space and the support for people to shape the activities they want and to connect and build friendships with one another.

"We look after each other, we look out for each other. If somebody doesn't turn up, then we want to know why. If it's snowed then somebody will knock on everybody's door and say, 'do you want any milk', and it's just got everybody together as a community, which didn't happen before."

Sparks

Another Age Better in Sheffield project, Sparks helps tackle loneliness and social isolation for people aged 50 and over by bringing people together through events rooted in creativity, art and culture.



Talking About Our Generation Festival

The pandemic meant plans for Sparks changed radically, with our focus shifting to working with the Steering Group to develop the Talking About Our Generation intergenerational arts festival as an online series of events in May 2021. The digital festival included music, exhibitions, workshops, seminars, a quiz, and a cook along. Over 70 people booked 115 tickets for the online events and there were nearly 250 views of online exhibition and YouTube content during the festival (including live and on catch up). The videos remain accessible on our TAOG playlist:

<https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLWTSqNeTLGOpzultB5kmO95zquXBmPUWI>



Sparks Christmas Meal Experience

For Christmas 2020, with restrictions once again in place we created an alternative to the Christmas Day Meals that we had run with Sparks for the last 2 years. Unable to gather people for communal meals, we arranged for deliveries or meals, gifts bags with presents and creative activities, and telephone calls for people who wanted them. In total 341 people were reached across the city.

"It enabled me to feel connected, instead of isolated" Gift Bag recipient



Arts and Culture Ambassadors

The Ambassadors programme, funded by IVE, aims to give young people in South Yorkshire an insight the creative sector and careers there, build their creative and interpersonal skills and support them to achieve the Arts Award qualification.

During lockdown, the programme largely had to be suspended, however creative engagement was adapted to be made accessible online. While this presented many challenges, the Arts Award in particular was seen as, “[providing] a great positive focus for students during Covid 19.” Teacher, Handsworth.

We were able to round off the year by delivering short and long courses over Zoom open to the whole Ambassadors cohort, bringing young people from different schools together.



Remote and Online Activities

We always value face-to-face and in-person activities. We aim to work in and with communities, getting people together in the same space to work together and encourage one another. However, Covid-19 lockdowns meant we had to find alternative methods of reaching and engaging people with creativity.

Creativity Packs

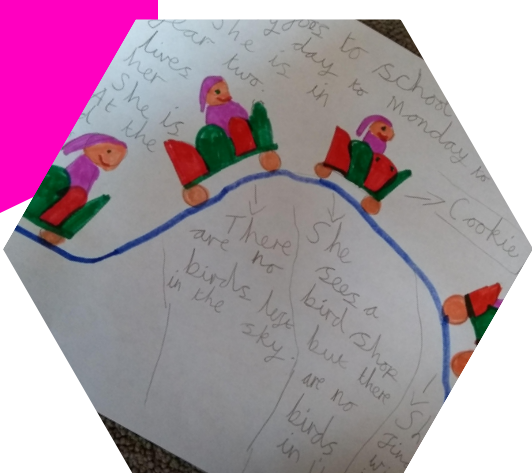
As well as our large-scale Art at the Heart and Reimagine projects, we developed creativity packs with materials and activities which were distributed via local community partners to families in need. We were very focused on making sure that these packs were accessible for families on low incomes.

"The packs are amazing, and families were extremely happy at the variety we had."

Zoom workshops

We found ways of delivering sessions over Zoom. As with our creativity packs, we were very focused on accessibility and careful to choose activities that did not require any special equipment or materials. We worked closely with Sheffield Libraries to publicise sessions to families in disadvantaged communities across the city. We found that these sessions worked really well for some children who may not otherwise have accessed in-person workshops, with several young people attending almost all of the workshops, which suggests there may be ways of delivering blended programmes of in-person and Zoom workshops in the future to make sure we engage as many participants as possible.

"It was great using recycled materials and our own craft materials as it made the things we made unique. We've never made playdough before, so that was a new skill we learnt together. I enjoyed making things with my son, it's nice that I didn't have to think of ideas, these crafts are not something I would have thought of myself. Thank you!"





At Home Activities

We also commissioned Ignite artists to create a series of fun instructional videos demonstrating artistic and creative activities that people can complete in their own time. You can create your own puppet theatre, space diorama, story stones, graffiti posters and much more, with

There are short engaging videos and pdf instruction sheets, all available for free from the Ignite Imaginations website on activities such as puppet theatres, space dioramas and story stones. <https://www.igniteimagination.org.uk/resources>

We hope to continue to develop this type of resource in order to engage people who might otherwise struggle to participate in face-to-face activities.



Conference

We ran an Arts & Well-being Conference in May 2021 via Zoom, in which we explored how the arts has influenced our wellbeing in these changing and challenging times.



Talent Development

We were pleased that in such a disrupted year, we were still able to provide good employment opportunities to Ignite freelance artists on interesting projects that would develop their practice and increase their professional experience and expertise. In particular, learning how to deliver and facilitate sessions online, creating video content and creating larger-scale installation work.

We were also able to adapt our systems so that we could still support a paid internship while working remotely over Summer 2020. This was through the 100 hour Third Sector Placement provided by Sheffield Volunteering, University of Sheffield Students' Union, and we were able to repeat this model again in the later spring of 2021.

"It's been different working in these conditions, but it's been really good. It's really boosted my confidence. I've enjoyed doing my own work and then coming together as a team and putting ideas together. It's boosted my professional and personal confidence and given me insight into how an organisation works."

Ruben Brown, intern.

"It has been a poignant work for me personally as the subject was close to home, but it gave me even more reason to understand what people need and that art connects us. I learnt new techniques through this experience and painted my largest mural to date."

"It's been amazing - living in the local area as well it's enabled me to feel more connected to my community. It's also had a positive effect on me as it has kept me busy, enabled me to develop my skills and given me a sense of worth during the pandemic."

"Just wanted to say a massive thank you for supporting artists so much this year. I am so proud to be an Ignite Imaginations artist and part of something that feels exciting, innovative, creative and supportive"



Staff and Board

Our CEO maternity cover Rosie led the team into lockdown in Spring 2020. We are very grateful to her for devising new working conditions and supporting the team through the transition, whilst also securing funding for Covid focused projects. Our CEO Luisa returned in July and was able to build on those excellent emergency measures to secure Ignite as a fully remote team, allowing us to give up our office in November 2020.



Organisation diversity

We want to actively increase the diversity of voices within the organisation. A step towards this is to accurately ascertain the current situation. We polled the staff and trustees active with the organisation in January 2022:

100% White British
100% No disclosed disability
78% female, 22% male
89% heterosexual, 11% bisexual

67% no religious belief, 22% Christian and 11% own spiritual path

