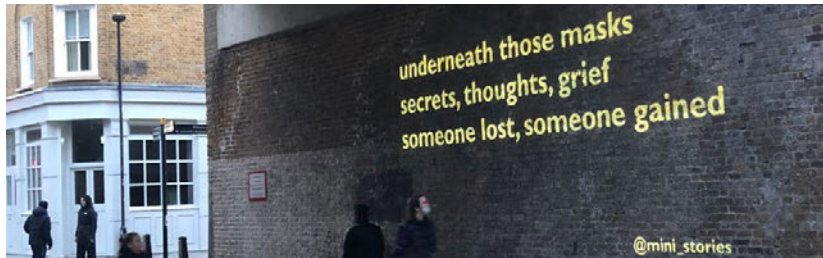
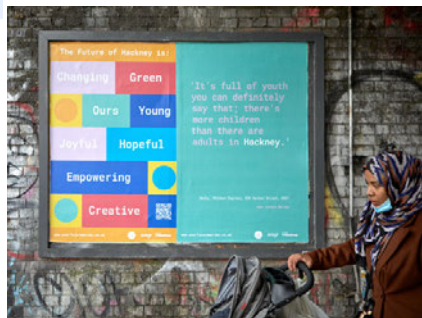




Can you sing us a song that reminds you of home?  
Come and join a free creative workshop for women in Shoreditch and Hoxton, celebrating the music we carry with us.  
Museum of the Home, 55 Kingsland Rd, E2 8EA  
10th and 23rd May 10:30am-2pm, 9th and 16th May 10:30am-12pm  
Shoreditch Library, 80 Hoxton St, N1 6LP  
@mini\_stories



# Shoreditch & Hoxton Art Fund Evaluation

Summary report

July 2023



The Shoreditch and Hoxton Art Fund was set up in 2018 and launched in 2019, pooling funds from Section 106 contributions from two developments in south Shoreditch. This grant fund took a unique and innovative approach to deliver public art by commissioning arts organisations to work with local residents and create art for the wider community. The Fund aimed to tackle the disconnect between Shoreditch, Hackney's most active economic centre with high levels of investment and

continued rapid growth, and Hoxton, a diverse residential area with pockets of severe deprivation. It strived to use public art to improve social cohesion, make arts and culture accessible for all and create new opportunities for the residents of Hoxton. It aimed to build a greater sense of community representation in local culture in an area that does not typically feel the benefit from development in the south of the borough.



Billboard from the Your Future Worlds project, delivered by Eastside Educational Trust

In 2023, Hackney Council commissioned Social Life to carry out a programme evaluation of the Art Fund. This assessment has multiple goals: to evaluate the socioeconomic impact of the projects on local communities in Hoxton and on Hoxton as a place; to understand how directly participating in the projects has benefitted individual participants and grantee organisations; and finally, to understand and appraise the process and governance of the Fund. The aim is to support Hackney, and other local authorities in the future, to use levies on development to invest in the arts in ways that maximise community benefits.

This report highlights our findings from primary research carried out throughout February 2023.

## Scale of impact

The findings highlighted in this report demonstrate the significant social impact the Art Fund has had on project participants, the funded arts organisations and on the wider community and neighbourhood. The programme introduced a new way to spend public art contributions negotiated through developments. These are often spent on the creation of physical public art - for example a sculpture or mural - positioned on the development site. Communities and local artists are rarely engaged in the creative process and the resulting artwork can have little connection or meaning to local communities.

The experience of the Shoreditch and Hoxton Art Fund demonstrates that contributions from development funded through Section 106 contributions can have wide-reaching social impacts on local communities. The evaluation shows how the Fund has positively affected community connection, improved the health and confidence of participants, while providing skills and new perspectives.

Hackney Council has been innovative in their [Arts and Cultural Strategy](#). They have established five dividends for arts and culture in the borough and aligned strategies and policies to the economic and social benefits of arts and culture. These five dividends - community, economic, employment, education, and health - were used to underpin the application and selection process for the Art Fund.

All of the 16 projects achieved one or more of these dividends, with the strongest impacts on community, education and health.

The projects all supported community networks and created opportunities for meeting new people and connecting members of the community. Even during the COVID-19 pandemic, when some of the workshops moved online, participants were able to meet and learn from professional artists and from one another. **93%** of the participants surveyed mentioned meeting someone new through this work and **84%** of residents who were aware of this work believed that it led to new social connections. **Half** of the participants surveyed saw positive impacts on their mental health as a direct result of their engagement. This is a remarkable impact, particularly during the pandemic when many people became isolated.

Distributing the Fund to a multitude of arts organisations instead of delivering one larger project meant that a wider audience and range of demographic backgrounds was engaged in the work. This included students from local schools, older people, women from migrant communities, young refugees and people seeking asylum as well as ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) students and people recovering from a stroke. The funded projects offered opportunities for intergenerational encounters and multi-cultural exchanges.

Funded organisations reported that the biggest long-term benefits of participating in the programme were the connections they made through the project, the local partnerships that were formed and the new audiences they reached through the work.

Inviting participation in the creative process makes art feel culturally relevant to participants. This is what made the projects unique to the area. It enabled local groups to feel represented and proud of the output they co-created. **All** of the participants surveyed felt that the work was relevant to them and their community, **70%** of residents felt the work was culturally relevant to the local community. This kind of local engagement leads to greater agency and sense of belonging and both have a positive impact on wellbeing.

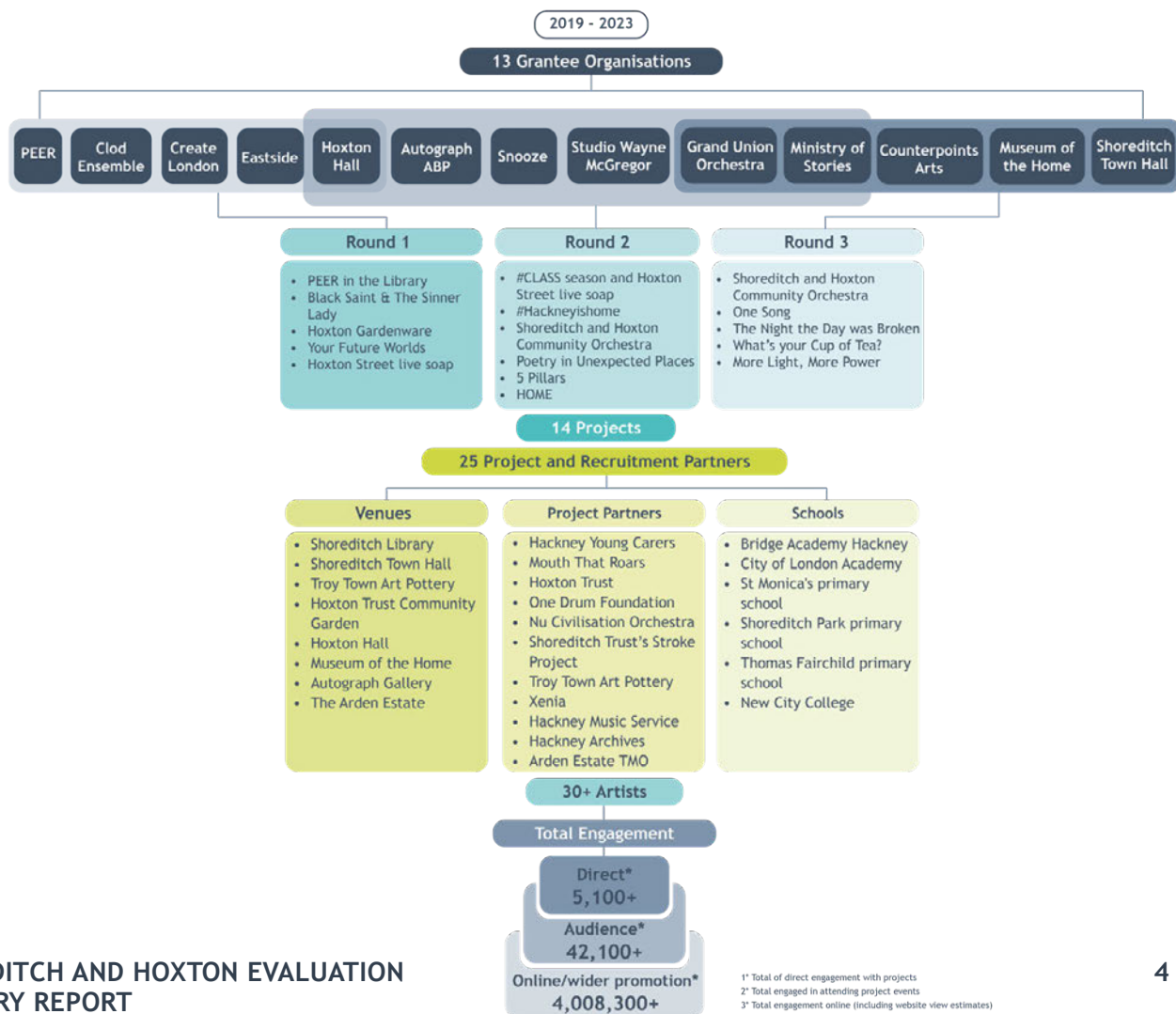
Participating also led to learning: **86%** of participants learned something new or deepened a skill they already had. The projects strongly encouraged engagement in future cultural activities and almost all participants surveyed wanted to take part in future projects. Over half of the participants were interested in working in the creative industry.

Local heritage was also celebrated through this work with **72%** of the participants reporting that they learned about the local area through taking part in the projects. While few of the residents and participants surveyed knew how the projects were funded, approximately **half** agreed that this changed their perception of regeneration, mainly positively. These benefits reinforced a sense of “placekeeping” of the rich cultural heritage of Hoxton, a neighbourhood positioned within a wider area that is changing and seeing major development, supporting a greater sense of cohesion between Hoxton and Shoreditch.

The impacts of the projects will live on long after the completion of the grant funded work with new connections, networks, learnings and career paths seeded.

Approaching arts and culture through arts organisations clearly benefits local residents and supports the local economy. The Shoreditch and Hoxton Art Fund is a case study in itself of how councils can leverage Section 106 contributions from private regeneration or funds collected through the neighbourhood element of the Community Infrastructure levy to directly benefit local people.

Over three years, **16 grants - £250,000** in total - were awarded to **13 arts organisations** (three organisations received a second round of funding to expand their projects or start a new one). An additional **£228,000** was raised in match funding and **14 different projects** were delivered. A total of **nine local schools** were engaged in the process and various other venues in the area partnered with the organisations to deliver parts of the work. In total the projects hosted over **5,100 participants** in their workshops and worked with over **30 artists** including writers, potters, documentary filmmakers and musicians.



## Summary of findings

- **Unsurprisingly, the impact of the projects was greatest for people who directly engaged in them.** All the people surveyed reported a positive experience and felt the work was culturally relevant to them. Cultural relevance in community arts is important for participants to feel they can relate to the process, outcome and see their identity, knowledge and emotions feature in the work. 95% gained confidence after participating and 86% gained or improved a skill; 50% of project participants surveyed agreed that taking part affected their mental or physical health and of those all reported an improvement in mental health and wellbeing.
- For the grantee organisations, the largest gain in participating was the **network and relationships** they built in the area with other institutions such as schools, community organisations as well as local artists and makers and the new audiences they reached.
- Overall, the greatest impact projects had at both project and neighbourhood scale was the **opportunity for social connection.** They brought people together, particularly during the isolating time of the pandemic.
- Within the neighbourhood there was approximately **50% awareness of the project** among people surveyed on Hoxton Street. The projects that were most noticed had the strongest public presence. Local traders had less engagement with the work but the majority (59%) of those we spoke to agreed that these projects benefit them.
- The reach of the projects differed with nearly **half of the grantees mentioning that they had fallen short of the numbers they hoped for.** The experience of the pandemic had a negative effect on participation for some projects.
- 21% of residents surveyed felt that the outreach for the projects was not targeting them and they didn't know about the projects taking place. Some mentioned they would have liked more "human" or door to door contact.
- **£228,000** of match funding investment was raised and brought to the area.
- **A majority of the traders (59%) surveyed agreed that these projects directly benefit them** because they build greater social cohesion, bring a unique identity to the area and increase footfall. Approximately **half (47%)** of the participants surveyed supported the local economy by visiting a local business when attending a project.
- 51% of residents said they have taken part in other arts and cultural activities in this area in the past few years and only 18% agreed there is enough support for arts and culture in the area (42% were unsure and 14% of project participants believed there is adequate support). **This data has the potential to become a baseline for arts and cultural activities in the area and be used to track the impact of future investments on engagement and perception of support needed.** This benchmark is important as it looks at both behaviour and perception in relation to arts and culture. Both are good indicators for how a community may benefit from projects and investments.
- **The Fund successfully supported organisations that are perceived as local cultural anchors and that are strongly rooted in the area.** The governance of the Fund was successful in providing adequate support, not overburdening small arts organisations with extensive reporting and demonstrated flexibility in responses to necessary adaptations caused by the pandemic.

Unexpected Poetry delivered by Ministry of Stories, © Tom Oldham



**A garden of words  
such an easy place to be**

## Best practice for local authorities

Out of the research findings, a more detailed best practice toolkit has been created. This toolkit describes how to set up a community arts fund using developer contributions. It is aimed at local authority officers - particularly in planning, regeneration, arts and culture and economic development roles - who want to leverage resources from development to directly benefit local people through funding for arts and cultural projects.

Five key themes emerge from the data to support best practice for Hackney Council going forward and other local authorities

1. Making the process replicable
2. Expanding cultural relevance and reach
3. Fostering relationships and building a network
4. Supporting the long-term viability of local arts groups
5. Tracking impact.

### 1. Making this process replicable

Hackney Council established a policy focus which enabled the creation of the Art Fund. The Council embedded arts and culture as a social and economic driver across planning, economic development and regeneration policy. In London, Hackney is unique as a borough in valuing arts and culture in this way. Their Local Plan recognises the economic importance of arts and culture, particularly to key urban centres. This alignment across policy and practice enabled the creation of the Shoreditch and Hoxton Art Fund using Section 106 contributions. Their key strategic policies that prioritise cultural investments include the Local Plan, the draft Future Shoreditch Area Action Plan, the Inclusive Economy Strategy as well as the Arts and Cultural Strategy. This approach is rooted in robust public consultation and engagement. Evidence of resident support for community and participatory arts has underpinned this policy approach.

### 2. Expand cultural relevance and reach

A community arts project needs to have cultural relevance as well as an inclusive reach to deliver social benefits for communities. These two outcomes must be embedded at all stages of the funding approach to the projects' delivery:

### a. Setting up the application

Application parameters for the type of project and the target audience should reflect local priorities and address local needs and gaps in services. Potential cultural anchors should be considered broadly, including churches and some local businesses, as well as a wide range of arts and cultural institutions.

The process of project delivery is where most of the social benefits take place. Depending on the funding criteria and any funding constraints, a grant programme could also consider funding projects that do not necessarily culminate into a final piece but instead propose classes, workshops, learning experiences, or partnering with schools on a more ongoing basis.

### b. Selection process

Including local artists, residents as well as officers that work closely with arts and cultural and community organisations (such as Cultural Development and Regeneration Officers) in a steering committee to guide the selection process and to provide some oversight of the work could make a bridge between the local authority, grantee organisations and local groups. This could increase the projects' local relevance and ease the outreach process. This would require additional resourcing from the local authority and must be balanced with the scale of the programme and nature of the area targeted.

### c. Project engagement and outcomes

Councils have access to substantial networks of organisations and institutions. Supporting organisations to build their network locally, particularly around local recruitment of young people in schools and in developing partnerships, will support the successful delivery of the work. The Council could support smaller organisations in their engagement through media exposure, recruiting, and advertising.



### 3. Fostering relationships and building a network

The biggest impact of the Art Fund for all groups (beneficiaries, grantee organisations, residents and traders) was the relationships and connections the projects supported. It is important to foster these relationships throughout the process and after the work is complete. The programme can provide ongoing opportunities for grantees to meet and learn from each other's experiences and networks through events. Structures could be created to allow grantees to meet as a cohort to share milestones, challenges and resources. This would sustain connections, enable organisations to reflect on their work and continue collaborating, supporting the local networks to thrive.

### 4. Support the long-term success of local arts organisations

The research has demonstrated the value that local arts organisations have on the perception of place and on Hackney's cultural dividends. Ongoing support to help these organisations thrive is essential. To level the playing field between large and small and older or newer organisations in the area, the programme could organise an informal conversation between interested organisations before applications are submitted. This would enable those without established local relationships to get advice and find potential partners. For example, at the start of the Art Fund, Hackney Council hosted a breakfast briefing event at a local venue, giving interested organisations an opportunity to find out more information.

The programme could also allocate a percentage of the grant to support core funding rather than just the project delivery (although the Section 106 agreements would need to enable this).

### 5. Track impact locally

Tracking impact can make the case for more funding in the future. While the Art Fund had reporting requirements around outputs, reach and impacts, some grantee organisations demonstrated interest in learning how to collect more robust data on their work. Data could be used to support learning, deepening their practice and helping them secure future funding.

New grant funds or similar programmes can use indicators set out within this framework, or create new ones based on local priorities, to track and assess how the projects are having impact over the course of the project. To ensure this research work takes place the Fund can either provide a stipend for organisations to develop participants' surveys or make participants' surveys a requirement in the application process. Additional support on survey design, administration and data analysis can be provided through workshops and information sharing sessions.

Data collected should inform the application criteria and priorities of the next round.

Images 1-2: #Hackneyishome delivered by Autograph ABP, in partnership with Mouth That Roars.

Image 3: Hoxton Street, delivered by Hoxton Hall

# About this report

This report was commissioned by Hackney Council in January 2023 to capture the social impacts of the Shoreditch and Hoxton Art Fund on grantee organisations, project participants and on neighbourhood residents and businesses.

## Acknowledgments:

We would like to thank all the grantee organisations who shared their feedback and reflections of their work with us. We are grateful for the time they put into this work and hope the report will support the continuation of funding such brilliant and impactful community arts work.

A special thanks to Counterpoints Arts, Clod Ensemble, Grand Union Orchestra and Museum of the Home for supporting us reaching their project participants with an online survey.

The report was written by Larissa Begault and Izzy Gibbin, with help from Nicola Bacon. Lavanya Kumaran designed the maps.

Fieldwork was carried out by Izzy Gibbin, Imogen Bullen-Smith, Natasha Shah.

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**Social Life** was created by the Young Foundation in 2012, to become a specialist centre of research and innovation about the social life of communities. All our work is about the relationship between people and the places they live and understanding how change, through regeneration, new development or small improvements to public spaces, affects the social fabric, opportunities and wellbeing of local areas. We work in the UK and internationally.

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