



Supporting young people in East Sussex into Creative Careers.

The Project

Talent Accelerator East Sussex is about creating a strategic step-change in creative and digital sector skills, careers and project-based learning. It is based on a 'needs led' framework of commitment proposed by the South East Creative Economy Network (SELEP) Creative Prospectus.

Developing a more joined-up infrastructure between industry and education, early indicators are that this will develop confidence in the sector as an economic and social driver, retain talent, boost learning opportunities and increase the number of sustainable creative careers in the county.

Talent Accelerator Interim Report

About this report

This interim evaluation report summarises the key learning points from the Talent Accelerator East Sussex Project. The methodology in this first year of the project has focused on the data provided by the Director of the project at the De La Warr Pavilion (DLWP) and analysis of some key documents and websites available via DLWP, Skills East Sussex, Future Skills Sussex and East Sussex Careers Hub. Through providing this short report the Director of the project aims to inform its creative learning agencies, networks and key partners of the significant progress that has been achieved to date and reflect on the learning and insight gained in the first year of the two year project.

About Talent Accelerator

Artswork South East Bridge has provided significant investment to support the strategic aims of Cultural East Sussex which is the Cultural Education Partnership (CEP) for East Sussex. Talent Accelerator East Sussex is about creating a strategic step-change in creative and digital sector skills, careers and project-based learning. It is based on a 'needs led' framework of commitment proposed by the South East Creative Economy Network (SELEP) Creative Prospectus. The framework is being led on behalf of the Cultural Education Partnership by the De La Warr Pavilion which is a 'cornerstone' creative industries employer for the East Sussex Careers Hub and pioneer of local industry encounters in its visual arts, music and events programme. The Talent Accelerator Director based at the De La Warr Pavilion oversees the day-to-day running of the project and is

accountable to and supported in its delivery of the strategy by a range of key cross-sector partners. Developing a more joined-up infrastructure between industry and education, early indicators are that this will develop confidence in the sector as an economic and social driver, retain talent, boost learning opportunities and increase the number of sustainable creative careers in the county of East Sussex.

The project is underpinned by 7 key principles (p.2) which aims to address a perceived lack of opportunity for young people in the creative and digital sector in East Sussex. The 7 principles have been subsequently themed into 5 outcome areas which the project aims to address. The Talent Accelerator model was derived from and built on case studies from across the South East, an evidence base both qualitative and quantitative drawn directly from young people who identified the support they needed in creative skills progression. The project aims to both draw on and build on the excellent practice and expertise which already exists in towns and communities across East Sussex, whether it is in community based career skills workshops, careers hubs, regional partnerships or consortiums of like minded organisations. What exists across the county is many 'hot spots' rich in creative practice. The Talent Accelerator framework aims to connect organisations and young people across their differences to provide a genuine pipeline of creative opportunity from age 5 to 18+ years of age. This is also a project which seeks to inform a sustainable framework regionally as part of the South East Creative Economy Network prospectus with Kent and Essex.

7 Key Principles

- 1 CREATING NETWORKS**
To establish a local collaborative framework of best practice that scaffolds opportunity, awareness, and innovation around creative skills development at all levels.
- 2 ACCESS TO OPPORTUNITIES**
To level the playing field of opportunity, ensuring that children and young people in ALL communities have access to enriching creative skills activity throughout the year.
- 3 REAL LIFE PROJECTS**
To build capacity in the creative and cultural sector for employers and educators to provide real-world project-based learning opportunities/encounters throughout the year.
- 4 ACCREDITING EXPERIENCES**
To consolidate and embed delivery opportunities for the Arts Award and Artsmark standards in creative education, connecting delivery to diverse project-based employer encounters.
- 5 COMMUNICATION BETWEEN CREATIVE SECTOR AND EDUCATION FOR FUTURE PLANNING**
To develop strategic and long-term approach to employer/education co-design, so that future project development is joined up, high quality and responsive to need.
- 6 ADVOCATING FOR CREATIVE CAREERS**
To advocate for all creative, cultural, and digital careers opportunities in East Sussex, promoting positive and joined up message to parents, schools/college leaders and other influential stakeholders.
- 7 EMBEDDING CREATIVE AND DIGITAL SKILLS ACROSS THE WHOLE OF EAST SUSSEX**
To create better conditions for embedded creative and digital skills at education settings across the whole county, reviewing and addressing cold spots.

Overcoming barriers

East Sussex is a county which encompasses urban, rural and coastal communities with a diverse range of employment and skills needs. All the indicators are that there is a direct correlation between low skills and qualifications in areas that are poorly served by transport and infrastructure, a situation that is echoed across the South East. Such a complex scenario requires a long term strategic focus with the flexibility to be very local, growing grass root expertise into a well-integrated deliverable approach. The Talent Accelerator programme sits within the Sussex Local Skills Improvement Plan notably in the Creative and Culture sector deep dive Executive Summary report published in August 2023 specifically within the section titled 'Challenges and Priorities for Change'. This section focuses on the challenges identified by the Cultural Education Partnership in the Artsworld bid and is exemplified in the 7 key principles (p.2).

The 5 outcome areas are further exemplified through the Creative and Culture sector report which in particular identifies two points which underpin the aims of the Talent Accelerator project by pointing to the;

- Lack of coordinated strategy across three LA areas and 2 LEP areas.
- Lots of good work underway but often in silo - opportunity for greater impact through collaboration.

5 Outcome Areas

- 1 EXPOSURE & INSIGHT (Activity for 5-11)**
Focused on inspirational industry encounters with creative practitioners, stories, spaces, and ideas. Enriched 'behind the curtain' experiences offer basic knowledge of production processes.
- 2 GUIDANCE & AWARENESS (Activity for 11-14)** More directly inspires young people toward information through support services/tools for signposting and deeper understanding of local creative economy. Support to access follow up activities and resources (generic and locally specific) and employer presenting routes into education/education/training/employment.
- 3 CULTIVATE & PRACTICE (Activity for 14-16)** Focused on independent learning opportunities, including out of hours activities/tuition. Youth networking is a key strand and encouraging/enabling independent participation through outreach and education offered by creative industry providers (including work experience in some instances).
- 4 INSPIRATION & COURAGE (Activity for 16-19)** Centred on authentic creative industries work related experiences. Every encounter should have a real-world element, producing response to live brief challenges, understanding audiences and creative economy life cycles.
- 5 PREPARATION & DEVELOPMENT (Activity for 18+)**
Positioned around the development of autonomous creative producers/consumers, an emphasis on sector-specific vocations set within a national/International context. Transferable skills and core competencies at this level should set within encounters of both employment and enterprise/self-employment.

The identified outcomes are a recognition of the need to plan and build a clear yet flexible framework which enables authentic collaboration and capacity building. This is why in year 1 there has been a targeted approach to engender participation by fostering partnerships with schools, colleges and employers with a desire to open up the hidden opportunities in creative industries. In this way making visible the creative industries to children in primary schools, young people in secondary schools and students. Key to this has been the significant collaboration with cultural hubs such as the [Towner Gallery](#), [the De La Warr Pavilion](#), [the Black Shed Gallery](#) and [White Rock Theatre Hastings](#).

The story so far

Partnership is integral to the Talent Accelerator project and in its first year the number of partnerships have enabled significant participation for children and young people. In 4 outcome areas the targets have either been significantly exceeded or met. This trend is expected to continue in the outcome area of 14-16 year olds where it is expected that participation will be greatly boosted through the partnership with the Towner Art Gallery and the Turner Prize wrap around activity. Eastbourne Alive aims to engage every year 9 pupil in Eastbourne with the Turner Prize Exhibition and in a careers presentation provided by Talent Accelerator. Additionally, Eastbourne Alive will boost 16-19 activity through the provision of 100 work placements. This resounding success has been achieved by identifying schools and organisations that are active and open to being involved. This opening up or as Cross and Wilson state

‘holding open’ the opportunity for young people to engage is a vital aspect of aligning the pipeline of opportunity which can ultimately provide a range of pathways for young people. In interviews with the Programme Director it is clear that this approach of career skills workshops, assemblies and work experience has deepened existing partnerships and also encouraged new collaborations in previously hard to reach towns such as Newhaven, Seaford, Peacehaven, Uckfield, Heathfield and Robertsbridge. An example of which is a project run by an organisation called the Newhaven Young Creatives, whereby each week fifteen year 10-12 students have been engaged in producing two films or Young Promoters sponsored by Youth Music. The students have been given the opportunity in one year to participate in the promotion of 16 gigs. The evaluation from such projects will inform the final evaluation at the end of year 2.



Since Talent Accelerator's launch in autumn 2022, the project has engaged with over five thousand students and young people and employees across East Sussex, exploring the creative industries, careers, and opportunities in the region with them. Talks have been given in assemblies, students invited to discuss creative careers onsite at cultural venues, and conversations have occurred with educators all with the aim of raising the profile of the creative industries across the local area.

Schools & Colleges

Primary Schools

We have held "What is a creative career?" assemblies, reaching over **800** students at **seven** primary schools.

Secondary Schools

At secondary schools in the area, we have held more than **30** workshops, assemblies, drama, filmmaking, photography and mural painting sessions and given interview/career advice to individuals, engaging with over **1500** young people.

Further Education

From career clinics and talks to creative logo work at the Towner Gallery to organising work experience we have engaged with **335** 16-19 year olds across the county so far.



Employer Engagement

We have attended **two** jobs and apprenticeship fairs.

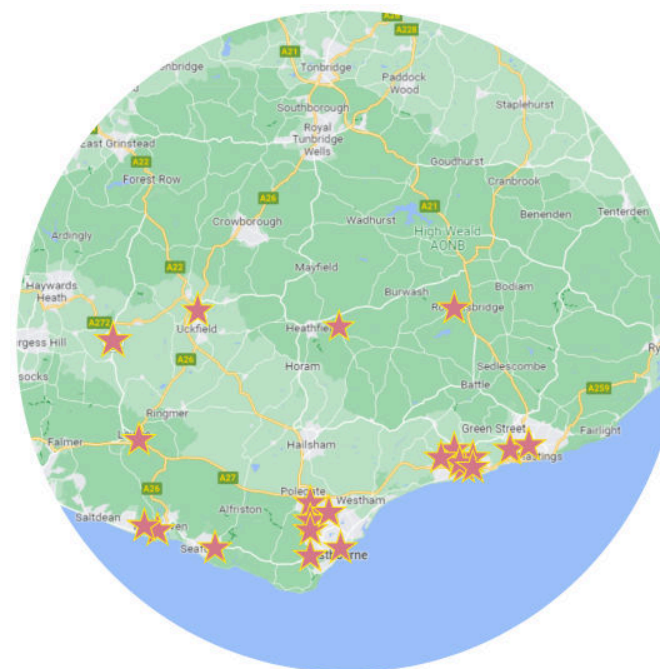
The Bexhill Job and Apprenticeship Fair had a zone dedicated to the creative industries and we held a workshop. There were around **600** attendees.



We also attended Eastbourne's Big Futures event, where we shared a stall with the Towner Gallery and there were over **2000** attendees. We're also working with the Towner Gallery as they are hosting the prestigious Turner Prize this year, and there are many opportunities for young people to get involved with the Eastbourne Alive project.

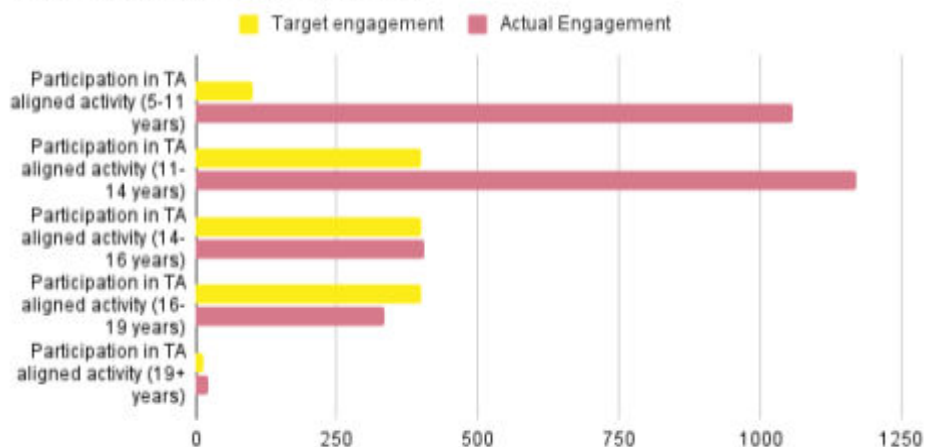
The attainment in the level of engagement achieved, points to an underlying success story, one of progressive leadership. The strategic vision held by the De La Warr Pavilion's leadership team which encompasses allowing a 'greater access to cultural experiences' and supporting a 'culture led-regeneration for the region has led to the appointment of a skilful Programme Director who can embody the De La Warr's values of professionalism, integrity and ambition. The Programme Director's leadership demonstrates the kind of collaboration emphasised by [Arts Council England](#) a 'power with' approach rather than 'over'. This approach is rooted in relationships recognising that trust, confidence and shared goals supports and amplifies the local network and ensures that the Talent Accelerator project does not exist in a silo. The result is a joined up approach across the partnership which is innovative in its connections, simultaneously increasing 'Arts Award' and Artsmark whilst also growing the employers network by including them in the Bexhill Job and Apprenticeship Fair and the Big Futures Event.

Over **25** Schools & further education settings actively engaged



Talent Accelerator Participation during Year 1 (2022-23)

Target engagement & actual engagement



Successes so far

From our original targets, we have had overall higher levels of engagement than anticipated during the 2022-2023 academic year, especially from primary and secondary school aged children - their participation with TA aligned activities has been in some cases **10 times more** than we were hoping for, as can be seen in the graph below.

These engagements took place during more than **60** separate sessions/events with over **25** different schools and colleges and organisations, from Hastings to Peacehaven.

The future

Harnessing the energy and learning from a highly successful year 1 and creating a live creative industries work placement matching app is the next step to ensure that young people, teachers and careers advisers have up to date knowledge of jobs and skills in the sector and to enable a wide range of young people to gain experience of the creative sector in new ways. This is a complex challenge that will require the target-driven style that has been evident in year 1 but with a developmental approach of partnering with organisations that secures and connects people and ideas through collaboration and co-creation.

Additionally, and aligned with this is a need to multiply the visibility, understanding and awareness of the project through managing technical issues such as ensuring that all partner organisations highlight their role in the Talent Accelerator project on their websites and build in time to map relationships. By mapping the relationships and partnerships across the region there would also be an opportunity to highlight the learning from the project and conduct a detailed analysis of engagement across areas of deprivation such as coastal communities and rural areas. Such analysis would provide further opportunities to reflect on the key learning outcomes and develop the strategic sustainability of the programme as part of the South East Creative Economy Network.

Next Steps

- Multiply the visibility, understanding and awareness of the project by creating an easy process to overcome technical challenges such as ensuring that all partner organisations highlight, share and promote their role in and support of the Talent Accelerator Project.
- Secure a partnership with a further education provider to support the development of a work placement matching app to ensure that future creative industry opportunities are more readily available to young people in the region.
- Work with East Sussex Careers Hub to further develop a cultural map of creative industry based placements and support the development of its platform.
- Engage partners in an activity to map the strengths, viability and sustainability of their relationships across the region to support a Pan Sussex approach to Talent Accelerator.