

Creative Learning Network Report 2019/21 - Executive Summary



Introduction

The work of Creative Learning Networks (CLNs) across the country reflects current national priorities such as the Scottish Attainment Challenge and the National Improvement Framework (NIF) and their twin aims of excellence and equity in education. Importantly, they do this by responding to local needs and priorities, working in partnership with educators and creative partners to develop a range of skills and capacities in learners.

Local authorities were invited to submit proposals to the Creative Learning Networks Fund (2019-20) to deliver the long-term outcome **'Creativity skills are recognised,**

articulated and valued by leaders, practitioners and learners' through programmes focused on learning, teaching, assessment and achievement, and/or skills development.

During this funding period, a National Creative Learning Network (NCLN) working group developed a new vision, mission and goals for [Scotland's Creative Learning Plan](#) ensuring they were appropriate for the current context and reflective of the National Creative Learning Partnership's aspirations. These refreshed ambitions were shared publicly in March 2021, during a week-long online National Creativity event, [Creativity in Leadership and Learning](#).

The Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the work of CLNs across the country, with face-to-face delivery paused and schools closed due to government guidelines from March 2020. In response to the challenges, CLNs drew on their creativity, continuing to support practitioners and learners by adapting planned workshops to digital formats, engaging with participants virtually and outside in some cases, and developing resources to be accessed digitally. As schools reopened in



August 2020, CLNs continued collaborating with partners to deliver a range of activity despite restrictions on external staff working in schools.

Because of the many challenges faced, the period for delivery of funded programmes of work was extended from June 2020 to March 2021.

Resilience and Wellbeing

In Aberdeen it was not possible to deliver the planned programme due to the impacts of the pandemic, so the Creative Learning Team took the opportunity to contribute Creative Learning input to the Emergency Response Vulnerable Hubs over the summer, with a focus on building resilience through creativity skills and supporting learners' wellbeing, readying them for the return to school in August 2020. Summer Community Hubs, led by the Food and Fun Partnership, included partners from Education, Social Work, Community Learning and Development and third sector agencies. The input from creative practitioners was child centred, taking cues from the learners and responding in ways that

got imaginations and curiosity going. Learners thrived through approaches that were tailored to their needs, gaining confidence, resilience and new friends.

Virtual Learning

Argyll and Bute's **Take One Picture** project used artworks from the Argyll Collection to stimulate cross curricular learning virtually, delivering a Creative Learning classroom with creative challenges linked to the collection offered weekly throughout the first lockdown. Virtual creative writing sessions led by Tawona Sitholé were also used to inspire and deliver a pilot Modern African Art project across two schools.

Secret Creativity

Glasgow CREATE commissioned Vox Liminis, a Glasgow based arts organisation, to develop a teacher resource inspired by their 'Rewrite the Future' conference. The resource contained a full set of lesson plans and materials which could be adapted for all learners. It was intended to engage learners and their imagination by putting them and their teachers in roles as applicants to 'The Secret Creativity Service'. All activities are missions set by the Secret Creativity Service, who devised an introductory video and top secret invite to assist teachers in setting the context and starting learners on their fictional journey. The teacher resource was launched at a twilight webinar to which all Glasgow teachers were invited and shared again on a national platform during Creativity in Leadership and Learning event week.

Thinking Out of the Box

Using visual facilitation methodologies, two schools in Orkney were invited to build metaphorical models of their school. The embodied and participatory experience of building a model takes time and enabled participants to think through what they felt, and to question what they thought they knew. Lockdown in March 2020 curbed plans for creative partner [Hidden Giants](#) to visit to the Orkney islands, so an alternative methodology using video calls through online platforms was

developed, enabling the project to quickly adapt and make greater use of virtual meetings. Small groups of teachers met virtually for coaching conversations, identifying changes in their approaches to leadership and in the culture of their schools as a result of their involvement in the project.



Communities of Practice

The support East Dunbartonshire offered freelance creative practitioners during lockdown was an important aspect of their project. Although not connecting directly with schools, freelance practitioners collaborated with each other and with teachers via online

forums and networks. Teachers' relationships with the creative practitioners who engaged in several communities of practice throughout the lockdowns was seen as positive by those involved.

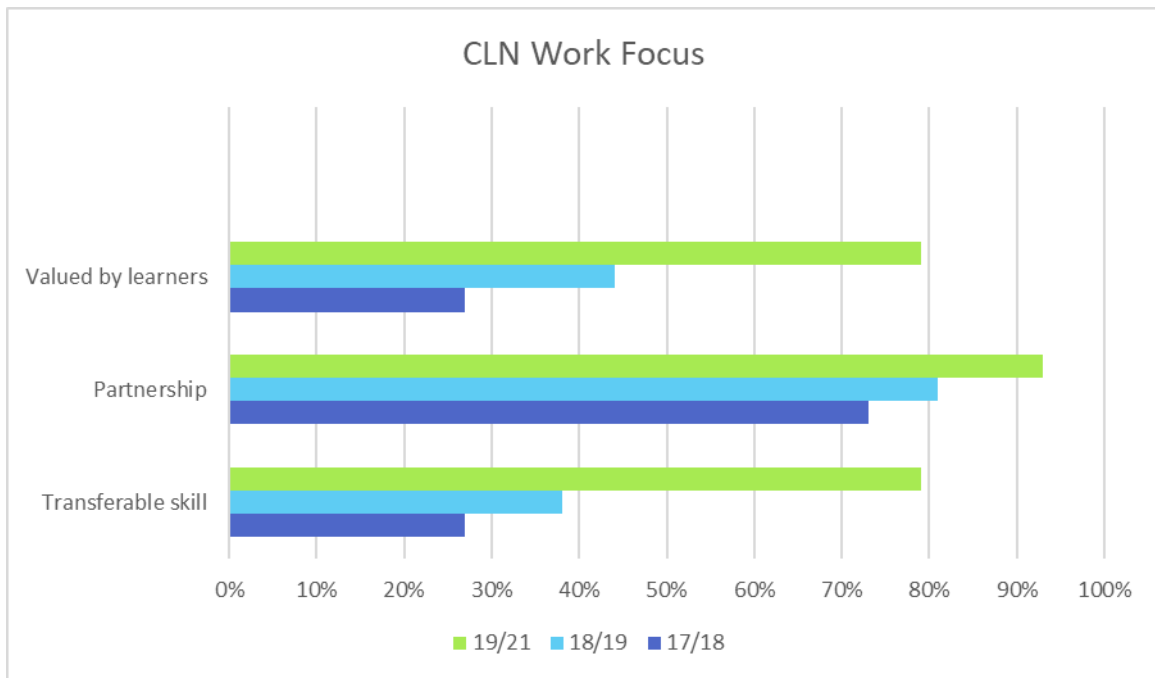
Building Capacity

South East Improvement Collaborative (SEIC) adapted Career Long Professional Learning (CLPL) courses previously delivered in person in Edinburgh. They developed CLPL to specifically support Pupil Support Assistants and support staff, enabling them in turn to support class teachers and learners. Train the Trainer approaches were used to build capacity and remote delivery that was engaging, interactive and ensured wider participation across the SEIC was developed. A suite of professional learning courses was delivered virtually for practitioners in any sector and setting, as well as at any stage in their professional career, to embed creativity skills into learning and teacher practice. Over the funded period, approximately 670 educators, including 440 probationers and early-phase teachers, engaged in the virtual sessions.

Conclusion

CLNs across the country have continued to stimulate creativity in learners, leaders, and practitioners, despite the various impacts of the pandemic. Their work in developing digital tools, creating online packages of materials, supporting remote learning and in stimulating and encouraging partnership working directly fulfils the Creative Learning Network Fund's overarching aims of building learner's confidence, achievements and skills for future life and work. Partnership working at both strategic and operational levels continues to be a key feature of the work of CLN funded programmes. The focus on partnerships being used effectively to deliver highly engaging creative learning by CLNs has increased. The biggest change has been the increase in CLNs identifying 'Learners are able to demonstrate their ability to transfer their creativity skills to new contexts,' as a strong focus of their work.





Recommendations

A key development in this fund delivery period has been the establishment of regular, online meetings for members. Feedback from CLNs identifies the significant value placed on these virtual meetings. Being able to be 'in the room' with colleagues, engaging in discussion and building relationships has supported both individual professional development and the development of practice across CLNs. Members also recognise the benefit of virtual meetings for a geographically wide-spread group.

It is recommended that consideration is given to establishing a calendar of online meetings in addition to the existing programme of 'in person' events.

The work of CLNs has consistently focused on the development of creativity skills in young people, contributing to increased confidence, achievements and skills for future life and work. Consideration should be given to advising Directors/Heads of Service of the refreshed Creative Learning Plan Vision, Mission and Values-based Goals, its relevance to the development of young people and the role of creative learning in their authorities as they plan services and recovery from the pandemic. It is also recommended that consideration is given to prioritising creative learning resources to support work with young people, schools and school communities during that recovery period.

CLNs worked to find innovative, creative solutions to enable them to continue to engage participants and partners throughout the pandemic. Many also used this time to reflect on their work and to think through how best to respond to these new challenges. It is recommended that consideration is given to providing an opportunity for this to be shared across CLNs and a review of practice development undertaken, to highlight innovative practice.

