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## **Children, Culture and Communities Scrutiny Committee** 1 April 2025

### **REACH Progress Report**

#### **Summary**

##### **Introduction**

1. The purpose of this report is to provide the members of Scrutiny with an update on the work of the York Cultural Education Partnership, REACH.
2. The arts, culture, and creativity are at a pivotal moment, with a growing body of research reinforcing their essential role in education. Reports from the Government, the Cultural Learning Alliance, the Campaign for the Arts, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, and the Centre for Social Justice all highlight the significant impact of arts, culture and creativity education on young people's cognitive development, well-being, and future prospects (see Annex 1).

##### **Background**

3. Over the past five years, REACH has worked in partnership with York's creative and cultural sectors to embed arts, culture and creativity into the city's educational landscape.
4. REACH is York's Local Cultural Education Partnership and is the delivery partner for the children and young people's element of York's Creative Future: York's Culture Strategy 2020 – 2025. This aims for York to be a city where children and young people have an entitlement to the arts, culture and creativity, particularly children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and those with additional needs and/or disabilities.
5. Putting cultural opportunities and creative skills within reach of every child and young person is a central aim of York as a UNESCO Creative City of Media Arts, linked as it is to the pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations.

## REACH Projects and Programmes

6. Over the last six years, as the partnership struggled to secure funding, REACH supported and implemented a number of exciting projects across the city, all targeted at children and young people likely to miss out on the opportunities the arts, creativity and culture have to offer.

- Bags of Creativity with IVE, Arts Council England Bridge Organisation for Yorkshire and the Humber;
- Bags of Creativity with the University of York's 'Festival of Ideas';
- Creative Doodle Books with York St John University
- UNESCO/Viborg 'Draw with Denmark' Campaigns
- 50 Creative and Fun Things to Do in York before you are 12!

Feedback on these projects was fantastic but REACH recognised that more needed to be done.

7. In 2022, REACH submitted a Partnership Investment Bid and received £50,000 from IVE, with £25,000 match funding from City of York Council. It is important to note that without the match funding from the City of York Council, none of the impact and outcomes detailed in this report would have been possible. With this funding we have:

- Developed the REACH 'Make it York' Directory – an on-line platform connecting artists, creatives, and cultural organisations offer with schools.
- In 2023, REACH worked with Dr Federico Pendenza and Dr Liz Haddon from the University of York: School of Arts and Creative Technologies to research Schools' Engagement with Creative and Cultural Education. (see Annex 2)
- In consultation with the Assistant Director of Education and Skills at the City of York Council, REACH identified a target group of schools to work with. These schools have between 20% and 41% of children on free school meals; three of these schools are 'well below' national average in reading, writing and maths [in line with the lowest 10% schools in England]. The vast majority of the schools have higher than the national average of children receiving SEN support and three of the schools have between 10% and 13% of children whose first language is not English.

- Our target schools were:
  - York High School
  - Inspire Alternative Provision
  - Hob Moor Oaks Academy
  - Burton Green Primary School
  - Clifton Green Primary School
  - Haxby Road Primary School
  - Hob Moor Community Academy Primary School
  - St. George's RC Primary School
  - St Lawrence's CE Primary School
  - Tang Hall Primary School
  - Yearsley Grove Primary School

8. To enable the schools to develop new ways of working and to establish new partnerships with the cultural and creative sector REACH provided the schools with two grants.
  - Grant 1 – £250 per school: to book one creative activity with an organisation which is new to the school, using the REACH directory on the 'Make It York' website  
<https://www.makeityork.com/culture/reach-young-people-hub/>
  - Grant 2 - £500 per school: to develop a mini project which strengthens cultural and creative provision in school. It is for activity which takes place in school and includes direct delivery with the schools' target group of young people.
9. Eleven professionals, ranging from freelance creative practitioners to representatives from both York's leading and emerging arts organisations, were involved in the programme as REACH Champions (Annex 4). Each Champion was partnered with one of our target schools. Their role was to support the schools during the programme, helping them to understand the high-quality arts, creative and cultural sector in York and how schools can develop sustainable and impactful partnerships with the sector. Each Champion brought sector expertise into the programme which in turn meant that each partnership was entirely unique.
10. REACH was given a Concessionary Day at the Barbican on Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> July 2024. The event aimed to celebrate York's children and young people and their achievements. It was an opportunity for children and young people to share their creativity, and what they've learned and enjoyed through the REACH programme, with their teachers, peers, parents and carers and invited guests. The Mini Projects were completed by June 2024 and the impact of these

activities was showcased at the REACH Celebration Event at the Barbican Centre.

11. In 2024, REACH worked in collaboration with York St John University, in a research and development project led by Sarah-Jane Gibson and Murphy McCaleb, and funded by The Institute of Social Justice. This research project aimed to work with school leaders to understand what prevents effective arts, culture and creativity education being on offer to everyone and how we can help design and deliver a new strategy for effective arts, culture and creativity education for all in the City of York. This work is on-going.

## **Next Steps**

12. REACH has continued to develop targeted outreach where we can make a difference. We are continuing to develop programmes such as Bags of Creativity, Doodle Books and Draw with Denmark, which focus on encouraging children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, those eligible for free school meals, and young people with additional needs to experience storytelling, art and design, dance, drama and music!
13. Through the following projects, REACH is continuing to share 'what works', developing new partners, partnerships and collaborative activities and will engage and connect with more education and community partners.
  - REACH has established new partnerships in the city between schools and creative and cultural organisations, with children and young people benefitting directly from delivery in schools which supports their mental health and wellbeing, employability skills, sense of belonging and enjoyment of school. It is important that these relationships can be sustained so that schools can continue to develop their provision of the arts, cultural and creative education.
  - We have an opportunity in the City of York to do things differently, working with providers across the City of York, and looking at the national and international research, we want to develop an essential/ creative skill set which will better equip our young people for life and success in the world of work and help them improve their attendance, their mental health and well-being, their behaviour and their school work. The skills framework would focus specifically on progression and outcomes for young people. It would focus on young people's development and how we can develop the skills and abilities that research suggests creates happy, healthy, safe and increasingly successful young people as

they navigate their way through school, community and into work and adult life. (see Annex 5)

- REACH is working with a group of our schools and youth groups to support many more children and young people to be part of this year's 'Draw with Denmark' campaign – this year's theme is 'Angels of Hope' and looks for children and young people's responses to the opportunities and challenges facing the world. Pilot activity has been carried out at Lord Deramore's Primary School, Ralph Butterfield Primary School and with Strensall's Young Artists group supported by ward funding. (see Annex 6) The initiative will be launched after Easter to schools and youth and community groups.
- We have been working with students at York College who have developed a 'Green' Bag of Creativity. This is currently at the planning stage, but will focus on the environment, climate and sustainability. We are talking with colleagues at Portakabin about supporting this programme. (see Annex 7)

14. Our aim is to research, innovate, and challenge schools to think differently about how arts, culture and creativity can drive improved outcomes, tackle poor attendance, enhance health and well-being, and build the essential/creative skills young people need to thrive at school, at work and in their lives generally. Looking ahead, we have no funding, but we are preparing bids for:
- Arts Council funding to develop stronger and more creative links with Viborg in Denmark. We hope to secure funding for a group of teachers, creatives and academics to visit Viborg.
  - Arts Council funding for a two-year "Essential/Creative Skills" project – to develop a coordinated, research-driven approach to developing the essential/creative skills at the heart of the arts, culture and creative education in a targeted group of schools, improving outcomes, attendance, mental health and well-being and life chances.

### **Some Questions**

15. REACH is York's Local Cultural Education Partnership and is the delivery partner for the children and young people's element of York's Creative Future: York's Culture Strategy 2020 – 2025. Going forward:
- We need to find a new home for REACH.
  - We need to secure funding for REACH to continue to make a difference where it matters.
  - We need letters of support for the bids outlined above.

- We need to know how the City of York Council sees the role of REACH.

### **Consultation**

16. Not applicable.

### **Options**

17. Not applicable.

### **Analysis**

18. Not applicable.

### **Council Plan**

19. Not applicable.

### **Implications**

20. Not applicable.

### **Risk Management**

21. Not applicable.

### **Recommendations**

22. Members are asked to note the work done by the York Cultural Education Partnership.

Reason: So that members are aware of the work undertaken by York Cultural Education Partnership.

## Contact Details

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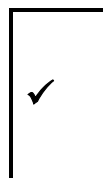
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**Chief Officers Responsible for the report:**

**Maxine Squire**

Assistant Director, Education and Skills

**Report  
Approved**



**Date** 19 February 2025

**For further information please contact the author of the report**

**Wards Affected:** List wards or tick box to indicate all

**All** ☒

**Background Papers:** None.

**Annexes:**

Annex 1: Supporting Research

Annex 2: Schools' Engagement with Creative and Cultural Education

Annex 3: REACH Projects

Annex 4: REACH Champions

Annex 5: Essential/Creative Skills Framework

Annex 6: Made in York 'Angels of Hope'

Annex 7: Bags of Creativity