

SAFEDI: SOCIAL ART FOR EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

EVALUATION REPORT

Sally Fort 2022

www.sallyfort.com



Arts and
Humanities
Research Council

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ON 'EDI' IN THIS REPORT

The report uses Atkinson Hyperlegible font which was developed by The Braille Institute to make reading easier for those with visual impairments or dyslexia, by ensuring every character is completely distinctive. If you can, please download Atkinson Hyperlegible¹ to ensure the font is as readable as it can be.

THE ABBREVIATION: EDI is used as an abbreviation of Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion.

THE SOCIAL MODEL OF EXCLUSION: Throughout this report the social model of exclusion is used. This means that exclusion happens because of barriers society creates rather than being something static, fixed, and internal within people who have experienced exclusion.

PERSON FIRST VS IDENTITY FIRST LANGUAGE: The report may use either person first or identity first language, depending on the context. Identity first language places a characteristic as a fixed part of someone's identity. For instance, saying 'someone is disabled' is identity first language. Person first language places the whole person as the core emphasis, and any individual characteristics as a secondary aspect. For instance, saying 'someone with a disability' is person first language.

The best version of person first or identity first changes depending on the context. For instance, 'autistic' (identity first language) is usually the preference of people on the autistic spectrum. And while some people call themselves Black, others use 'Person of Colour'. Where it isn't known, the report gives alternatives, may switch between identity or person first to accommodate different preferences, or may say 'someone facing / who has faced exclusion'.

Wherever possible, the preference of a particular person or group has been used if it is known, and people have been asked to describe their diversity in their own words rather than using tick box categories.

¹ [Download the Atkinson Hyperlegible Font | Braille Institute here.](#)

USING THE TERM ACCESS: Frequently the report discusses access, because the social model of exclusion is clear that the emphasis for change is on those who create barriers to remove them – thus improving access. Therefore, it has been used for its ability to be wholly inclusive of all excluded people, whatever the specifics of their situation may be.

CONDITION VS ILLNESS VS DISABILITY: In this report, unless a specific disability has been identified, the word ‘condition’ is generally used. This is because it includes those who identify themselves as disabled or living with a disability, as well as people who may not have a formal diagnosis, or who have a long-lasting illness, biological or neurological situation which they don’t think of in terms of a disability. The Equality Act is clear that all of these are protected characteristics under the ‘Disability’ section of the Act.

READABILITY:

1. The report was created and intended to be read in the Atkinson Hyperlegible font to support those with visual impairment or dyslexia.
2. The report is written in plain text as much as possible to help with speech readers and translations.
3. It uses blank space and visuals where possible to make reading easier.
4. Visuals include alt text descriptions. (I.E. written descriptions of the image embedded into the computer code of the document as an automated accessibility feature of computers and devices which can read text out to help reduce visual and literacy barriers.).
5. Text is always a minimum of 12 points in font size.

POLITICAL EQUALITY:

Some artists commissioned discussed the role of colonialisation in the languages they use and the tensions this creates in work aiming to improve equality, diversity, and inclusion. When asked if the report should include or be translated into other languages to acknowledge or reduce the problem, they clearly said it should be written in English.

The report acknowledges the complexities of colonialism the project brings being borne out of major national funders and universities. Whilst this report has been commissioned as an independent evaluation outside of these institutions and every effort is made to remain objective, the author recognises the tension between independence and the responsibilities to everyone involved in funding, commissioning, managing, delivering, and taking part in the project (as per any evaluation).

RESPONDING TO FEEDBACK:

The report presents the learning as positive, future facing considerations. This is in response to one of the findings of the project. That is, people who have faced exclusion find discussing those experiences adds to the negativity, fatigue, and emotional labour they live with. Looking at positive futures, celebrating the good things, and finding ways to make things better is a more helpful and healthy way to change the status quo.

The report has been through several edits so that all involved have had chance to check they are happy with how people and situations have been represented.

The report will be shared online for transparency, and as a thank you to everyone who contributed, so they know what will happen because of their involvement.

Finally, the report acknowledges that despite attempts to respect what matters to people who have faced exclusion, there may still be mistakes. Please contact the author in this instance, to ensure better practice in future and where possible, online versions of the report will be updated accordingly.

EVALUATION APPROACH

The evaluation started with a theory of change², visualising the descriptions set out in the original funding application. This was used as the basis for all monitoring and evaluation.

Initially, based on the original project plan and delivery timeline, once artists confirmed their plans, the people they would involve and the kinds of general direction they might take the work in, the intention was to signpost each commission to an existing tried and tested data collection toolkit, specifically chosen to complement the people involved in the project and better understand what made change happen, and how much it happened. This would be complemented by end point interviews for all partners, artists, and researchers.

Once SAFEDI got underway in practice, it quickly became clear each commission would work to a different timeline, and details of participants / collaborators would not really be known until the commission was well under way. Therefore, planning up front was impractical, and a more agile approach was needed. The evaluation approach switched to a more responsive mode focussing on qualitative data collection with outcomes mapping and case studies. This had the benefit of a rich data, though was more time intensive than anticipated.

² https://miro.com/app/board/o9J_lCdyg6U=?share_link_id=976384498832

³ <https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/search/site/advocacy>

It also became clear that all partners involved came on board at different times and had a different starting point in their policy development process, so baselines were also needed to really identify any change the project might achieve.

The evaluation of policy change was supported by a desk review of existing toolkits and guidance documents³ outlining existing models of policy and advocacy evaluation – covering evaluation techniques, ethical considerations, and policy and advocacy models.

Qualitative data collection relied on a triangulated mixed method approach between artists, partners, participants / collaborators, researchers, and the project team including:

- Start-up interview with artists to hear about their overall vision and plans for their partners and participants / collaborators.
- Mid way catch-up to clarify how best to gather feedback from participants such as what needs and communication preferences they might have. For participants / collaborators, the approach was that everyone should be invited to give feedback, and no-one should feel obliged. Artists brokered the conversations so that they could explain the context and assure confidentiality.
- Rich reflective end point interviews with artists to review their experiences, achievements, challenges, and findings.

- Baseline interviews with partners to discuss their policy situation around equality, diversity and inclusion at the outset.
- End-point partner interviews to identify changes made.
- End point interviews with the research and project team, to understand the successes and challenges from their experience.
- Observation of regular team meetings once or twice a month to follow the process of the project.
- Open ended invitations to describe diversity in artists and participator / collaborator's own words (or opt out) – for a nuanced understanding of what exclusion means in this context.
- Desk reviews of digital resources created throughout the project.

Quantitative data collection was minimal, tracking outputs aligned to the targets presented in the theory of change, regarding numbers of artists, artworks, researchers, meetings, artworks, partners, policies and participants / collaborators. This data was collected during meetings and interviews already taking place, through consent forms used as the basis for counting participants / collaborators; and by reviewing digital resources created throughout the project.

DATA ANALYSED

- Start, middle and end point interviews with each artist commissioned (18 interviews)
- Baseline interviews with 5 of the 6 partners; and end point interviews with all 6 partners (11 interviews)
- End point interviews with participants of 4 of the 6 commissions (4 interviews)
- Start, middle and end point interviews with Lead Research fellow (3 interviews)
- End point interviews with each co-researcher (4 interviews)
- End point interview with Creative Producer (1 interview)
- Observation of 11 start-up, artist and project team meetings and 1 full project sharing event.
- 28 digital resources including documentation, sketches, work in process notes and quotes, blog posts, websites, publications, online articles, social media posts, films and presentations
- 28 team meeting minutes
- Desk review of 9 policy evaluation toolkits and reports

INTRODUCTION TO SAFEDI

The project was first developed by Professor Amanda Ravetz, Manchester Metropolitan University and developed with R.M. Sánchez-Camus (Lead Artist), in response to the Arts & Humanities Research Council's (AHRC) 'EDI Fellowship' call out, which it describes on the AHRC website as *"Ten arts and humanities researchers receiving funding to further the impact of their equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) research."* Ravetz previously worked in partnership with Castlefield Gallery and Axis, exploring the ways in which the value of socially engaged artists is overlooked by the visual arts sector. Noting that social artists are uniquely placed to authentically work in the (often excluded and marginalised) communities they themselves come from, it was recommended more be done to support and recognise the work of such artists to help diversify the arts sector. Amanda's fellowship proposal aimed to do just this, by commissioning socially engaged artists to collaborate with their communities, to uncover barriers that prevent people accessing visual arts spaces, and as a result better understand how such arts spaces could improve their policies to be more welcoming to those who have experienced exclusion.

Working in partnership with Axis and Social Art Network, a proposal was created which brought these elements together with arts partners across the country who might benefit from the work by improving their inclusivity across, for example, audiences, staff members, collections, or programming. In addition, a small team of four research colleagues from Manchester Metropolitan University's School of Art was embedded, to learn more about social art's potential, the process of carrying out public or community engagement, working in partnership, how that plays out in the academic context, and to input into the policy making process with the arts partners.

Axis and Social Art Network enabled the research group to bring ideas out of the university and make them real for practicing social artists in its networks; getting involved in commissioning; supporting the needs of artists; scaffolding good practice; and developing communication and advocacy opportunities for sharing in the wider sector.

Three action research questions were used to help bring learning together:

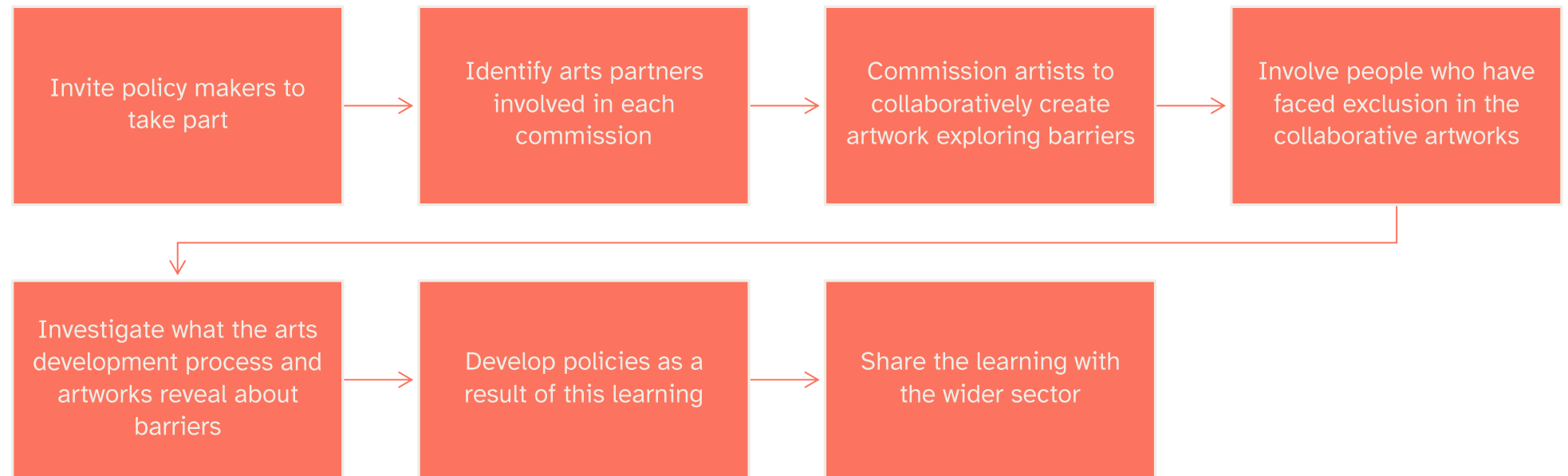
How can policy makers (commissioners, funders, influencers) be better equipped through community feedback?

How can artists be better supported to bring out community voices and concerns?

How can communities be more authentically and diversely represented within larger frameworks of governance?

The project co-incided with the second Covid lockdown . Adaptations were made regularly to make delivery feasible for all involved.

PROJECT PLAN



PLANNED OUTPUTS

POLICY	ARTISTS COMMISSIONS	POLICY DEVELOPMENT	RESEARCH	SHARING & DISSEMINATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •1 position paper outlining the starting points •6 partner organisations •12 policy makers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •1 inclusive shortlist •60 community participants engaged •6 high quality artistic outputs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •1 debrief session with 6 partners and 12 policy makers •6 policies redrafted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •4 researcher mentees •4 mentoring meetings •3 full project team meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •1 SocialWorks? journal issue •Works embedded into online Social Art Library •1 Evaluation report

PLANNED OUTCOMES

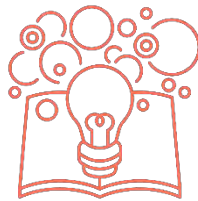
SHORT TERM OUTCOMES



MARGINALISED PEOPLE

Marginalised people feel more valued

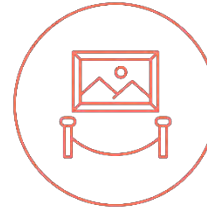
Marginalised people feel more represented



ARTISTS

Increased resilience of artist led organisations in covid times

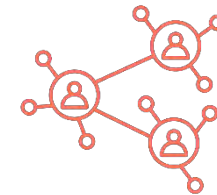
Improved understanding of the support social artists need.



ARTS PARTNERS

New audiences reached

New understanding of EDI considerations / practices in arts and cultural organisations



WIDER SECTOR

Stronger existing research and engagement networks

New research and engagement networks reached

Raised profile of social art practice

MEDIUM TERM OUTCOMES

Stronger Advocacy

More inclusive and representative policy making

More inclusive policies

LONG TERM IMPACT

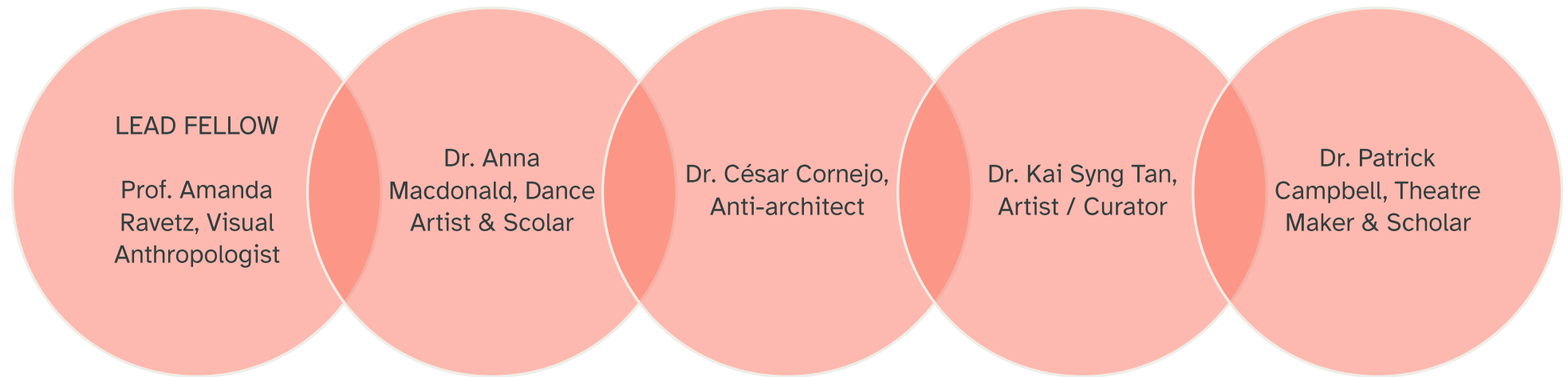
More diverse and inclusive programming

More diverse workforce

More representative collections

New and more diverse audiences

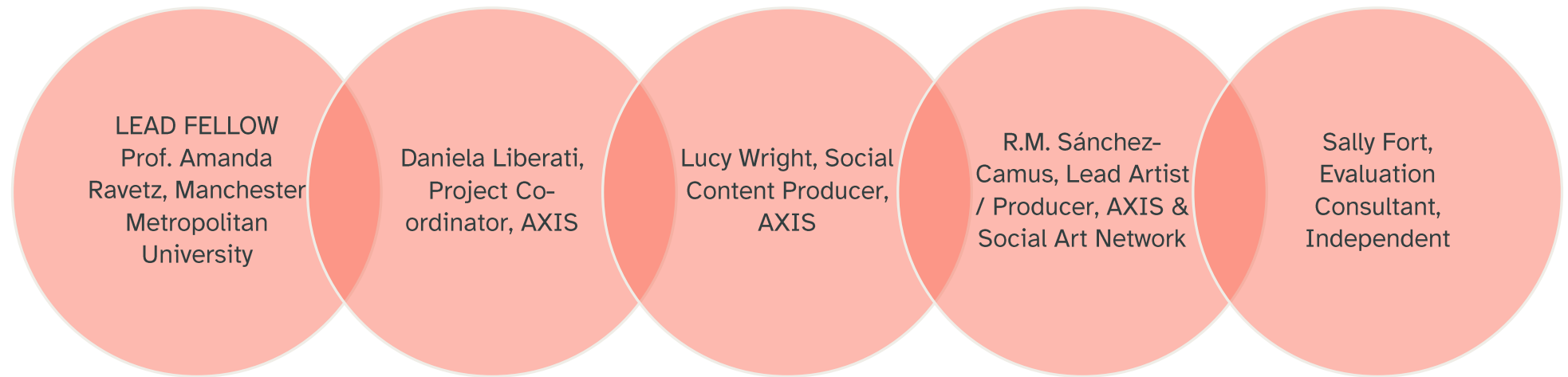
THE RESEARCH TEAM: MANCHESTER METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY



The research team came together from across the Art & Performance Research Hub at Manchester Metropolitan University and...

- worked in partnership with commissioned artists to support them as a critical friend
- learned from artists about how the social arts practice affects policy development
- held research group meetings as a space to share and reflect on their experiences of the project and how their own experiences of exclusion or bias fed into their understanding
- joined in with team / artists meetings to ask clarifying questions and offer additional insight
- worked with Amanda Ravetz to learn more about the process of research funding, collaborative fellowship practice and the relationships between academia and diversity
- collaborated with artists to create articles or other content for journal publications

THE PROJECT TEAM

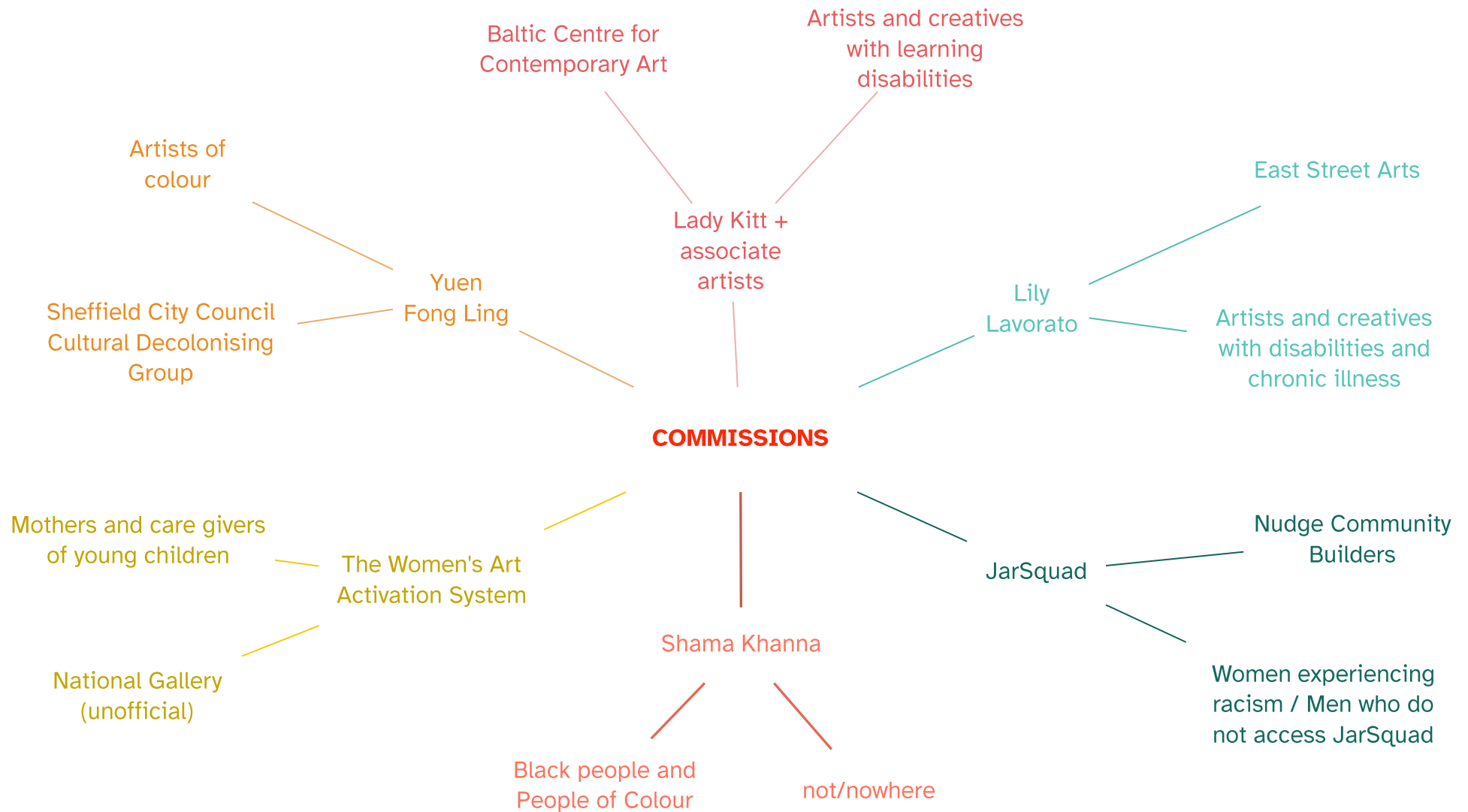


The project team worked hard to

- Make sure the programme happened
- Balance the big picture and the details
- Keep information flowing between funders, partners, researchers and artists
- Advise on ethical practice
- Promote opportunities and practice sharing online
- Co-ordinate communications and budgets
- Run fortnightly meetings to keep the project flowing
- Facilitate artist's wellbeing meetings
- Share findings with the wider sector
- Ensure the continuation of the work beyond SAFEDI's Arts & Humanities Research Council funding.

THE COMMISSIONS

Six artists / collectives were selected and commissioned to work with a partner and community of people who are underrepresented among visual arts organisations due to exclusion or bias. (See Case studies for details of the commissions).



IMPACT

The project achieved and often exceeded almost all its targets (outputs) by bringing to fruition...

POLICY

1 position paper outlining the project's starting points, published by Arts Industry⁴

9 partner organisations including East Street Arts; Nudge Community Builders; Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art; not/nowhere; Sheffield Archives and Local Study Centre; Sheffield Museums; Sheffield City Council Planning, plus The National Gallery as an unofficial home of one of the commissions; and project partners AXIS and Social Art Network.

20 policy makers comprising 12 staff from partner organisations and representatives of Sheffield City Council Business Development (Culture); Arts Council England; Sheffield Racial Equality Commission; Headway Arts (Northumberland) and Block 336 (London)

ARTIST

COMMISSIONS

1 inclusive shortlist of 6 artists / collectives totalling 12 individual artists. After a call for proposals in text and audio, with a shared space for questions and answers during the application process, artists were shortlist based on the variety, experience, diversity and strength of proposal. The commissioned artists / collectives were:

Lady Kitt with Sarah Li, Sofia Barton and Dan Russel⁵

JarSquad: Rachel Dobbs, Tess Wilmot, Carmen Wong⁷

The Women's Art Activation System (WAAS); Sharon Bennett, Sarah Dixon⁹

Lily Lavorato⁶

Shama Khanna⁸

Yuen Fong Ling¹⁰

⁴ <https://www.artsindustry.co.uk/feature/2502-the-word-finding-your-new-visual-arts-audience>

⁵ <https://www.ladykitt.com/enshrine>

⁶ <https://www.lilylavorato.co.uk/>

⁷ <https://jarsquad.com/>

⁸ <https://flatness.eu/contributors/shama-khanna/>

⁹ <https://thewaas.org/>

¹⁰ <https://www.yuenfongling.com/>

ARTIST COMMISSIONS

The six artists / collectives described themselves as one or more of the following:

Female; woman; cis male White Irish; artist of colour; light-skinned Chinese person; ethnically excluded; white; South Asian; White-British Italian; Chinese descent Middle class; working class; mother; over 50; carer Migrant; outsider; second generation migrant; Past experience of limiting chronic health conditions; struggling with mental health; managing childhood and adult trauma; long term mental health conditions; physical disabilities; long term chronic health; non-disabled; neurodiverse; ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer and other self-defining or non-defining terms); trans; Gender non-conforming; Queer; gay; QTIPOC (Queer, Trans and / or Intersex person of colour)

220 community participants identifying as creatives; mothers and child rearers; women experiencing racism; arts organisation staff; LGBTQ+; global majority; carers; working class; learning disabled; having long term mental health condition; being neurodiverse (including autistic, dyslexic, ADHD, Dyspraxic); having a physical disability; having a long term chronic illness; being Deaf and / or BPOC (Black people and people of colour).

Over 50 high quality artistic outputs: The commissions led to the creation of 3 films; 1 installation including around 20 small works; one game; one publication including 7 articles; a plethora of preserves; one touring ceramic pot; 11 remote art workshop kits; and many sketches, illustrations, and photographs. Quality was measured by these selection criteria and the involvement of an independent EDI Consultant¹¹ in the artist selection process.

1. *Feasibility* - How much does ambition match practicalities? Are there partnerships in place to support this? What communities do artists want to work with and is there support? Is the budget sound?
2. *Innovation* - How strong is the project idea? Is the art making central to the work and unique?
3. *EDI Focus* - Does the proposal incorporate EDI at its core? Does the applicant have knowledge of EDI?
4. *Social Making* - Is there a high level of participation? Will the proposal develop dialogue for policy making?
5. *Track Record* - Does the artists have the experience to hold both the conversations, the research, and the making?

¹¹ <http://www.thanhsinden.co.uk/>

POLICY DEVELOPMENT	<p>2 debrief sessions; 1 online cross-project debrief and practice sharing with 6 partners and 12 policy makers and 1 inclusion in 1 additional meetup hosted by Social Art Network London¹²</p> <p>4 policy change works in progress across large, medium, and small-scale arts organisations throughout the North East, Yorkshire, London and the South West.</p>
RESEARCH	<p>4 researcher mentees Dr Anna Macdonald, Dr César Cornejo, Dr Kai Syng Tan and Dr Patrick Campbell, who between them have now gone on to create a new research group with additional funding and embed their SAFEDI experiences in the development of a new course.</p> <p>4 mentoring meetings which strengthened internal relationships, practice and wellbeing.</p> <p>28 project meetings including 3 full project team meetings; fortnightly partnership meetings; 3 artists wellbeing sessions and 1 cross-project debrief.</p>
SHARING & DISSEMINATION	<p>2 commissions archived digitally¹³ on the Social Art Library; 6 six short reports on each commission¹⁴ on the Axis blog; and a dedicated new microsite for all things SAFEDI¹⁵</p> <p>Evaluation report</p>
LEGACY	<p>In addition, the seeds planted by SAFEDI will continue through:</p> <p>1 SocialWorks? Journal issue in summer 2022 dedicated to EDI with, amongst wider content, work representing each of the commissioned projects – such as interviews, academic reflections, illustrations and excerpts.</p> <p>Inclusion in the 2022 Social Art Network Summit where artists will share their SAFEDI practice sharing and learning</p> <p>1 set of commissioning and recruitment guidelines to be published online for the sector</p> <p>1 new research and networking group – SAIL, Social Arts Inclusion Lab, which has secured seed funding to continue to build and exchange knowledge with other researchers exploring the same field</p>

¹² [SAN LDN MARCH MEETUP – Social Art Network](#)

¹³ [SAFEDI - Social Art Library](#)

¹⁴ [SAFEDI | Axisweb: Contemporary Art UK Network](#)

¹⁵ <https://safedi.org.uk>

“It’s given us a new way to think about artists commissions for future ways of working so that we have more artist interrogation of policy and practice and it’s not just about commissioning a piece of art.”

Ingrid Banerjee-Marvin, East Street Arts

LEGACY

Continued relationships between artists and partners. Sheffield will continue to benefit from the practical work Yuen has carried out because of SAFEDI, which will feed into the recommendations of the Racial Equality Commission, and from there into Sheffield City Council’s future policy and practice. The Baltic are keen to continue working with Lady Kitt to develop more inclusive development activity. East Street Arts will soon be meeting with Lily to review the learning she brings on behalf of her collaborators, and to use the model she developed in SAFEDI to conduct a similar exercise with staff internally.

1 potential new national network of visual art organisations commissioning artists to explore further policy work. Two of the arts partners involved are on similar trajectories and have been connected through SAFEDI to explore the idea of a national consortium model.

2 new transferable models of arts practice. Lily Lavorato and The Women’s Art Activation System (WAAS) created activities in their commission which can easily be transferred to other arts organisations. WAAS have already had interest from Manchester Art Gallery, following their involvement in a panel event based on their SAFEDI commission, as part of an inclusion symposia hosted at the gallery.

WHAT DIFFERENCE HAS SAFEDI MADE?

All the immediate changes intended by SAFEDI were realised to varying degrees.

Summaries are provided below, and more detail can be found in the Case Studies section.



OUTCOMES FOR MARGINALISED PEOPLE

Marginalised people feel more valued: *Achieved in 6 commissions.* This was the most strongly achieved outcome with communities in all the commissions feeling valued by the artists. Feeling valued by the arts partners needs to be the next step.

Marginalised people feel more represented:

Achieved in 4 commissions. This was strongly achieved across most commissions. For this to occur, commissions needed to bring the profile of excluded people and their voice to the attention of arts organisations.



OUTCOMES FOR ARTISTS

Increased resilience of artist led organisations in covid times:

Achieved in 3 commissions. Three commissions directly affected artist led organisations. In each case, the work brought something extra to the business that would not have happened otherwise. SAFEDI also supported the development of the Social Art Network and the Social Art Library through their close involvement with Axis.



Improved understanding of the support social artists need:

Achieved in 3 commissions and the research group. This was most strongly achieved by artists becoming more confident self-advocates. Understanding the access needs of the artists is crucial to achieving this outcome. It was also achieved through researcher-artist relationships and research meetings, where researchers could reflect in detail on the commissions. More details were shared in artist wellbeing meetings and evaluation interviews. Though confidential, these should filter through to influence the sector in time.

OUTCOMES FOR ARTS PARTNERS

New audiences reached:

Achieved in 1 commission. New audiences would include participants engaging with the partner for the first time, and as a step towards this, people engaging with the arts (via the artists) who typically would not. In one commission the artists themselves became new audiences to the organisation they were involved with. What started out as impenetrable and huge at the outset, became familiar and 'theirs' by the end. See Findings, Section 3 for more on what it takes to meet this outcome.

New understanding of EDI in arts and cultural organisations: *Achieved in 3 commissions.* This was successful in three commissions where the relationships between the artists and the organisations were the strongest and had prior history together, so more could be achieved in the time available.



OUTCOMES FOR THE WIDER SECTOR

Stronger existing research and engagement networks: *Achieved in 2 commissions and the research group.* Two commissions grew out of existing networks; what SAFEDI was uniquely able to provide here was the opportunity to turn theory into practice. Both artists are still involved with the networks so the impact of the work will help refine and improve future work. Within the research group, though researchers shared the same research department, they had not worked together so closely before, particularly not in such a supportive, reflective way. As a result, they overcame some preconceptions about one another, grew closer as colleagues, developed new areas of shared interest, and improved their understanding of funding, policy and community engagement in the higher education environment.

New research and engagement networks reached: *Achieved in 4 commissions and the research group.* Two commissions achieved this by connecting to others outside of SAFEDI, plugging into wider networks of artists, practitioners, programmers and curators. SAFEDI has connected two other partners to explore the possibility of a new national consortia for the visual arts sector. The research group have secured seed funding to grow a new research network (SAIL – Social Art Inclusion Lab) which widens the learning, brings in new members and seeks crossover with other relevant networks.

Raised profile of social art practice: *Achieved in 3 commissions and in dissemination and advocacy work.* Arts partners already on the pathway to more inclusive policy were most open to what social art could bring to their organisation. In all three cases the partners want to continue working with the artists. One significantly changed their engagement practice; one their outlook on internal infrastructure; and one on more accessible policy making. Two have also updated how they commission artists in the future because of SAFEDI. Advocacy and dissemination work is already reaching national levels, including Arts Council England through advocacy meetings and as evidence included in National Portfolio Organisation applications.

MEDIUM TERM OUTCOMES

These outcomes should start to happen more in the next year or so because of the changes and learning already achieved. Two of the commissions and some sharing and dissemination work are already starting to create progress in these areas.

Stronger Advocacy

- *The Human Memorial* commission work feeds back to the Racial Equality Commission findings for Sheffield City Council because of the ideas now tested out in practice.
- The research group has now evolved, securing funding to form a follow-on research network and project called *SAIL*: Social Art Inclusion Lab, to build on SAFEDI and create more opportunities to cross over with other research groups and networks exploring the same themes. Some of the work *SAIL* will do includes hosting events for early career researchers and PhD students, develop a symposium and a cultural discussion group, and set up an associate fellows scheme.
- Amanda Ravetz and R.M. Sánchez-Camus have held meetings with Arts Council England's Director of Research to discuss how the project can influence the visual arts sector nationally.
- A body of documentation now exists for future reference across the SAFEDI web pages on Axis, Social Art Network, The Social Art Library and SAFEDI microsite, as well as the websites of the artists

More Inclusive and Representative Decision Making

- *The Human Memorial commission* changed Sheffield City Council's public art commissioning to focus more on engagement, making art with and for Sheffield people, rather than commissioning art objects from a small pool of artists.
- The Baltic senior leadership team are reviewing the en-SHRINE commission, and will meet with artists and collaborators to discuss next steps for policy development
- Co-researchers can now create more inclusive funding applications, noting the shared, collaborative fellowship model rather than elevating the work one academic and an exploratory rather than prescriptive approach.

More Inclusive Policies

While policy *change* has not happened yet, policy *influence* has, shown by the impact of the Sheffield commission on the Race Equality Commission and City Council; the Baltic leadership team's interest in meeting artist Kitt as part of their policy reviews; the small arts organisations reviewing their positions after en-SHRINE, Assemblies and Milky Way commissions; and by Axis who will share policies online for better transparency, and embed the commissioning guidelines into their practice.

LONG TERM IMPACT

Typically impact goals happen after more than a year and can frequently take several years. Often one project like SAFEDI contributes alongside other factors to achieve impact at a much wider or deeper level than can be seen straight away. None the less, some progress is already starting to be made at impact level with a small number of the SAFEDI partners.

More diverse and inclusive programming

In Sheffield, Yuen's work has dramatically changed the way public art officer works. Public art has been part of the council's planning team, so the artworks were seen more as city scaping and 'assets to look after' than a live process of public conversation.

Yuen has been able to influence commissioning and procurement documents, to remove bias and open the process out to a wider, more diverse range of artists. He has also highlighted the importance of the voice of Sheffield's people in shaping the art they want in their streets, so public art will now have equal weight placed on engagement.

More representative collections

Following on from Sheffield's new approach to developing public art, their collection of artworks across the city spaces will become more representative now they have been opened up to shared decision making.

The Baltic have also diversified their collection by accessioning a small paper sculpture by Lady Kitt, created as part of the en-SHRINE commission, into their archive. Typically, the archive only contains digital and paper documents, so this is one of the first artworks to enter the collection and will take its place as a reminder of more accessible processes for the organisation.

More diverse workplaces

As yet, there are no direct indications of this taking place, though commissions with East Street Arts and the Baltic both have the potential to start this conversation.

ADDITIONAL OUTCOMES

As well as the outcomes designed into the project, a range of others also occurred.

Participants / collaborators who have been marginalised



- Greater independence and a better knowledge of local resources and places for women newly arriving in the country
- New friends made across cultures for women newly arriving in the country

Arts Organisations



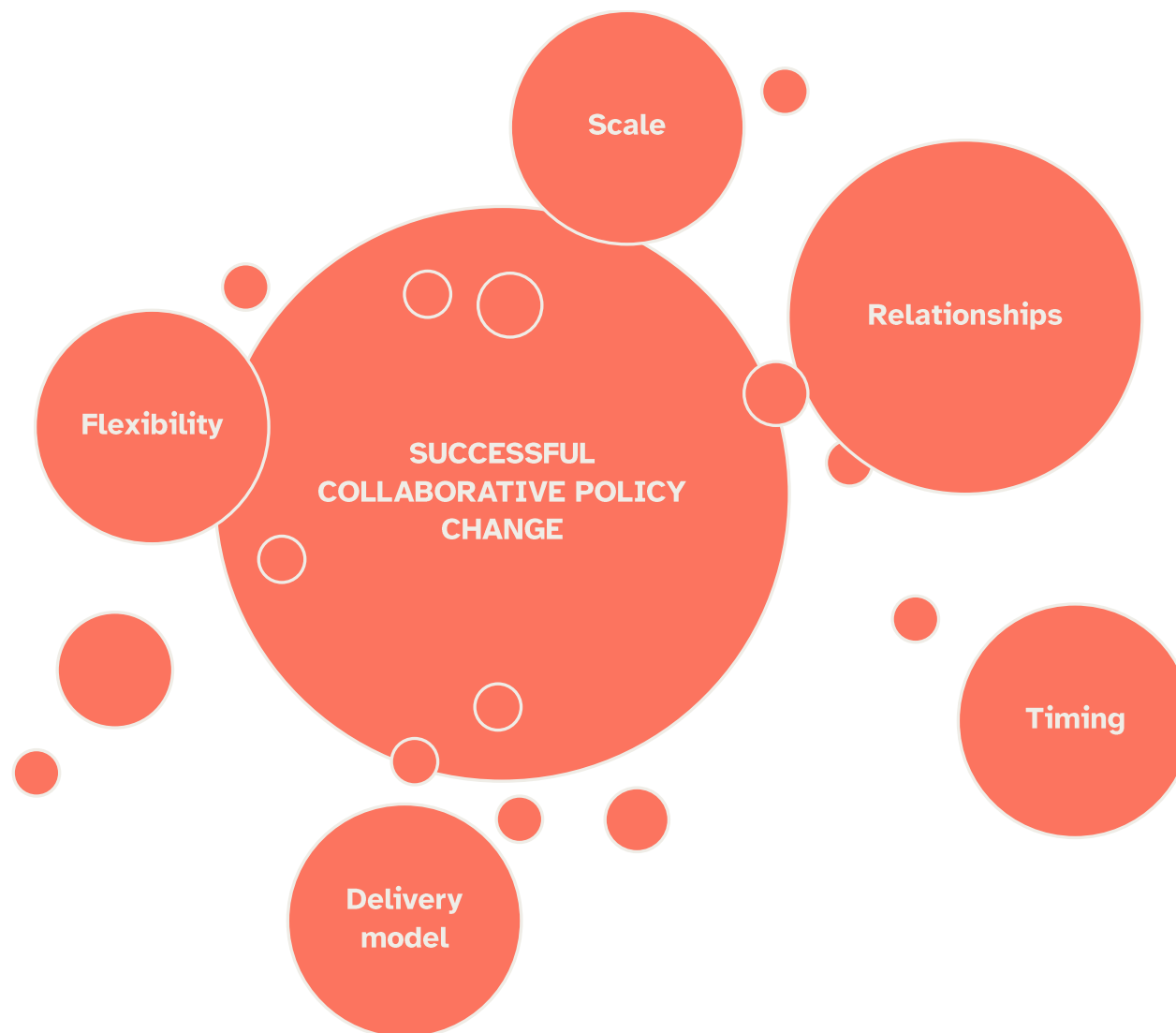
- New staff voices informing internal inclusion
- Proof of more creative ways to identify access barriers by comparing arts commission results to formal access audits

Artists



- Increased profile, status and experience for future work for newly commissioned artists
- More formal approaches to taking care of and advocating for their health and wellbeing, especially for artists living in with disabilities and long term health conditions
- Adaptable models of transferable activity that can be promoted to or commissioned by other arts organisations
- Feeling part of something bigger
- More confidence in their practice because of recognition of the value of their work in an academic context
- Experience of new types of arts practice
- New experience of working in partnership, especially with visual art venues
- Potential new commissions and future work with their partners
- Better knowledge of and confidence in arts production skills; and understanding the role and value of involving producers
- Feeling less alone.

FINDINGS PART 1: POLICY & PARTNERSHIP



1. The most important finding from SAFEDI is that in every single aspect of EDI work, no one size fits all.

Equality, diversity and inclusion does not happen uniformly. It is as varied as the people involved. Everyone in any such collaboration needs to start with no assumptions and take time to really question, listen and be honest with one another, in every stage. All parties must be open to mistakes, corrections and learning on all sides.

This applies to everything from how people want to communicate or share information; to how they want to manage relationships; interact with partners; how many people or what kinds of people they want to involve; how to allocate resources; the ways in which arts organisations do or don't create or use policies; what people understand by the word 'policy' and if this is a positive or a negative thing; how organisations do or don't include all parts of society; whether the arts sector defines people as artists, audiences, participants or communities; and any other factor of this process. At every juncture and in every conversation across SAFEDI, assumptions were quickly brought to the surface. Being open to this and changing course is essential for positive progress.

2. Trust must be strong between arts partner and artist; between artist and the community they are working with; and between the community and their views on the likelihood of positive change.

a. Where relationships between artist and arts partner existed prior to this commission, policy change work could happen more quickly.

This was the case with the Human Memorial and en-SHRINE commissions.

b. Trust between arts partner and artist, or artist and their community of practice, needs several months if starting from scratch.

In *The Milky Way* and *Building Warmth* commissions, relationships with communities were new but easier to build because of the artists' affinities with the people they included, however relationships with partners were not already established, so it was harder to move from collaborative artwork towards policy influence.

c. Trust between excluded people and the likelihood of positive change is much harder.

For someone experiencing alienation, exclusion or bias often most of their life or over several generations, experience teaches them to be wary and protective. Mistrust is a survival mechanism. They invest time, emotional vulnerability, and physical and / or mental discomfort when participating in this work. They do so in

the hope things will change. They must see their input being acknowledged in tangible ways and arts partners must commit to letting them know exactly how things will be different as a result - to make sure their alienation is reduced not compounded. The *Building Warmth* and *Queer Diasporic Futurity* and *Human Memorial* commissions all experienced this wariness in different ways and with different outcomes.

d. Commissions highlighted two approaches of how best to become more inclusive which arts organisations must be aware of and follow according to what excluded communities tell them.

In some commissions, people who have been excluded took part because they agree 'nothing about us without us is for us' – the phrase adopted by disability rights campaigners in recent decades. Which means that people making decisions on behalf of others, without the involvement of those being 'othered', creates more exclusion. So, change must directly involve conversation with those who have previously been excluded. The *en-SHRINE* commission is one example of this approach. In other commissions, the more recent philosophy illustrated throughout Black Lives Matters events in 2020 was central. In this, the emphasis is on those who created exclusion and bias to do the work of putting things right, without asking people they excluded to give emotional resilience or labour to help those who made life hard. It isn't that input is unavailable, more that it is

created and shared in ways defined by people this exclusion has affected in their own way, at their own time, so they can control the authenticity of their message and the amount of toil it takes. In this instance, arts organisations need to find and go to the networks, communities and spaces holding this knowledge / content, rather than ask people to bring it to them. *Queer Diasporic Futurity* was one such example of this approach.

'Nothing without us' is more familiar to people excluded through disability and illness. 'Do the work' is more likely to be the case for people excluded through race or ethnicity. People excluded on other grounds may be more familiar with the 'nothing without us' approach even though they may not know of that slogan specifically.

These are not definitive rules, and arts organisations should follow the lead of those they want to welcome.

3. Partnerships can be successful when they come at the right time, and with enough time.

a. The right time: Arts partners who started the process of more inclusive policy change prior to SAFEDI achieved the most success.

Therefore, social art practice for policy change faces the dilemma of affecting change where the door is already open; or trying to influence organisations most likely to need change but least ready for it. Organisations without readiness or pre-existing

readiness artist relationships can need years of influence before any sort of action can happen, and this is beyond the resources of the SAFEDI.

b. Enough time: SAFEDI was an ambitious project for a 12-month timeframe. Ideally two to three years were needed to fully see the work through from start to finish.

SAFEDI essentially involved 7 stages: Identify partners + recruit artists + match artist to partner + confirm participants / collaborators + realise commissions + change policy + share findings for the wider sector (with research and evaluation running throughout).

Often the first step was recruiting the artist, *then* finding a partner, then the artist finding a community of collaborators and getting to know them, before the commission could be fully shaped and realised. For most, the time it took to confirm a partner and their participants / collaborators ate into the time that had been intended for policy change and sharing, so those later stages couldn't happen within the 12 months of the project. Where artists already had partners and collaborators from the outset, they could get further faster, sometimes reaching policy change and sharing.

In an ideal world, twelve months would be framed as a research and development process to complete these stages:

Identify partners + recruit artists + match artist to partner +

confirm participants / collaborators + develop plan for commission activity.

Then a second stage would realise the commissions, review findings, influence policy change, and share findings – including going back to the participants / collaborators to let them know what changes as a result of their involvement.

4. Amid the different styles of delivery models, collaboration proved more successful than activism.

a. Throughout the project the theme of activism was often discussed amongst artists and partners.

Social artists often come with first hand experiences of exclusion, which can bring authentic insight and guidance, and mistrust of institutions, because of power imbalances historically.

Collaboration can seem like compliance so a more activist, agitator or provocateur stance might be expected. However an open, honest, shared collaboration was what the individuals in the arts organisations most wanted. Likewise some artists explicitly talked about activism being at odds with their own ways of working. An artist in one commission described themselves as 'a quiet activist' and found that working gently with – rather than against – the institution, gave them greater power to influence change as well as helping them protect their own safety.

5. Scales of collaboration need to be in sync.

a. The collaborations that were most fruitful were those where both sides of a partnership felt to be of the same size.

As artist Yuen Fong Ling put *it “EDI work has to be on a human scale.”* One artist working closely with one contact, or a small collective with a small organisation felt like an equal conversation. One artist or small collective trying to influence a whole institution became overwhelming and made less progress. Though social artists and the communities they work with typically have shared control of decision making and can move quite quickly; institutions work with much larger scales of relationships and systems (and arguably opportunities). Each needs to understand the culture of the other to be most effective. Interestingly, what SAFEDI was able to achieve, was to add weight to the voice of one artist or small collective, by bringing an equally large institution to the table on their side, making the conversation an ‘institution to institution’ one. Artists frequently mentioned the extra confidence they felt by being associated with the programme; and the involvement of an academic partner and national funder adding gravitas to their side of the conversation, whether or not they felt mistrust of institutions in general.

6. Assumptions about ‘policy’ need discussing openly during the relationship building stages.

a. The word policy can be a barrier. People who have been excluded can associate the word policy with control, or excuse.

What they found more useful were concepts like commitment, intention, offer, protection, values, mission and philosophy. Rarely did people who have faced bias see that all these terms are part of the same thing except in one partner organisation, *not/nowhere*, who explained, *“We want to make sure our protections are shored up and protected beyond our own individual involvement.”* Several artists and participants / collaborators questioned, who is policy for, what is its purpose, who makes it, who can access it, and wanted clearer answers from arts organisations.

b. For accessibility, the format of a policy matters as much as the content.

Part of improving an arts organisations’ inclusivity, is making its systems accessible and responsive, and the format of a policy can affect this. In the *en-SHRINE* commission, the artists and the Baltic were both keen to see the policy moved off the page and into something more representative of the values they want it to communicate. To this end, finding messages around an artwork, watching videos of ‘recitations’ and following an interactive online digital tour of an installation were felt to be a much more

engaging way to articulate commitments and intentions. In JarSquad's *Assemblies* commission, they want to share intentions and commitments with others visually in their activity space in ways that can be updated in response to learning or feedback at any time. This might be on a chalk board, or something more creative in keeping with their preserve making activity.

c. A policy is only as good as the extent to which it is embodied or acted on in practice.

Consistently across the commissions all artists and participants / collaborators agreed on this. Excluded people want to see commitments carried out across all levels of an organisation, from front of house staff, to how trustees and staff are recruited and behave. And furthermore, that policies are, as one artist described, "in constant beta" continually updated rather than static. The *Human Memorial* commission has already inspired a meaningful change in practice, though policy change is still a work in progress. Policy and practice need to be a continual source of inspiration for one another to have long lasting success.

d. A specific EDI policy has its limitations.

Since inclusive action and commitment needs to come from all parts of the organisation, two commissions in particular were keen to express that it should be embedded across all areas, and therefore all policies, rather than sit in one place. One artist

observed, "*if a specific EDI policy is needed, the organisation will never be inclusive*". Another recommended that access and inclusion be part of every budget every year, so that it becomes a habitual, instinctive part of every conversation. This is already the case in Sheffield, with the working group Yuen Fong Ling collaborated with in the *Human Memorial* commission are demonstrating this approach, sharing a range of updates and policies on their website to give the full picture. (See [FIND OUT MORE](#) for more details).

e. Arts and cultural organisations are already doing good work.

The Sheffield working group is one example. The Baltic and East Street Arts were also already on a path towards better policy making. In another commission, the arts organisation first identified as one to investigate, was found to be carrying out what the artist thought to be excellent practice already, so they looked elsewhere. So, a first step in finding arts partners is to check any assumptions about what they may or may not already be doing.

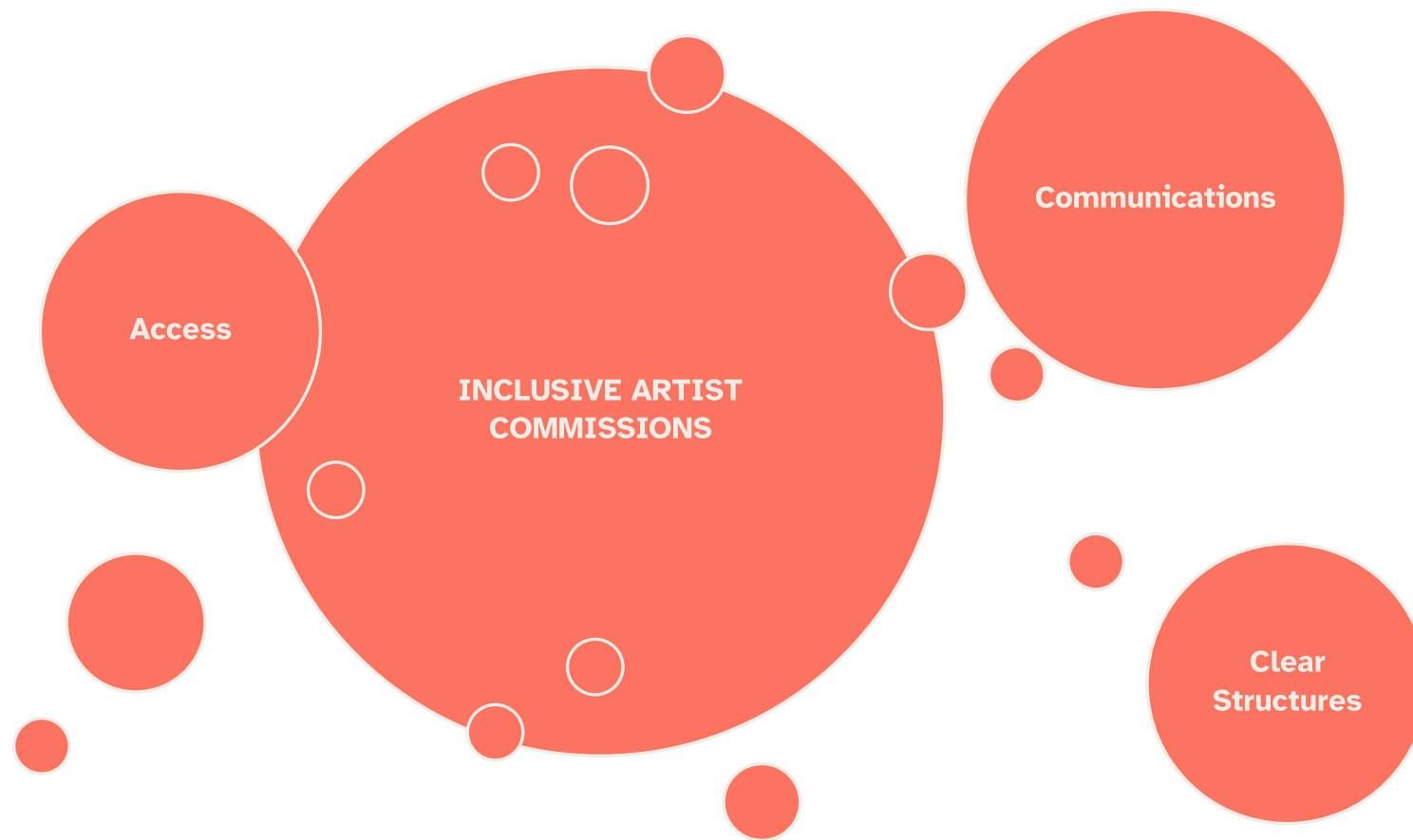
7. People who have been excluded or witnessed bias will recognise an organisation's *intentions* towards inclusivity.

a. To the arts partner, different departments work with different priorities and agendas. Whilst under-represented people notice a genuine attempt at inclusivity, or a patchy approach led by some people but not upheld by others.

Policy change has a real role to play here, by encouraging consistency across the whole organisation. Organisational learning through arts activity often falls under a community / engagement staff member, or less frequently a curator / programmer. However excluded people will also notice if labels

aren't accessible; if web content makes assumptions or is biased; if arts installations and spaces aren't clear in how you can or can't move around within them; if staff, volunteers and the organisation's decision makers aren't diverse; if the rest of the activity programme is as accessible and inclusive as it can be; and potentially will look at who makes decisions for the organisation. They don't expect everything to be instantly improved, but they will notice if the tone of the organisation feels different in different places and will detect if an accessible, inclusive intention isn't shared across the organisation.

FINDINGS PART 2. COMMISSIONING & SUPPORTING SOCIALLY ENGAGED ARTISTS



1. Accommodate the access needs of artists as much as those of the communities they are working with.

a. Ask artists if they have access needs once appointed and let them know they can come back to the conversation at any time. Some artists referred to this as an access passport or rider. Some knew they had needs they wanted support with but were worried this would infer they weren't up to the job and asked for help further down the line. Some have specific needs relating to illness, disability or neurodiversity. Anxiety from historic traumas and being isolated in lockdown was common, which meant more processing time was needed. For example, longer gaps between activities due to the additional mental and physical energy needed to run them, which means more time to regulate and recharge.

b. Social art is especially hard for artists working solo. Collectives talked about being able to cover for one another and look after each other's wellbeing. Artists who started off working alone all chose to involve a producer or collaborator eventually, to help balance the workload, make the most of different skills, for mental and moral support, and so they were not a lone voice. For artists who have experienced exclusion or bias, budget for a producer or assistant may be an access need.

c. Support individually and collectively helps lessen the emotional weight of social art practice. Wellbeing sessions where artists could come together and share experiences in a closed, safe space, were welcomed. Likewise, support from researchers helped artists feel validated, heard, seen and respected. This had a significant impact on their self-confidence. In turn this helped them manage the needs of their participants / collaborators.

2. Work with the communication preferences of artists.

a. Communication preferences vary.

For better access provision, it can help to find out who prefers phone, email, screen or text communication. This makes it easier for artists to respond quickly and manage their workloads, and therefore any relevant conditions.

b. Artists respond well to using the digital technologies already embedded into their daily life. This may not be the same format across everyone. They are unlikely to use platforms created specially but may pull information from their platform to a project space through plug-in apps, social media sharing, hashtags, or copying content over with the right permissions. Artists experiencing exclusion or bias in particular may want to keep control of how content is used.

3. Help artists understand where they fit in the project's structure.

a. Be as clear as possible up front about administrative tasks required, to make it easier for artists to respond to extra asks when needed. Every additional ask once the work starts creates work they hadn't accounted for. This can have an impact on their access needs / health and wellbeing.

Artists understand being responsive is part of the process that comes with the flexibility they are given so the ask is to keep unplanned work to a minimum and consider when and how things are asked, rather than an expectation that everything is known from the start.

b. If artists are part of a network of commissions and research practice rather than a single commission, let them know this in the brief so they are ready to share and collaborate. This can affect the proposals they create, time allocated to different aspects, and can raise access considerations for those needing support to communicate, socialise or process information.

c. In projects involving lots of different teams, elements and specialists, an organogram or similar guide to who's who helps. When artists understand the distinct roles and responsibilities different people are undertaking, they can see the big picture which helps them manage their own

expectations, reduces overwhelm, and supports resilience to help with mental health or chronic illness.

d. Be clear about what degree of impact artists are expected to make, and how much of this is their responsibility. Impact and change can seem overwhelming asks in a small, short-term commission. However, 'influence', 'contribution towards' or 'part of' make it clear that the goals are achievable.

e. Be aware social artists and marginalised communities are often part of the same thing, though the arts sector is biased against this in its systems. The arts sector is encouraged to count, monitor, report and approach artists and communities separately. National infrastructure assumes that because the artist creates art - they seemingly can't be marginalised from the arts sector; and marginalised communities receive or participate - so they can't be artists. Yet in social arts practice the artist often collaborates with a community they are directly involved with, indeed the authenticity of that is one of the unique benefits of social art practice. Social artists can be part of under-represented communities. And underrepresented communities can be a group of artists. It needs to be better understood and accommodated within the arts sector that artists experience exclusion and bias from arts organisations as much as anyone else.

4. More awareness is needed that disability as a protected characteristic includes *undiagnosed* mental conditions that have a negative impact for 12 months or more (no matter the cause).

a. Anxiety in particular is a cross cutting symptom of many of the invisible conditions present throughout SAFEDI and affected all the commissions in different ways.

People experiencing this may need more processing time (e.g. between meetings or workshops) or are limited in when and how they can engage with others (e.g., crowds, too many sessions in a row, not having enough time to prepare, not know what is expected, fear of failure). This has been exacerbated by covid, the effects of lockdown, and having to work so much online. Keep in mind artists living with anxiety or other invisible conditions are likely to need more time to plan and deliver work than arts organisations / commissioners usually plan for.

FINDINGS PART 3: WHAT EXCLUDED PEOPLE NEED FROM THE ARTS SECTOR



1. Acceptance in the arts sector that artists / creatives can also be participants / excluded audiences.

Too often the fact that practicing artists can be part of communities of people who have experienced exclusion is overlooked. The arts sector divides projects up into artists, participants, and audiences and in terms of funding, monitoring and reporting. However in most SAFEDI commissions the ‘participants’ artists involved were their own excluded community who also happened to be artists / creatives. This illustrates the blurred lines, roles and flattened hierarchies inclusive work needs but institutions struggle with since it does not fit their expectations or administrative systems. Excluded people need organisations to adapt to fit their communities and relationship structures, not vice versa.

2. Recognition of peer to peer and collaborative ‘delivery’ methods within arts and education infrastructures.

Traditional hierarchies in arts and education sectors reinforce the sense that institutions or advantaged people are the only ones with the right to make decisions.

The national sector infrastructures are set up to assume a ‘delivery’ model where one (or more) person leads and others respond / follow. By repeating this delivery model, organisations further exclude those they seek to welcome.

3. Ownership by excluded people of where and how they are involved.

For instance, what spaces work for them and how they are / aren’t comfortable communicating. They may also want to change the agenda and tell arts organisations what they want them to know, rather than what the organisations thought they needed to ask. Therefore conversations have to be held away from the arts organisation’s venue while this part of the process takes place, and arts organisations have to be flexible about / open to what comes up.

4. A return on the investment of time and emotional labour excluded people invest in this type of work.

When those who experience exclusion and bias give their own time, experience, and input voluntarily, the minimum they should receive in return is a commitment to make change AND updates about the changes being made.

Payment for involvement is complicated since research funded work may not allow it; flatter hierarchies of involvement may mean some participants / collaborators expect to be valued in the same way as anyone else taking part (e.g. the commissioned artist); whilst other participants / collaborators may not be able to accept payment without it having an impact on any other lifelines such as benefits or refugee status for asylum seekers. The most important thing is to ensure those involved know what will change, and agree a reciprocal arrangement that works for them is agreed and is upheld.

5. Trusted facilitation between arts organisations and those who have been excluded.

Social artists can be excellent trusted facilitators for this process where they have direct experience of what excluded people face on a daily basis; and feel confident and comfortable in their own experiences of arts organisations. Some artists have experienced bias and exclusion and as a result now choose to actively work outside of arts organisations, so are not confident advocates for arts partners. Finding the right artist to broker relationships between excluded communities and the arts partners who may have contributed to that exclusion in the past needs time, care and honesty from everyone to ensure the personal safety, wellbeing and best chance for success all round.

6. A more drawn-out engagement model than arts organisations might be used to.

People living with chronic illness, disabilities, cultural differences, language differences, neurodivergences, trauma or bias may– for different reasons – need more time to just do the activity. They may need to rearrange due to illness, book personal assistants or translators, need more time between sessions to process that activity mentally or emotionally. The additional emotional and logistical needs should be factored in to project timetables. This applies as much to artists as it does participants / audiences / collaborators etc.

7. Long term relationships not just a one-off project.

Arts organisations need to plan not just for delivery of a project, but further – to make changes and report back on these to the communities they listened to. Once those changes have been implemented THEN organisations can start the work of encouraging people into their building, teams or programmes.

8. Flexible budgets for access needs.

It may not just mean translators, interpreters, or transport costs; but could also mean the cost of an assistant or producer for neurodivergent or chronically ill artists. Remember to include budget for anyone's needs, not just participants. If in doubt, estimate for more rather than less access support.

9. Broader understanding of access needs / support.

Some of the needs the artists, commissions and researchers highlighted include:

a. Ethical / legal protocol in formats that encourage wider diversity. This includes consent forms of academic or arts partners. As an example, the consent form participants were required to complete for research purposes actually prevented some people from taking part in one artists commission; and the terminology used assumed a didactic relationship which could not be applied to the collaborative nature of some of the commissions.

b. Time to read and process things before, between and after meetings (and during, if relevant).

c. Using technology people are already comfortable with rather than asking them to use new or bespoke platforms.

d. Working with smaller group sizes or shorter (or longer) sessions.

e. Multi-sensory options for receiving and sharing information (written, auditory, visual as a minimum) and

finding out whether someone prefers email, text or phone calls.

f. Someone contracted to support on executive functioning tasks (i.e. managing time, focus and organisation). This might be a personal assistant or a producer for example.

g. Plain text for speech readers or easy read versions.

h. Asking people how they want to be described in photographs (if they have consented to being in them).

CASE STUDY: en-SHRINE



Broken Equipment image description: Colour photograph, interior. A tiny paper sculpture of a pair of glasses. One of the lenses is broken. The glasses are orange on the outside and blue on the inside. They are sat in a green paper tube with a light shining on them.

Broken Equipment Lady Kitt, 2021

Handmade 3D paper sculpture created with recycled paper and cardboard tubing
This work was made by Kitt in response to conversations between co-authors during workshops as part of the project.

It represents the Access Obstacle "Broken Equipment"

Access Recitations (suggestions from co-authors about how to navigate/dismantle these barriers) include: One co-author noted "If one broken lift means I can't access your building then you don't have a "fully accessible" building. You have a "constantly in threat of not being at

all accessible" building." Have an action plan in place for broken lifts / other equipment. For example: who do you need to inform (including audience and staff who may be affected, as well as the person/company that maintains the equipment)? Identify a room on ground level (if there is one) that can be quickly and easily used for rearranged events/meetings if a lift is out of order. How will you explain what has happened, apologise to, support / compensate people who are directly impacted by broken equipment?

ARTIST(S): Lady Kitt with co-artists Sarah Li; Sofia Barton and Dan Russell

PARTNER ORGANISATION: Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art (Lead Contact: Vicky Sturrs, Head of Engagement)

PARTICIPANTS / COLLABORATORS: 23 people with disabilities across Gateshead and Northumberland including Disconsortia Collective members; staff and artists from Headway Arts; and three staff at The Baltic.

REGION: North East

“It was a really uplifting experience for me because I’ve never been asked to say all of that before. I felt really positive and not alone. It was wonderful to have that conversation and just be listened to. It was the most exciting thing I’ve done in years. It was very emotional to be heard like that, all while being creative.”

Participant / collaborator

WHERE IT ALL BEGAN

Lady Kitt and the fellow artists involved had recently completed a separate project prior to this commission, developing a toolkit to explore access and policy. They had also completed another piece of work with The Baltic in 2020. So, there was an existing relationship and sense of trust established, ready for Kitt’s response to this call for proposals.

The Baltic were 18 months into an equality, diversity and inclusion review, though they had identified a gap in their access awareness. They were interested in how artists and the creative process can make that conversation more tangible and accessible. They agreed this was an ideal moment and opportunity to explore that gap and look at incorporating findings into their policy developments.

WHAT HAPPENED

Lady Kitt invited all staff from The Baltic to a personalised one-to-one session. Three staff members accepted the offer. Because the invitation was open to all, the interactions were on an individual basis not part of a staff group, and The Baltic invested a stipend to cover the time of those staff members who took part, The Baltic reported that those involved were ‘not the usual suspects’ and so some new voices were brought into the conversation.

Visual arts including paper sculpture, painting, and calligraphy were part of wider workshops with disabled people across the North East, some of whom who are part of disability arts groups or other disability groups including Headway Arts, and Disconsortia – a consortium of disabled artists.

Working with Headway Arts (a group of learning-disabled artists), at their base in Northumberland, Kitt and the artists discussed experiences of barriers to visiting art galleries. Headway invested more funds to ensure their artists could take part in the conversations. As well as identifying some useful examples for The Baltic, it also prompted Headway to look at their own space and start to think about barriers that could be addressed there too.

Many of the workshops were held online due to covid limitations, including some exploring musical composition as a basis for sharing access experiences.

The culmination of these strands was an installation in a shopping centre, which shared a series of oversized and miniature paper sculptures, plywood sculptures, paintings, texts, and video and sound pieces. These made tangible an 'access obstacle course' portraying barriers the collaborators described,

and a series of 'access recitations' offering solutions to such barriers – a deliberate solutions-focussed approach to inform policy makers.

Finally, a digital version of the installation was created, to provide a lasting legacy and act as a point of reference for The Baltic to refer to in their practice and policy development.

NEXT STEPS

Though the commission itself is completed, The Baltic are arranging a meeting with Lady Kitt, and potentially some of the collaborators, to review the findings together with the senior leadership team and identify how this will be used to produce and embody a new access policy. Lady Kitt would like to see The Baltic and other arts organisations build a specific access budget line into every area of the organisation on an annual basis so that it becomes a consistent conversation with a real presence. The Baltic is very keen to work with Lady Kitt on future projects.

IMPACT

- ARTS ORGANISATIONS

- A series of policy recommendations has been included in the digital installation, for the benefit of The Baltic and other arts organisations.
- A wider diversity of voices has come forward internally to inform EDI developments in the workplace.
- Work from this commission is being accessioned into The Baltic's archive collection, including documentation, and one of the small paper sculptures.
- The findings match those of a separately commissioned access professional, and so make tangible and directly relevant to The Baltic as an Arts organisation – what the generalised access theory looks like in a medium that's specific to the gallery sector; and through the actual 'voices' of potential Baltic audiences. Makes the hypothetical real at a hyper local, bespoke level.
- The findings are now being used to inform and be used as evidence in The Baltic's Arts Council National Portfolio application

- ARTISTS

- Lady Kitt and the en-SHRINE artists now have a database of British Sign Language interpreters with experience of working in the arts, to speed the process up for the future.
- They have also paid more attention to how they manage their own mental health and wellbeing as a team to support a healthy balance and work effectively, building in more time for slowness; time away from digital technology; and adding wellbeing goals to future project proposals.

- PARTICIPANTS / COLLABORATORS

- People across the NE have felt valued in the ways they have been taken care of, and the knowledge they have been asked to share.
- Some of those involved have not yet been to The Baltic so there is potential for new 'audiences' if barriers are removed in the future.

- WIDER SECTOR

- Headway Arts identified the need and begun to audit their own spaces for access barriers and put support in place to overcome these.
- As a result of this work, The Baltic have been invited to discuss founding a new consortium of visual arts organisations exploring artist-led internal infrastructure change.

SAFEDI OUTCOMES MOST STRONGLY MET

SHORT TERM OUTCOMES

Increased resilience of artist-led organisations in covid times
Strengthened existing research and engagement networks
Marginalised people feel more valued
Marginalised people feel better represented
Raise the profile of social art practice
New learning of EDI considerations / practice in arts / cultural organisations
Improve understanding of the support social artists need

MEDIUM TERM

More inclusive and representative decision and policy making

LONG TERM IMPACT

More representative collections

FIND OUT MORE

Interactive digital installation Reaching Out sharing the work and findings from this commission:

<https://www.theasys.io/viewer/j6ULpyZrUA0BJMa5IacaQDpVoVVL2v/>

Axisweb feature: <https://www.Axisweb.org/safedi/projects/safedi-enshrine/>

Social Art Library feature: <https://www.socialartlibrary.org/library/to-change-75ntb-ffjbj-n5b7h-hw3zw-tp5gp-z3s6z-yzn8s-m45cy-ds54y-az7ms-9d99f-dx35b-tgssx-r58yl>

Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art - statements and policies: <https://baltic.art/about/baltic-mission-vision-values>

CASE STUDY TWO: ASSEMBLIES & OTHER ADVENTURES

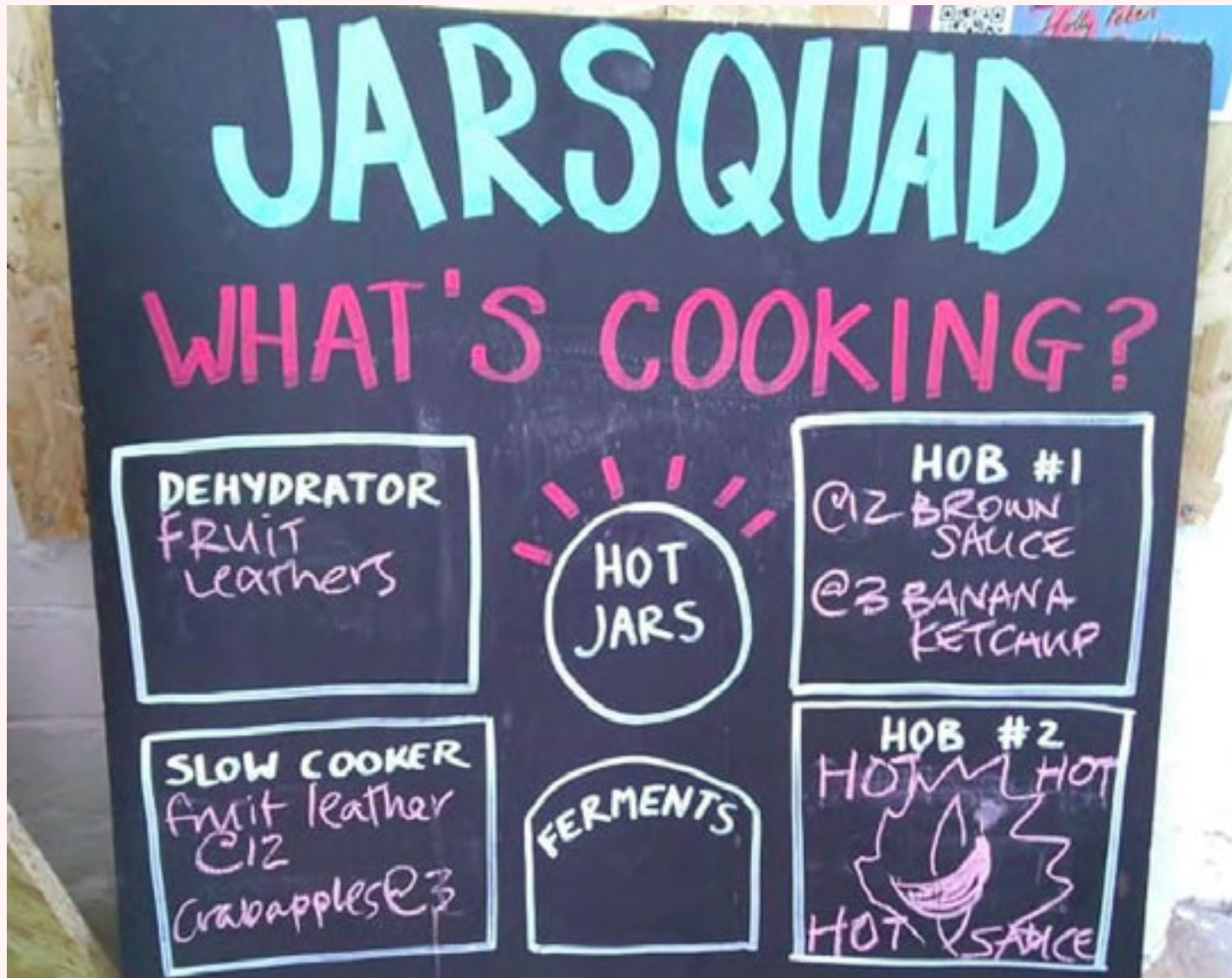


Image Credit: JarSquad

Image description: A portable chalkboard with the words "JARSQUAD, WHAT'S COOKING?" to show participants what different preparations they can get involved with during the session. We see that Fruit leathers are being cooked and dehydrated, crab-apples are in the slow cooker; brown sauce, banana ketchup, and HOT HOT HOT sauce are being made and bottled.

ARTISTS: JarSquad – Rachel Dobbs, Tess Wilmot, Carmen Wong

PARTNER ORGANISATION: JarSquad & Nudge Community Builders

PARTICIPANTS / COLLABORATORS: 9 participants / collaborators from across local communities brought by Plymouth & Devon Racial Equality Council; Timebank SW, and Cliik Community.

REGION: Plymouth – South West.

WHERE IT ALL BEGAN

JarSquad as a collective and community interest company were newly formed when commissioned though their creatives are well established and experienced. They use principles gained through arts, learning and permaculture (i.e. sustainable growth and nurture of plants and animals) to bring communities together by making preserves. They are based in a building run by Nudge Community Builders, a ground-up co-operative community organisation supporting other small enterprises and voluntary groups to thrive in creative and communal ways along Union Street in Plymouth.

Nudge have a long-standing history of inclusive development and were keen to support JarSquad as a partner. At the start JarSquad were unsure how to balance being both tenants and critical inquisitors of their property owner and felt Nudge had more to teach them than learn from them. Through this, JarSquad acknowledged their own infancy, and how they wanted to develop good practice inspired by Nudge. It emerged that where JarSquad could make the biggest difference in this commission, was in investigating their own policy commitments, so they flipped the brief, with the help of Nudge.

WHAT HAPPENED

Initially JarSquad planned to run targeted sessions, some for women with whom they had not worked before; and some for men – who typically don't attend JarSquad's activity. They wanted to explore and overcome any barriers that might be keeping people away. Over five months they held various 'taster' activities including a drop-in Jam Tasting session for local residents, a drop-in Ferments session for local residents, and a day of badge-making activities at the local Union Street Party. This helped them meet new people and invite them to their monthly sessions. Plymouth & Devon Racial Equality Commission (PDREC) Community Development Worker joined in one such event, then brought women who are newly arrived in the country to later sessions because JarSquad's activity offered something different to PDREC's work, fit well with the Five Ways to Wellbeing¹⁶ principles they use to prioritise the activities they offer the women, and were held on days that did not compete with any of their own sessions.

¹⁶ [NEF-5ways.pdf \(neweconomics.org\)](https://www.neweconomics.org/publications/5ways)

Interest from new people also took place serendipitously because of JarSquad's location in one of Nudge's buildings. Sited in a 'walk through' zone of the building, their activity was visible to passers-by. At times this presented difficulties but also brought benefits. As people passed through the building for other reasons, they eventually plucked up courage to ask about the activity and ultimately this was a more successful way to attract men to the sessions rather than through a specific group, as one person took a particular interest and started building word of mouth recommendations.

Over the commission period, six 'JarSquad Assemblies' were held events where people could come and turn surplus and foraged fruit and vegetables into preserves which are then shared back with the community. Each squad is around ten people, who can dip in and out of the full process of washing, chopping, cooking and jarring the produce. As the assembly unfolds, people ask questions of one-another, and knowledge sharing is equitable and facilitated rather than led or directed. While assemblies use a series of specific processes, they run fluidly and respond to who is in the group, and what knowledge or resources they bring with them. It is intended to be an exchange not a taught workshop.

Behind the scenes, JarSquad also held two Happy Hour cocktail sessions with staff from Nudge, borrowing Nudge's own model for informal, social meetings and conversations. This created a space for JarSquad and Nudge to swap notes informally and learn from one another in a pressure-free environment.

"Jarsquad are gentle souls. Good at working with other communities. They don't ask too many questions. They have that cultural awareness already and they're in the local community. They're accessible, it's not somewhere the women have to get two buses to go to. Having the bus fare provided made a massive difference in the women being able to come. Otherwise for them, that's the price of a meal for their family." Vanessa Crosse, Plymouth & Devon Racial Equality Council

NEXT STEPS

“Words on paper are finished but to be authentic you have to live and breathe it; you need a lot of people whose job it is to fight for things – or against them. What if it could be more game-like? If you need something in continuous beta, there’s an opening for feedback at any time, but once it’s on paper it’s fixed. Maybe it needs to be something on the wall, in eye-line to give us a reminder, a visual that we take into spaces with us – so it has portability but could be written in chalk so it can be revisited.” JarSquad

Through this commission JarSquad developed a more intentional philosophy behind to activity which they will keep refining and sharing with their ‘squadders’.

To improve accessibility, they want to articulate their work in different ‘languages’ so that each way suits the understanding of the people they are with. Where possible they will steer away from formal written text but will also develop wording that helps them communicate their work to strategic partners.

Working with researcher partners Patrick Campbell and Amanda Ravetz, they are looking forward to published work in the forthcoming SocialWorks? Journal.

With a clearer set of intentions around their JarSquadding practice, they want to share the model and see other squads pop-up around the country so that JarSquad is a movement rather than one collective reliant on the three practitioners.

JarSquad also want to see academic consent and other ethical documents made more accessible; and may make their newly developed version created with their communities available for the sector after current trials have concluded.

IMPACT

ARTISTS

“SAFEDI helped us gain our ground more authentically, working with more intention.” Carmen Wong

- Their goal is a commitment in ‘permanent beta’, that shares power and ownership, is welcoming and embodied rather than formal and static on paper and can be continually reviewed and updated. For example, hanging it visually in their activity space at eye level on the wall, accessible at any time by anyone in the space in a format that is portable; perhaps in chalk to be updated at any time.
- The words ‘commitment’, ‘pledge’ and ‘explicit intention’ resonate more strongly than the word ‘policy’.
- Building on a list of mottos and pitfalls they already use to guide them which is reviewed periodically.
- Putting ‘softer and often intangible modalities of care, solidarity, and access’ at the heart of their promise.

- Using a transparent alternative economy with a sliding scale price system, where 'price' is set by level of involvement rather than monetary value. The system has been trialled and be adjusted as needed, balancing their obligations as a Community Interest Company, with the most inclusive 'rate of exchange' for their communities.
- Trialling a more accessible consent form as an evolution of Manchester Metropolitan University's, with the help of squadders involved in this commission, so people can clearly and easily understand what they are joining in with.
- They are also keen to involve participants in any future policy (or policy style) developments so that power is more shared and less reliant on the three current members of JarSquad.

PARTICIPANTS / COLLABORATORS

- Women new to the country have made connections to other people and the local place that would not have happened otherwise.
- They have a better understanding of local resources because of sourcing surplus foods, so they know about the 'community fridge'.
- Some of the women are starting to move around the area more independently having been supported in using the local bus service.
- They learnt about food culture in new ways, such as moving from cooking, to socialising – from the functional to the enjoyable.
- The sessions helped people make connections across diverse cultures with food as a vehicle for expression and shared experiences.

SAFEDI OUTCOMES MOST MET

SHORT TERM	Increased resilience of artist-led organisations in covid times
	Marginalised people feel more valued
OUTCOMES	New learning of EDI considerations / practice in arts / cultural organisations
	Improve understanding of the support social artists need

FIND OUT MORE

JarSquad: <https://jarsquad.com/>

Axisweb feature: <https://www.Axisweb.org/safedi/projects/safedi-jarsquad/>

Nudge Community Builders: <https://nudge.community/>

CASE STUDY THREE: BUILDING WARMTH



Photo: Lily Lavorato.

Image description. Photograph of a fire-making kit: a box containing wooden sticks tied together, some written instructions on paper and some matches laid out on some brown cloth.

ARTIST: Lily Lavorato. **Project Assistant:** Carys Fieldson

PARTNER ORGANISATION: East Street Arts (Lead Contact: Ingrid Banerjee Marvin)

PARTICIPANTS / COLLABORATORS: 11 artists / creatives in Leeds living with disabilities / chronic illness.

REGION: Leeds, West Yorkshire

WHERE IT ALL BEGAN

Lily has a tradition of working among communities who experience exclusion and has a special interest in making arts more accessible. Whilst Lily was already well networked with other artists and communities and around Leeds, she had no specific partner or participants included in her proposal, knowing that this was not a requirement, and that SAFEDI could broker a partner for her.

East Street Arts have been inclusive in many ways for a long time on an ad hoc basis. They started looking at this more

formally over around 18 months before the commission. Before this project, policies were created by the Director, General Manager, HR

and with working groups. As an organisation founded by and for artists, when approached by the SAFEDI project team, they were especially curious about the potential of an artist facilitating independent conversations with others about access. They were keen to support Lily and ensured she could access any of the company's policies she wanted.

WHAT HAPPENED

The SAFEDI project team brought Lily together with East Street Arts. The organisation supports artists and runs events but has no dedicated gallery space or collection. This meant Lily needed to change her original plan which was gallery based. In another part of her life Lily also has strong experience of forest schoolwork, fire making leadership, and survival skills. The power of building fires to open conversations that don't happen anywhere else, the tactile element, the rich metaphors fire making allows, and the traces left behind in the ashes combined with her arts engagement practice were brought together for the first time in Lily's revised proposal.

“You don't have to make eye contact around the fire, it's trance inducing, you can unlock more honest conversations.”

Lily Lavorato

Originally Lily intended to run six sessions over four months, combining face to face and online activity to ensure accessibility so people with chronic illness could join in no matter their mobility, fitness, mental health or energy levels, and so she could be ready for any changes needed due to covid.

Lily spent time refining the structure of the commission, helped by SAFEDI research partner Patrick Campbell. At this stage Lily flagged her own access needs so with support from the SAFEDI access budget, East Street Arts helped her find a producer to talk through ideas with and take on some of the administrative and operational parts of the commission.

Lily ran three online sessions which adapted along the way in response to the feedback of her collaborators. She sent kits out to eleven people joining in remotely, so they had all the materials and guidance of a workshop available in their own spaces. The kits contained kindling, flint, char cloth, steel, matches, paper, card, charcoal, an illustrated handout on how to build a fire, and a self-enveloped to send their responses to four key questions back to Lily.

“Something interesting to think about when thinking through conversations around access, particularly when marginalised people are asked to do a lot of labour in terms of talking to organisations about their issues which can be overwhelming. It’s just not the job of chronically ill people to be doing that work.” Participant / collaborator

In the fourth and session, Lily invited people to meet face to face around the fire, to chat and put their responses to earlier workshops in the fire. Lily had also kept a record of these so that the significant points could be fed back to East Street Arts or other organisations in future. After the fire, Lily collected the ashes and use them to create a glaze for a new pot - the main tangible artwork from the commission. The pot is intended to tour, collecting responses from others, becoming a safe space to say what needs to be said, as a way to keep stoking the fire of conversations about access.

“Unfortunately, I think many galleries and curators find the issue of representation and disabled artists a bit of a minefield, rather than thinking about it as an interesting subject for exploration and discussion. So, they end up steering clear of the whole subject.” Participant / collaborator

NEXT STEPS

East Street Arts want to meet with Lily soon for a debrief about how the commission can feed into their policy development over the rest of this year. They are keen to work with Lily again, making sure she is more involved with them on an ongoing basis.

Lily wants to be able to feed back to her participants what the work has led to – what changes will happen as a result of their time and energy? She wants to run similar fire-based conversations and activity with staff from East Street Arts and other arts organisations.

Lily and research partner Patrick Campbell are developing a collaborative piece of work to include in the EDI issue of the SocialWorks? journal in summer of this year.

IMPACT

ARTS ORGANISATIONS

- The commission inspired East Street Arts to ask for different advice from their HR advisors, to start looking beyond the legal minimum.
- East Street arts are more aware of a wider range of needs and ways to support artists. This now includes how they can support artists with long term illnesses.
- The commission changed how East Street Arts think about commissioning artists. They are now interested in looking more at how artists can help interrogate internal infrastructure of their own organisation and in the wider arts sector.
- The commission has raised awareness of East Street Arts for people with whom they had not had contact with previously.
- They have been put in touch with another SAFEDI partner on a similar trajectory, with a view to co-founding a national consortium exploring how artists can inform policy development.

ARTISTS

- This diversified Lily's professional portfolio, as her first solo artist commission (building on her previous studies and contracted engagement work). She now has the profile

and experience to be in a stronger position for other future commissions.

- The opportunity helped Lily bring her two passions together for the first time – arts engagement and outdoor / survival skills – diversifying her practice and fulfilling a personal goal.
- She has a new model now which can be commissioned by other organisations looking to remove barriers to inclusion.
- Lily appreciated being able to contribute to something more significant and on a greater and more ambitious scale than she could have achieved alone.
- She has a better understanding now of her own access needs as an artist working on a commission and will be more confident in asking for the support she needs in future.

WIDER SECTOR

- Lily's external producer / project assistant Carys now understands how to create a skeleton for socially engaged practice placing as much (if not more) emphasis on process and structure as is normally placed on creating the artwork.

SAFEDI OUTCOMES MOST STRONGLY MET

	Marginalised people feel more valued
SHORT TERM	Marginalised people feel better represented
OUTCOMES	Improve understanding of the support social artists need Raise the profile of social art practice

FIND OUT MORE

Project summary (Lily Lavorato): <https://www.lilylavorato.co.uk/building-warmth>

Axisweb feature: <https://www.Axisweb.org/safedi/projects/safedi-lily-lavorato-sheher/>

East Street Arts: <https://www.eaststreetarts.org.uk/>

CASE STUDY FOUR: QUEER DIASPORIC FUTURITY



Screenshot from Rasheeqa Ahmad's 'Plant Medicine for the City: A Seasonal Diary' for Queer Diasporic Futurity by Flatness

Image description: A phone camera image showing the hand of a brown person handling a stinging nettle plant to expose the green seeds beneath its leaves.

ARTIST: Shama Khanna

PARTNER ORGANISATION: Not Nowhere Art Workers' Collective (Lead contact: Jennifer Martin, Co-Director).

PARTICIPANTS / COLLABORATORS: Rasheeqa Ahmad, Daniella Valz Gen, Decolonising Economics (with Evan Ifekoya, Amardeep Singh Dhillon and June Bellebono), Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley, Adam Farah and Aditi Jaganathan. Book design by Design Print Bind.

REGION: London

WHERE IT ALL BEGAN

“We’re interested in not so much influencing the policy content, more the format and concept of what policy is. The project is about blowing apart any need for policy and thinking about ethos. And if that’s not based on equality, why would marginalised people want to engage with it?” Shama Khanna

Shama Khanna is the founder of Flatness, an online artistic platform led by and for Queer, Trans and/or Intersex People of Colour (QTIPOC) and practices committed to working towards social justice, in a safe space where the emphasis is to heal from experiences of exclusion, and where practitioners can keep control of the way their likeness and work is used.

Shama's concept was to 'meet and support minor practices on their own terms' [Safedi proposal excerpt] by commissioning collaborators from Flatness to create new work on the theme of their imagined 'utopian futurity' where previously excluded people can freely voice their desires. The work would then be published in a bespoke low-cost publication, to be shared with 'audiences' who would give responses to the works in exchange. The publication would also become a document that can be used to contribute to future inclusive decision making.

Shama is a member of not/nowhere artist workers' cooperative organisation which supports new media practices – especially for artists who identify as Black or people of colour – through workshops, screenings and other programming, and identified them as the arts partner for this commission. Not Nowhere saw their role as support for Shama, connecting them with other members who might be right for the project.

Not/nowhere are an organisation whose main focus is to support Black people and people of colour. They already have policies which support strong diversity and inclusion, with commitments included in their Articles of Constitution; internal monitoring

processes; and specific policies for disability; health and safety; child safeguarding; bereavement and with a new policy for maternity experiences in the pipeline.

WHAT HAPPENED

On behalf of Flatness, Shama invited seven collaborators to contribute to what they describe on the Flatness website as, *“a collective call to restore loving connections to the body and to nature. QDF reflects on how this kind of holistic sharing of skills and resources can create a redistribution of power and strengthen cooperation amongst Black and Brown folk in times of instability and precarity towards a fairer, more equitable economy.”*

With support from fellow not/nowhere member Daniella Valz Gen, Shama took on the role of curator and editor for the first half of the project. Accessibility of content was a particular area of interest, as Shama was mindful of the density of text provided by contributors. Shama's solution was to try and ensure the publication was as visual as possible. The second half of the project was in producing the publication itself which was a steep learning curve for Shama though Daniella's support and experience came to the fore during this phase.

Shama's initial timeline lengthened due to the knock-on effects of covid, other commitments, and the challenge of encouraging others to meet the deadlines needed to publish the book. The online pdf publication was launched in Spring 2022.

NEXT STEPS

- Shama is currently running a crowdfunding activity to raise the funds needed to publish hard copies of the publication.
- Not Nowhere has commissioned another of its members to provide an independent review of the book which will then feed back into Not Nowhere's learning about how it can better serve the needs of its members.

SAFEDI OUTCOMES MOST STRONGLY MET

SHORT TERM

Increased resilience of artist-led organisations in covid times
Strengthened existing research and engagement networks
Reach new research and engagement networks
Marginalised people feel more valued
Marginalised people feel better represented

FIND OUT MORE

Flatness Project feature and publication: <https://flatness.eu/contributors/queer-diasporic-futurity/>

Axisweb feature: <https://blog.Axisweb.org/safedi/projects/safedi-shama-khanna/>

Not Nowhere: <https://www.not-nowhere.org/>

IMPACT

ARTS ORGANISATION

- Not Nowhere now has a better understanding of its members and the issues they face.
- The experiences included in the publication will feed back into Not Nowhere's ongoing policy conversations with its members over time.

ARTIST

- Shama has new knowledge about the process of producing a publication including commissioning contributions from others.

PARTICIPANTS / COLLABORATORS

- New relationships have been brokered between members of Not Nowhere who had not collaborated together before.

CASE STUDY FIVE: THE MILKY WAY



Photo: Catherine Harder Photography

Image description: A close up of the Milky Way game board, held by a white woman wearing a dark blue jumper. Her finger points to a small image of a baby on a sticker, which is placed on the board. The rest of the board is white with small gold squares each with italic writing in them - these are the names of the paintings to be found in the Milky Way tour.

ARTISTS: The Women's' Art Activation System (WAAS). Sharon Bennett and Sarah Dixon.

PARTNER ORGANISATION: National Gallery – unofficial partner. Contact: Joseph Kendra, Adult Public Programme

PARTICIPANTS / COLLABORATORS: 13 people from child rearing communities – mothers, doula, grandparents, women of child birthing age.

REGION: The WAAS – South West. National Gallery & participants / collaborators – London.

WHERE IT ALL BEGAN

The WAAS is committed to activating and facilitating women's art. With experience of working with women in pregnancy or with child caring responsibilities, they identified that new parenthood often leads to physical and mental issues but sits outside of the protected characteristics listed in the 2010 Equalities Act. This led to their submission for SAFEDI to work with a partner gallery, not yet identified, and involve a community of child rearing people to redefine the gallery, moving it from merely including or accommodating them, to embracing and celebrating them. They were open to where this might happen and planned to invite people from a local community or communities relevant to the arts partner.

In the run up to its 200th anniversary, and with the advent of covid which presented the time, space and catalyst to reflect, the National Gallery is, according to its website, looking *“to relaunch the National Gallery as the Gallery for the nation. This includes welcoming more people into the Gallery than ever before, engaging young people from all backgrounds in the wonders of our collection ... and being a resource for the nation and for the world”* A relatively new Head of Learning & National Programmes

was in the process of creating a strategy for the Learning Department and working with the Executive team on a wider organisational strategy. In her team, Adult Public programmer Joseph Kendra had recently completed an exhibition proposal exploring *“A Depiction of Motherhood’ bringing together a range of artworks depicting the ever-evolving notions of motherhood from across several centuries, revealing its romanticised and even mythical ideals, challenges and complexities. It also documents the ways in which artists tell their own autobiographies through their relationships to their children or own experiences of motherhood. Far from a definitive exhibition, the aim of this collection of images is that audiences would reflect upon their own experiences, the challenges, and joys either as a child or parent, as both fluid, unique and far from universal.”* Joseph Kendra, National Gallery.

WHAT HAPPENED

“I just felt so proud that we’ve been part of this really important, ground-breaking community” Sharon, WAAS

With no partner identified, WAAS wanted to be as ambitious as possible and got in touch with a contact at The National Gallery, who connected them with the Learning team. The team were already reviewing policies and had an existing interest in the relationships between the collection and motherhood, so WAAS were invited in to discuss their proposal.

WAAS’s first event was a facilitated exploration for new parents and those caring for young children. They invited participants to explore the galleries then meet up to discuss their thoughts about motherhood in the National Gallery. Having expected feedback to be about the accessibility of the building, they were interested to hear people talking about looking at motherhood as represented in the paintings on display.

WAAS met again with the Learning Team to discuss links to the connection in more detail. Because the team already knew about the building’s restrictions, they were keen to explore more about how the collection could support new family audiences. At this time, WAAS were still developing the concept for the next stage which would involve policy makers. They were forming thoughts about an installation piece live in the gallery to highlight a mother’s experience of visiting. It was hard to fully describe what they planned but proposed ‘an event for a single person, out of hours, a deluxe experience in relative privacy’. The National

Gallery agreed in principle but struggled to understand what to expect operationally. The Learning team were more used to long periods of consultation to engage people who have not visited before, so were unsure whether WAAS’ priority was in exploring the experiences of the mother (participants); or in creating a piece of art. They felt as an engagement experience, given the short time available, it might work best as a research and development activity behind closed doors and filmed for sharing and learning afterwards, though WAAS knew filming would change the dynamic and focus of the mother’s experience. As a live art piece in the gallery, then no official partnership was needed since the artists could carry this out at any time; whereas official artist partnerships need a longer lead in time and the involvement of other departments. So in any context, a formal partnership was not feasible in the time available.

With the end of the commission timeframe on the horizon there was no time to unpack and resolve the misunderstandings so as a result of feedback from all involved, WAAS changed their next steps. Following the feedback from participants, and in line with the gallery’s interest in links to the collection, Sharon and Sarah switched to a softer, more playful concept of an eye-spy type board game which guided people around the galleries to find and investigate paintings depicting motherhood. They invited policy makers from the National Gallery and other networks to meet for an event at which the game would take place; and ran a second event with the game at the request of an arts collective.

“A highlight for me was talking with our researcher. She had such a deep willingness to attend to this project and our work in general. It was really nice just to be seen in a different way. We don’t normally get that level of attention.” Sarah, WAAS

NEXT STEPS

Manchester Art Gallery approached WAAS at an EDI conference online to show interest in the commission and discuss the possibility of a future collaboration.

National Gallery is continuing a long-term consultation and conversation process with parents and wider family communities to identify their strategy and activity going forward. They are also bringing curatorial and learning teams more closely together for collaborations in the future.

WAAS now have a better understanding of how partnerships operate and are keen to work in partnership more in the future. They would still like to continue the conversation with the National Gallery and collaborate with them at a later date.

IMPACT

ARTISTS

Sarah and Sharon felt their profile and status was elevated by taking part in a national academic research programme.

Being part of something bigger and the specific critical support from their research partner Anna Macdonald helped validate their practice and boost their confidence.

Shared sessions reflecting with other artists improved their own understanding of EDI practice and helped them feel supported throughout the journey.

WAAS now have a better understanding of how partnerships operate and are keen to work in partnership more in the future. As a result of this work, they were invited to take part in the *Handle with Care* EDI collaborative conference panel for INIVA (Institute for International Visual Arts) and Manchester Art Gallery. This brought them to the attention of Manchester Art Gallery’s Learning Manager for Families, who is interested in discussing the commission in more depth.

WAAS now have a model that can be adapted to facilitate engagement in other galleries and art museums.

WIDER SECTOR

One of the participants / collaborators in the mothers and child rearing group also runs her own private gallery space. As the gallery shares a building with a disability organisation, she is interested in how the gallery can be more inclusive and has considered it informally in the past. However, because of taking part in this commission her thinking about access is more focussed.

SAFEDI OUTCOMES MOST STRONGLY MET

SHORT Marginalised people feel more valued
TERM Reach new research and engagement networks
OUTCOMES New audiences reached

FIND OUT MORE

Project summary (The WAAS): <https://thewaas.org/index.php/portfolio/the-milky-way/>

The Milky Way Report (The WAAS): <https://thewaas.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/The-Milky-Way-Report.pdf>

Social Art Library feature: <https://www.socialartlibrary.org/library/to-change-75ntb-ffbj-n5b7h-hw3zw-tp5gp-z3s6z-yzn8s-m45cy-ds54y-az7ms-9d99f-dx35b-tgssx-r58yl-9pst7>

CASE STUDY SIX: THE HUMAN MEMORIAL



Yuen Fong Ling, "The Human Memorial" (2021), film still - documentation of workshop at Theatre Deli, Sheffield. Workshop leaders: Yuen Fong Ling, Nathan Geering; participants: Samara Casewell, Marcus Smith, Rebecca Solomon, Darwin Taylor, and Sam Underwood Doherty; and special thanks to Picture Story Productions.

ARTIST: Yuen Fong Ling

PARTNER ORGANISATION: Sheffield City Council - Decolonising Working Group (Lead Contacts: Rebecca Maddox – Business Development (Culture, Sheffield City Council; Andrew Skelton – Public Art Officer, Sheffield City Council; Kirstie Hamilton – Director of Programmes, Sheffield Museums; Pete Evans – Director, Sheffield City Archives & Local Studies Library)

PARTICIPANTS / COLLABORATORS: 170 people, mostly people of colour. Visitors to and creatives from Theatre Deli, Sheffield.

REGION: South Yorkshire

“My voice has become louder. Though there are still stories to be told, my focus is on Black joy. I don’t want to see trauma. I don’t want to give trauma. I want to see happiness.”

Project participant / collaborator

WHERE IT ALL BEGAN

“The commission was a call to do something proactive, to press the reset button on my practice and say, ‘What are you going to contribute to this conversation that’s happening globally.’” Yuen Fong Ling, Artist

In the wake of the Black Lives Matter events and the toppling of the Colson statue in Bristol, both in 2020, Sheffield local authority were prompted to look at their own treatment of cultural history and representation throughout the city. As a result, they brought together an independent Race Equality Commission designed to ‘provide a strategic assessment of the nature, extent, causes and impact of racism and race inequality in the city and make recommendations for tackling these’ according to their call out for expressions of interest from would-be commissioners.

Artist Yuen Fong Ling had been one such member of the Commission, who created recommendations for the final report and took a particular interest in the history of street names, and how Sheffield’s public realm might start being decolonialised. Yuen also sat on the visual arts panel for the strategic development of Sheffield’s cultural strategy. With this background, understanding, and relationships in place, he submitted a proposal for SAFEDI to build on the learning uncovered during the Race Equality Commission – to make tangible some his findings and take the conversation to the streets with the Decolonising Working Group – comprising people from Sheffield’s archives, museums, development and public art / planning teams - as his partner.

WHAT HAPPENED

Yuen's concept was a three staged work using the plinth as a tool for exploration (given that the plinth was the only part of the Colson statue left standing and had led to some interesting responses having been left empty). He planned to work with other artists and performers to:

1. Take an empty plinth to the streets of Sheffield as a conversation starter with the public, to explore the presence / lack of racial diversity represented across the city.
2. Explore 'wearable plinth' costumes to conceal and reveal the body and feel a physical connection to the notion of a past constructed and controlled by others or by self.
3. Facilitate a 'human plinth' where all props are removed, and the people become the plinth through human pyramid or tower type arrangements.

These would then be collated into films with conversations and interviews about first-hand experiences, to be shared in public spaces to facilitate conversations and interviews about hopes and dreams for a future Sheffield.

Covid, lockdown, illness, injury and the time needed to understand and consider the multiple partner agendas prevented Yuen being able to realise this original plan. All three stages required working in public spaces – indoors and outdoors – which due to covid, meant replanning, delays, postponements and adaptations. Added to this, injury and illness across the artist and collaborators lives, and the need to follow safe social distancing practice, all slowed production down. In addition, the weather

conspired to further complicate matters, when storms hit Sheffield during plans for outdoor public plinth conversations. So, when action was possible, it was squeezed into short bursts of time later than expected, and among other commitments already scheduled for that time. As a result, more focus was spent on working with collaborating artists rather than engagement on the streets.

Performance director Nathan Geering met Yuen on the Race Equality Commission panel and had recently become the new Director of Theatre Deli, a space embedded into the Sheffield community based in a local shopping centre building. The empty plinth was installed in Theatre Deli for several weeks as part of an exhibition over Black History Month in October 2021.

Nathan then worked with Yuen to help direct and facilitate performers create their 'human plinth' experience, where 5 artists worked with their bodies and the empty plinth to experiment with and describe the effect of positions, collaboration, balance, perspective and relationships. The descriptions are an explicit way of bringing in an audio description aspect, a core part of Nathan's own approach, to help improve the accessibility of the work. All the while mindful of the traditions of power and exploitation the plinth represented above and below them.

Yuen is actively interested in changing the status quo with his art and through this creative collaboration, learned about the difference between the suffragists and the suffragettes from one of his collaborators. The former being peaceful advocates for

change, working 'with'. The latter being more radical, working against / in direct opposition to. This was a useful lens for understanding how he wanted to affect change, as a gentle peaceful collaborator. Experience has taught him, "**as a minority, you learn not to stick your neck on the line.**"

Meanwhile Yuen worked with researcher partner Patrick Campbell to help reflect artistic ideas; and brought in SAFEDI partner leads Amanda Ravetz and R.M. Sánchez-Camus to meet with the Decolonising Working Group and explore bridges between the project and Sheffield's future policies and practice. Finally, Yuen produced a set of short films documenting and sharing the thoughts of the collaborating performers.

NEXT STEPS

- Yuen's films will go on to be shown in future exhibitions and online to keep spreading the findings of the work.
- He continues working with the Sheffield partners and in his role on the Race Equality Commission.
- Yuen secured funding with Sheffield Institute of Policy Studies at Sheffield Hallam University, for a series of focus groups to further build on this commission and his work with Sheffield City Council.
- Sheffield Museums begin their work as a partner on the national *Decolonising Arts* programme supporting ethnically diverse artists to work in residence with public art collections, leading to new acquisitions, new commissions and public engagement. They are also working through anti-racist work including changes to archives, education, collections and other areas of their cultural work to start addressing mistakes made in the past across their institutions. The SAFEDI commission was aspect of this wider work.

IMPACT

ARTS ORGANISATIONS

“Now rather than go straight to the usual sculptors we’re trying to widen that conversation. To think about how we do it, who for, who decides, who designs. Yuen’s helped us understand and think differently. Without his patient, gracious advocacy we wouldn’t have got to this. It’s gentleness used powerfully.”

Rebecca Maddox, Sheffield City Council

- **Experiences from Yuen’s commission will feed back into the Race Equality Commission’s recommendations** for their final report. What was originally theory has now been tested and refined as a result of the SAFEDI commission.
- **The public art commissioning process of Sheffield City Council has shifted** from using a closed small number of artists who produce artwork to the council’s brief, to a wider approach with bias removed; ways to include early career artists; and the engagement element having as much importance as the art production.
- **Local authority conversations have been made more accessible and inclusive.** Responses to the Race Relations Commission report were limited to those who could access, read and understand the report online. Yuen created alternative ways to reach others and thus include a wider variety of voices.

ARTISTS

- **Yuen now has more confidence in planning for specific timeframes and budgets** without over committing himself in response to competitive commissioning processes.
- **Yuen feels less alone as an artist and person of colour** as his practice shifted from a singular, fixed approach to a collective one responding to a collaborative process. This reduced what Yuen calls the *burden of representation*, in which one person is asked to represent a large body of people who share one characteristic but may otherwise be infinitely different.

PARTICIPANTS / COLLABORATORS

- Collaborators from workshops and public events felt more confident, powerful, heard and uplifted by their involvement in this commission as they found new ways to process past oppressions and emerge into a more positive, forward looking future.

WIDER SECTOR

- New relationships have been made between collaborating artists in Sheffield, widening their networks and giving them a powerful new outlook.
- Theatre Deli are interested in discussing the possibility with Yuen of taking the workshop activity and developing this into a full theatre production, to be shared around the communities of Sheffield.

SAFEDI OUTCOMES MOST STRONGLY MET

SHORT TERM	Strengthened existing research and engagement networks
	Reach new research and engagement networks
	Marginalised people feel more valued
	Marginalised people feel better represented
	Raise the profile of social art practice
MEDIUM TERM	New learning of EDI considerations / practice in arts / cultural organisations
	Stronger Advocacy
	More inclusive and representative decision and policy making
LONG TERM IMPACT	More inclusive policies
	More diverse and inclusive programming
	More representative collections

FIND OUT MORE

Yuen Fong Ling: <https://www.yuenfongling.com/>

Axisweb feature: <https://blog.Axisweb.org/safedi/projects/safedi-yuen-fong-ling/>

Sheffield City Council's ongoing responses and reports regarding the Race Relations Committee Decolonising and Culture process - [Sheffield: Our history and heritage told through our streets, monuments, museums, libraries and archives - Sheffield City Council - Citizen Space](#)

Sheffield Museums anti-racism work: [Our Anti-Racist Action: Museums Sheffield \(museums-sheffield.org.uk\)](#)

RECOMMENDATIONS

To support the sector and respond to the findings from the project, readers are invited to reflect on these recommendations to further their policies and practice

ALL PARTIES

1. **Make no assumptions.** Take time to build trust, really ask questions, listen and be open to mistakes and keep shared goals in mind. What might seem obvious to one person, might be revelatory to another.
2. **Invisible conditions are overlooked.** Barriers experienced by people with neurodiversity, struggling mental health, chronic illness, disabilities and experience of trauma affected every aspect of SAFEDI perhaps more than any other. Mental health and anxiety are protected within the disabilities section of the 2010 Equalities Act, yet the pressure to be competitive and work quickly amplify anxiety, cut out opportunities to think clearly, recharge, process effectively, and do the best work possible. More needs to be done across all the sector to champion wellbeing and change the way work is delivered so it supports the mental and physical health of those working in it, as well as the people we want to see more represented in our arts communities.
3. **Ask people you work with how they prefer to communicate** and if there is anything you can do to help them be at their best. This improves access for everyone, regardless of what they do or don't disclose about themselves.
4. **Do ask if people have access needs and invite them to revisit the conversation at any time.** It's hard to disclose personal information before trust has been built but they may need help further down the line.
5. **Don't ask people to revisit trauma.** Commissions clearly showed that what excluded people want is to make things better, look to the future, experience joy and feel valued. Focus on what can change, rather than what's gone wrong in the past, which only adds to or reactivates former difficulties.

FUNDERS

1. **Invest in *development grants*** so new partners can spend time unpicking assumptions, asking questions and listening / learning, and building trust *before* creating plans for delivery. The output from such funding should be an action plan for delivery, rather than measures of delivery itself.
2. **Ask specialists to conduct a review of unsuccessful applications** make recommendations for removing bias and barriers which may be excluding the people you want to attract.
3. **Explore ways to improve the culture of competitive over-commitment in applications**, which affects mental and physical health of those who need to work slowly and deeply rather than broadly and quickly – as is often the case for people who have experience exclusion, bias, trauma or mental, physical or developmental conditions.
4. **Encourage your sector to make all safeguarding and ethical protocol accessible.** At present the formality of these systems can exclude the very people they are intended to protect. An over reliance on form filling as the preferred communication format adds to the problem of exclusion. As a minimum, invite applications in writing, audio or video. Application open days can be more accessible for those who tend to be under-represented. Look out for language which assumes a didactic relationship with communities when collaboration might be more appropriate.

UNIVERSITIES

1. **Improve safeguarding and ethical protocol to be more accessible.** Make sure anything required for community engagement and public engagement or impact is accessible for anyone who might be part of the work. Involve those people in the redesign of your systems. Look to existing good practice with specialist charities who have already done the work.
2. **Create systems that support non-hierarchical collaboration.** Be aware that engagement outside of academia is flattening in structure with less and less leader-recipient relationships; and more and more facilitator-collaborator relationships. Protocol needs to be able to flex to varying styles of engagement to support equality, diversity and inclusion.

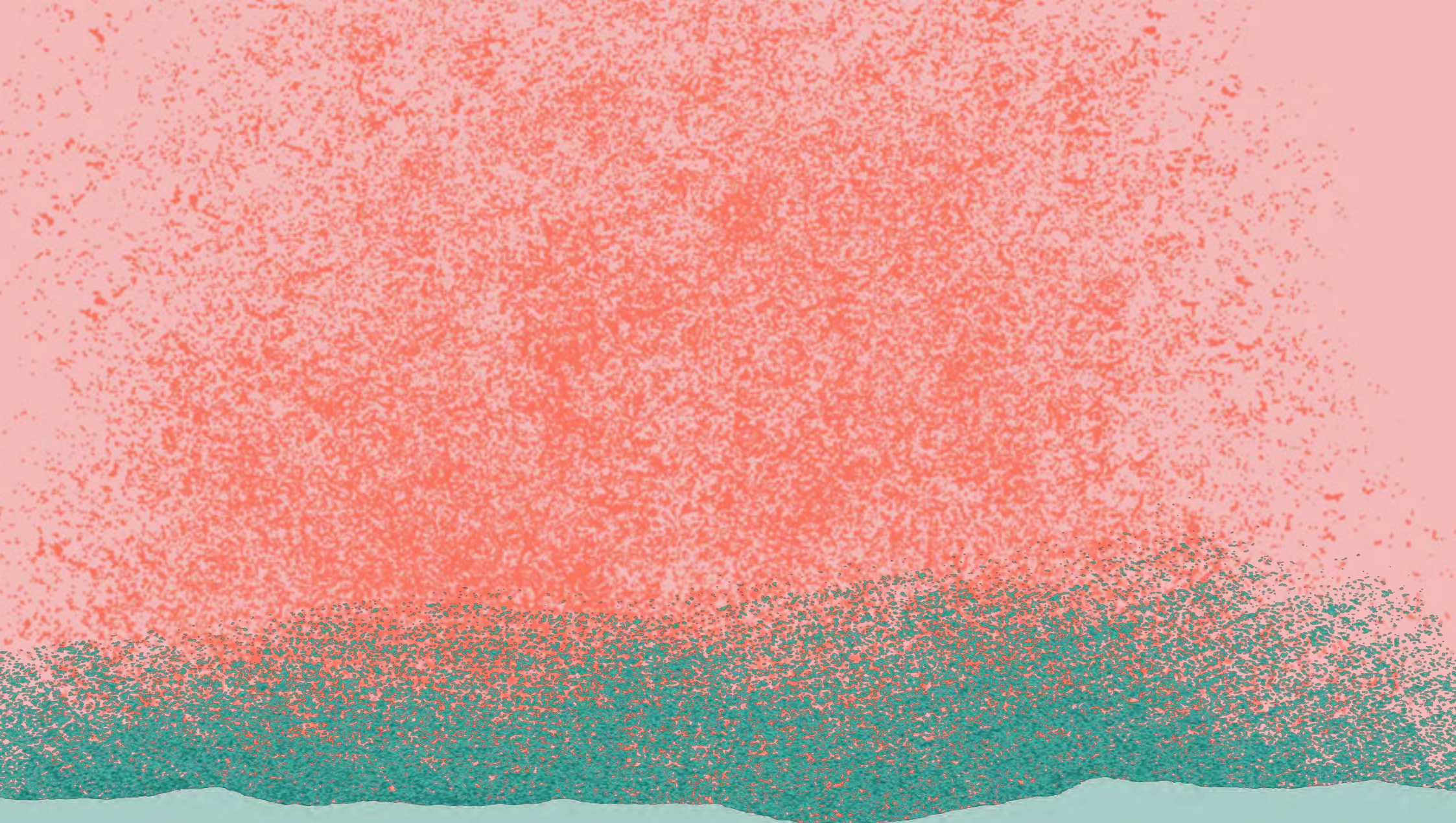
RECOMMENDATIONS

ARTS ORGANISATIONS

1. **Leadership and governance teams should consider who their work and their policies are for and develop them accordingly.** Most arts organisations have not-for-profit or community interest status and receive public funding, so have a clear obligation to public benefit. Policies need to be reviewed with that public in mind and involved to be as effective as they can.
2. Whenever excluded people are part of a process where they invest their time and emotional energy, always return and let them know what changed as a result. Without reassurance their experiences led to change, alienation and exclusion is amplified.
3. **Commission social artists to support internal business development.** Social art is rich in process and can be powerful in supporting infrastructural change. Inviting social artists in to support development can help unstick old patterns, humanise bureaucracy, improve communication by highlighting diverse ways to share information and depersonalise challenging conversations.
4. **Go to excluded people in *their* spaces to do this work** – be this online or in community environments. If they are not reaching your arts organisation, the barriers preventing that need to be removed before you can expect them to come and help.
5. **Include those who are under-represented in every stage of your policy development,** so they hold weight in decision making stages not just information gathering. Try to create a pool of external representatives so that no single person is expected to represent a whole culture on their own.
6. Share your policies online, invite feedback, and review regularly.
7. **Check practice informs policy and vice versa.** Include ground-up practice in policy reviews; and ensure policies are enacted not just documented.
8. **Use accessible language. The word policy was found to be synonymous with control or coercion** among people who have been marginalised. Would commitment, intention or similar be more inclusive?
9. **Use formats that can accessed by different senses or reading / writing levels.** Just as interpretative text, website or journalistic writing can be assessed for accessibility, could any of those standards be used to test your policies? Can it be shared through a range of multisensory formats?

ARTISTS & COMMUNITIES

1. **Create your own policies, commitments or values for equality, diversity and inclusion.** Through this process several artists / collectives realised they have not stopped to take stock of what they want to offer and protect for themselves and others. This will help those who have been marginalised be stronger advocates for themselves and each other; build more resilient individual or collective groups, practices or businesses; and provide useful experience to take into other organisations with you. It may also challenge you to identify where you might make assumptions, just as others may make them about something you have personally experienced.
2. **Be your own advocate when you feel safe to do so.** Others don't know what they need to ask you precisely because of the barriers in the way, so when you can - say what you need to when you need to in the ways you want to and highlight bias or barriers when the conditions feel right.



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