

Arts Backpack: A Feasibility Study

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(for **always possible**)



KULTUR
RUCKSACK

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study has been commissioned by Action for Children's Arts (ACA) to explore the feasibility of a pilot project for an Arts Backpack for primary-aged children living in the UK.

ACA's mission is to campaign for the arts for children between the ages of 0-12 years old.

The idea for the Backpack is driven by an awareness of:

- good practice internationally
- a perceived lack of provision in the UK.

The Arts Backpack is envisioned as a way for primary school children to access a minimum of five arts, including digital arts, cultural, heritage and library engagements and experiences across the school year.

The aim of this feasibility study is to dig deeper into the Backpack idea and to ask:

1. Does the UK need an Arts Backpack? (what problem will it solve?)
2. What might it look like?
3. How might it be funded?
4. What are the next steps?

Key findings

Primary School aged children.

There is a lack of focus on culture for primary school aged children as opposed to other age-ranges. There is a gap in research, in strategic thinking and potentially in provision. There is growing research targeted at an older age range; there are campaign groups that address the arts curriculum at secondary level like *BACC for the Future*; and there is an increasing focus on creative skills for careers and employability. There is also an acknowledgement of the importance of early years. However, there is a case that the cultural life of primary-aged children is currently being overlooked.

Varied contexts

The contexts for any new cultural initiative are very varied across the United Kingdom, and also different to the international contexts we have investigated. The variations are due to:

- different national policy drivers
- inequalities of provision in local geographic areas.

It may be that some governments already have policy initiatives similar to the Backpack idea and it may be that some schools are already very culturally active. However, it is clear that there is an unequal approach to how children become culturally confident as they grow up, and the Arts Backpack may be a way to level the playing field. This study offers case studies from international models, and recommends which elements might work best in the UK.

Culture for intrinsic good vs Culture for education and health

There is a growing awareness of the need to evidence the benefits of culture, and an understanding of the difference between the intrinsic benefits, culture for its own sake, and extrinsic educational and health benefits. We have found that if cultural initiatives are too closely allied with extrinsic objectives, such as education and health, then quality may suffer and the offer may be less attractive to children. We have also found that any new initiatives requiring funding will need to navigate a balance between these potentially conflicting objectives.

An easily understood idea that has the potential to adapt to different contexts

We have found that the idea of an Arts Backpack is relatively easy to understand; and that it has been a successful cultural flagship project in different international contexts. The success of these international projects has been due to either the comprehensive backing of a national government that puts significant resources behind the project, or energetic partnership working in local context.



2. THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

It is useful to take a moment to review previous initiatives and policy developments to see where the idea of an Arts BackPack sits in the context of cultural education thinking.

For example, in England, The Culture at King's report *Step by Step: arts policy and young people 1944-2014*, was initiated by a realisation that contemporary cultural policy is frequently made without a proper understanding of what has been attempted before. The report gives a useful guide to progress in arts policy for children and young people, since John Maynard Keynes' vision for an Arts Council in which he states:

We look forward to the time when the theatre and the concert-hall and the gallery will be a living element in everyone's upbringing, and regular attendance at the theatre and at concerts a part of organised education.

John Maynard Keynes

The report identifies the positive milestones that have moved policy and action in support of Article 31 of the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child* which states that governments 'shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life.'

The particular policy contexts of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales are slightly different, but in all countries progress has been made; the premise of the important link between education and culture is now a given; most cultural organisations have strategies for work with children and young people; and there is evidence to show the positive impact the arts have on children's emotional, educational and creative development. However, there is also a context in which, in 2019, there is a risk of a step-back in a progressive movement for arts for children.

To return to the example of England:

Firstly, there is a concern that arts audiences do not reflect the make-up of the wider population:

Lots of money has been spent since the two world wars to enfranchise all the population with the arts. It hasn't worked. In a recent Arts Council England strategic planning meeting we discussed that only 50% of the population are getting involved in culture. A pilot backpack in one area, that works, might be a way forward.

Sillis, 2018

Secondly, children at primary school age are overlooked by both research and arts programme initiatives. Of the four reports recently commissioned by Arts Council England (ACE) to collect evidence for their next ten year strategy (2020-2030), only one has investigated the primary age range, and only partially (Arts Council England, 2018 ii).

It is in this context that the idea of a primary Arts BackPack, and the conversations it can ignite, may have a new and significant role to play.



Scotland

In 2013, Creative Scotland published a 10-year Creative Learning Plan, with the explicit aim of investing in more creative teaching practices and support for creative initiatives within local authorities, schools and places of learning as well as more support for and understanding of the value of creativity and experiential learning by parents and carers (Creative Scotland, 2013)

There is significant investment in a range of targeted initiatives to support participation in dance, music and theatre as well as supporting better collaboration between artists and education settings, and schools/colleges and creative businesses in the development of vocational curriculum.

There does not appear to be any over-arching, strategic approach to universal arts and culture access at a primary level outside of a general commitment to support cultural participation.

Northern Ireland

In 2018, The Arts Council of Northern Ireland, Education Authority and the Urban Villages Initiative have developed a £120,000 fund to pilot a Creative Schools Partnership in ten schools across the region. Elements of the evaluation are included in the Best Practice section below. (Arts Council of Northern Ireland, Education Authority and the Urban Villages, 2018)

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England

In 2015, ACE and the Department for Education launched the Cultural Education Challenge, which put forward a cultural entitlement model for children and young people. The ACE-funded Bridge organisations work with Local Cultural Education Partnerships (LCEPs) to address local inequality of access to culture for children and young people.

The LCEPs are ACE's vehicle to level the playing field for children and young people who may not access culture because of barriers of geography or socio-economic background. For example, the recent announcement by ACE to invest £5 million in a Youth Performance Partnerships Fund is channeled via LCEPs to address geographic areas of low engagement.

Any Backpack initiative or pilot in England would need to align closely with the work of LCEPs and of the strategic Bridge organisations (at least until 2022).

There is very little benefit in a stand-alone scheme when there are multiple partners all trying to encourage this kind of development and strategic organisations in place to support and facilitate. Therefore I would expect it to sit as part of a suite of entitlement work that would include: - Early Years development and links provided via health visitors and EY settings, Local Cultural Education Partnerships and the organisations working together to identify and provide opportunities. National initiatives including Music Education Hubs, Bridge Organisations, Libraries, Arts Council, ArtsMark and Arts Award so that the integration mechanisms are clear and mutually supporting.

Gunn, 2018

ACE are currently consulting on their next ten-year strategy and have proposed that the creative and cultural lives of all children and young people are recognised and nurtured (as one of the seven outcomes they would like to see for 2030).

The ACE consultation acknowledges that cultural opportunities are not equal across the country for children and young people and proposes increased investment in pre-school cultural activities (ACE 2018).

The accompanying evidence review notes that since 2008/09, there has been a significant decrease in the proportion of children aged 5-10 who have participated in dance activities, music activities, theatre and drama activities, arts and crafts activities, and other media activities. The figures for 17/18, more recent than the scope of the evidence review, note that the numbers of children visiting a museum is significantly lower than 16/17 (Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport 17/18).

Wales

The All-Wales Arts and Education Programme enables schools to draw on the knowledge and practice of artists, arts and cultural organisations to improve and complement teaching across the curriculum (Art in Wales, 2018).

The aim of this programme is to increase and improve opportunities for teachers and learners in our schools to work with artists and arts/cultural/heritage organisations; increase opportunities for young people to experience the work of Wales's artists and arts/cultural organisations; and create more opportunities for communication and partnerships between schools, artists, arts/cultural/heritage organisations and local communities.

Four regional networks have been created as vehicles for strategy and delivery, and an 'Experiencing the Arts' fund is for schools to directly increase the number of opportunities and experiences for their pupils in arts exploration.



4. EVIDENCE OF THE BENEFIT OF ARTS PARTICIPATION

It is important to acknowledge at this point that the majority of the ACA BackPack steering group, other interviewees, and the researchers themselves, believe that engagement in the arts has an intrinsic positive benefit that is difficult to measure, and sometimes shouldn't be measured.

I don't want to live in a world where the Arts are seen as having to solve a problem. If the arts think that's their function they'll stop being artistic. The Arts. Culture. It's not social work... But if you need evidence of 'need' then let's see - obesity, mental health, suicide, isolation, teenage pregnancy, drug abuse, homelessness, the rise of the far right, the rise of nationalism, the loss of outdoor play... Maybe the arts can cheer us up. Perhaps the BackPack exists to ensure an importance is placed on art, for art's sake, not art to solve a problem – or be seen to fix the gaps left in education?

Moore, 2018

We are absolutely confident in our belief that children who have regular access to arts and culture – as participants, producers and consumers – will be more enriched and fulfilled than those who don't. However, it is clear that any feasibility study for a UK-wide Arts BackPack – that will need considerable investment and buy-in from a very wide range of stakeholders – will have to articulate clear evidence of need. We note that there is currently much work taking place in this area that will be useful to develop the BackPack idea.

For example, The Durham Commission on Creativity and Education aims to collect evidence on cultural education in England, and to explore whether there is a gap in what is currently provided.

The benefits will be looked at within the following themes:

1. Economic growth, skills, and social mobility
2. Community identity and social engagement
3. Personal fulfilment and wellbeing

The commission runs until Spring 2019 followed by a further review period until 2020 and will inform ACE's future strategy for children and young people's cultural education in England.

Another report due to be published in Spring 2019 is the Wolf Brown study for the New Victory Theatre's SPARK programme in New York. This will give insights into the intrinsic benefits of a programme that targets vulnerable children from the upper primary age range. Early reports of this two year study of over 1000 children show a very statistically significant positive impact. The study measures intrinsic benefits and shows how the arts impact on the children's capacity to feel, relate and create. The final published report will be useful for the Arts BackPack idea because of the focus on the primary school age range, the fact that the children are targeted for specific need and that the report measures intrinsic, rather than extrinsic, outcomes.

For this study, we have been looking at a broad range of research focused on **three key areas of enquiry:**

- 1.** Evidence for the benefit of children's participation in arts, culture (and other sport/leisure) on quality of life and life chances
- 2.** Examples of other participative activities around cultural capital and arts engagement for children, and which elements made them successful or not
- 3.** The systemic challenges that funders, schools and other public service providers are looking to address when investing in arts participation and engagement activities (areas in which, perhaps, an Arts BackPack can offer added value).

4.1 Impact on quality of life

We know about 'get your 30 minutes of exercise' and 'get your five-a-day fruit and veg', but at the moment there is no equivalent for arts and culture

Fancourt, 2018

The links between arts and health and well-being are very relevant to today's debate and there is a strong advocacy via the report commissioned by the All Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Well-being (APPG, 2017). The impact of this is also becoming more localised. For example, when the Director of Public Health in Brighton & Hove published his annual report in November 2018, the title was *The Art of Good Health* – making clear the role of the arts as a solution to part of the city's mental and physical health crises.

However, in the case of young people, there is another side to the debate. If young people see the Arts BackPack as a weight to be carried as part of the curriculum or the fruit and vegetables of a prescribed healthy diet, it may become less attractive and be viewed as a portion of worthy 'cultural spinach.' According to Beth Juncker, Professor Emerita at the University of Copenhagen, theatre performances for children are not intellectual exercises or produced to make children healthier. She coins the term 'cultural spinach' to describe the way children start to see theatre that is delivered as part of their educational life, not cultural life.

She argues that this is why children and young people have turned their bedrooms into cultural institutions where they have control. They don't want cultural institutions telling them what kind of cultural experience is good for them and giving them a portion of worthy 'cultural spinach' (Juncker, 2012).

Research and practice around the Backpack may be a timely way of investigating the way children and young people encounter the arts.

In 2015, a longitudinal UK study on health by Understanding Society found evidence that people engaging with the arts as audience members were 5.4% more likely to report good health. Other analysis, which took life satisfaction as an indicator of subjective wellbeing, valued the increased wellbeing as a result of arts engagement at £1,084 per person per year to the NHS, or £90 per person per month (Understanding Society, 2015).

This year, The Journal of Public Health published findings of a long study on the health benefits of mass participation, which recognises the need for children to feel part of something bigger than themselves (Stevinson & Hickson, 2018). Mass participation events (e.g. ParkRun) demonstrate increased positive health outcomes and have created a language promoting the benefits of mass physical participation in a digital age, and schools often respond to this need with investment, both of time and money, in social participation activities. It is unclear why the arts have been more on the back-foot, despite moderately successful participation programmes (such as the annual Summer Reading Challenge) reaching large numbers, but nowhere near sports equivalents.

The comprehensive study, *The Creative School* published in 2018 by the Royal Opera House Bridge has a number of case-studies that interrogate the direct benefits (or otherwise) of embedded creative cultures in school life (ROH Bridge, 2018).

What is profoundly clear is that access to culture is extremely unequal amongst UK schools.

There is evidence that the extrinsic benefit is not the main driver for young people to get involved in the arts. For example, a recent survey by BeatFreaks who asked young people why they engaged in the arts (Arts Council England, 2018 ii)

Why do young people engage with the arts?



Lower performing schools, seeking to avoid negative Ofsted judgements, generally perceive that cultural entitlement is not a high priority. However, creative arts participation does have a measurable impact on outcomes when the school already has a strong culture of creative practice (i.e. as demonstrated by a school achieving Platinum Artsmark status) – but very little data to break-down all outcomes and what they imply, or how schools are using this to leverage more influence/funding.

According to the Education Endowment Foundation's aggregated data on arts participation, there is not much compelling evidence yet on overall impact of arts participation on academic attainment (EEA, 2018). However, impact is greatest when creative practice has been found to support improved outcomes in English, maths and science – mainly in primary and/or with disadvantaged learners.

In the widely cited KCL Culture Case: *Fostering Creativity in Young Children* report from 2014, there is some evidence to support the impact of visual arts learning (more in-depth learning than just participation/consumption) on verbal and figural communication skills. (Hui, He & Ye, 2014)

The 2015 Durham Commission report on the impact of arts practice on cognition found that when teachers have used creative participation, especially at KS2, to tackle a very specific problem (such as poor literacy or problem-solving) then significant improvements to attainment have been found.

4.2 What works and what doesn't

There are, of course, many examples of best practice arts and culture participation activities in and outside of schools – but these can happen in isolation and are almost always tied to unsustainable sources of funding which limit any long-term impact.

The concept of 'Cultural Entitlement' for young children, which could be a useful foundation framework for an Arts BackPack has been devised by Royal Opera House Bridge, and has been broken down into the following elements:

All children should be entitled to:

- Co-creation alongside professional artists
- Access creative work from diverse cultures and times
- Learn outside the classroom in a range of cultural settings
- Experience high quality, live professional performance/see exhibited art work first hand
- Be introduced to the diverse professional roles and technologies that make up the cultural industries and understand the contribution these roles make to artistic excellence and our enjoyment of cultural experiences.

The Henley Review (prior to Darren Henley taking the CEO role at ACE) recommended in 2012:

The Cultural Education Partnership Group should consider establishing a new cultural education passport scheme for children between the ages of five to nineteen, which records all of their in-school and out of school cultural activities, enabling parents, carers and teachers to understand what each child has achieved and to plug any gaps in knowledge and experience.

Henley, 2012

Some of the key recommendations around Talent Accelerator, currently being considered by a number of local authorities, Bridge organisations and LEPs:

- working with Local Cultural Education Partnerships to identify a few small Talent Accelerator Zones, identifying Cultural Champions – or similar – from existing networks and successful projects to lead
- identifying Community Champions from business and/or local government who will help broker access, funding, opportunity and space
- targeting support for educators around aligning work inspiration activity with core curriculum live briefs from employers
- creating a centralised Talent Accelerator support team with a set of guiding principles and online focus for all stakeholders (either on a new or existing website such as the CCSkills Creative Choices page)
- supporting schools and community venues with space audits (general resource & equipment) for hosting creative projects for earmarked projects
- offering Talent Accelerator support to local Champions - supporting general events in integrating participatory stages/live brief/work experience and shadowing
- investing in enterprise skills projects – supporting partnership with adult enterprise provision
- encouraging cross-purpose projects (ie well-being, enterprise, environment, democracy) that align with local strategic priorities and existing PHSE focuses
- commissioning continual independent evaluation, creating a meaningful impact assessment of every stage of the pilot, with strategic and practical recommendations for the next steps
- engaging fundraiser to identify and secure funding for post-pilot activity

The cultural education passport scheme has not yet been taken up by the pilot partnership groups, presumably because of the amount of work and time needed to develop partnerships in the first instance. Some similar schemes are beginning to emerge, for example, the Cambridge Culture Card (see p.18), via local cultural education partnerships. Henley's recommendation chimes with that of the ArtsBack, but, as with any idea, the right context and the right time is needed to develop the idea to reality.

Schools in which a rich offer of access to local arts and cultural opportunities has been successful have relied on local 'Cultural Champions' that drive any participation, ideally someone at a senior level (see Thurrock Trailblazer).

The recently refreshed Artsmark Award in England is successfully supporting cultural provision for children, including primary age, in 3,431 English schools. However, nationally this is 14% of schools, and the award is not necessarily targeted at those schools with need.

A recent feasibility study (not published) on the concept of a *Talent Accelerator* for 0-25 year olds, commissioned and developed by the South East Creative Economy Network, put the need for trained Cultural and Community Champions at the heart of a pilot and then roll-out. This programme is focused on project-based learning opportunities, and a centralised portal through which creative businesses and arts organisations can offer real-world skills experiences for children – but also a framework through which commissioned projects in local 'zones' can be more joined-up and inclusive of all children's needs/experiences.

Whilst the Talent Accelerator hasn't yet been tried and tested, there is momentum behind the idea of both a national, digital focus and the targeted support for local infrastructure running engagement projects around a set of criteria for inclusion.

As was clear from interviews with the ACA steering group, even the most developed NPO education programme would benefit from something tailored, joined-up and inclusive of all schools. There is always a risk that projects, like the Arts BackPack and Creative Partnerships in the past, could be perceived as simply a way for artists to access more funding and not delivered with children in mind.

Creative Boost, a recent DfE and Bridge funded project in East Sussex developed a collaborative model of working between schools, creative industry businesses, arts & cultural organisations and local authorities around cultural entitlement – especially through the prism of encouraging children to consider themselves as future creative practitioners.

The best practice from this project, something for an Arts BackPack to consider, is how a simple methodology can involve all stakeholders in design from the beginning – therefore widening impact and reach. The excerpt on the right from the evaluation has not previously been published.

Learning from Creative Boost (East Sussex County Council)

- Key to the success of the project was the engagement of Skills East Sussex (the independent skills and employability board for the county), and its employer-led sector skills taskgroups in joining up the conversation and aligning it with the local skills and employment story.
- Regular updates via the taskgroup meant that information was reported up to the local authority and the Skills Advisory Board of the South East LEP (SELEP), ensuring findings from the project had a wider impact and developed greater understanding of the needs of schools, businesses and creative employers.
- The Creative Café model is something that has been developed by local social enterprise Culture Shift for many years – providing a format that could be aligned to the project's objectives without having to spend time and money inventing a new methodology.
- During Arts Award training, teachers were asked about the interests of their students - something to which the Creative Cafés could directly respond.
- As well as opportunities for schools to engage with professionals, the Creative Cafés provided new experiences for local employers and freelancers, enabling them to test ideas and improve their practice with young people.
- Leading cultural organisations in the area that sit on the taskgroup (including Towner Gallery and De La Warr Pavilion) have also been given the opportunity to work with new schools through this project – work can continue as part of their National Portfolio Status from Arts Council England.

Some key recommendations, following the NI Creative Schools Partnership pilot

- The programme should be continued with an initial term of three years.
- The existing ten schools should be funded for the three years to continue to embed creativity in learning (across the arts departments, in other departments, and to apply lessons about how to engage specific students) and also to act as ambassadors to a wider group of schools
- The good practice points of the pilot programme should be retained: clear objectives linked to School Improvement Plans, careful choice of a targeted group of young people, employment of professional artists, sustained engagement prioritising depth over breadth, and multiple contacts within the schools including principals.
- Application criteria should be extended to ask about what contact with parents is planned during project delivery.
- The schools should give more attention to legacy and should create a legacy plan that includes opportunities identified as the project evolves.
- The programme should include a set of events to share and develop learning. Subjects should include: the importance and process of using creativity in schools; how artists and teachers can work together to support the development of both; how to involve parents in projects; and how to use projects to bring new audiences to arts organisations.

One of the most anticipated pilots coming in 2019 is the Cities of Learning project, for which the collaboration between The RSA and DigitalMe has already been recognised as one of top 100 innovative education ideas in the world by the HundrED Foundation in Helsinki (Painter & Shafique, 2018)

The Cities of Learning concept is built on the belief that learners of all ages deserve access to experiences and opportunities to develop their knowledge, skills and capabilities, with the ability to progress into meaningful and valued learning and work opportunities which enable them to thrive.

The programme is centred around 'Digital Open Badges', which are micro-credentials awarded by many different civic, cultural, educational, business and recreational organisations in a city – essentially creating a city campus. An individual collects these badges in a virtual 'BackPack', which becomes a repository for their knowledge and skills built-up through informal learning and new experiences.

The 2018 Creative Schools Partnership programme in Northern Ireland (NI) has tested a more joined-up approach to linking arts and cultural participation with school improvement in some of the country's lowest performing schools. (Jackson, 2018). If applied to a Backpack structure, the suggestion in NI is that depth, rather than breadth, is most needed and that the impact will come with intensive opportunity being provided to the least engaged before any wider roll-out is considered.

4.3 Adding value

ACE are have published their call-to-consultation Shaping The Next Ten Years (Arts Council England, 2018 iii), supported by the more detailed Strategy Consultation Framework.

Across all their consultations ACE have found that those consulted 'highlight the importance of providing access to cultural activities for children and young people'. They also recognise in their documents that:

For some children, school provides their first opportunity for cultural activity. That experience can act as a 'social leveler'. Without this equality of access, the gap in the levels of cultural activity that children experience widens further.

Arts Council England, 2018 iii

When making the case for a new Arts BackPack, especially something universally understood throughout the UK, we must be clear about what added value it could bring – and that no existing cultural programme is yet achieving.

Nothing works in isolation, so added value could be an essential over a universal BackPack offer, but that speaks to a range of other more targeted local opportunities and sign-posts to the work of LCEPS, for example.

A current study by the Fabian Society, Children & The Arts and The Musician's Union that is yet to publish, is focusing on current barriers to cultural engagement in schools and has identified the following:

- More curriculum time being dedicated to numeracy and literacy at the expense of creative subjects
- Inadequate teacher training in the arts leading to poor quality provision
- Limited availability of arts toolkits to support non-specialist teachers
- Absence of a music specialist in "most" primaries
- Lack of commitment to arts activity by school leaders and governors
- Lack of confidence among teachers who are embarrassed to sing in front of classes
- Inability of schools to identify and progress talented pupils, which has most impact on opportunities for poorer families
- Arts being delivered as extra-curricular activities rather than during school hours
- Ofsted's failure to adequately define their criteria for 'good' and 'outstanding' arts provision

The emphasis of the Backpack could be on levelling the playing field around equality of access to arts and culture in schools. Many primary schools have done a great deal to keep a robust and enriching arts curriculum alive in their setting and will question the value of an Arts Backpack that has a 'one size fits all' policy.

If primary schools and early years settings are to be main the distributor for an Arts Backpack, then there needs to be clarity around the additional value for teachers and parents, beyond information and encouragement. Some of the barriers identified above could be explicitly supported by a Backpack, especially the support for non-arts specialist teachers, cross-curriculum embedding and supporting buy-in from senior leaders and governors.

At a time of teacher shortages, it is interesting to note that some senior leaders are using the value they place on creative and cultural learning as a successful recruitment tool and some suggest that teachers' freedom to lead creative and cultural learning can play a vital role in staff retention. This is echoed in the approaches some schools have taken to involve parents and the wider community in a creative school ethos. The importance of broadening horizons and building and sustaining aspiration in a community cannot be underestimated.

There is also a political imperative for culture to counter the rise in populism, isolationism, extremism – how explicit can the Backpack be as part of a mission to open up thinking, and support safeguarding? The Backpack can support good cultural habits and connectivity with pluralist perspectives. Regular engagement with the arts from a young age leads to regular participation, normalization and critical thinking, without being instructional.

Please note that some reports and evaluations cited above are not yet published, and have been included here with permission of the evaluators – or have been cited, in part, within the body of a different article. All published texts are included as a reference at the end of this report.



5. CASE STUDIES

The existence of various models that have proved the test of time is evidence that the Backpack can and does work. However, the different international contexts are important.

We look at two different models: the Norwegian Cultural Rucksack and the Nuremburg Cultural Backpack. It is partly because of the size of the Norwegian model and the different political and economic context to the UK, that this study proposes the Nuremburg model to be a more feasible model as a local pilot inspiration, but both are worth drawing upon and learning from.

5.1 The Norwegian Cultural Rucksack

The Norwegian Cultural Rucksack began in 2001 and has inspired several similar models, for example, the Nuremburg Cultural Backpack, Creative School in Sweden and Listaleypurin in the Faroe Islands.

The Norwegian programme is unique because it is a national programme that includes all schools and all students in Norway, making it one of the largest programmes in the world that aims to bring professional arts and culture to children. Approximately 840,000 students annually are involved in the programme; 614,000 in primary and lower secondary schools and 230,000 in upper secondary schools (Christopherson, C; Breivik, C; Breivik J-K, Homme, A & Rykkja, L H, 2015).

Norway has a large public sector and a long tradition of public support for arts and culture.

The private sector exerts relatively less influence on arts and cultural life in Norway than in some other places, with low levels of political conflict and broad agreement on the allocation of resources in society.

It is also a rich nation, with a large sovereign wealth fund of over one trillion dollars, equivalent to nearly two hundred thousand dollars per citizen that it has built from oil revenues. These factors have most likely played a role in both the wide approval that the programme enjoys and the ease with which the programme can be resourced.

What is the Norwegian Cultural Rucksack?

In Norway, the programme can be seen as many things:

- an arena for audience development
- a framework for meaningful arts experiences
- a breathing space in everyday life
- a financing scheme
- a policy measure
- an educational activity.
- a work sphere for public employees and for artists
- a cultural flagship

An Age-Specific Programme?

It is useful to note that Norway also runs two similar schemes for different demographics:

- Cultural Lunch Box for employees
- Cultural Walking Stick for the elderly

There is a question about whether it is useful to segregate audiences by age for different elements of culture.

An educational or a cultural programme?

Whilst the existence of a well-funded programme firmly anchored in both cultural and educational policy is in many ways to be envied, it is useful to note the tensions in the relationship between the school sector and the cultural sector. Because of this tension, different ways of understanding goals, objectives, and key concepts have arisen. This tension becomes tangible in debates on the programme's selection criteria, in the practice of making teachers superfluous in the practical implementation of the programme, in a lack of ownership of the programme on the part of the school's representatives, and in divergent views of what should be perceived as children's interaction with art.

Some cultural sector workers define their artistic activities as being opposed to the school's activities, a definition which results in an unsettled relationship with the school.

Educationalists and cultural practitioners will have different objectives and whilst it is imperative to find links and synergies, a programme that is too systematic may not always be useful (Christopherson et al, 2015).

There have been also questions about the quality of the art made for the programme, if the art is made specifically with educational objectives in mind. However it is worth noting that Kevin Lewis (formerly of Theatre lolo) makes an interesting reflection on the positive relationship of making theatre to tour to schools, as opposed to presenting at venues.

At lolo when we toured schools we were able (because we had developed long term relationships with schools and teachers and they trusted us) to present and produce interesting contemporary plays from Europe in translation whereas when we started touring to venues in Wales we did fewer performances - schools weren't so used to coming to venues (it was more difficult for them to organise) and more importantly the venues were quite conservative in what they wished to programme.

Lewis, 2018

A goodness programme?

The programme is characterised by a distinctive type of enthusiastic rhetoric that arises both because the programme is relatively new, and because the field of cultural policy is battling against other, “weightier” fields for political prioritisation and budgetary allocations. This enthusiasm could, on one hand, be regarded as a strength of the programme, while on the other, it could stifle constructive criticism and open debate (Christopherson, 2015). In addition, a *goodness* programme may be less attractive to some children who don’t want too much ‘cultural spinach’.

5.2 Nuremberg Cultural Backpack

The Nuremberg Cultural Backpack began in 2008 and is this year celebrating its 10th anniversary. There is no online or digital component of the Backpack.

What problem is it solving?

The city of Nuremberg has plenty of cultural opportunity, but 10 years ago there were lots of schools in the city where the children did not go to dance, theatre, museums or to listen to music. The majority of these children were from lower socio-economic backgrounds, so the problem was how to serve these children.

There were new projects to target disadvantage in the city, but often they were aimed specifically at these children without using the existing cultural assets of the city. Participants might participate in a small cultural or artistic project, but not access the city in the way other children might.

How did it begin?

The idea came from Theatre Mumpitz, and from their director who had witnessed the Cultural Backpack idea in Norway and in Dusseldorf, Germany.

At the start, the aim was for every school to take part, but finance plays an important factor. If there is more money, then a new school can be invited. The reality is that funding and capacity only allow a proportion of the city's children to access the backpack, so it is targeted at those who need it most. In the first year, 2009, there were 50 children from three schools who had the back pack. Now, in 2018/19 there are 1,500 children with the Back Pack, from 18 schools across the city. The ambition is to reach every child that needs the cultural backpack. However, the project is at capacity, so there is a challenge to increase the numbers without impacting negatively on quality. Also, there is a challenge to sustain the current funding and the project does not want to increase temporarily and then be forced to go backwards and disappoint the schools.

To begin, Mummpitz invited the directors/headteachers of the schools to ask if they were interested in the idea. They went to the different political and municipal offices for social, cultural and educational matters and told them the concept and asked for funding. Each department said it was a great project but that it belonged to another department. The culture department gave a little start-up money for three years. The social department gave no money, but helped to connect to sponsors. The education department gave no money but advocated for the project. The Mayor helped with connections. For example, the first 30,000 euros was raised via the Opera Ball.

At the start, the education office helped target the work at where it was most needed. After three or four years, the schools began to contact Theatre Mummpitz and ask to join but they could only join if they were from an area of need. (Theatre Mummpitz 2018)

What does the Nuremburg Cultural Backpack look like? How does it work?

The Backpack is a physical gift received by pupils, containing a range of leaflets and artefacts that sign-post children to different available experiences. Children have four cultural experiences (theatre, museum, dance, music) during the year. The Backpack aims to open the door to professional arts and culture and to develop cultural knowledge.

Partners

Six partners (one theatre, three museums, one dance, one opera/music)

Timetable

October – all cultural partners are invited to the theatre and to network with the other partners

Oct - Dec – theatre

Jan - March – museums

April - July – dance/opera

Logistics

- Theatre Mumpitz employs one member of staff to administer, working 20 hours per week
- There is a contract with cultural partners and a contract with schools
- Every ticket to the cultural event includes the cost of travel on the bus (67 cents to the bus company)

Ethos

- To value the child as a serious human being with as equal access to the culture of the city as adults
- For the child to participate in culture for its own sake not for accreditation or to improve test scores
- To promote the Backpack as a symbol of survival; the organisers describe the Cultural Backpack as a basic 'food' for the children, independent from parents' wealth
- To advocate for a range of culture; the contract with the school is for the children to visit all cultural partners during the year, not to pick one
- To build trust with the schools and the directors/head teachers of the schools

Funding

- 10% from the city and the rest comes from commercial local business sponsorship and some payment by the school (for example, big retailers are asked to be a 'godfather' to a school). The cost is approximately €100,000 per year for 1,500 children.

The Nuremberg Cultural Backpack is different to the Norwegian one for a number of reasons.

It is a more appropriate model for the UK because it is:

- More manageable and less resource-heavy
- Targeted specifically at primary-aged children, all from the same year group aged 9 to 10 years old
- Not for all children, but those who need it the most, primarily targeting those children from lower socio-economic backgrounds
- A project that built gradually as support, resources and interest grew

Clearly the model is not suitable for all contexts but there are transferable elements, particularly for city-sized cultural partnerships.

5.3 Emerging models from the UK

England model 1: Birmingham Arts School

This emerging model will have two members of staff; a headteacher and an administrator. The other members of staff will be the current learning staff at Birmingham's cultural organisations; the museum will be the History department, the iKON Gallery the art department and The REP theatre, the drama department.

The headteacher will ensure that cultural organisations are serving all 400 schools in the city (rather than super serving the same 35 schools), advocate for the arts in schools, coordinate after school, holiday and CPD activities and facilitate joined up funding applications to large scale charities and trusts. The Cultural Back Pack could be part of this strategic initiative.

England model 2: Cambridge Culture/XP Card

In Cambridgeshire, The XP card has set up an online reward and record system with two pilot groups of children and their families, one on the edge of Cambridge City and one in more rural Cambridgeshire. It works closely with the targeted programmes for the MyCambridge LCEP.

The project has attracted Paul Hamlyn and ACE funding because of the potential for a national roll out.

It is currently in a prototype phase that will measure against and test the viability of its three strategic aims:

- Has it increased children's engagement in the arts, particularly those from low income backgrounds?
- Has it recognized and acknowledged children's engagement in art, creativity and culture?
- Has it provided a platform for collecting robust, relevant and visible evidence of cultural engagement on children?

The Arts BackPack has clear synergies with these aims and there are opportunities for the Arts BackPack to work alongside the digital infrastructure set up by the XP card and for each programme to enhance the other.

England model 3: Thurrock Trailblazer

The Thurrock Trailblazer is a version of the Arts BackPack for primary and secondary schools in the borough of Thurrock. It is evidence that there are schemes already in the UK. It is a local programme in a semi-rural area without large numbers of cultural institutions.

Even if Government resources were available for a roll-out of a UK-wide Arts BackPack, this would need to work with existing partnerships on the ground. The Thurrock Trailblazer model is resourced from a mix of local schools, Thurrock Council and Royal Opera House Bridge. It developed out of a needs analysis that noted how:

- a cultural entitlement model could form an important part of Thurrock's achievement and aspiration strategy for low achieving schools.
- insular and parochial attitudes are common in Thurrock learning communities
- any initiative for all Thurrock's children needs to have impact across curriculum over time
- each school needs to have a cultural champion

(Ambition, Achievement and Attainment, 2014)

Initially, 19 schools expressed an interest in becoming pathfinder schools, less than half of the borough's schools. It is now in its 5th year of delivery with school sign ups increasing year on year with 85% taking part over the period of the programme. 33 schools are taking part in 2018/19.



6. HOW COULD AN ARTS BACKPACK BE FUNDED?

A mixed economy of funding is essential for both a pilot, and for a wider roll-out.

The Backpack pilot will have a better chance of sustainable funding and growth if targeted on a specific locality and with a nominated local delivery partner, with a number of match funders, from which it can then be scaled-up. For example, the RSA Cities of Learning process involved a period of research and light-touch workshops/tests in a few local areas. From this, a clear blueprint for a pilot was developed (in two localities) to be delivered by local partners – in one case, the LCEP, with a mix of national and local funding.

The Nuremberg Backpack is powered by local business investment, something made more attractive by the physical nature of what the children receive.

There are number of national trusts and foundations, for whom an Arts Backpack would align and would be supportive of their mission.

There are regional cultural support, education partnerships and strategic networks for whom an Arts Backpack would offer some logical and tangible impact.

Key to the success of the pilot is making a business case to CSR investment, developing a 2-3 year relationship with a supporting enterprise. From this a replicable and scalable model of local investment can be created for all areas of the UK.



7. NEXT STEPS / RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Fill the Gap

We have found there is a gap in strategic thinking and cultural provision for primary-aged children. We recommend that the Arts Backpack idea focuses on the 5-12 age-range and draws together emerging research (The Fabian Society and Children & the Arts) and other interested parties to develop further evidence and thinking. To limit the costs of developing a bespoke delivery mechanism, further research into the digital needs of an online Arts Backpack will benefit from working with partners who have established digital infrastructure to develop possible digital implementation resources.

2. Co-design to reach all children

Any pilot project needs to be locally specific rather than one-size fits all. It should include children, families and teachers in co-designing the project. It should specifically target those children who do not currently access arts and culture thereby making case for the Arts Backpack to be a means of levelling an unequal cultural playing field. The Backpack may thereby be a cultural survival kit in a fast-changing Brexit-era landscape where children can be vulnerable.

3. Advocate for the intrinsic value of culture

It is recommended that the Back Pack prioritises the intrinsic value of culture, and that other extrinsic outcomes such as education, health and employability are part of the equation but only foregrounded when needed.

4. Build partnerships and support around a pilot project

A Pilot Project or a number of different pilots is recommended to build evidence, and a model of success, before any wider UK-wide rollout of the idea. In the first instance it should look more like the Nuremberg Cultural Rucksack than the Norwegian version. A pilot needs to be locally led and supported by multiple partners. These may include a national funder, who may be interested in a dissemination of the idea, and local cultural partners, including schools, who will understand local need. Any pilot(s) should make timely use of the latest research that supports the case for a targeted initiative of this kind and devise a comprehensive communications strategy to advocate to schools, children, parents, cultural partners and policy makers.

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When adding his support, Michael Foreman said:

Art was my boyhood 'magic carpet' to a world of Wonder. It has been all my life. Every child should have the opportunity to go on this ride.