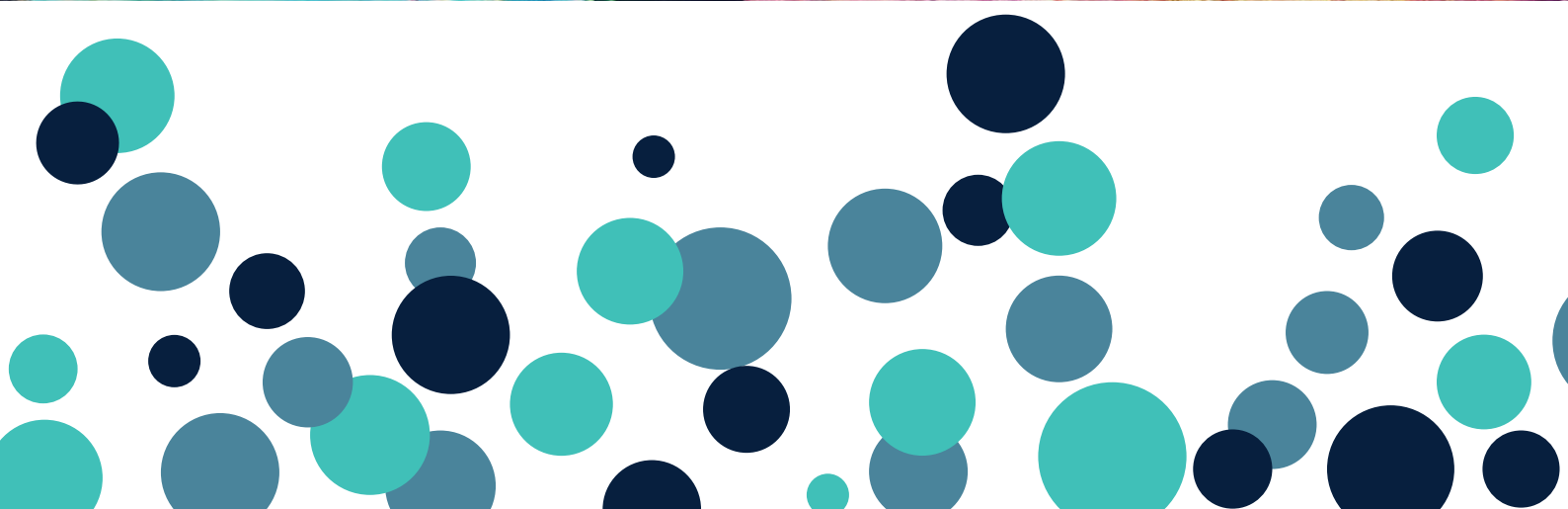




STARCATCHERS

Creative Skills

2018/19 Report



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SHANARRI icons key



Safe



Healthy



Achieving



Nurtured



Active



Respected



Responsible



Included

Icons reproduced with kind permission from the Care Inspectorate

Executive summary

Creative Skills is a unique artist-facilitated training programme, designed and delivered by Starcatchers, Scotland's National Arts and Early Years Organisation.

We give early years practitioners, educators and others who work with babies and young children the confidence and skills to put expressive arts at the heart of their practice. Creative Skills has been delivered as a Scottish Government-funded programme in some local authority areas since 2013, and has a proven track record in improving the skills and confidence of the participants we work with.

By upskilling the early years workforce, the training takes a prevention and early intervention approach. Participants go on to use more creative, expressive arts approaches within their Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) practice, improving the quality of experiences they provide, and improving outcomes for Scotland's children.

The training inspires practice that supports children through the Scottish Government's Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) principles and clearly links to the related SHANARRI wellbeing indicators (Safe; Healthy; Achieving; Nurtured; Active; Respected; Responsible; and Included).

The training increases young children's access to the arts, which fulfils Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and also contributes to addressing inequalities. The 2017 Scottish Household Survey shows the least advantaged people are the least likely to access the arts and cultural experiences (Scottish Government 2018). This is particularly relevant in terms of the attainment gap. Research reveals that shared creative activities – like singing, drawing and being read to – are linked to increased cognitive development in young children (Growing Up in Scotland 2019).

At a strategic level, the Creative Skills programme has been recognised as a core activity with Scottish Government, receiving funding from the Children, Young People and Families Early Intervention Fund since 2016. This report covers delivery in 2018-19.





In 2018-19 Starcatchers ran Creative Skills programmes in partnership with Aberdeen City Council, Dundee City Council, Midlothian Council, North Ayrshire Council, the Village Storytelling Centre in Glasgow, Edinburgh College and Glasgow Kelvin College.

We also ran our SQA qualification *Creative Skills in Early Childhood Practice* in Aberdeen and Glasgow.

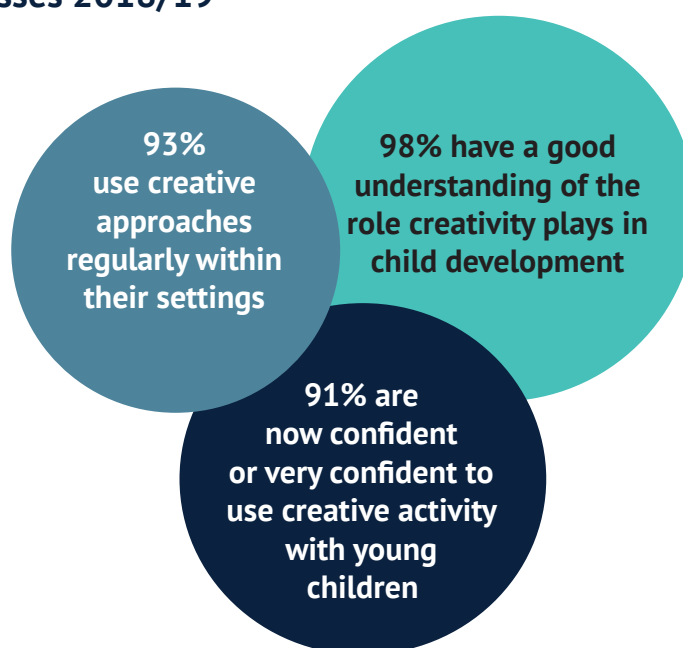
In total we worked with 276 participants, benefitting an estimated 11,040 babies and young children, and the feedback from the training has been consistently positive.

After taking part in the Creative Skills programme:

- **91%** agree or strongly agree they feel confident using creative experiences in their settings
- **98%** agree or strongly agree they have a good understanding of the role creativity plays in child development
- **95%** agree or strongly agree they have a good understanding of the capability the children they work with have to be creative
- **93%** agree or strongly agree they use creative approaches regularly within their settings.

Through case studies and impact stories, participants feed back to us how the training improves outcomes for children. **They report an increase in confidence, participation, concentration, inclusion and emotional literacy among the children they work with, and more meaningful engagement with parents and carers.** These changes help towards the development of executive function and self-regulation vital for future school success (Center on the Developing Child 2011). This evidence demonstrates that the programme helps support the delivery of key Scottish National Outcomes (Scottish Government 2019).

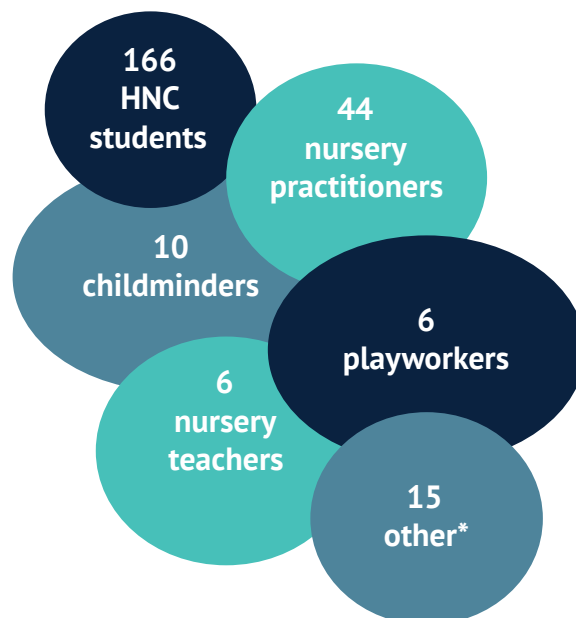
Key successes 2018/19



70+ sessions across...



276 participants made up of...



*Inc. trainees, teachers, storytellers, family support workers, lead practitioners, senior early years practitioners, and excellence and equity practitioners

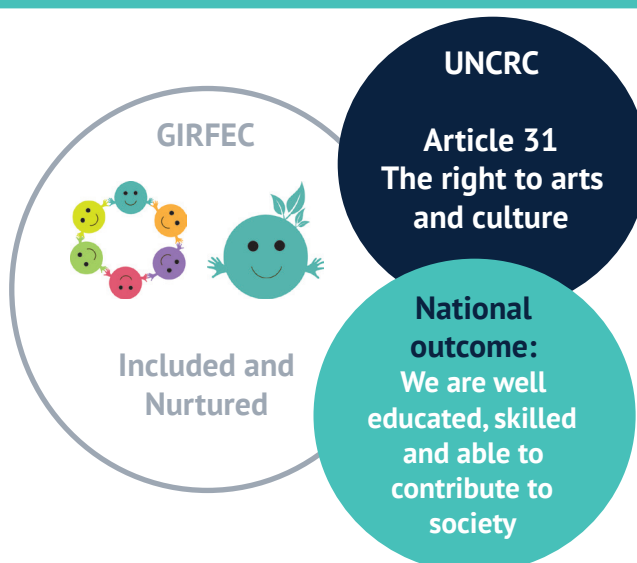
Impact on children

Callum never joined in with any group time activities. The first week of Starcatchers group he sat in the corner just watching. The second week he joined in reluctantly.

By the fourth week he was joining in with everything, smiling, happy and socialising appropriately.

This was just by having a creative, inclusive approach to the group, where there are no expectations placed on the children and done in a fun way around music and arts!

Creative Skills impact story, Dundee

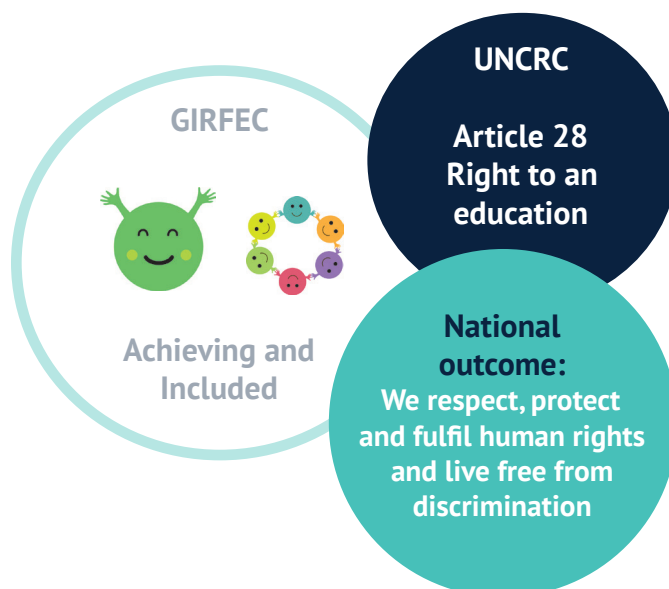


We set up Starcatchers Creative Skills groups with two ASN children and eight mainstream children in each group.

One boy has behavioural difficulties and social and communication difficulties. After two weeks in the integrated creative group he was joining in with all the songs and activities, doing paired work with other children, following instructions and all with a big smile on his face!

The transformation from a sullen, uncooperative boy to a happy, cooperative, friendly boy was remarkable!

Creative Skills impact story, Dundee



I felt some children in my group were showing signs of challenging behaviour. By knowing all the children well, I understood that a way for them to express their feelings could be through drawings or paintings.

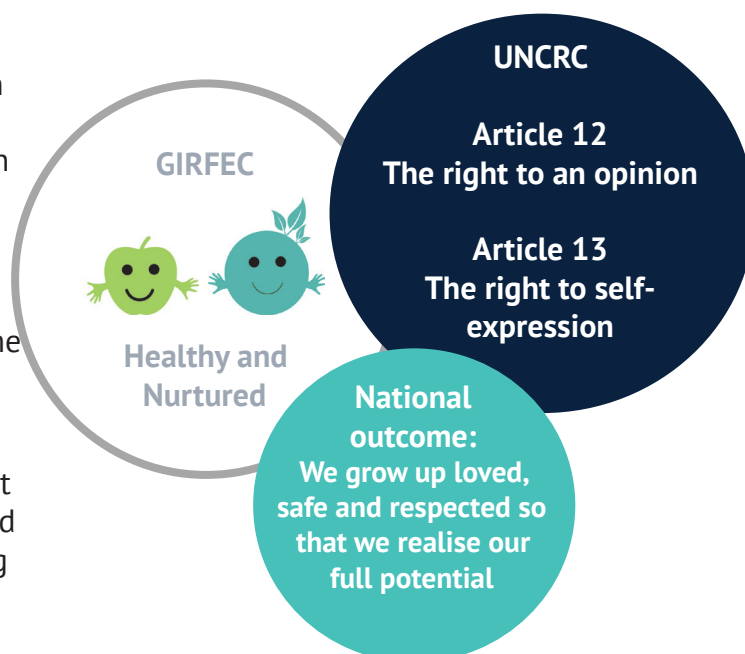
They began to express their feelings through the materials. Their movements were sharp, sudden and harsh. This was a clear indication of how they were feeling.

I then introduced an acoustic guitar playing a low volume level. As a result of this the children's emotions changed and they became more engaged and happier.

Each child [...] would describe what their art was. For example, "that's me being shouted at by my gran that made me scared" and "I'm sad in the picture because everyone wasn't being kind".

By discussing this the children were able to share how they felt.

Case Study, North Ayrshire





Background

Starcatchers

Starcatchers is Scotland's National Arts and Early Years Organisation, providing exceptional arts experiences to support improved outcomes for our youngest children. Starcatchers' work is delivered over three core pillars: producing and touring, professional development and community engagement.

Creative Skills programme

Creative Skills is Starcatchers' unique artist-facilitated training programme. We give early years practitioners, educators and others who work with babies and young children the confidence and skills to put expressive arts at the heart of practice. Creative Skills has been delivered as a Scottish Government-funded programme in some local authority areas since 2013. At a strategic level, the Creative Skills Programme has been recognised as core activity with Scottish Government, receiving funding from the Children, Young People and Families Early Intervention Fund since 2016. This report covers delivery 2018-19, and in particular focuses on the impact the training has on the participants and the children they work with.

Creative Skills ethos


The Creative Skills ethos has been developed over five years of professional dialogue with Starcatchers artists, Education Scotland, the Care Inspectorate, our local authority partners and the early years professionals we train.

Starcatchers Creative Skills approach shares open-ended ideas and techniques designed to give babies and young children a voice – using the expressive arts to engage them in decision-making, offering opportunities for self-expression, and respecting them as active agents in their own lives.


We take an asset-based approach: our artists are experts in the expressive arts for young children, our participants are experts in their own setting and the children they work with, and babies and young children are experts in what interests and motivates them.

Creative Skills is about more than just the sharing of ideas – it's about investing in early years practitioners as people, giving them the skills and confidence to engage in creative approaches of all kinds and develop their own creative practice.

Creative Skills is about more than the expressive arts. While we recognise that the arts are a powerful tool for engaging young children and creating a sense of wonder, they also provide key opportunities to develop creative skills such as curiosity, open-mindedness, imagination and problem solving that can be used across all aspects of learning.



We share
open-ended ideas and
techniques designed to
give babies and young
children a voice



Early years practitioners should see themselves as an open-ended resource – they can inspire, create a sense of wonder and introduce new ideas as proposals, provocations or invitations without leading or dominating a creative process. Part of the Creative Skills journey is for participants to see how ideas can be adapted and inspiration can be offered as a part of everyday practice.

Context for delivery

The expressive arts and creative activity are mentioned in one form or another in every key policy document for Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) in Scotland.

Specific expressive arts experiences and outcomes are outlined within Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence. *Pre-Birth to Three* (Learning and Teaching Scotland 2010) highlights the importance of shared creative activities for literacy skills and easing transitions. The Play Strategy for Scotland emphasises the role of creativity and imagination as part of play (Scottish Government 2013). Growing Up in Scotland research highlights the importance of shared creative activity (reading, singing, drawing) for young children's cognitive development (Growing Up in Scotland 2019) and also children's overall happiness and ability to adjust to school (Parkes et al 2016). Education Scotland's *How Good Is Our Early Learning and Childcare* cites "developing creativity and skills for life and learning" as a quality indicator (Education Scotland 2016). Locally and internationally, research highlights the important role the arts and shared creative activity can play in narrowing the attainment gap for some of our most vulnerable children (National Endowment for the Arts 2015; Deasy 2002; and Siraj-Blatchford et al 2011).

Despite this, practical training in expressive arts and creative skills is not generally available to early years professionals at college undertaking NC and HNC courses. At university it is often only available as a theory-based, opt-in course.

Without the benefit of training, the range of creative activity taking place in nurseries and childcare settings is largely based on the existing skills, understanding and confidence of individual staff. This can negatively impact the full implementation of national policy, and the range and quality of positive creative experiences for our youngest children.

As part of the Scottish Government's expansion of free childcare, up to 11,000 new members of staff will have joined the Early Years workforce by 2020. While this transition takes place, more experienced staff have a greater burden placed on them in terms of training and supporting new colleagues while some of the most experienced professionals have been seconded to strategic or managerial roles. This leaves a gap in terms of skills and experience within the staff working directly with young children.

Creativity and Scotland's ELC policy framework

“Quality can be defined in a number of different ways, and different interpretations of quality will be considered throughout; but the evidence base is clear: children benefit when the adults around them interact with them in sensitive, responsive and stimulating ways.”

Independent review of Scotland's early learning and out of school care workforces (Scottish Government 2015)

“Offering opportunities for stories, conversations, listening, rhymes, singing, mark making, environmental print, and creative and imaginative play are all effective and fun ways of developing literacy”

Pre-Birth to Three Positive Outcomes for Scotland's Children and Families National Guidance
(Learning and Teaching Scotland 2010)

“Creativity is at the heart of Curriculum for Excellence, delivering education in Scotland in an innovative and engaging way.”

Michael Russell, Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning (Russell 2013)

3.3 Developing Creativity and skills for life and learning

- Creativity is at the heart of play and all aspects of learning...

How Good is Our Early Learning and Childcare, Education Scotland (Education Scotland 2016)

Wellbeing 1.31 and 2.27 – Creativity, natural curiosity and learning.

Health and Social Care Standards: my support, my life (Scottish Government 2017)

“Just taking part in expressive arts can be transformative – the end product is not the goal. The approach and attitude with which services embrace expressive arts is as important as the particular chosen activity”

Our Creative Journey (Care Inspectorate 2017)



Evaluating Creative Skills

Aims and objectives

To improve equity of access to arts and creative learning by empowering the ELC workforce to learn the skills to embed a child-centred, playful approach to the arts within their practice.

High level outcomes

Early learning and childcare workforce:

- Increased understanding of the importance of the arts in early years and how they support positive outcomes for children
- Increased understanding of the role of arts and creative learning in the delivery of key Scottish Government Early Years policies
- The ability to deliver creative opportunities for children
- Increased support at a strategic local level in both education and the early years for using an arts-based approach
- Increased diversification of Creative Skills participants by providing training for practitioners who cannot access the core programme.

Children:

- More children fulfil their right to access high quality, artistic and cultural experiences in their childcare and education setting
- Increased cognitive and social capacity of young children
- Families and communities are connected through shared experience of the arts.

This report details the several different ways we have gathered evidence. All participants fill in a baseline survey on the first day of their training and an evaluation form at the end. Within training sessions artists facilitate reflective practice discussions, which deepen our understanding of how the training is impacting on practice, and artists fill out artist feedback reports. We also source case studies, which are based on stories that Creative Skills participants have shared with us or written as part of our SQA Qualification coursework.

Our Creative Skills Manager meets with local authority partners to plan and reflect on the training, and where possible we ask for local authorities to share any feedback they receive from participants. There is a Starcatchers Creative Skills closed Facebook group and a public Twitter account @StarcachersCS where participants can share practice and reflect on the training.

In May 2019 we shared a questionnaire with participants who had taken part in the Creative Skills programme since 2013. This questionnaire asked about the longer-term impact on practice and the impact on the children our participants work with.

The impact stories within this report come from the responses to that questionnaire.

Names of all children have been changed to protect their identity.

Methodological approach

The work shown in this report has been carried out using the Matter of Focus approach. The Matter of Focus approach is a theory-based approach to outcome monitoring, evaluation, learning and improvement that builds on contribution analysis. In using the approach, we have gone through a logical and structured process of:

- Developing a theory of change for our project informed by an understanding of the context in which we operate
- Agreeing one or more outcome maps that show how we think our activities contribute to outcomes, and what needs to be in place to make this happen
- Identifying clear change mechanisms by which our project or programme works, which are shown in our pathways
- Developing a plan to gather data to understand whether or not we are making progress towards outcomes we hope, which includes integrating current data and information we collect and capturing data specifically for this purpose
- Systematically reviewing this data against each of the stepping stones for each pathway in the outcome map
- Summarising key findings against each of the stepping stones to tell our contribution story.

This report has been produced in OutNav, a software system developed by Matter of Focus that supports organisations to take a collaborative and outcome focused approach to evaluation planning, implementation analysis and reporting.



Participants' pathway

1	2	3	4	5	6
What we do	Who with	How they feel	What they learn and gain	What they do differently	What difference does this make?
1.1 Run a creative skills training programme in partnership with a range of stakeholders	2.1 Early years professionals	3.1 This training is for me and can help me do my job	4.1 Understand the value and role of arts and creativity in early childhood	5.1 Confidently embed arts and creativity routinely in practice	6.1 Scotland's early years workforce has the ability to deliver creative opportunities
1.2 Create opportunities to connect and support each other in creative skills		3.2 Listened to, respected and valued	4.2 Believe that engaging with creativity is an important part of who we are	5.2 Champion the arts and creative approaches	6.2 Children fulfil their right to access to creativity and the arts
		3.3 Inspired, connected, empowered, relaxed, delighted, enjoyment and creative	4.3 Develop confidence and skills in using creative approaches		6.3 Increased cognitive and social capacity of very young children
		3.4 Challenged - this is different	4.4 Shared experiences create a sense of wonder and fun		6.4 Families and communities are connected through the arts
		3.5 Feel confident in myself			

	Great progress	Some progress	No progress
High confidence	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>
Some confidence	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>
No confidence	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>

Detailed findings

This section of the report sets out the evidence underpinning each of the participant pathway stepping stones.

Participants' pathway 1: What we do

Activities:

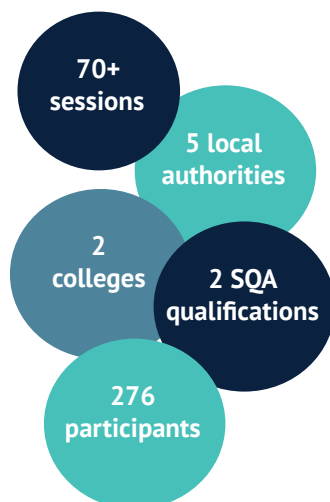
- 1.1 Run a Creative Skills training programme and qualification in partnership with a range of stakeholders
- 1.2 Create opportunities to connect and support each other in Creative Skills.

Key findings:

Training has been delivered in partnership with Aberdeen City Council, Dundee City Council, Midlothian Council, North Ayrshire Council, the Village Storytelling Centre, Edinburgh College and Glasgow Kelvin College. The qualification has been delivered in Aberdeen and Glasgow. Participants came together from a variety of different settings and roles, sharing practice and supporting each other as they gained creative skills and confidence.

1.1 Run a Creative Skills training programme and qualification in partnership with a range of stakeholders

The Creative Skills Programme typically consists of ten, two-hour sessions, with a condensed version available to fit into HNC Childcare students' timetables. Artists share a toolkit of open-ended approaches to expressive arts such as drama, visual art, music, dance and creative movement, puppetry or storytelling. Each artist works with the group twice, giving participants the opportunity to try ideas between sessions, and engaging with reflective practice with the artist and their fellow participants within the second session.



By taking a flexible approach to the structure of the delivery, we are able to widen access to the training and best meet the needs of local authorities, colleges and individuals, who may not be able to access training at certain times of the day due to work or personal commitments.

Sample timetables from 2018-19

ABERDEEN (twilights)

3rd October 2018: **Introduction**
10th October 2018: **Creative Movement 1**
7th November 2018: **Creative Movement 2**
21st November 2018: **Music 1**
5th December 2018: **Music 2**
16th January 2019: **Creative Champions**
30th January 2019: **Visual Art 1**
20th February 2019: **Visual Art 2**
6th March 2019: **Puppetry 1**
20th March 2019: **Puppetry 2**

DUNDEE (full day, midweek)

24th October 2018: **Introduction and Music 1**
14th November 2018: **Music 2 and Puppetry 1**
5th December 2018: **Creative Champions and Drama 1**
16th January 2019: **Creative Movement 1 and Puppetry 2**
6th February 2019: **Drama 2 and Creative Movement 2**

GLASGOW KELVIN COLLEGE (within college timetable)

26th November 2018: **Creative Champions and Drama 1**
27th November 2018: **Visual Art 1 and Puppetry 1**
28th January 2019: **Visual Art 2**
18th February 2019: **Drama 2**
4th March 2019: **Puppetry 2**

1.2 Create opportunities to connect and support each other in creative skills

Creative Skills is not only a place to learn new skills from artists but also somewhere for participants to meet one another, work together and learn from and support one another. Artists encourage participants to talk about how their learning can be applied in their settings, and feedback to the group about what they've tried.

"The group were enthusiastic, conversational and energetic. It felt like a very conversational session where people felt safe and able to comment on what they were doing/had done and share how it related to their work place or practice."

Artist Greg Sinclair, Music

This year's Midlothian sessions were aimed at childminders who, working alone, are often isolated. Through Creative Skills they had a common space and connected together to build a support network, aided by Midlothian Council. There were also nursery practitioners, playworkers and teachers on the course which also allowed them to see a cross section of roles within the early years workforce and gain insight into other roles. As we can see in the participant feedback, this was hugely valuable.

By partnering with the Village Storytelling Centre, we were able to open up our Glasgow training across local authorities, with participants from Glasgow, Falkirk, Inverclyde, North Lanarkshire, North Ayrshire, West Lothian, Edinburgh, Renfrewshire and East Renfrewshire.

"I've really enjoyed my training. I've loved getting to know individuals from different sectors and authorities."

Glasgow participant 18/19

"I have had a great time sharing experiences and listening to others. I have a lot more confidence to carry throughout."

Glasgow participant 18/19



"[The biggest difference Creative Skills made to me was] meeting and sharing ideas with people from similar backgrounds."

Midlothian participant 18/19

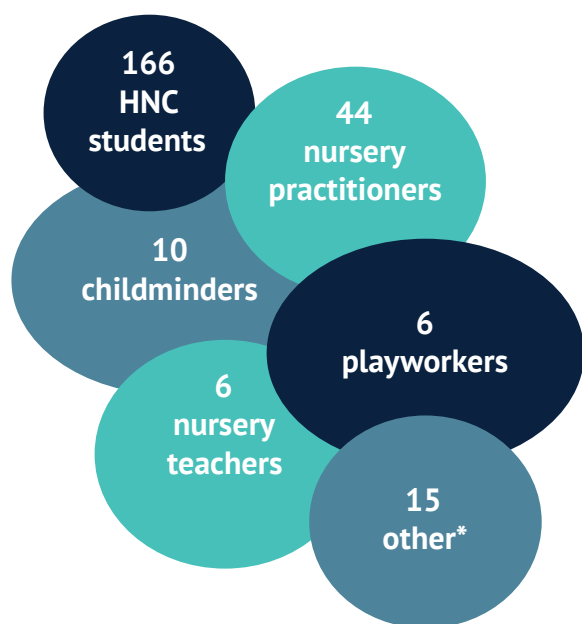
Participants' pathway 2: Who with

Engagement:

2.1 Creative Skills worked with 276 participants this year.

Key findings:

Our participants included: nursery practitioners and managers; playworkers; family support workers; teachers; teaching assistants; childminders; excellence and equity practitioners; and HNC students.



*Inc. trainees, teachers, storytellers, family support workers, lead practitioners, senior early years practitioners and excellences and equity practitioners



Participants' pathway 3: How they feel

Reactions:

- 3.1 This training is for me and can help me do my job
- 3.2 Listened to, respected and valued
- 3.3 Inspired, connected, empowered, relaxed, delighted, enjoyment and creative
- 3.4 Challenged – this is different
- 3.5 Feel confident in myself.

Key findings:

Through artist and participant feedback, it is clear the participants feel positive about the training in a variety of ways, in particular around the development of their own creative confidence.

3.1 This training is for me and can help me do my job

“One participant in particular commented on how she had felt that art was something alien to her practice but that she could see how she could now apply it as a crossover within her own discipline.”

Skye Reynolds, Creative Movement Artist

This artist feedback from Skye shows a moment where a participant realised this training was relevant to them and could help their practice and work with young people. That ‘Eureka!’ moment can be hard to capture - but here we see a practitioner realise art is crucial to their role at work. Participants’ feedback demonstrates that they felt Creative Skills was well-suited to their practice.

Several participants fed back that what they really enjoyed about Creative Skills was that it showed how using creativity could be easy to embed, and that they did not need expensive materials or pre-made resources.

“It’s made me feel more confident in just having a go, not worrying too much about the outcome. Made me think again about how important creativity is and how I should be embedding experiences into everyday practice as much as I can. Lots of simple, easy to implement activities.”

Aberdeen participant 18/19



3.2 Listened to, respected and valued

As highlighted earlier, many participants felt a fantastic part of Creative Skills was the supportive space it provided, and the opportunities it gave them to share experiences with artists and fellow practitioners.

“There was a lovely moment when a couple of the students opened up about their challenges of being a student within an established environment and how at times they didn’t feel as confident in suggesting that they lead a session - even though they were passionate to do it. By giving space to be heard and offering some of my personal experience I felt there was an alertness from the group that told me most of them resonated with this. To me this outcome would be around connection, learning, companionship and being heard and seen.”

Jayne Middleton, Creative Movement

3.3 Inspired, connected, empowered, relaxed, delighted, enjoyment and creative

Participant feedback indicates that they are engaged, connecting, having fun and feel part of a safe and welcoming space.

“I have thoroughly loved the experience. All the artists have been so helpful, inspiring and have made each experience simple to adapt.”

Midlothian participant 18/19



“I’m now more excited to try different things.”

Midlothian participant 18/19

“Creative Skills made me a more creative member of staff.”

North Ayrshire participant 18/19

3.4 Challenged – this is different

In our feedback, participants reflected on how Creative Skills had taken them “outside their comfort zone” and forced them to think differently about creativity. Participants felt challenged in several different ways - some fed back that they found performing or being creative in front of adults was a new challenge.

Many reported that the biggest challenge was overcoming their fear of “getting it wrong”. In our baseline survey, 57% of participants reported their fear of getting it wrong was a moderate to high barrier to using creative approaches in their setting. By the end of the course this number had decreased to 27%.

“I lack confidence and this made me challenge myself and come out of my comfort zone.”

North Ayrshire participant 18/19

“I’ve learned to think outside the box and not only use what I already know.”

Aberdeen participant 18/19

3.5 Feel confident in myself

Participant feedback indicates that participants feel confident about using their own skills and creativity after leaving training.

- Before Creative Skills, 53% of participants marked ‘own lack of skills’ as a moderate to high barrier to using creativity in their setting; afterwards this number dropped to 36%

- When asked what was the best thing about Creative Skills, 46% of participants mentioned the improvement in their own confidence
- In our evaluation, 91% of participants agree or strongly agree they feel confident using creative experiences in their settings.

Participants' pathway 4: What they learn and gain

Knowledge, attitudes and skills:

- 4.1 Understand the value and role of arts and creativity in early childhood
- 4.2 Believe that engaging with creativity is an important part of who they are
- 4.3 Develop confidence and skills in using creative approaches
- 4.4 Shared experiences create a sense of wonder and fun.

Key findings:

Feedback shows participants who complete the training gain the knowledge, attitudes and skills to successfully use creative approaches to the expressive arts within their practice.

4.1 Understand the value and role of arts and creativity in early childhood

Feedback shows that participants have a good understanding of the value and role of arts and creativity in early childhood, and of the role it plays in child development. It also shows that they develop a new perspective – of how children feel and think when they're being creative.

"Being creative, with the relaxing music playing, made me appreciate how the children feel when they're absorbed in making things or doing art."

Midothian participant 2018/19

Capacity for children to be creative

Before Creative Skills

85%

After Creative Skills

95%

Agree or strongly agree they have a good understanding of the capability the children they work with have to be creative.

Regularity of creativity

Before Creative Skills

80%

After Creative Skills

93%

Agree or strongly agree they use creative approaches regularly within their setting.

4.2 Believe that engaging with creativity is an important part of who they are

A recurring theme in feedback from participants and artist reports in response to the question ‘What was the biggest difference Creative Skills has made to you and your practice?’ is the belief that engaging with creativity is an important part of who they are.

“I have learned how to be more creative.”

“I’ve developed confidence in empowering others to embrace their creativity.”

“The ability to be creative is in me. I just need to channel it out.”

“My confidence has developed tremendously. I can see beyond the need for expensive resources. It has ignited my creativity and I really want to do more in my practice to ensure I am offering meaningful opportunities and experiences.”

Creative Skills participants 18/19

[After Creative Skills] we went on to plan and provide a whole school staff training session, which gave us the opportunity to share some of the practical ideas and theories we had learned whilst on the course. We found this has had a big impact on staff confidence levels delivering activities.

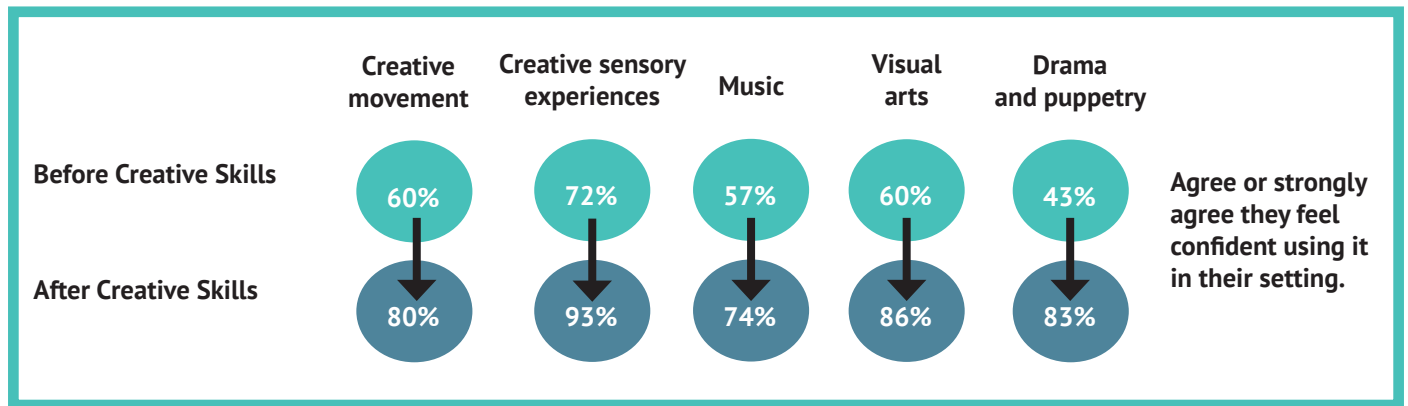
I have noticed that over the course of the year, staff are independently providing more activities they practised at the training day. This shows me that they have taken our training on board and the children are becoming more confident and creative because of this whole team approach to creative arts.

Creative Skills impact story, Dundee



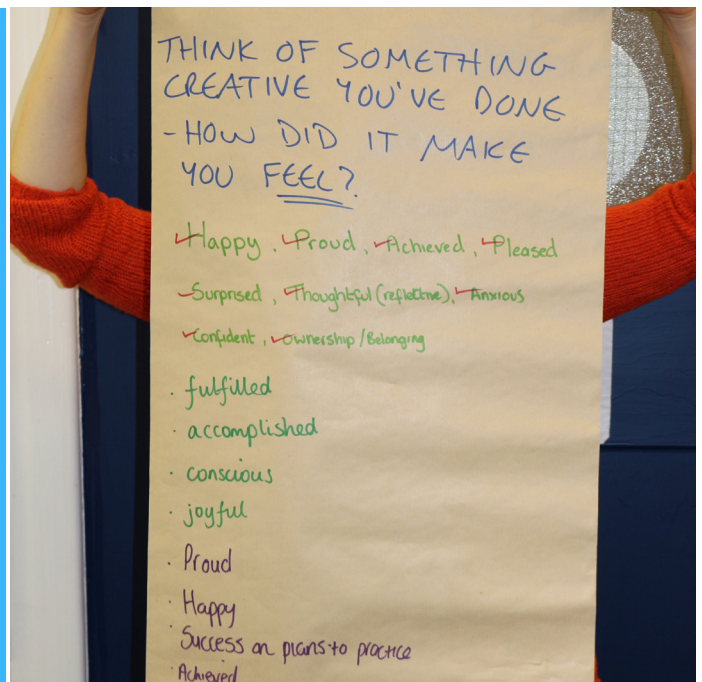
4.3 Develop confidence and skills in using creative approaches

As demonstrated above participants feel more confident as individuals and in using creativity in their settings. Here we can see the increase in confidence in specific skills and art-forms:



4.4 Shared experiences create a sense of wonder and fun

The word cloud below, generated from participants' words to describe the Creative Skills programme, and the paper document created by Aberdeen participants reflecting on how creative experiences made them feel, provide insight into how shared creative experiences can create a sense of wonder and fun.



Participants' pathway 5: What they do differently

Practice and behaviour change:

5.1 Confidently embed arts and creativity routinely in their practice

5.2 Champion the arts and creative approaches.

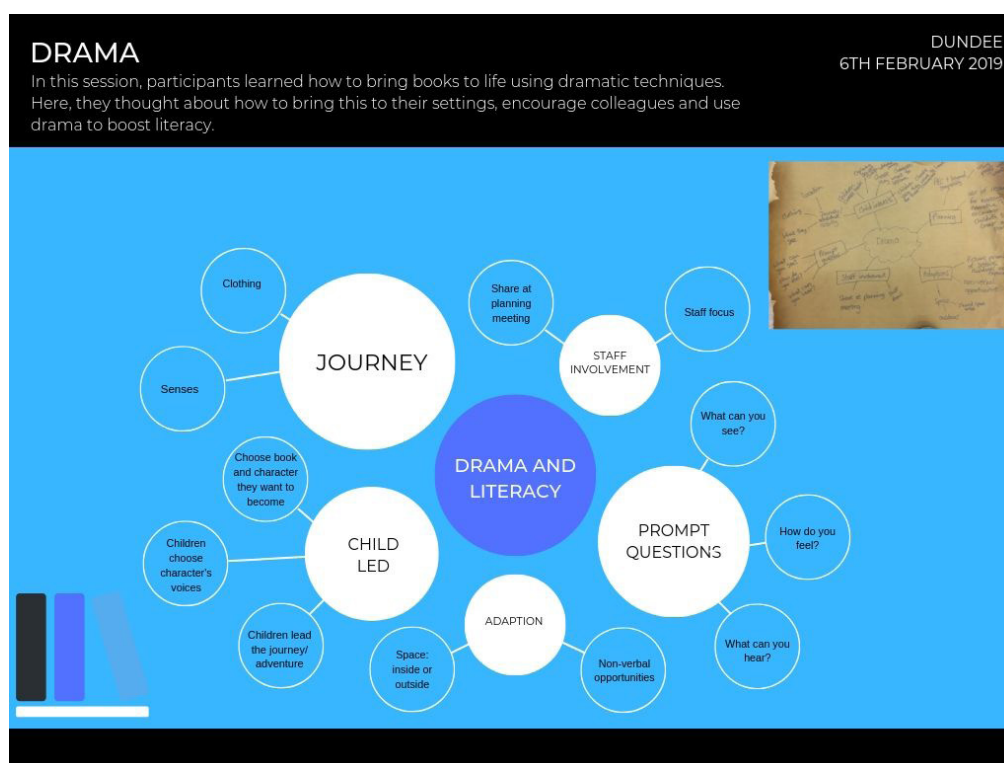
Key Findings:

- After taking part in the Creative Skills programme, participants offer more creative experiences and embed them into their practice, sharing successes with colleagues and parents. These creative experiences support best practice and help support children through Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) wellbeing indicators.

5.1 Confidently embed arts and creativity routinely in their practice

Before Creative Skills, 80% of participants agree or strongly agree they use creativity regularly within their settings. After Creative Skills, this number increases to 93%.

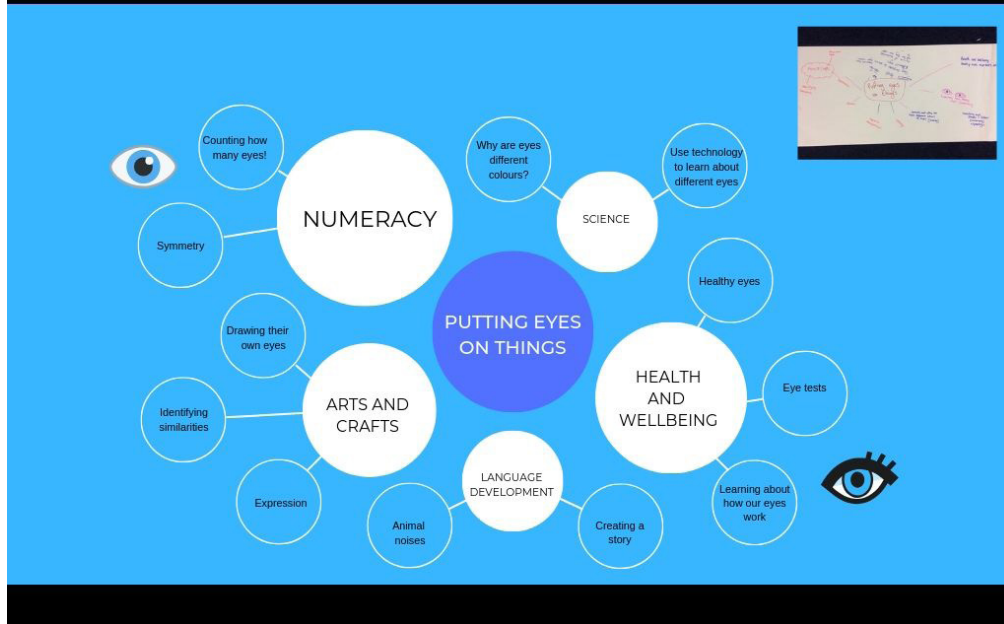
During training we discuss how participants are using creative approaches in their practice. They create mind maps focusing on activities they've learned during the day and how they can use them in their settings. This demonstrates that they're not only thinking about using creative approaches in their setting, but how to embed them. As we can see from the examples below, participants are thinking about how to use what they've learned in sessions across the curriculum.



PUPPETRY

In this session, participants learned how to create puppets. One activity did this by putting eyes on inanimate objects. Here, participants consider how to use this to learn about other curriculum subjects.

KELVIN COLLEGE
27TH NOVEMBER 2018



The tweets below from our participants' nurseries (Largs Early Years Centre, North Ayrshire and Frances Wright Nursery School, Dundee) show they are regularly using creative approaches and exercises they have learned from Creative Skills sessions. They're also passing this knowledge on to colleagues and others who work within their setting.



Largs Early Years Centre
@LargsEYC

Follow

Well done Shona and Jane. The girls were putting this activity straight into practice outdoors today 🍌 #creativity #largs #learningnewskills #fun



Creative Skills @StarcatchersCS

Lovely photos from @stillmotionarts who lead a fantastic #CreativeSkills visual arts session with our North Ayrshire participants yesterday! Drawing doesn't have to always be at a table... 🍌 #CreativityEveryday @StarcatchersUK

7:40 PM - 15 Feb 2019

6 Retweets 15 Likes



1 6 15



“I have found this training to be very beneficial to me as a practitioner and to our setting. I feel that the workshops helped me to think about the different arts and how we can promote them with activities that we could adapt within our room.”

Aberdeen participant 18/19

“The great thing about this training is that you pick up so many wee ideas that can be introduced easily as part of free-flow play.”

North Ayrshire participant 18/19



Frances Wright Nursery
@FWPSCnursery

Follow

Great fun at our Creative Skills @StarcatchersCS groups today. So much fun that I wasn't able to take many photos! We sang, danced and did Row Your Boat with new friends. Ask your child about it if they are in these photos. #creativity



8:40 AM - 29 Nov 2018

5.2 Champion the arts and creative approaches

In Creative Skills the term ‘Creative Champion’ is about championing the value of the expressive arts within your setting - not just with the children, but also the parents and colleagues you work with.

Every group takes part in a dedicated Creative Champions session as part of the programme, which is shaped by the individual needs and challenges the group are facing.

These sessions have inspired blogs, which share ideas about how to champion the expressive arts and creative approaches with parents and carers, and also how to introduce creative, expressive arts ideas within settings. Within the first 24 hours of sharing, the first blog was read by 48 people – we hope these blogs will be popular and valuable resources for the sector.

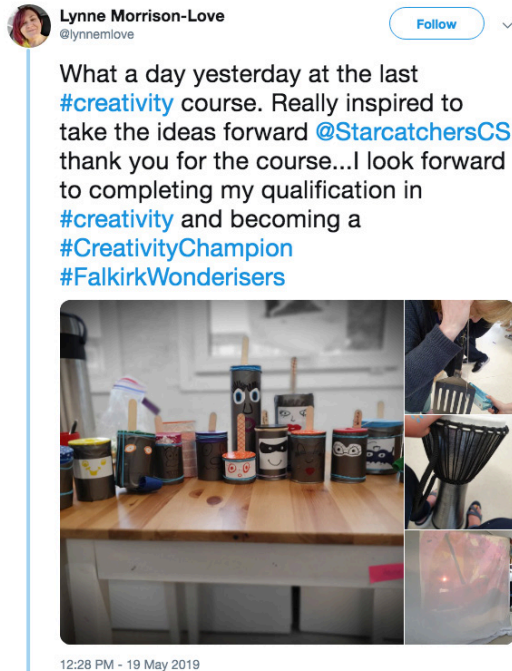
After completing the Creative Skills Programme, 81% of participants feel confident supporting their peers to be more creative (compared to 73% before).

The following notes from a Dundee Creative Skills feedback session shows participants championing the arts to parents:

“After Amy’s exercise, which focused on bringing books to life through drama, the group had a big discussion about how they could use this in their settings. A lot of them spoke about using drama as a tool to engage parents with reading. They wanted to try and get the books (distributed by ABC and Beyond/ Bookbug) before the parents did so they could chat to them about the focus of the book, have exercises ready to go and show parents what they’d be doing in the nursery.”

Creative Skills feedback session, Dundee 18/19

Shared tweets also show participants using creativity in their nursery and encouraging conversations between staff and parents as well as between parents and children.



Participants' pathway 6: What difference does this make?

Final outcomes:

- 6.1 Scotland's early years workforce has the ability to deliver creative opportunities
- 6.2 Children fulfil their right to access to creativity and the arts
- 6.3 Increased cognitive and social capacity of very young children
- 6.4 Families and communities are connected through the arts.

Key findings:

The Creative Skills programme gives participants the ability to deliver more creative opportunities and they go on to do exactly that. In doing so, they fulfil Article 31 of the UNCRC (the right to access the arts and culture), improve outcomes for very young children and help them connect more with their families. In addition, these creative opportunities offer opportunities for self-expression, which helps fulfil UNCRC Articles 12 and 13 (the right to an opinion, and the right to self-expression).

6.1 Scotland's early years workforce has the ability to deliver creative opportunities

Creative Skills boosts participants':

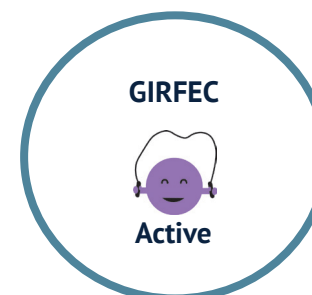
- Understanding of creativity and its importance in early years
- Understanding of how creative the children they work with can be
- Individual creative confidence
- Confidence in art-forms including drama, puppetry, music, creative movement, visual art and in sensory experiences
- Ability to integrate the expressive arts and creativity into day-to-day practice.

"The children in my class have all shown great interest and enjoyment in all of the activities that I have done with them so far. It has really extended their imagination and creativity which has been lovely to see and I look forward to sharing many more activities with future classes."

Aberdeen participant 2018/19

"I now know how to engage the children more with creative activities and how to adapt tasks for certain individual needs."

Edinburgh College participant 2018/19



6.2 Children fulfil their right to access to creativity and the arts

For babies, toddlers and young children, learning about their rights is a lived experience – both *Pre-Birth to Three* guidance and *Building the Ambition, the national practice guidance for ELC in Scotland*, assert that babies begin to learn about their rights from the moment they are born through carers' and others' interactions with them:

"...from an early age children are finding out about their rights, often through the way that others treat them."

Dr Rosemary Roberts, *Pre-Birth to Three Positive Outcomes for Scotland's Children and Families National Guidance, Learning and Teaching Scotland (2010)*

Babies: what do they need?

- ***Respond to the baby's efforts by understanding how a baby expresses interests; for example, facial expression, gazing intently, movement, noises and sounds.***

Building the Ambition: National Practice Guidance on Early Learning and Childcare, (Scottish Government 2014)

When it comes to fulfilling Article 31 of the UNCRC – ‘Children have the right to relax and play, and to join in a wide range of cultural, artistic and other recreational activities’ – it is not enough to have expressive arts experiences available. To be truly accessible, those opportunities must be developmentally appropriate and genuinely capture the interest and imagination of the child.

Creative Skills boosts participants' confidence across art-forms and feedback shows that participants regularly create artistic experiences for children in their settings.

In the context of children's rights for very young children, a key focus is the quality of children's relationships with parents and carers and how well they support a child's sense of agency – being able to make choices that influence and have an impact on the world around them.

“Agency is about having a sense that you can make a difference to what happens... being able to explore, to experiment, to find out, to really get stuck into something, to concentrate on something, to feel that if you get it wrong this time it doesn't matter.”

**Dr Rosemary Roberts, Pre-Birth to Three Positive Outcomes for Scotland's Children and Families
National Guidance, Learning and Teaching Scotland (2010)**

When we look at the ways participants use what they learn from Creative Skills within their settings, it is clear the approach does not just fulfil the right to access the arts. The experiences are being shared in ways that also develop a sense of agency, and enable young children to access their rights more broadly.


“One participant spoke about learning what they'd used in their practice. They noticed the children turning movement into a game and adapting it. One child has English as a second language so the participant wasn't sure if he was engaging. Parents commented he took this game home and taught it to his siblings. A lot of them also mentioned how fantastic creative movement had been for engaging non-verbal children.”



Creative Skills feedback session, Dundee 18/19

Discussions among participants during a Creative Skills session in Dundee showed that throughout the programme they were considering how to adapt what they'd learned to work with specific children in their settings.

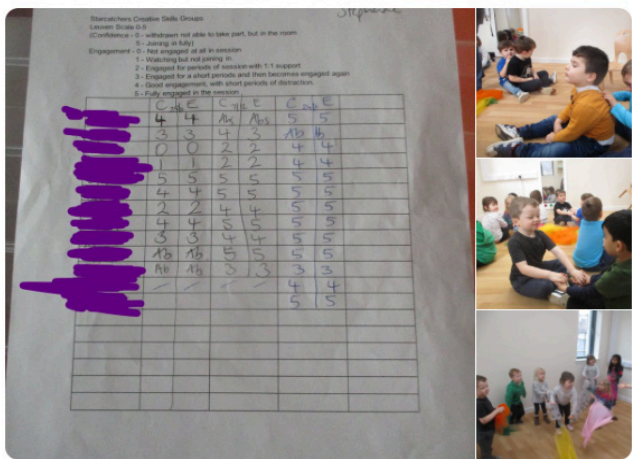
The tweet below demonstrates settings using Creative Skills and measuring its impact using the Leuven Scale, which measures how confident and engaged children are.




Frances Wright Nursery
@FWPSCnursery

Follow

We resumed our @StarcatchersUK @StarcatchersCS Creative Skills groups this morning. Children enjoyed creative music and movement. We have been using The Leuven Scale to assess improvement in confidence & engagement, which is very evident. Smiles & participation all round! :-)



4:33 AM - 24 Jan 2019



GIRFEC: Achieving


Arthur, age 3 at the time, wasn't keen on activities involving music or dance and often took himself away from the group and hid, but was curious about what was happening.

During the Starcatchers course we learned creative ways of introducing music using objects and creating sounds using descriptive words.

Arthur had a great imagination and when introducing music to him in that way, he was more confident in making noises with different instruments and his confidence grew and he began to join in with other music and dance activities.

At the age of 4, he did his first music performance on stage and thrived. We and his parents were so proud of what he had achieved.

Creative Skills impact story, Orkney



GIRFEC: Respected

6.3 Increased cognitive and social capacity of very young children

Through research and national policy, it is clear there are well established links between children engaging in creative experiences and developing increased cognitive and social capacity (see Appendix 1).

The case studies below illustrate how the Creative Skills programme, when applied within settings, helps practitioners deliver creative experiences that help increase both social activity (children becoming more social, engaged and communicating more) and cognitive ability (concentration, problem-solving, personal and emotional development).

Similarly, our impact stories show children who have additional support needs becoming more engaged, sociable and friendly.

After Starcatchers, I used the 'coral reef' exercise that Skye taught us in creative movement. I showed the children what a coral reef is using images and film on the projector and asked the kids to pretend to be their favourite fish or underwater creature.

When I shared these sessions some children would just watch and wouldn't join in. Slowly, over time, more and more children joined in. We had one girl who is 4-years-old who used to be really quiet, but these sessions have offered her somewhere to express herself. It's made quite a difference to her.

Aberdeen case study

I felt some children in my group were showing signs of challenging behaviour. By knowing all the children well, I understood that a way for them to express their feelings could be through drawings and paintings.

They began to express their feelings through the materials. Their movements were sharp, sudden and harsh. This was a clear indication of how they were feeling. I then introduced an acoustic guitar playing a low volume level and as a result the children's emotions changed and they became more engaged and happier.

Each child [...] would describe what their art was. For example 'that's me being shouted at by my gran; that made me scared' and 'I'm sad in the picture because everyone wasn't being kind'. By discussing this the children were able to share how they felt.

North Ayrshire case study

6.4 Families and communities are connected through the arts

Starcatchers' research (Starcatchers 2014) shows that engaging in the arts helps families and communities become more connected. This includes capacity to nurture, emotional and physical wellbeing, stronger relationships, improved mental health in parents and stronger resilience.

In 2018/19 we adapted the Creative Champion session within the training to ensure participants were able to explore the issue of increasing parental engagement. The learning from these sessions have been compiled into a blog, sharing how positive comments during transitions, wall displays with personalised comments from the children themselves, and social media can be used to increase parental engagement, and increase parents' understanding of the importance of creativity.

"A photo of some abstract transient art on a beach may leave some folk cold, but adding the caption 'me did croccle-dial [Sian, age 2]' helps parents understand that there was a creative process with thought and care behind the work. The other advantage is that parents and carers are more likely to access the social media in the first place if they hear there's something about their own child on there, leading to more parental engagement."

Starcatchers' blog, June 2019 (27)

The following impact story was shared by a playworker in Linlithgow, who had completed Creative Skills and was using it within her practice. It highlights how Creative Skills arts activities can bring together families and help them bond and communicate.

“Another participant spoke about a connection movement exercise Skye taught them. She used it with a child in her practice. Not only did she take it home to her whole family, but she showed it to parents and children as they were entering the nursery. Parents were really engaged in learning the game and asked a lot of questions. It started a really good discussion and conversation between parents and early years practitioners and really made a great drop-off experience for the children and their parents!

A lot of them spoke about how it really encouraged dads to get a lot more active, engaged and affectionate around their children.”

Creative Skills feedback session, Dundee 18/19



GIRFEC: Responsible



I introduced free art play. Instead of having craft sets or colouring sheets I saved up cardboard boxes, sheets of scrap paper, cellotape, scissors, glue, stickers - I just left them on the table and watched as the kids came in.

Child A had never sat at the craft table longer than two minutes. She spent the entire morning at the table making a house.

It was fascinating to watch how she sussed the table out by circling it and then sat and looked. She then persuaded her granny to join in and it was just lovely to watch them create together (they were in their own wee world).

Creative Skills impact story, Midlothian



GIRFEC: Nurtured

One new approach we have explored is the introduction of soft classical music into our daily routine to create a calm, welcoming atmosphere. As children start the session classical music will be playing in the background.

Children self-register by choosing a butterfly, bumblebee or ladybird prop. As register is taken and names are called out children “fly” their prop in their own way to the magnetic board to be counted.

This experience has helped speed up our settling in process, children happily part from carer and are showing an increased confidence and raised self-esteem.

Adults have responded to the routine also. I have observed that parents and staff are now less likely to chat over the top of children. They come in quietly and some even sway along to the music with their child.

Midlothian case study




GIRFEC: Respected

Longer-term impact on practice, children and settings

In May 2019 Starcatchers invited previous Creative Skills participants to complete a survey looking at the longer-term impact of the training, both in terms of participants’ practice and the impact on the children they work with.

Updates to our contact lists as a result of the introduction of General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) meant we were unable to contact many previous participants directly. The survey was shared primarily through social media channels and we received a total of 24 responses. Whilst we would urge caution in terms of extrapolating that these responses are indicative of the previous participants overall, it is reasonable to conclude that those who took the time to respond are likely to be the participants who have embedded the training most fully into their practice.





Survey results

Longer-term impact of Creative Skills

Changes to practice...

- 100% are more confident
- 100% have more ideas
- 100% have a more creative approach to their practice
- 100% provide more creative approaches
- 100% see creativity as an important part of who they are
- 80% have used the arts to support GIRFEC and SHANARRI
- 70% dedicate more time to the arts
- 70% provide more expressive arts provocations
- 60% said a more creative approach gave them greater job satisfaction
- 60% feel empowered
- 50% undertake more cross-curricular work

Changes to the children practitioners work with...

- 100% reported more enjoyment in the arts
- 100% reported increased creativity
- 90% reported children were now taking the lead in creative processes
- 90% reported improved communication
- 80% reported increased confidence
- 80% reported increased emotional expression
- 70% reported children engaging or concentrating for longer periods
- 70% reported increased attachment with parents and carers
- 70% reported increased attachment with staff
- 70% reported improved social skills
- 60% reported increased resilience
- 50% reported improved decision-making

Changes within the setting...

- 90% said they engage parents more around arts and creativity
- 80% said creative approaches have helped them put the voice of the child at the centre of their setting
- 80% said that the arts play a more central role in the ethos of their setting
- 80% said colleagues have taken on new creative ideas
- 80% said they've shared their learning with their colleagues
- 80% said their setting has more opportunity for the arts
- 70% said arts experiences offered are now more child led
- 50% said they've changed the way they plan arts experiences
- 40% said they've changed the way they plan other experiences

Artists

The Creative Skills programme takes an asset-based approach. Our artists are experts in the expressive arts for young children, our participants are experts in their own setting and the children they work with, and babies and young children are experts in what interests and motivates them.


Creative Skills artists

Matt Addicot is a performance maker and theatre director who has been with Starcatchers since 2007 when he was our Artist in Residence at Platform. Since then he has created numerous pieces including *The Incredible Swimming Choir*, *The Cloud Factory* and *News + Weather*. He is the Community Engagement Programme Leader for Performance at Platform. Matt leads Creative Skills sessions in drama.

Charlotte Allan is a theatre maker who creates theatre for under 5s and their adults under the name of Ipdip Theatre. She has worked in Scottish theatre for over ten years as a writer, performer, director, tutor and youth theatre artist. She has worked as an associate artist with Imagineate Festival. Charlotte leads Creative Skills sessions in drama and puppetry.



Hazel Darwin-Clements is a writer, performer, puppeteer and theatre-maker. She has worked with organisations including National Theatre of Scotland, Lyceum Youth Theatre, Catherine Wheels and Frozen Charlotte. She has also performed in and created various Starcatchers' shows including *Hup*, *The Attic* and *Too Many Cooks*. Hazel leads Creative Skills sessions in puppetry and drama.



Heather Fulton is drama artist who has been directing award-winning children's theatre in Scotland for the last 12 years. She was a trainee director with Imagineate and has since gone on to create *Frozen Charlotte* with whom she has created a number of award-winning productions for children including *Too Many Penguins*, *Paperbelle* and *Valentina's Galaxy*. Heather leads Creative Skills sessions in drama.

Ellie Griffiths is a theatre artist who specialises in working with young people, including those who have additional support needs. She has worked with Imagineate Festival and Oily Cart Theatre. She ran drama workshops for us until 2018 and has now moved to London to be Artist Director of Oily Cart.

Amy Hall-Gibson is a drama artist and workshop facilitator. Her workshops specialise in using drama in conjunction with literacy. She has worked with the Scottish Book Trust, Perth Theatre's Youth Theatre and Angus Council. Amy delivers Creative Skills sessions in drama and puppetry.

Brian Hartley is a Glasgow-based artist whose work combines visual art, design and photography under his company StillMotion. His production *Wee Dance, Wee Grove* has toured internationally since 2008 and *Scotch Hoppers* was part of the Cultural Programme for the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow. Brian leads Creative Skills sessions in creative movement, visual art and photography.

Pearl Kinnear is a Glasgow-based artist who comes from a painting background, but works in a variety of mediums. She was the artist in residence with Scottish hip-hop band *Hector Bizerk*, where she created their EP albums as well as making art live on stage. She was selected for the Inishlacken Residency in 2014, which saw her create art in conjunction with the community in Ireland. Pearl leads Creative Skills sessions in visual art.

Jayne Middleton is a dance artist devoted to spreading empathy. She has a background in mental health nursing, community dance and development. She has worked for the Scotland for Alternatives to Violence Project as National Coordinator. Jayne leads Creative Skills sessions in creative movement.

Skye Reynolds is a dance artist, performance creator and educator. She has been a dance artist in residence with Imagineate, North Edinburgh Arts and Dance Base. She has developed shows including *Pitch*, a stand-up dance show as well as *What Do You Expect?*. Skye delivers Creative Skills sessions in creative movement.

Greg Sinclair is an award-winning musician and live artist. His piece *Sonata for a Man and a Boy* won the 2013 Critics Award for Theatre and in 2016 he received the Children Theatre's Fellowship from the Arts Foundation. Greg is also a member of Starcatchers' Sprog Rock, an interactive live music experience for early years-aged children and their adults. Greg leads sessions for us in music.

Fraser Stone has been a professional musician and educator for over a decade. He is currently Starcatchers' Community Engagement Manager. He has been in bands including: *Blind Old Dogs*, *Stereoglo* and *Treacherous Orchestra*. Fraser delivers Creative Skills sessions in music.

Artist development

The artists who facilitate Starcatchers' Creative Skills programme are key to ensuring the quality of the training remains consistently high. The Creative Skills Manager, Heather Armstrong, keeps up-to-date with the latest Scottish policies and research in early years, and runs annual training to ensure the ideas our artists share support best practice. We also support the continuing professional development of our artists by engaging them in their own reflective practice, through artist development days, artist feedback and informal support.

Through the experience of working on the Creative Skills programme, our artists report that their understanding of the role of creativity in early years has deepened (75% very much so, 25% yes), their ability to facilitate and lead workshops has improved (50% very much so, 37.5% yes, 12% a little), and they have improved their own artform (25% very much so, 62% yes, 12% a little).

"Leading Creative Skills training has been brilliant for my confidence as a workshop facilitator as well as devising the content for the workshop and seeing the impact it has."

Skye Reynolds

"Leading the training has made me go back to the essence of why I do early years work."

Amy Hall-Gibson

"Delivering these workshops has increased my confidence and self-belief."

Matt Addicot

"It has been a real learning process to figure out how to enable practitioners who are anxious and, at times, reluctant to try and see the value of drama in their settings. It has made me able to work more effectively with a wider diversity of people working in sectors different to my own."

Ellie Griffiths





Issues for reflection

While the number of participants we worked with has risen since 2017-18, the Creative Skills programmes delivered for early years professionals were not full to capacity in 2018-19.

We work closely with our local authority partners to ensure the training continues to meet their strategic aims and that early years professionals are informed about the training and supported to take part.

However, the expansion of free childcare provision to 1140 hours has had a significant impact on the early years sector as a whole and has a continued impact on our work.

Within our key contacts at local authority level there has been an unprecedented level of staff turnover, between secondments and other restructuring to cope with the massive changes within Early Learning and Childcare (ELC), making it more challenging to build and maintain the relationships that are so vital to the success of our work.

Within ELC settings, more experienced senior staff have been moving to strategic and planning roles, contributing to fewer senior staff with the same wealth of experience, and in turn a new influx of practitioners new to ELC means less experienced staff in the wider teams, too. Between establishing new settings and staff restructuring within existing settings, there has been an understandable shift of focus onto the operational side of delivery, rather than being able to focus on quality.

Attendance at the Creative Skills programme relies on participants' goodwill in terms of giving up their free time and/or changing their work hours, and also the capacity of settings to be able to find cover. For an overstretched sector struggling to find enough staff to fill vacancies, it can be difficult to find participants able to attend ten sessions of training. Having spoken to our local authority partners and other third sector organisations who provide longer format training, we are confident this is a sector-wide challenge and not unique to the Creative Skills Programme. The rapid expansion of ELC and its impact across the workforce means the Creative Skills programme is needed now more than ever to help maintain high quality ELC provision.



Conclusion

As the expansion of free childcare provision in Scotland rolls out, Starcatchers' Creative Skills programme has an important role to play in continuing to support best practice across the sector.

In the final year of current funding, our challenge is to successfully engage and inspire an over-stretched and under pressure Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) workforce. We will do this by continuing to strengthen strategic relationships with local authorities and other key organisations, by keeping in touch with professionals who have successfully completed the programme, and by sharing the impact of the training in ways that inspire a whole new cohort of participants.


One of the great strengths of Creative Skills is that it takes the focus on creativity within key Scottish Government policy and best practice guidance, and turns it into tangible, practical examples of what that creativity looks and feels like in the real world.

Creativity has been a key feature in thinking around early years best practice for hundreds of years: whether you favour Vygotsky or Froebel, whether your focus is on Planning in the Moment or Sustained Shared Thinking, the practical, flexible ideas our artists share help practitioners make best practice a reality.

It is clear from the findings within this report that the Creative Skills programme does support best practice.

By increasing participants' knowledge and confidence, the training results in participants confidently embedding arts and creative approaches routinely in their practice. Case studies give an insight into how these changes in practice improve outcomes for children, by supporting them through GIRFEC principals and clearly linking to wellbeing indicators. Participants report an increase in confidence, participation, concentration, inclusion and emotional literacy among the children they work with, and more meaningful engagement with parents and carers.

The difference the Creative Skills programme is making is clear. Scotland's early years workforce is developing its ability to deliver creative opportunities that fulfil children's rights to access creativity and the arts, and increase their cognitive and social capacity. Crucially, it does all this in a way that values, listens to and respects the early years professionals. It is about inspiring, connecting and empowering individuals, who go on to make changes that improve ELC provision for thousands of children across Scotland.



The difference the Creative Skills programme is making is clear..... It is about inspiring, connecting and empowering individuals, who go on to make changes that improve ELC provision for children across Scotland.



Appendix 1

Research and national policy highlight the well-established links between children engaging in creative experiences and developing increased cognitive and social capacity:

- “Children who experience a wide range of activities from an early age (like being read to, singing nursery rhymes, and drawing) score higher in cognitive ability tests at age three than children with less experience of these activities.” (Growing Up In Scotland 2019)
- “Creativity skills empower us all to take control of our lives – they are vital to our capacity for autonomy, personal growth, self-acceptance and in gaining a sense of purpose.” (Education Scotland 2018)
- *All Our Futures: Creativity, Culture and Education* highlights the skills that creativity nurtures, including: using imagination, being original, judging value, problem solving and emotional articulation. (NACCCE 1999)
- “Early Childhood Arts Education improves cognitive development.” (Americans for the Arts 2008)
- In *Born Creative*, Bernadette Duffy outlines clear improvements in children’s personal, social and emotional development; communication, language and literacy; problem-solving and reasoning; knowledge and understanding of the world; and physical development following the implementation of creative approaches and creative learning. (Duffy 2010)

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