

the playground

★ A Starcatchers Project

A pioneering programme of creative engagement
taking place in family centres and nurseries

EVALUATION REPORT

This evaluation was conducted by Starcatchers and with the support of
Dr Sarah Morton, Centre for Research on Families and Relationships

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Introduction

Starcatchers

Starcatchers is Scotland's leading arts organisation developing, creating and sharing performances and creative experiences for babies and young children aged 0-5, their parents, carers and educators. Since 2006, Starcatchers has been pioneering methods of artistic engagement with audience through models of artist residency and developmental projects, producing and touring professional experiences and supporting Early Years practitioners to build their skills and understanding in using creativity with the children and families they work with.

Starcatchers believes that:

- Creativity has a fundamental role in supporting early child development
- Creating performances and arts experiences for very young children is inspiring for artists
- Creating opportunities for educators to build their confidence in using creativity in their every day practice can have a significant impact on them and the children they care for

The Project

The Playground was the first large-scale residency project delivered by Starcatchers after becoming a constituted organisation in 2011. Prior working was delivered firstly through North Edinburgh Arts Centre (2006 – 2008) and subsequently through Imagineate (2009 - 2011). The learning from this working, particularly that of the Starcatchers Inspire project at Imagineate, which delivered 4 artist residencies in 4 different communities in Scotland, informed the content and structure of The Playground.

Previous Starcatchers residencies had focused on the artist being placed within an arts centre setting – as a conduit not only for artistic development, but also for these venues to engage with audiences in their immediate communities. These residencies encouraged contact between artists and groups of very small children either in childcare settings or in sessions delivered within the arts centres themselves. However this contact was time limited in blocks of 4-6 weeks and whilst this contact was positive for the artists as well as the children, staff and parents, there was a feeling from the research carried out on this project that there was potential for far deeper engagement and impact if artists had consistent contact with this audience over a longer period of time. (See Live Arts: Arts Alive report - www.starcatchers.org.uk/resources)

The opportunity offered by the Creative Scotland National Lottery First in a Lifetime funding enabled Starcatchers to develop a new residency process with new partners. The process placed the emphasis on the longer-term engagement between artists and the childcare settings and what the potential impact on the children, staff and parents in these settings.

The Playground was set up in a way that reflected previous residency frameworks:

- Key partners in each communities who supported the residencies locally and who also made a financial contribution to the project
- Artists were paid an appropriate fee for their time
- Artists were also able to access an appropriate materials and productions costs budget to work with other artists and to create a production during their residency

The key difference between this project and Starcatchers' previous residency working was the placing of the artists within the childcare settings.

Timeline of the Playground Project

MAY 2012 Funding is secured from Creative Scotland for the project and partnership working is confirmed with East Renfrewshire Council and South Lanarkshire Culture and Leisure.

JULY 2012 Artists are recruited.

AUGUST 2012 Launch events are held in the 2 partner communities to introduce the artists to the children, staff, parents and project partners they will be working with.

OCTOBER – DECEMBER 2012 Glenlee Nursery take part in the Burnbank Woods Project with Jen.

OCTOBER 2012 Nik begins to work with Hugh Graham, Family Learning Development Worker, on sessions for McCready family days.

OCTOBER 2012 Jen takes part in a week long residency entitled Dream:The Joy of Creating, with Artist, Mark Storor and Artistic Director of Catherine Wheels Theatre Company, Gill Robertson

NOVEMBER 2012 Nik starts working with artist Hazel Darwin-Edwards in McCready Family Centre.

NOVEMBER 2012 The Playground artists and Starcatchers staff attend Take Off Festival, Durham.

DECEMBER 2012 Children and Parents from our 3 settings attended Little Ulla, Grinagog Theatre Company's Christmas show at Eastwood Park Theatre.

DECEMBER 2012 Nik starts working with puppeteer Rick Conte on sessions in McCready Family Centre.

JANUARY 2013 The Playground artists take part in Silly Moments, celebrating Global Belly Laugh Day with their communities.

JANUARY – MARCH 2013 Jen develops and builds The Den sensory room at Calderside Nursery.

FEBRUARY 2013 Nik began taking part in McCready Family Centre home visits

FEBRUARY 2013 McCready Family Centre children and parents attended Electric Glen, a light display in nearby Rouken Glen Park.

MARCH 2013 The Den Sensory Room is launched at Calderside Nursery

APRIL – JUNE 2013 Jen leads the children and parents at Glenlee in a storytelling and art project.

APRIL 2013 The Playground artists attend Fratz Early Years festival in Berlin

MAY 2013 Suzanne Zeedyk delivers CPD sessions for the Playground artists on developmental psychology

MAY –JUNE 2013 Nik runs sessions for the parents at McCready Family Centre including sessions specifically for their young mums group

JUNE 2013 Intensive rehearsals start for the three Playground performances.

JULY 2013 The three Playground performances tour their local communities and further afield

AUGUST 2013 Celebration events are held in the 3 settings to mark the end of the project.

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2013 Sharing the Learning CPD events are held in both communities for early years workers. 40 early years workers attended from East Renfrewshire, and 120 from South Lanarkshire.

OCTOBER – DECEMBER 2013 An extension of the Playground projects allows Jen to return to Glenlee Nursery to develop another project taking place in the woods, and for Nik to return to McCready Family Centre to deliver more sessions for children, parents and staff.

The Playground by Numbers

2 year-long residencies, based in community in South Lanarkshire and East Renfrewshire

3 original performances

154 staff took part in 14 CPD sessions

481 parents attended **60** sessions

1653 children aged from 6 months to 5 years and **154** staff attended **207** sessions across our 3 settings.

180 children and parents attended **6** performances in our **3** settings

2129 children and parents attended a total of **82** public performances in summer 2013

A total of **24** artists contributed to the project

160 Early Years workers attended 2 CPD events to spread the learning to other Early Years professionals in the communities. **40** Early Years workers attended from East Renfrewshire, **120** from South Lanarkshire.

Summary key findings

Evaluation is an important part of Starcatchers' work. The Playground offered us an opportunity to understand the outcomes of having consistent contact between an artist and the same groups of children, staff and parents over a 12-month period.

Our evaluation focused on the impact on 4 groups – children & parents, staff, artists and partners.

Further detail about the evaluation process and understanding the impact of the project can be found in this report but a summary of the outcomes of the project can be found below.

Outcomes for children and parents

The project fully met all of its initial outcomes, including:

- Parents interested and attending playground and other cultural activities
- Vulnerable children and families included and supported
- Children have the opportunity to be creative
- Parents and children enjoy the project

There was good evidence for partial achievement of mid-stage project outcomes including:

- Desire to access other arts activities
- Children's ability to learn/think/communicate encouraged and developed
- Parents see the value of including arts activities and have a better understanding of creative play and ways of interacting with children

There was full-achievement of many later-stage outcomes including:

- Increased participation in activities and performances.
- Parents and children have improved relationships and benefit from shared experiences.

In a year-long project it is very difficult to measure some of our final outcomes. But there is strong emerging evidence to support outcomes including:

- Increase in children and parents' self-confidence, self-esteem, and sense of wellbeing
- Parents and children engage more regularly in arts and community activities
- Parents' capacity to nurture their child is improved

Outcomes for staff

The project aimed to embed arts activities into centre activities and increase the confidence and skills of staff in delivering arts-based activities. Staff knowledge and understanding of the ways creative approaches could be used, and their capacity and confidence in doing this was increased. This led to creativity becoming embedded in the nurseries' approaches.

Outcomes for artists

The structure of the project allowed the artists the space and resources to experiment, play and create, and to benefit from working with other artists and creative. The artists reported that they felt unafraid to take risks within the project.

Artists also benefitted from spending time with the children and staff in the settings, and had the opportunity to engage in training and seeing other work. This led to a deepened understanding of early years policy and practice.

The final outcome for artists was the creation of a strong, unique arts experience for the age group, which toured both within the local communities, and further afield.

Outcomes for partners

Partners felt that the project engaged with the right people in different sectors and that the chosen settings were enthusiastic and worked in partnership with the arts agency.

The partners gained a positive experience of working with other professionals and had a better understanding of how the residency model and multi-partners projects can work.

From the project partners also identified emerging new projects and wider arts engagement and developed new policies. The project also left a legacy in new networks, partnerships and embedded learning, with all partners keen to extend their partnership working.

There was strong evidence of sharing of knowledge and experience between artists and settings, and that this was also shared in the wider communities.

The Communities

East Renfrewshire

East Renfrewshire is a local authority located to the south of Glasgow. It is an area affected by deprivation and a range of social problems. There is limited provision for arts activities in the areas compounded by barriers of cost and of perceptions of the arts felt by the potential participants in the project.

Within East Renfrewshire we worked in Barrhead, which rates amongst the worst 15% in domains including health, housing, income and employment according to the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation.

References:

http://www.gcph.co.uk/assets/0000/2742/MHIF-Section7-EastRenfrewshire_15.11.11.pdf

<http://www.sns.gov.uk/Simd/Simd.aspx>

East Renfrewshire Council

In East Renfrewshire, Starcatchers worked in partnership with East Renfrewshire Council with the key contact being Alana Friell, Arts Development Officer (Performing Arts), based at Eastwood Park Theatre who provided support for Nik throughout the residency.

Starcatchers had an existing relationship with East Renfrewshire Council Arts Development team, having previously presented work at Eastwood Park Theatre and in community venues in the area and delivered a short programme of workshops in the McCready Family Centre led by Hazel Darwin-Edwards in 2011-12.

In 2011, East Renfrewshire Council produced its' first Early Years Festival set up in response to the demand from the increasing number of young families and children living in the area. A hugely successful event, the arts team from East Renfrewshire Council have made a commitment to expanding the level of participatory arts offered to very young children and their carers in the area.

The Setting: McCready Family Centre, Barrhead, East Renfrewshire

The McCready Family Centre has 60 children aged between 6 weeks and 3 years, based in 3 rooms. Places in the centre are allocated through a "Children's Allocation and Review Group."

Many of the staff had previously worked with Starcatchers artist Hazel Darwin-Edwards during the programme she delivered in 2011-12 and so were familiar with this type of activity.

Parental involvement and working in partnership with parents is key to the centre and so Nik quickly became involved in weekly family days, parent sessions and play visits to the homes of harder to reach families.

South Lanarkshire

South Lanarkshire is a council area bordering the South-East of the city of Glasgow. As with East Renfrewshire, South Lanarkshire is affected by deprivation and a range of social problems.

We worked specifically in the areas of Blantyre South and Burnbank, Hamilton.

Burnbank, Hamilton rates amongst the worst 15% in domains including Income, employment, health and education according to the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation.

Blantyre South rates amongst the worst 15% in domains including Income, employment education, housing, and crime according to the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation.

References:

http://improve.southlanarkshire.gov.uk/corvucgi/cvhtmsrv.exe?file=/ResourceFolder/CommonReports/WebReports/GenericDocuments/EASL_Section_Z_Deprivation.pdf

<http://www.sns.gov.uk/Simd/Simd.aspx>

South Lanarkshire Leisure and Culture

South Lanarkshire Leisure and Culture (SLLC) manages a charitable organisation which delivers services, including arts development on behalf of South Lanarkshire Council.

SLLC has been developing networks with Starcatchers over the last 4 years and has a commitment to developing cultural projects for early years and pre 5's. South Lanarkshire has previously worked with Starcatchers on projects including: We Dance Wee Groove, The Incredible Swimming Choir and The Attic. South Lanarkshire Leisure and Culture Arts development have been developing projects in area's cultural venues with projects such as Boogie Beats for Tiny Feet, Spellbound and Mini Music Makers. South Lanarkshire venues programme puppet, animation and theatre shows for early years and nursery children from national and international arts companies.

The key contact at SLLC was Mark McAvoy, Arts Development Officer Drama, who provided support, office and rehearsal space for Jen throughout her residency.

Other local partners

In addition to working with SLLC, The Playground benefitted from contribution from Debra Lindsay and Louise Lammie from Integrated Children's Services at South Lanarkshire Council. This enabled the project to be connected in to other sectors locally and gave Jen additional support. Integrated Children's Services also supported the cost of extending some of the project working after the main project was completed.

The Settings: Calderside Nursery, Blantyre, South Lanarkshire.

Calderside Nursery is a bustling centre, with 165 children aged between 0 and 5 years, based in 4 rooms with some staying both morning and afternoon.

Glenlee Nursery, Hamilton, South Lanarkshire.

Glenlee Nursery has 63 children aged between 2 and 5 in total in one room (children attend a morning or afternoon session.) The nursery is attached to Glenlee Primary School and is joint with Hamilton School for the Deaf.

What We Did

Recruitment and Model

The Starcatchers Artists in Residence were recruited in Summer 2012. Applicants were asked to submit proposals for how they would deliver their residency, what their methodology might be and what they were inspired by. Applicants could identify specific venues or communities that they were interested in working in, or could be considered for all four residencies.

We received over 21 applications from across Scotland and the UK.

From a short-list of 8 applications the 2 Starcatchers Artists in Residence were selected.

The Starcatchers Artists in Residence were:

- **Jen Edgar**, a theatre artist
- **Nik Paget-Tomlinson**, a musician and composer

Each artist was selected because of the skills and experience they could bring to their residency. Both artists had experience of engaging with the 0-5 age group both with Starcatchers and other organisations.

Each residency lasted 12 months in total although both artists spread this time out over a slightly longer period. The residencies began in September 2012 and officially ended in September 2013. Both artists have continued working in their communities for slightly longer as a result of additional funds being made available for the delivery of key parts of their working. Each artist was paid a fee for their time (£17,000) and also had access to a resources and production budget (£12,500) to experiment, develop and create work. The key prerequisites outlined to the artists for this project were that:

- They would work with the chosen settings within the local communities
- They would work with the children, staff and parents both collectively and in individual groups
- They would contribute to the evaluation process
- They would create one small-scale production in response to the work in the settings (For information on the productions created see page 37, or www.starcatchers.org.uk/things-weve-done and Yarla and the Winter Wood, Too Many Cooks and Sonic Playground.)

Each artist and our partners approached the residency in a way which was appropriate to the context that the settings had in each community. This meant that whilst the framework for each residency was the same, the content, process and product was very different.

Launch Events

In late August 2012 launch events were held in both communities to introduce the artists to the communities in which they would be working. Children and staff from the settings attended alongside local councilors and other partners. Nik and Jen prepared a short performance piece making music from recycled materials and previous Starcatchers residency artist Sacha Kyle shared her installation BabyChill.

The Residencies

Barrhead, East Renfrewshire: Nik Paget-Tomlinson

"One of the key areas I would be keen to develop is the creation of multi-sensory performances and spaces where audience members/participants can create a unique experience based on their interactions within the environment.

I would also like to explore further the natural relationship between babies and toddlers, and the human voice through gentle singing, story telling and other vocalisations. I am aware of the connection between musical principles, voice and the development of language/communication skills in early childhood. This is an area I would be interested to find out more about to inform artistic practice.

I am also very interested in the use of live audio capture and looping to create a musical soundtrack, in particular the use of "found sound", and instruments made from recycled items. This idea could be developed alongside a simple narrative into a complete performance based around reused and recycled everyday objects and sounds." –

Nik Paget-Tomlinson from his initial application for the project

Being a musician, Nik was interested in bringing in different musical instruments to the Family Centre, both allowing the children to play with them, and playing for them in order to see the effect that different music would have on the room.

Nik also worked with Hugh Graham, Family Learning Development Worker, to organise sessions for both children and parents on McCready weekly family days. These took the form of sound walks where participants recorded everyday sounds, and craft sessions making and playing instruments made from recycled materials.

McCready Family Centre also do play visits at the homes of families who are harder to reach or unable to come into the centre. Staff were keen that Nik was also able to interact with these families and invited Nik to attend play visits where they thought the children would benefit.

From the beginning of this residency Nik knew that he was interested in creating a piece of theatre set in a kitchen, with messy chefs who made music while they cooked. Nik brought puppeteer Rick Conte and artist Hazel Darwin-Edwards in to sessions at McCready from the early stages of his residency to develop this idea, experimenting with different characters, plots, puppets and sounds. Various works in progress were shared with the children throughout the period January-June 2013, and eventually these developed into Too Many Cooks, a performance piece with Hazel Darwin-Edwards.

Nik kept a project blog which can be found at <http://playgroundeastren.wordpress.com>



Too Many Cooks | Photo” Neil Thomas Douglas

Hamilton, South Lanarkshire: Jen Edgar

"In France, it is a wonderful compliment if someone notices that your child is awakened. This is done through giving a child time and space to discover the new world around them, and this can come from staring at the sky, smelling flowers, playing on grass with bare feet or splashing the water of their bath. It's believed that awakening helps children forge inner psychological qualities such as self-assurance and tolerance of difference. This immediately made me think about the Curriculum for Excellence, and what the Scottish Government wants this to achieve; to "develop successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors."

This idea of Awakening completely inspired me. In Britain so much emphasis is put on children learning concrete skills, and making certain advancements from a very young age. Less time is spent playing, and just being. I absolutely love and admire that so much time and space is given to French children to have these personal experiences, to feel that they are part of something bigger, and to learn to play, take risks and exist on their own, as well as with their parents.

Can this kind of gentler foundation laying, lead to developing the kind of adults and citizens that Creative Scotland and the Scottish Government talk of? This is something that I would very much like to explore."

**Jen Edgar from her initial application for the project, talking about
"French Children Don't Throw Food" by Pamela Druckerman**

Jen Edgar's residency was split between two nurseries in South Lanarkshire, Glenlee Nursery and Calderside Nursery. Jen's approach to each nursery was very different, taking into account their very different needs.

Calderside nursery is a bustling centre, with 165 children between 4 rooms. Jen immediately recognised a need for a calm space within the nursery, and discovered that a room which had once been set aside as a sensory room, was now being used as a store cupboard. With this in mind Jen began working with the baby room (0-2 year olds), experimenting with light, music, and scents, seeing how these affected the babies.

Gradually this sensory exploration led to den-making, and the importance of space to the children. From here Jen brought in various artists to collaborate, musician/composer Scott Twynholm and architect and designer Roy Shearer. Slowly their exploration became more concrete and they started work turning the old storage room into The Den, a sensory space for all of the children, staff and parents at Calderside. The Den was launched in March 2013 with a grand opening party. After the launch Jen continued to work in the centre, encouraging staff and parents to regularly use the den with the children.

At Glenlee Nursery Jen's residency took a very different approach. Jen was very interested in working outdoors, due to a love of nature, and a concern about the decline of outdoor play and the consequences for children. Glenlee has 63 children based in one room. It has a very small outdoor area with little greenery, and the staff were disappointed that it was not really very exciting for the children to play in.

Staff alerted Jen to the local woods, Udston and Glenlee Woods, just a short walk from the nursery and the Woods project started to form.

Coming from a theatre background, Jen was interested in using the artform as a way to interact with the woods. She worked with playwright and actor David Ireland to devise a narrative based around a character, Burnbank, and his quest to find the magical Ferdiddlypopple stick. On their first trip into the woods the children unexpectedly met Burnbank for the first time, and quickly agreed to help him. For the next 2 months they regularly visited the woods, each time being given a task by Burnbank. Finally, on the last session before Christmas, the children found the Ferdiddlypopple stick and celebrated with a campfire and hot chocolate, made possible through links made with the Rangers Service.

When Jen returned to Glenlee in April (following an intensive period of working on the Sensory room in Calderside) both Jen and the staff were keen that parents, who had taken part in the woods project in large numbers, but in a relatively passive role, took a more active part in a new storytelling project. Because of the trust that Jen had built with the parents she found that they were willing to take part, even if they were initially unsure about taking part in something more creative. Jen led the groups gently through a project where parents and children told a story they shared, illustrated the story onto a life-size outline of themselves, shared these in an exhibition, and planted a sapling tree in the woods to celebrate the end of the project.

Jen kept a project blog which can be found at <http://playgroundsouthlan.wordpress.com>



CPD for staff

A key part of The Playground was providing support and training for the staff in each setting to build their capacity, skills and understanding of using creativity with the children and families they work with. This training also forms a key component of the legacy of The Playground in each of the communities involved.

Starcatchers provided a programme of CPD for the staff in the settings which explored 3 key art-forms and a further session which explored the engagement signals research undertaken by Prof Aline-Wendy Dunlop and the team from the University of Strathclyde during the Starcatchers Inspire project. This session was a useful tool to get staff to think about how the children in their care engage with the creative experiences on offer – either as workshops or performances in the settings themselves or at performances in theatres or arts centres.

In total 154 staff took part in 14 CPD sessions - 7 in each community comprising:

- 2 sessions on drama with Hazel Darwin-Edwards
- 2 sessions on music with Stephen Deazley
- 2 sessions on dance with Skye Reynolds
- 1 sessions on engagement signals in young children with Aline-Wendy Dunlop.

Sharing the Learning

At the culmination of the project celebrations were held in the 3 childcare settings, sharing the performances with children and families who had not seen it, or organising different activities based around the performances and other aspects of the residencies.

To share the learning from the project CPD events were held in both communities for those working in early years. The artists, along with staff from the settings and partners, shared their experiences of the project and developmental psychologist Dr Suzanne Zeedyk spoke about the importance of creativity in early years.



Evaluating the Playground

Centre for Research on Families and Relationships

The Centre for Research on Families and Relationships (CRFR) was established in 2001 as a consortium research centre based at the University of Edinburgh, with partners at the Universities of Aberdeen, Glasgow, Glasgow Caledonian, Highlands & Islands and Stirling.

Our aims are to:

- Produce high quality, collaborative and inclusive research relevant to key issues in families and relationships.
- Act as a focal point, and promote and facilitate a network, for all those with an interest in research on families and relationships.
- Make research more accessible for use by policy makers, practitioners, research participants, academics and the wider public.
- Enhance the infrastructure to conduct research on families and relationships.
- Our consortium approach allows us to develop a multi-disciplinary work programme that reflects current issues and trends from across the country. Our Co-Directors are drawn from various schools within the University of Edinburgh and our Associate Directors from each of the consortium universities. We also have long-standing Associate Directors from other institutions who have strong disciplinary links with CRFR. All of our Directors offer academic expertise and guidance relating to our research strategy.

We attract funding from a variety of sources including the ESRC, the Scottish Government, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, the Leverhulme Trust, NHS Scotland, the European Union, the Big Lottery Fund and Scottish local authorities.

Evaluation Methods

Research and evaluation has been key to the success of Starchatchers' working over the last 7 years and so evaluating The Playground effectively was a key component of the project. The Starchatchers Director approached the Centre for Research on Families and Relationships at the University of Edinburgh to work with the organisation on the evaluation of The Playground. This would provide a framework for evaluating the project, some external evaluation input, as well as provide self-evaluation support for Starchatchers staff.

For this project the evaluation was carried out by the Starchatchers Projects Coordinator with the support of an external consultant and specialist in Contribution Analysis (Dr Sarah Morton.) For the purpose of this evaluation a combination of internal and external evaluation approaches were used. This combination of internal evaluation, with external support and scrutiny fitted this project in a number of ways. It was important that the evaluation was small scale in line with the overall funding. Starchatchers wanted to embed evaluation in their work, and develop their skills and expertise in evaluation, but by involving a consultant were able to ensure the robustness of methods and add to validity by asking for second opinions, outside interviews etc. As well as bringing expertise in Contribution Analysis and evaluation methods, the consultant:

- 1 Carried out performance observations to validate initial findings
- 2 Interviewed key staff where it was felt there might be more negative feedback in order to capture this
- 3 Interviewed the partners at the end of the project to allow for feedback about Starchatcher's role.
- 4 Helped frame research instruments
- 5 Oversaw the analysis and write-up of the project.

The evaluation drew on Contribution Analysis as the framework for all data collection and analysis. Contribution analysis (CA) involves developing and clarifying the theory of change underpinning a service and establishing chains of potential causality, that is, what does the project set out to achieve, and what steps will lead to these

outcomes and why? All stakeholders were consulted and asked to respond to the question 'what would success look like for me?' These answers formed the basis of a multi-partner meeting and results chains for the project were developed that incorporated all of these 'criteria for success'.

Four results chains for the projects were drawn up in consultation with the key partners, one for children and parents/carers, one each for the artists, the partners and staff. The risks and assumptions for the result chains were assessed. This provided monitoring criteria for the project. This report provides an assessment of the extent to which assumptions were correct and risks were mitigated and provides an overall assessment of the contribution of the project.

The results chains set out the contribution the project wanted to make for children, their parents, staff, the partnership and the artists themselves. Interviews and focus groups were conducted with staff, partners and artists. Children were observed during performances using a method developed by Starcatchers previously (reference) A full description of methods is in appendix 1 and the results chains are presented on p?

Data was collected using mixed methods from staff, partners, artists, children and their families. This is presented in Table One below. Data was collected at baseline, midway and at the end of the project, and each component of the project was also evaluated (events, performances, CPD). The artists' blogs provided useful data on the risk and assumptions, and on the way the project developed in response to the interaction with children, parents and staff.

Data collection tools are available on request from Starcatchers main office.

Table One

Source of Evaluation Data	No. of participants	Interview rounds
Interviews with Artists	2	2
Interviews with Partners	2	1
Staff focus Groups	38	2
Feedback from performances		
Artist blogs	2	2
Feedback from children via staff	63	1
Observation of children during performances	594	24
Feedback from parents Glenlee	12	2
Feedback from parents McCready	7	1

Where possible children were involved in the evaluation. For example at a evaluation session parents were asked a question at the "Evaluation Station" then their child would place a toy train on a drawn train track outside the "station" which represented their parent's answer.

<http://playgroundeastren.wordpress.com>
<http://playgroundsouthlan.wordpress.com>

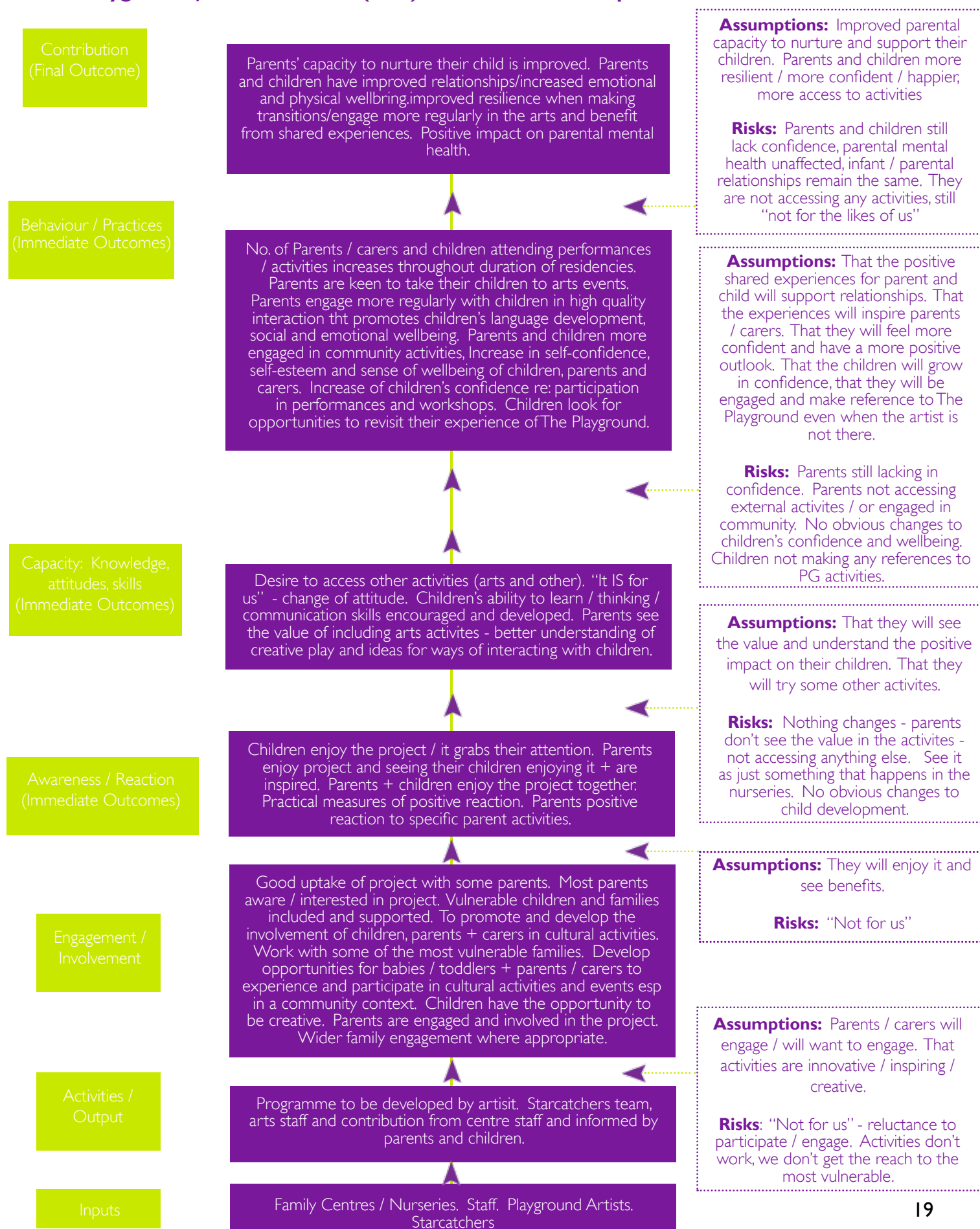
The Contribution Analysis approached formed the framework for analysis, allowing for consideration of how the data fitted into the different levels of the model, and pulling together relevant information to evidence the risks and assumptions that had been built into the model.



Outcomes for Children and their Parents/Carers

The following results chain was devised for children and their parents/carers:

The Playground | Results Chain I (RCI): Children and their parents



Engagement/Involvement

The project achieved high levels of engagement and involvement of children and sometimes their parents.

At initial interviews and focus groups there was concern especially about the engagement of parents in the project.

"We've tried so many things so it really doesn't bother us that they (parents) aren't involved....If the children are experiencing something new, something different and if they can hold onto that and again it's something they can maybe take on to school or whatever."

Calderside Staff Baseline Focus Group

"At Calderside I've not really engaged parents – not had opportunity to engage them. It's been challenging – especially engaging the babies ...unless you're engaging the parent/carer too it's tricky to work with the babies. You would need to have a lot of trust already there"

Jen Interim Interview

The settings expressed concern that it is difficult to get parents to come in, and that there was a particular group of parents who were particularly less likely to come. In addition there were concerns that parents reactions to the arts would be negative- that they equate arts activities with mess and painting, or that they react negatively to children's artistic output, like responding negatively to drawings their child is proud of. Some staff thought that parents were keen to see their child involved in arts but wouldn't want to take part themselves.

However, across all data sources actual engagement levels were high, especially with children.

"In Glenlee it was very easy to engage the children – I thought long and hard on how to lure them in – theatrically, introducing Burnbank. Using a character was in response to age group – it was simple and fun. It was ok to get parents involved – the staff helped. The parents role was passive (accompanying) but that experience has helped engaging them in the next project which is more active."

Jen Interim Evaluation

A successful engagement strategy with parents was to get them in before each stage and explain the activities that were planned. Staff felt that meetings had encouraged parents to be interested, and would contribute to word of mouth engagement of other parents. Children being able to show their parents things they had made or places they had been also contributed to their involvement.

In Glenlee Nursery the level of parental engagement was remarkable and has become the focus for further discussion within the education department more generally. This was the visit to the woods as part of the project.

"Jen's residency has been very important in engaging with parents and carers. The level of parental engagement has been outstanding and it talked about by colleagues in Education – almost all of the children had a parent or carer there, and these are very hard to engage families. It was something new – not just handing out a flyer at the door of the nursery. Jen's skills as a community artist were important. At the final event for The Playground, Jim (the headteacher at the time) said that in 19 years of teaching he had not seen such a level of engagement."

South Lanarkshire Partner Final Interview

"And I think it was the children's enthusiasm at this time that really helped us recruit a lot of our parents. If they hadn't originally volunteered to come along the children were saying "You have to come along, Burnbank's going to be there, you have to come and see." So the tugging at the heartstrings stuff did really help us. And once the parents did come along you could see they really did get a lot from it even some of our 'cool for school' parents were like, "so when are we coming back, I need to swap my day at work." So that was lovely."

Glenlee Staff Focus Group

At the baseline, staff felt that it was not possible to engage some of their hard to reach parents, but by the end not only had that turned around, the staff also felt they learned something about the value of engagement;

"I think it made me fully understand the power of families engaging in our nursery, in a rich context. That was provided by the project."

Glenlee Staff Focus Group

Interview data, artists reflections and other feedback about the project suggests that trying to get an artist to work across more than one setting was not successful – the link with locality was important to the success of the project:

"In retrospect it was hard for the artist to work across two settings, so three would have been more difficult still"

South Lanarkshire Partner Final Interview

At McCready the children were quick to interact with Nik and staff found that even children who normally would not approach strangers were drawn to Nik and the music

"The children are becoming more comfortable and enjoying what he's doing" "Children that were originally tied to staffs legs will now go and sit next to Nik".

McCready Staff Focus Group.

"He's already working with the families on family day... and they're really enjoying it."

McCready Staff Focus Group.

Case Study: McCready Family Centre

Jackson, 2, was very quiet and wary and would often cry when his mum left him at nursery. Brought up in a single-parent family he was very wary of men. For the first few months that Nik was in the centre he was wary and would not interact, until one day he just decided to play with the sound beam, which had been left out for the children to discover. He figured out how to play it himself and enjoyed doing so. Several weeks later, Jackson seemed to decide that he liked Nik. He came up to him during the session and chatted away, smiling at him. At the end of the session, when his mum asked him if he has a new friend, he said yes. Now when he sees Nik in the street he always gives him a big smile.

Nik was able to interact with parents at McCready's weekly family day and took part in home visits to harder to reach parents and children with McCready staff.

An assessment of the project against expected results on engagement

Project planed results on engagement	Extent of achievement		
	Not	Partial	Full
Good uptake of project with some parents			×
Most parents aware / interested in project			×
Vulnerable children and families included and supported			×
Promotion and development of children, parent and carers' involvement in cultural activities			×
Opportunities for babies / toddlers + parents / carers to experience and participate in cultural activites and events especially in a community context			×
Children have the opportunity to be creative			×
Parents are engaged and involved in the project			×
Wider family engagement where appropriate			×

Reactions:

On the whole reactions to the programme were very positive, from staff, children and parents. The extent to which children and parents enjoyed the programme comes across from all data sources.

As discussed above, the engagement with the woods was particularly successful for parents and children. 100% of parents from Glenlee Nursery said their children enjoyed it 'a lot'.

Parent Evaluation (Glenlee Nursery Family Centre – 8 parents responded)

1. How many of the Playground Sessions did you attend with your child?

1-2 sessions attended **1/8**

3-4 sessions attended **4/8**

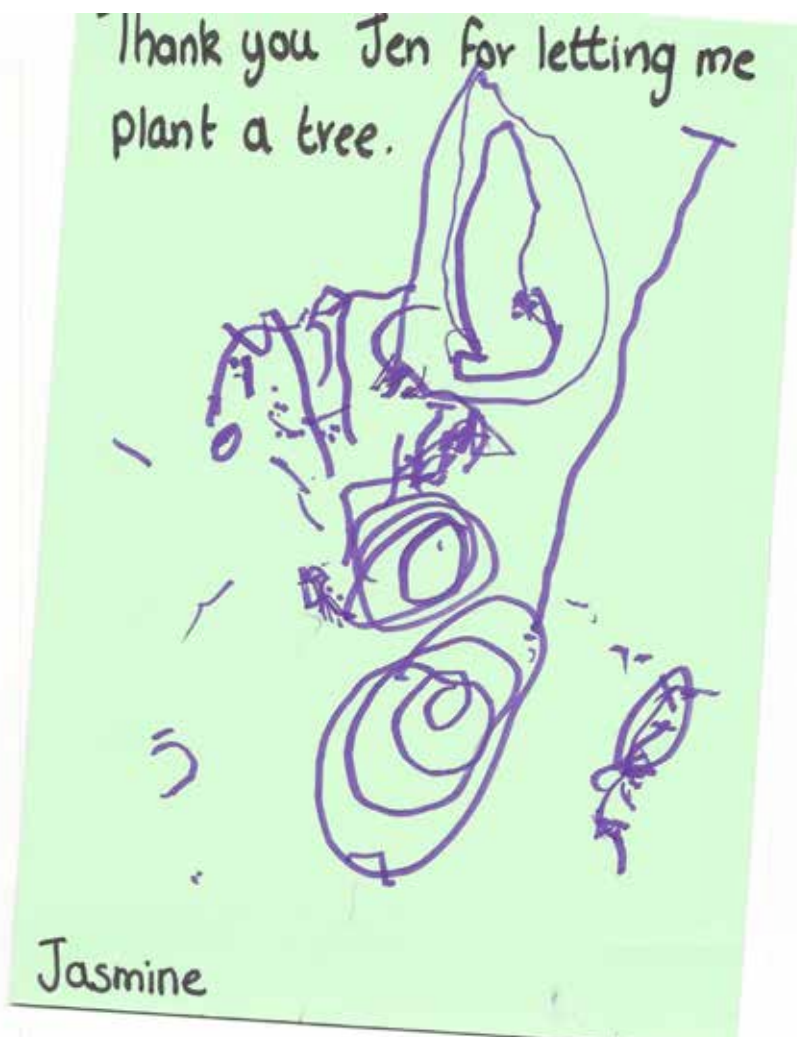
5-6 sessions attended **3/8**

"They're (the parents) really, really excited (about the potential visit to the woods) Some of them are actually gutted that they couldn't make it that day they are getting days off and changing shifts so they can come."

Glenlee Staff Focus Group

"The Children and Parents have loved it" **Glenlee Staff Focus Group**

Thank you letters for Jen from children at Glenlee Nursery





"Spellbound." "It was fantastic." "The girls still talk about it." "Really good." "My son's obsessed." "I wanted to be involved." "Brilliant." "Happy" **Glenlee parent feedback**

This was also reflected in the nursery reports on many of the children:

"Jade has really enjoyed taking part in the Starcatchers project created by Jen where she learned all about the characters Burnbank and Queen Meredith."

"Holly has thoroughly enjoyed our recent adventures with the character Burnbank in our local woods and all the experiences that we took part in to help him return home."

"Lilly responded enthusiastically to our Starcatchers project, visiting the woods, meeting the character Burnbank and being involved in all the related imaginative experiences."

"Kyle loved visiting and learning about the woods."

"Kyle loved dressing up as Burnbank!"

"Jade enjoyed pretending to be Burnbank in the roleplay area."

Glenlee Nursery Reports

There is also evidence of positive reactions to The Den:

"Billy explores The Den with confidence. He likes to handle the fibre optic lights and watch the projected lights."

"Jack was apprehensive when we entered The Den, but with some reassurance he relaxed and explored the area, looking and listening."

Calderside Nursery Reports

Case Study: Calderside Nursery

In the room for 2 - 3 year olds at Calderside Nursery Jen met one little boy, Kyle, who was extremely quiet, and whom she never heard speak. He was confident in every other way, however he used gestures to communicate with the world. During the research period in designing The Den, Jen created a number of warm, relaxing, quiet and welcoming environments for the children and staff to spend time in. Scott, the musician, would play sounds in the room, along with different styles of music, while Roy, the designer, would alter the lighting and introduce new textures. During this development, Kyle spent a lot of time in the room, and to Jen's delight, began vocalising and describing the environment around him. When he heard the sound of the dog, he said "dog", when different lights came on he would comment and excitedly shout out "lights!". He would touch the surfaces around him and tell Jen how it felt.

By creating a safe, quiet and secluded environment away from the busy nursery, Kyle felt confident and inspired enough to talk.

Assesment of project against planned results on children and parents reactions

Project planed results on reactions and awareness	Extent of achievement		
	Not	Partial	Full
Children enjoy the project / it grabs their attention			×
Parents enjoy the project and seeing their children enjoying it + are inspired			×
Parents + children enjoy the project together			×
Practical measure of positive reaction			×
Parents positive reaction to specific parent activities			×

Reactions:

The evidence shows that the project run by Nik also generated a huge amount of enthusiasm and was successful in engaging with parents.

Parent Evaluation (McCready Family Centre – 6 parents responded)

1. In what way did you participate in the Playground Project?

Home visits **1/6**

Sessions in the nursery **4/6**

Trips **1/6**

"The sound walk really engaged parents and the instrument-making day with Hugh."

Nik Interim Interview

Whilst many of the children were cautious of the project at first, as might be expected in a family centre setting where children often have attachment or other issues, their reactions soon became very positive.

"I remember trying to take a couple of them over and the grip (on staff) was just getting tighter and tighter... now they just love him." **McCready Staff Focus Group**

"It's settling/relaxing for the children. Children that were originally tied to staffs legs will now go and sit next to Nik. They love trying the guitar. "It was very popular, and they all had a shot." **McCready Staff Focus Group**

"He's already working with the families on family day... and they're really enjoying it." **McCready Staff Focus Group**

The very positive reactions from children and parents had a knock on effect on staff, helping to motivate them and bringing higher levels of job satisfaction:

"And finally what does it do for you, when you see that success, it makes you feel better about yourself, it makes you want to get up in the morning and do even better" **Glenlee Staff Focus Group**

Changes in Knowledge, Attitudes and Skills

The Playground aimed to change staff, children and parents attitude to the arts, their ability to access arts activities, and to enhance communication skills. The Evaluation station at Glenlee Nursery asked parents 'Did you and your child go to any other arts activities because of the project? 75% said they had or would:

Parent Evaluation (Glenlee Nursery – 8 parents responded)

**Did you and your child go to any other arts activities because of the project?
(Performances, art groups, trips etc)**

No **2/8**

No, but I would in the future **2/8**

Yes **4/8**

Parent Evaluation (McCready Family Centre – 6 parents responded)

**Did you and your child go to any other arts activities because of the project?
(Performances, art groups, trips etc)**

No **1/6**

No, but I would in the future **2/6**

Yes **3/6**

Jen reflected on the ways parents had interacted with being in the woods in terms of developing their knowledge and understanding:

"Seeing parents again – seeing the ones who'd been to the woods, and talking to them about an abstract idea (the new project) and seeing them understanding, exploring and sign up to it. It's maybe not about the arts, but about my role, or new experiences – that has changed. They've been taken physically to another place. I am interested in not changing parents attitudes, but in giving them more possibilities."

Jen Interim Evaluation.

Case Study: Glenlee Nursery

Staff at Glenlee Nursery were surprised when Jessica's mother agreed to come along on one of the first visits to the woods, as she normally didn't interact with the nursery, and staff commented that she didn't really speak to her daughter. On the visits, however, staff observed discussions between Jessica and her mother while they were doing activities such as looking at leaves together. From then on Jessica's mum made an effort to come to the woods visits, even changing her shifts to attend. She also took part in several sessions of the storytelling / art project after Easter, and commented at the celebration event that the project had given them something to talk about together.

Staff at McCready Family Centre also reflected on changes in parents attitudes:

"I can see some of our parents really are starting to build confidence in themselves."

"I think they are much more open and much more confident at having a go at things now than they were maybe a few months ago. We took them to Starcatchers before ... the parents couldn't believe how beneficial it was for their children, children who wouldn't sit, children who wouldn't engage with things so they immediately said that they would use that again, so I think this time if they're getting a lot more input they would definitely take that up." **McCready Family Centre Staff Focus Group**

Case Study: McCready Family Centre

Sean, 3, was normally hyperactive and had concentration issues. He had lots of toys and tended to run between activities, not focusing on anything for more than a few minutes. McCready staff suggested that Sean might benefit from Nik coming on some home visits.

During the home visits Nik brought out one instrument at a time and Sean's mum was really surprised to see him getting into each instrument, and spending time on each, culminating in him wanting to hold and play the guitar himself. Sean's mum was really proud and took pictures, later showing the to Sean's Gran who commented on them to Nik. Sean's family are planning to buy him some musical instruments for Christmas.

Assessment of project outcomes on parent and children's knowledge, attitude and skills

Project planned results on knowledge, attitudes and skills	Extent of achievement		
	Not	Partial	Full
Desire to access other activities (arts and other), "It IS for us" - change of attitude		75%	
Children's ability to learn / think / communicate skills encouraged and developed		x	
Parents see the value of including arts activities		Good evidence for some parents	
Better understand of creative play and ideas for ways of interacting with the children		Good evidence for some parents	

Changes in policy, practice and behavior (intermediate outcomes)

Although the Playground project ran for only 12 months there was clear emerging evidence of changes in behavior amongst parents and carers in terms of engagement with the project and arts activities, parents and children doing things together. In the short time scale it is harder to evidence increases in self-confidence or self-esteem, although confidence in attending arts activities might be included in this.

87% of Glenlee parents and **33%** of McCready parents said they had tried new activities at home because of The Playground project, for example, painting fir cones, going to the woods to visit the trees they planted or making their own musical instruments.

"(The trees) have their names on them – it's a special memory. We can go back and build on it and use the woods." Glenlee Parent Session

Staff felt that parents attitudes to engagement with the arts had really changed:

"They're really on board. They're gutted when they can't come – it spread and they were desperate to come and gutted when they couldn't. Before it was hard to get parents involved in educational things – this has built enthusiasm" **Staff focus group**

Nik also reflected on this aspect of the parents engagement

"I get the impression they don't get the opportunity to do these things so they want to. Going to the theatre – it's a day out for them. Preconceptions aren't an issue. They loved Electric Glen, even though it was rainy cold, horrific really with children crying. But all the parents said they'd really liked it. They like the community aspect of doing something all together". **Nik Interim Interview**

In particular staff reflected on the way that working with the project had helped to build more positive relationships between parents and children:

"I think sometimes some of the parents... when they think about their children and what they do with them it can sometimes come over a wee bit negative.. so when they do do things like that they see how their children respond and how well they do it gives the parents a nice sense of wellbeing that rubs off on the child and then it does kind of support that relationship because they're so proud of their child and what they've achieved and they see the nice, positive stuff and I think that definitely does help." – this is happening already with Nik's work. **McCready Staff Focus Group**

Assessment of children and parents change in practice and behavior

Planned results on changes in policy, practice and behaviour	Extent of achievement		
	Not	Partial	Full
No. of parents / carers and children attending performances / activities increases throughout duration of residencies			x
Parents are keen to take their children to arts events			87%
Parents engage more regularly with children in high quality interaction that promotes children's language development, social and emotional wellbeing		Some emerging evidence	
Parents and children engaged in community activities		Increased participation	
Increase in self-confidence, self-esteem and sense of wellbeing of children, parents and carers		Some strong emerging evidence	
Increase in children's confidence re: participation in performances and workshops		Increase in arts engagement	
Children look for opportunities to revisit their experiences of The Playground		Positive feedback across all projects	

Final Outcomes

In a 12 month long project it is hard to identify longer-term outcomes for children, parents and staff. However, even in this short time-frame there is clear evidence about the effects of the residencies on longer-term outcomes, and this could be followed up again at a later date to review.

In assessing whether the project had resulted in increased confidence for children and parents, **7 out of 10 parents surveyed at Glenlee Nursery felt that being involved in the Playground project had improved both their own and their child's confidence.** As one parent commented, "he's come out of his shell – he loved it". The staff also felt that the children's confidence in presenting the Burnbank story at assembly was evident and that their desire to share the story gave them increased ability to stand up and share it.

In terms of improved relationships, several sources of evidence point to early indications of this. Staff and parents comment on the fact that working with the Playground has given them ways of interacting that improve relationships.

"Logan's mum didn't speak to him – but at the trip there have been discussions/interactions – looking for leaves- it's a task to do together" **Glenlee staff**

Parents commented that "we have more things to do together now" and "different things you enjoy more, nice ideas, I love it". All of the Glenlee parents agreed 'a little' (12%) or 'a lot' (88%) that the project had improved relationships between them and their children. One member of staff commented that the project helped develop a better relationship for one child **"with Dad, who wouldn't normally come to these things but did because mum was on maternity."**

Members of staff also commented on improved relationships between parents and children, and how important that was:

"The children felt secure and enriched by it as did the parents, we were in situations where really loving positive interactions were going on between the parents and children. That took us back to our aim of finding what attachment was for our school."

"One of the things we noticed was that there was a real increase in our children talking to their parents, especially at pickup and drop-off times. For those children that are fortunate enough to be asked "What did you do today?" the children ...were so enthusiastic they couldn't hide it. Even the children who unfortunately aren't typically asked that, they were making sure they told whoever was picking them up that day all about Burnbank and the Ferdiddypopple stick." **(Glenlee staff)**

"Family engagement – that went through the roof as far as I was concerned and it wasn't just about families dropping off and picking up – When we're talking about family engagement we should be talking not just about quantity but quality and the engagement of children and families in the learning of the nursery was immeasurable. It was fantastic. The children felt secure and enriched by it as did the parents, we were in situations where really loving positive interactions were going on between the parents and children. That took us back to our aim of finding what attachment was for our school." **Glenlee Head Teacher**

Several staff felt that the project meant a lasting legacy of learning for the future.

"From June last year we were able to stand back and think we were part of something really special, and so were our children, A lot of things that they'll take from last year they'll keep with them for the rest of their lives. I really do believe that." **Staff member, Glenlee**

"We have a lot of dysfunctional families within the nursery. They need the support to make themselves better parents. We had parents who really wanted to be involved for their children, to do the best for them. I think that helped them to become better parents, and had a knock-on effect for the children." **Glenlee Head Teacher**

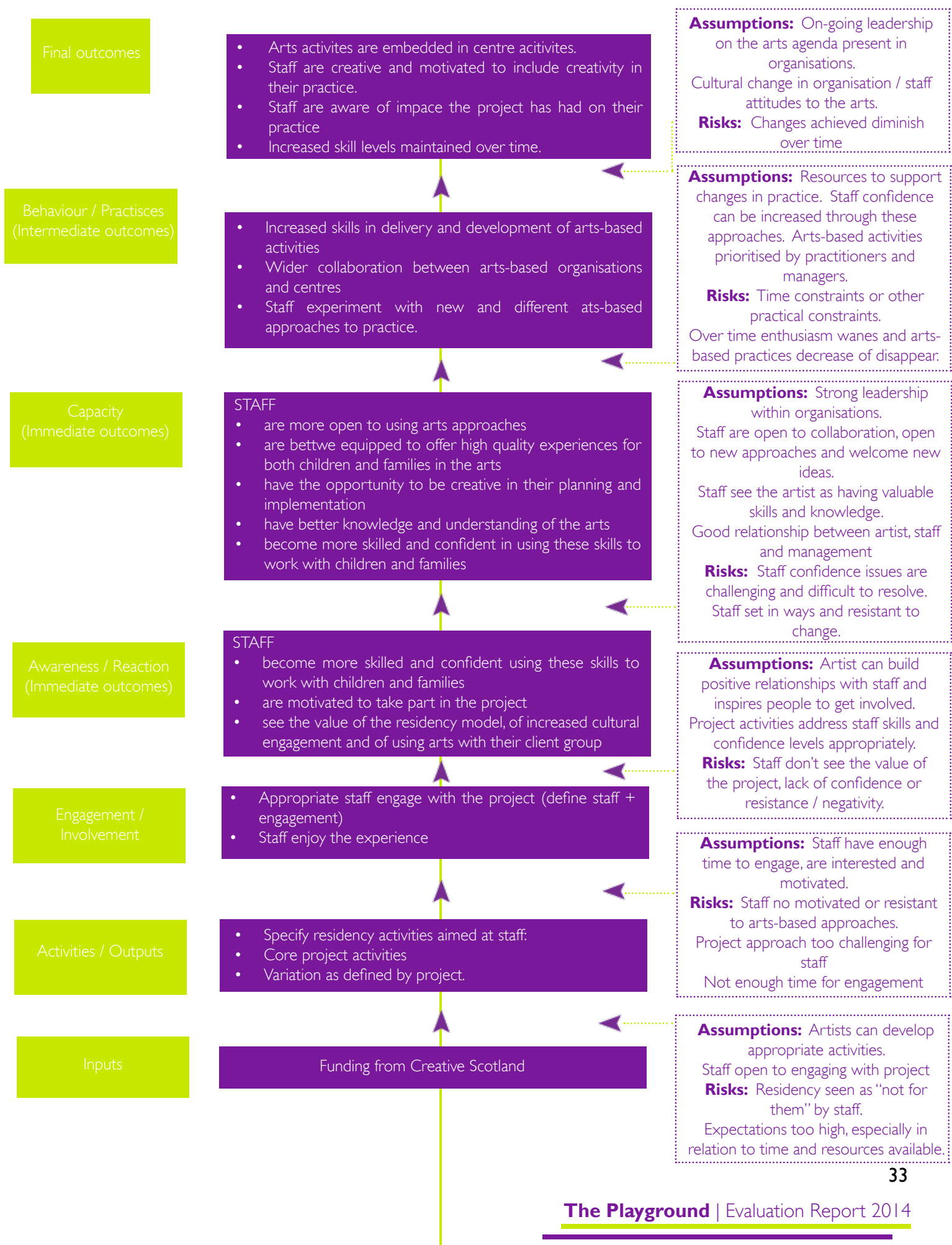
Another important outcome was that the project was extended in both areas. From October to December 2013 further funding from South Lanarkshire Integrated Children's Services and Starcatchers allowed Jen to return to Glenlee Nursery to develop another project taking place in the woods. Likewise a further contribution from Starcatchers allowed Nik to return to McCready Family Centre to deliver more sessions for children, parents and staff between October 2013 and February 2014.

Assessment of achievement on final outcomes

Project planned final outcomes	Extent of achievement		
	Not	Partial	Full
Parents and children have improved relationships			x
Parents' capacity to nurture their children is improved		Potential for this based on evidence so far	
Increased emotional and physical wellbieng / improved resilience when making transitions		Much harder to measure within short term project	
Parents and children engage more regularly in the arts and benefit from shared experiences			x
Positive impace on parental mental health		No measures of parental mental health taken in this project but promising sordt indicators from parent and staff feedback	

Outcomes for Staff

The following results chain was devised for staff:



Engagement/Involvement

The project aimed to embed arts activities into centre activities and increase the confidence and skills of staff in delivering arts-based activities. As predicted when planning the project staff were apprehensive about what would be expected of them, but soon came around to being involved in this kind of project.

"In the beginning we didn't know what to expect."

"I was doubtful but Jen's been fab – I've loved every minute of it." **Glenlee Staff Focus Group**

"At first we were apprehensive – but he (Nik) asked what we'd like to do." **MCready Staff Focus Group**

An assessment of the project against expected results on staff engagement

Project planned results on engagement	Extent of achievement		
	Not	Partial	Full
Appropriate staff engage with the project			×
Staff enjoy the experience			×

Reactions

However, staff reactions were very positive to the interaction once it started

"It makes you think again. Wee things – when you're doing it in practice it becomes your practice."
Calderside Staff Focus Group

"I reflected on my own practice." **MCready Staff Focus Group**

"It's gone above all expectations"

Assessment of project against planned results on staff reactions

Project planned results on reactions and awareness	Extent of achievement		
	Not	Partial	Full
Staff become more skilled and confident in using these skills to work with children and families			×
Staff are motivated to take part in this project			×
Staff see the value of the residency model, of increased cultural engagement and of using arts with their client group		Potential based on evidence so far	

Changes in Knowledge, Attitudes and Skills

Results for staff knowledge and understanding of the ways creative approaches could be used, and their capacity and confidence in doing this was increased in many ways:

"There is increased confidence in singing and drama amongst the staff – they all joined in and thought it was great – for some singing in front of other adults was a new experience." **Calderside Manager Interview**

“There were lots of new ways of doing things – new ideas of using simple resources in new ways. Allowing children to use and express objects in the way they want and going with children’s creativity rather than correcting them (e.g. if they use a brick as a telephone). Rather than needing specialist resources we realised we could do more with everyday things and use them more creatively – less resource intensive, just a more creative approach”. **Calderside Manager Interview**

“We used to just make a lot of noise with the instruments, Nik’s approach is much more calming”
McCready Staff Focus Group

Staff also took part in a total of 14 CPD sessions with other Starcatchers artists covering drama, music and dance as well as engagement signals in early years children. Staff reported that this CPD gave them ideas, inspiration and the confidence to try more arts-based activities in their settings.

“It gives you new ideas and you can kick ideas off each other.” **Glenlee Staff Focus Group**

“We can do little performances ourselves.” **McCready Staff Focus Group**

Assessment of project outcomes on staff knowledge attitude and skills

Project planned results on knowledge, attitudes and skills	Extent of achievement		
	Not	Partial	Full
Staff are more open to using arts approaches			×
Staff are better equipped to offer high quality experiences for both children and families in the arts			×
Staff have the opportunity to be creative in their planning and implementation			×
Staff have better knowledge and understanding of the arts			×
Staff become more skilled and confident in using these skills to work with children and families			×

Changes in policy, practice and behavior

This has led to creativity being embedded in the nurseries’ approaches. In particular:

- Staff supporting children to interact with the artists and to continue artists legacies across all settings
- Music and drama is integrated into assessment in one setting
- Creativity is good at increasing self-confidence – if they feel safe and secure then they can use creativity to problem-solve and express themselves across the curriculum.
- There are now spaces in each setting for different kinds of creativity.

“It has helped with the Curriculum for Excellence emphasis on creativity. It has boosted the morale of staff – bouncing ideas off each other. When pairs of staff have been at CPD they have been really keen to take it on.” **Calderside Manager Interview**

“Jen’s given us the ideas and inspiration.” **Glenlee Staff Focus Group**

Assessment of staff change in practice and behavior

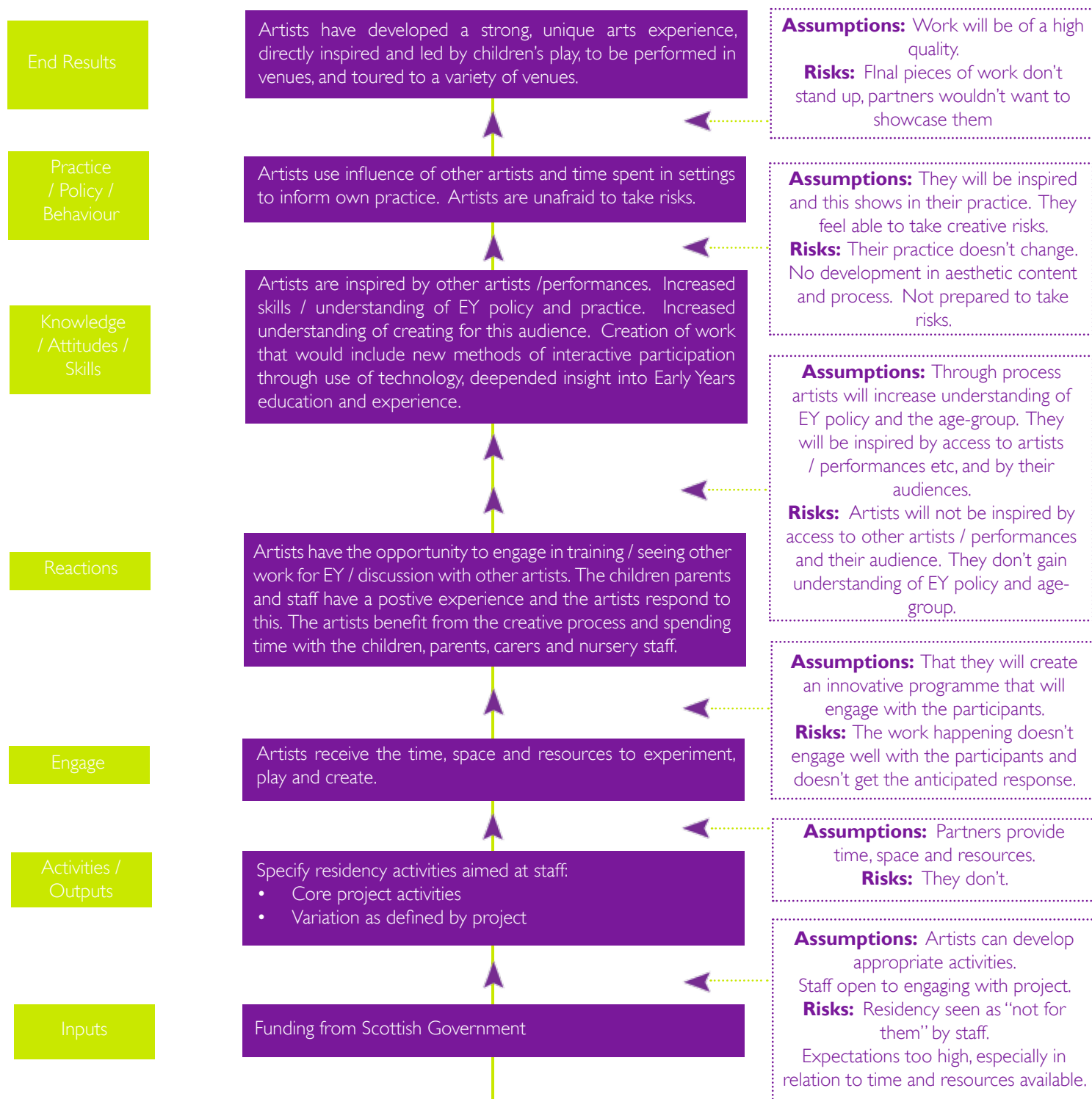
Planned results on changes in policy, practice and behaviour	Extent of achievement		
	Not	Partial	Full
Increased skills in delivery and development of arts-based activities			x
Wider collaboration between arts-based organisations and centre		Limited evidence outside project	
Staff experiment with new and different arts-based approaches to practice			x

Assessment of achievement on final outcomes

Project planned final outcomes	Extent of achievement		
	Not	Partial	Full
Arts activities are embedded in centre activities			x
Staff are creative and motivated to include creativity in their practice			x
Staff are aware of the impact the project has had on their practice		Some evidence to support	
Increased skills maintained over time	Unable to prove within timescale		

Outcomes for Artists

The following results chain was devised for artists:



Engagement/Involvement

The artists were positive about their engagement with the nurseries, and the support and resources they received as part of the project.

"I do feel like it's what I imagined the job to be. It is what I hoped for." **Jen Interim Interview**

"Creatively it has been what I expected... The staff are great and make it easy... It's great being in the position to just play." **Nik Interim Interview**

The artists only concerns were to do with the timescale of the project, as well as the number of days per week allocated. Jen found this particularly difficult as she divided her time between two settings in South Lanarkshire. Eventually this issue was eased as Jen spent intensive periods of time in each area, instead of visiting each setting each week.

"My concern before we started was that 3.5 days wasn't a lot of time for both activities and producing shows, and yes, this is the case. A lot of the time I'm running out of time." **Nik Interim Interview**

"I think maybe having the 2 nurseries has affected time— I would rather be in one centre."

Jen Interim Interview

An assessment of the project against expected results on artists' engagement

Project planned results on engagement	Extent of achievement		
	Not	Partial	Full
Artists receive the time to experiment, play and create		x	
Artists receive the space and resources to experiment, play and create			x

Reactions

Both artists cited the relationships they built with the children, nursery staff, and partners as one of the key positives of the project, with artists reporting benefits of reciprocal learning with nursery staff.

The positives of the project were: *"relationships I've made in the settings with staff and children" and "working with Mark (McAvoy) and the other artists."* **Jen Interim Interview**

The positives of the project were: *"regular contact with the children (and) June and Hugh – brilliant team of people"* **Nik Interim Interview**

The artists were also able to attend training and to see other early years work. These opportunities included attending Take Off Festival, Durham, Fratz Early Years Festival, Berlin, a series of CPD sessions led by Suzanne Zeedyk on developmental psychology and, for Jen, attending a residency entitled "Dream: The Joy of Creating. Both artists felt they benefitted from this, but would have liked to have done even more, had time allowed.

"Seeing more work is really useful to me" **Nik Interim Interview**

"We were lucky enough to see some truly inspiring work... As part of Fratz Festival we attended a number of very interesting talks by some great speakers." **Nik's Blog 24/4/13**

"Had a great day of inspirational chat at our training session with Suzanne Zeedyk today. The session focused around the ideas of babies as artists and babies as audience, and using the science of early development to enable artists to make the most meaningful performances for this age group. Fascinating

stuff. I hope this is something that we can do more of in the future.” **Nik’s blog 24/5/13**

“At the beginning of October I had the fantastic opportunity to take part in a week long residency entitled, Dream: the joy of creating, and what a joy it was. A whole week spent unlocking and exploring a thousand creative pathways, with a fabulous collective of artists from all over the world. It was an absolute privilege to work with these people, to hear so many their stories and ideas; and indeed to share mine with them.” Jen’s blog 5/11/12

“This was a fantastic opportunity to get a taste of what kind of Early Years work is being created around Europe, and how we fit into the international and cultural landscape.” **Jen’s Blog on Fratz Festival 7/5/13**

Assessment of project against planned results on artists’ reactions

Project planned results on reactions and awareness	Extent of achievement		
	Not	Partial	Full
Artists benefit from the creative process and spending time in the settings			x
Artists have the opportunity to engage in training and see other work			x

Changes in Knowledge, Attitudes and Skills

A desired outcome for artists was a deepened insight into Early Years Education and Experience, as well as increased skills and understanding of early years policy and practice. Both artists reported that working with the nursery staff in their settings naturally led to this.

“Early years policy is definitely relevant, being in the centre and learning from the staff I end up copying their policy on how to deal with behavioral management.” **Nik Interim Interview**

“Being in a nursery every week does that naturally - seeing how it’s done in an educational setting.” **Jen Interim Interview**

“I also had a very relaxed and informative day in the baby room in Calderside Nursery. I learn so much from the staff each time I’m there, information that is consistently helping me form my practice for 0 – 2 yrs. One of the topics we tend to talk about is just how intelligent these babies are. They can’t talk to us, but they understand what is happening around them, and are constantly commenting on the world around them. I find it all so fascinating, and feel really lucky that I have this time to observe their daily lives.” **Jen blog 5/10/12**

The artists, and Jen in particular, followed this up through their own reading and attending training.

“I’ve enjoyed researching attachment theory – and how that’s feeding into formal settings. I also took part in training with Glenlee on attachment theory.” **Jen Interim Interview**

“I’m reading about environments – “Detoxifying Childhood” by Sue Palmer – has influenced the work. She talks about what a childcare environment should be like.” **Jen Interim Interview**

Nik in particular hoped to create work that would include new methods of interactive participation through use of technology. This can be seen in particular in his installation Sonic Playground, and the use of these new methods of technology can be seen in his blog.

"This is my fruit and veg keyboard. Inspired by other people's projects using a gadget called MaKey MaKey – I thought I'd give it a try myself." **Nik's blog 4/3/13**

"I was keen to introduce the children to elements of this technology to discover how they play and interact with it so today I brought along a device called the Soundbeam." **Nik's blog 30/11/12**

Assessment of project outcomes on artists' knowledge attitude and skills

Project planned results on knowledge, attitudes and skills	Extent of achievement		
	Not	Partial	Full
Increased skills and understanding of Early Years policy and practice			×
Deepened insight into Early Years education and experience			×
Creation of work that would include new methods of interactive participation through use of technology		Relevant to Nik's work	

Changes in policy, practice and behavior (intermediate outcomes)

Both artists also took the opportunity to collaborate with other artists from the early stages of the project, and felt that this inspired their creative process as well as the final performances. In total the artists worked with a total of 22 other creative during the course of the project.

"The work I've done with other artists has been very inspiring. I love that about collaborating, when other people bring other skills and make things happen – but you're all doing it together. This has been such a great opportunity for this to happen." **Jen Interim Interview**

"I'd never worked with Iain or Laurie before, but had a very good feeling about the 4 of us creating the right kind of dynamic. They played off of each other beautifully and created such exciting and lovely moments." **Jen's Blog 13/3/13**

"During the creation of 'Too Many Cooks' I was fortunate enough to work with some extremely talented artists. These collaborations taught me a huge amount about the process of creating a piece of theatre for young children." **Nik's blog 13/12/13**

The artists also stated that they wanted to feel that they were able to take risks in their work, and positively reported that this had happened.

"Yeah I think I do. I feel safe enough to do it. Joanne at Glenlee says – "We feel like it's not going to work but we know it will." Because of the woods project they're now open to a new project and don't question the fact that I'll lead them through it." **Jen Interim Interview**

"I think the centre are almost up for anything - they're very open-minded" "I feel I can try pretty much anything." **Nik Interim Interview**

Assessment of artists' change in practice and behavior

Planned results on changes in policy, practice and behaviour	Extent of achievement		
	Not	Partial	Full
Artists use influence of other artists and time spent in settings to inform our own practice			Positive results for both artists
Artists are unafraid to take risks			Positive results for both artists

Final Outcomes

For the artists, the end result of the project was hopefully to be the creation of a strong, unique arts experience, directly inspired and led by children's play, to be performed in venues, and toured to a variety of venues. In July 2013 Yarla and the Winter Wood, Too Many Cooks and Sonic Playground together performed in 82 public performances to 2129 children and parents, and 6 performances to 180 children and staff in our 3 settings.

Aspects of the residencies can be strongly seen in each piece of work from the children's fascination with sticks, the use of dens, the character in the woods, storytelling, sensory work and collecting sounds in Yarla and the WinterWood, to the children's fascination with pressing buttons in Sonic Playground and making instruments out of household items and the characters in Too Many Cooks. For documentation of these please see the artists' blogs.

"Space is so important – that's something that I've explored especially in Calderside. It can affect you physically, emotionally. I wonder what affect Calderside is having – that's why I made the Den. I enjoyed the contrast – the woods at Glenlee, and the interior landscape of the Den. They'll merge in Yarla." **Jen**

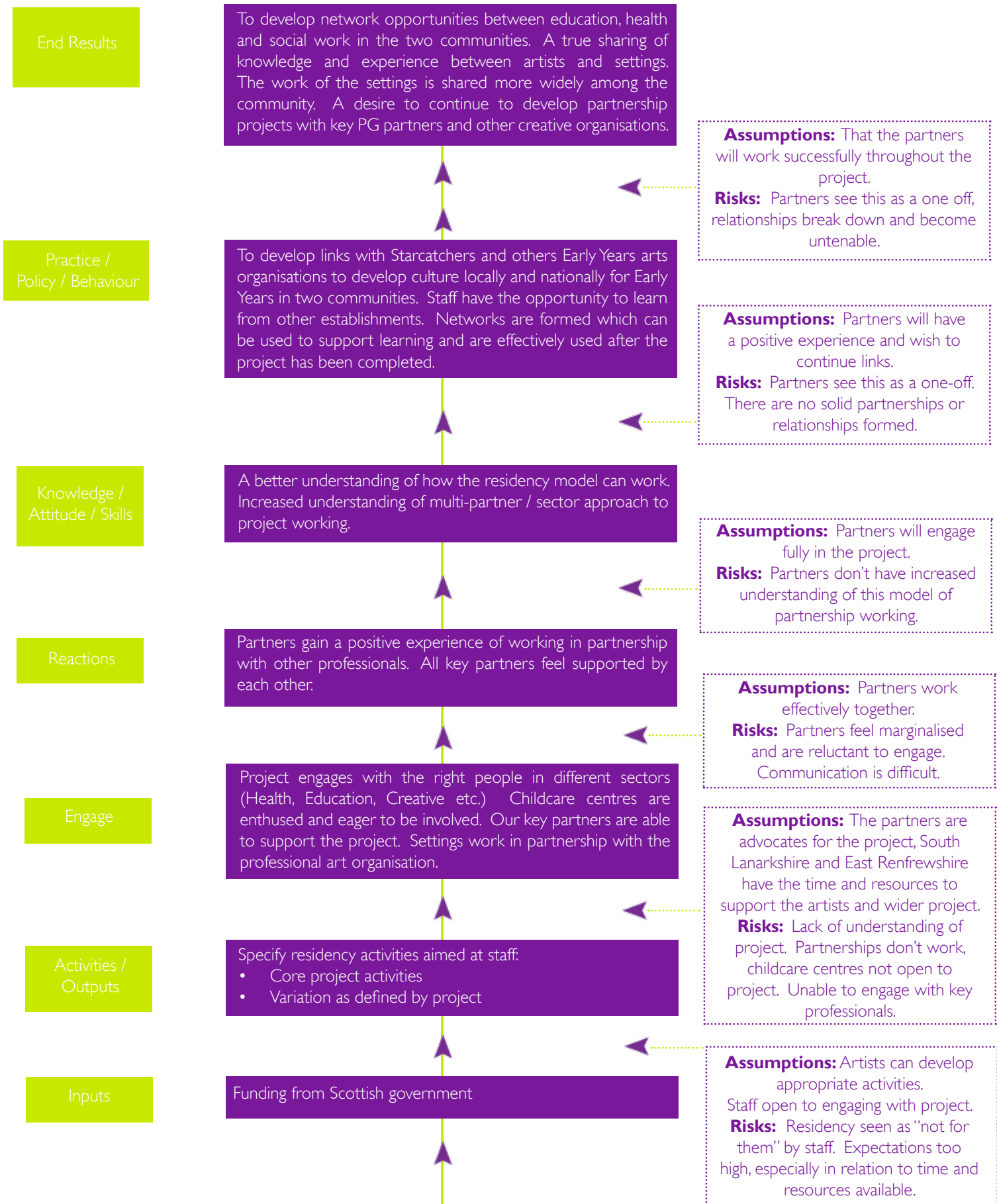
Interim Evaluation

Assessment of achievement on final outcomes

Project planned final outcomes	Extent of achievement		
	Not	Partial	Full
Artists have developed a strong, unique arts experience, directly inspired and led by children's play, to be performed in venues, and toured to a variety of venues			x

Outcomes for Partners

The following results chain was devised for partners



This sector draws on feedback from staff and artists across the project, and on two specific interviews with arts development staff from each local authority area who had taken a lead on the partnership working for the project.

Engagement/Involvement

There was agreement that the partnership had effectively engaged with the right partners across sectors. The mix of family and arts organisations was seen as particularly important. Childcare centres were very enthusiastic about the project, and if anything would have liked more time with the artists. The artists being split across centres contributed to this, as discussed elsewhere in this report. One of the partners felt that staff capacity had sometimes made it difficult to communicate and attend as much as they would have liked, with one key member of staff on maternity leave, and another having a long period of sickness. This had affected the ability of the settings in that area to engage with the local arts organisation as the key arts worker was on maternity leave. In other settings this was achieved.

Planned results on engagement and involvement	Extent of achievement		
	Not	Partial	Full
Project engages with the right people in different sectors			x
Childcare centres are enthused and eager to be involved		All but one setting fully engaged	
Key partners are able to support the project		Less effective in one setting with staff absent	x
Settings work in partnership with the professional arts organisations		Less effective in one setting with staff absent	x

Reactions

The partnership was mainly very positive and worked well together. In particular work between the local authorities and Starcatchers was seen as very positive. Cross-department working was also believed to have been enhanced in one local authority. The strength of the artistic work was seen as a positive help to the development of the partnership.

Planned results on reactions	Extent of achievement		
	Not	Partial	Full
Partners gain a positive experience of working with other professionals			x
All key partners feel supported by one another		Time was an issue in full partnership working in some cases	

Changes in knowledge, attitudes and skills

There are many comments about how the residency model demonstrated the benefits of cross-sector working and wider outcomes for children and families. This has led to better relationships between some services:

"The work has clearly joined the gaps between some services. It has allowed services to work together in new ways to achieve a shared outcome. We are already continuing this inter-service development and delivery – that's part of the Playground's legacy" **Arts development Officer, East Renfrewshire** 43

Others also reported that working together around the artist in residence project meant that they were able to develop and sustain partnerships:

"The partnership has developed because we put an artist in residence into an early years setting and showed how it worked – this has led to buy-in from other partners" **Arts development officer, South Lanarkshire**

Planned results on knowledge / attitudes / skills	Extent of achievement		
	Not	Partial	Full
A better understanding of how the residency model can work			×
Increased understanding of multi-partner / sector approach to project working			×

Changes in policy, practice and behavior

There has been development of partnerships from the residency project, and ongoing legacies of the project. In particular

- Funding of an extension of the Playground project
- South Lanarkshire partnering Starcatchers on a creative skills programme
- Strategic work to bring culture into the work with GIRFEC and SHANARI
- Development of early years festival to include more workshops and to link with the Early Years Collaborative
- Funding application for new early years arts post
- More families travelling to see early years theatre
- Increased and new networks
- Playground projects touring other venues in Scotland

Planned results on policy, practice and behaviour change	Extent of achievement		
	Not	Partial	Full
Develop links with Starcatchers and other EY arts organisation to develop culture locally and nationally for Early Years in the two communities		Emerging new projects, policy development and wider arts engagement	
Staff have the opportunity to learn from other establishments		Some evidence of sharing in South Lanarkshire between the 2 settings and through the sharing event	
Networks are formed which can be used to support learning and are effectively used after the project has been completed			Continuing legacy of the project: in new networks and embedded learning

Final outcomes

Partnership working was sustained and enhanced during the project, despite difficulties with staff absence described above.

44 *"I think having an artist in residence does work really well. It allows the artist time to make real changes and embed within the community"* **Arts Development Worker East Renfrewshire**

The sharing of knowledge between artists and settings was very effective, and although there was already some awareness of this, partners from both settings felt that having the residencies strengthened this.

“When you work with an artist you see things from a different perspective. We were all challenged by it in a really good way” **Nursery Head-teacher**

The project has left a lasting legacy in a number of ways as described throughout this report.

Planned final outcomes	Extent of achievement		
	Not	Partial	Full
Network opportunities between education, health and social work in the two communities			Good evidence of new and emerging partnerships
Sharing knowledge and experience between artists and settings			Strong evidence of proof on concept learning
Wider learning and sharing in the communities		Highly successful sharing events	
Desire to continue to develop partnership projects			Continuing legacy of the project: continuation, new developments and embedded learning

Conclusion

The Playground was a hugely successful project for everyone involved, particularly, the children, staff, parents and artists. There is a significant learning that Starcatchers, our partners, the artists and others can take from the findings in this report.

Fundamentally, The Playground residencies proved to be an effective mechanism for inspiring very young children, their parents and carers through engaging in the arts and creativity. Whilst it was always going to be challenging to show evidence for some of the bigger picture outcomes because of the timescale attached to the project, there were encouraging signs and evidence being gathered as part of the evaluation process.

The Playground has:

- shown how much the arts and artists have to offer early years and that this work can have a much deeper impact on all the participants involved.
- shown to have had a positive impact on the children and parents in the settings
- shown that it can afford transformational change in staff and setting practice
- shown that it has a positive impact on the approach and understanding of the artists working on these types of projects
- shown the potential for partners to extend their understanding and develop stronger relationships within their communities.

A very positive outcome of The Playground has been the ability to extend the working in both areas for a period of time beyond the project term. This has consolidated working relationships and reinforced some of the outcomes that have been evidenced in this report. Starcatchers will continue to use the learning from The Playground to inform the development of our work as we continue to strive for increased availability of high quality arts and creative experiences in Early Years in Scotland.

Appendices

Performances

One of the outcomes of the project was that each artist would develop a performance inspired by their time in their settings. The performances were then toured in the partner communities and further afield.

Too Many Cooks

Created by Nik Paget-Tomlinson and Hazel Darwin-Edwards

For 2-5 year olds

Too Many Cooks came from a long exploration process with the children of McCready Family Centre. From the beginning of the residency Nik knew that he was interested in creating a piece of theatre set in a kitchen, with messy chefs who made music while they cooked. The residency allowed him time to bring in drama artist and puppeteer Hazel and experiment with lots of different instruments, characters and puppets. Too Many Cooks was non-verbal and both of the actors played music from instruments including pots, pans and cutlery.

<http://www.starcatchers.org.uk/things-to-do/too-many-cooks>



Yarla and the Winter Woods

Created by Jen Edgar

For 6 months – 3 years

Jen's final piece of work, Yarla and the Winter Woods, took inspiration from her work in both Calderside and Glenlee. From Calderside came the gentle nature of the piece and sensory elements and from Glenlee the storytelling plot, and of course the setting of the woods. The piece was non-verbal and included live cello music.

<http://www.starcatchers.org.uk/things-to-do/yarla-and-winter-wood>



Sonic Playground

Created by Nik Paget-Tomlinson

For ages 2+

Sonic Playground an interactive installation was based on the children's love of exploring, pushing unknown buttons, and creating noise. Children entered a futuristic space where each footstep or touch triggered a new sound.

<http://www.starcatchers.org.uk/things-to-do/sonic-playground-0>



Engagement Signal Monitoring

Building on previous evaluation methods developed for Starcatchers evaluation (by Young and Powers (2008) for the 'See Theatre: Play Theatre' and Dunlop, McNaughton, Grogan, Thomson and Martlew (2012) for 'Live Arts: Arts Alive') Catherine Campbell, Starcatchers Projects Coordinator used a simplified system based on these methods to analyse the engagement of children during performances. In 17 random performances the children in the audience were monitored at 10 minute intervals to determine whether they were engaged or disengaged with the performance, and of those who were engaged, whether they were absorbed (completely engrossed in the performance, eyes locked and not reacting to anything else going on) or mirroring (copying the actions or sounds on stage, or making other appropriate comments or movements.)

The results were validated by staff from the Centre for Families and Research, who also analysed several performances and produced almost identical results.

In all checks 90-100% of the children in the audience were engaged.

At the first 10 minute check an average of 62% of children were absorbed, and 44% were mirroring or responsive.

Some observations from the ten minute checks:

"Responding and reacting. Copying each others reactions. Engrossed. Shouting out what fruit/veg."

Too Many Cooks

"Some very young children – but all absorbed in performance. Older ones enjoying, mirroring, clapping."

Too Many Cooks

"Lots of shuffling and getting settled, they are fascinated by the cello but were totally focused on Yarla when he came out of the tent. Lots of giggles." **Yarla and the Winter Wood**

At the check 20 minutes in, an average of **51%** of children were absorbed, and **56%** were mirroring or responsive.

"Staff great – encouraging children to try different things and showing what to do. Children with additional support needs getting a lot out of it." **Sonic Playground**

"Puppets bring them back every time – imitating coconut. Children that started off very unsure and restless now completely engrossed." **Too Many Cooks**

"Seemed engaged throughout – some related talking. Mums are good – commenting and making noises to keep engaged." **Too Many Cooks**

"They're really getting the comedy themselves. Little boy perfectly mirrors Greg while singing – at same time – looking around open mouthed." **Yarla and the Winter Wood**

At the check 30 minutes in, an average of **69%** of children were absorbed, and **31%** were mirroring or responsive.

"Rhythm especially good at engaging especially very young." **Too Many Cooks**

"Some children mimicked Greg subconsciously after he sang. Many in the middle moved closer and closer as the show progressed." **Yarla and the Winter Wood**

"Excitement at bit with trees. Lots of absorbed babies. Some gurning but stops when trees fall. This dramatic bit really caught their attention." **Yarla and the Winter Wood**

Differences between nursery and community venues

Another interesting aspect which was highlighted by the engagement signal monitoring was the differences between performances in nurseries, community venues and arts spaces/theatres.

Observations from nursery venues showed staff directing the children's attention, at different times both focusing their attention on the performance, or detracting from this.

"Teacher tells them to stop interacting. Very engaged."

"Very different performance as staff constantly commentate and question, directing childrens' attention."

Engagement Signal Monitoring

In the nursery performances children also felt more comfortable in their familiar environment. This could lead to them being more boisterous, noisy and even attempting to go onto the set.

"Children very lively possibly as in familiar space with familiar people."

"Nursery so different feel – chatting amongst children."

At performances of Yarla and the Winter Wood Jen Edgar also noted differences between playing smaller community venues, such as libraries, and established theatres and arts venues:

Touring the show was a fascinating experience in terms of how learning how venues impacted on the audience and their experience. For example the smaller, community based venues such as libraries seemed to have a positive effect on the audience, compared to theatre spaces where the atmosphere could be profoundly different.

(In community venues) the audiences were smaller, relaxed and unified. They were more inclined to stay behind for longer allowing their child to explore the space and interact with Greg and Laurie. Generally speaking they had an ownership of the space which felt right. The adults felt safe to move around if their child became restless or unsure, and the important aspect of this observation is that when the adults were this relaxed, the babies and children were too, it is an absolute ripple effect.

I noticed that when we played to sold out audiences in theatres, the adults would enter, possibly with a pre-conceived idea (instilled in them when they were children) of how one should act in a theatre. It holds many similarities, I believe, with the social etiquette of attending church. It's ritualistic in it's nature, which can be soothing; knowing when to sit down, when to clap and when to leave, there's little room for making a mistake. Reassuring for adults, but possibly disconcerting for babies?

The fascinating thing about performing in the community venues, was that the framework of the theatre going ritual was there, but the audience moved more freely within it, changing things as they required in response to their children's needs, and making new rules as they go.

<http://playgroundsouthlan.wordpress.com>

Audience Feedback

Audience feedback forms were distributed at random performances of all **3** shows in order to gauge audience opinion. In total **180** forms were returned.

43% of the audience for these performances were new to the venues in which they were held.

43% had also not attended a performance for children before.

Overwhelmingly the response to the pieces was positive with all of the audience members surveyed, bar two, responding that their child had enjoyed the show.

Yarla and the Winter Wood

Comments for Yarla and the Winter Wood often focused on how engaged children were, even the youngest audience members (often to parents' surprise.) The music was also highlighted, as well as the gentle characters in the performance.

They were totally enthralled the whole way through!

Certainly enjoyed it. Listened to the music quite intently.

Children's attention held throughout and responded to music/atmosphere.

My 10 months old son was captivated! Music beautiful and Yarla is such a lovely warm character.

Wee one was mesmerised by sounds and visuals – especially the cello.

Parents also commented that they themselves particularly enjoyed the music

Very fascinating and captured your full attention. Very expressive music.

Music. It was nice to watch the calming effect on (most!) of the kids.

Lovely use of live sound and visual images.

The performers also featured highly in response to the question “What did you like most about the performance?”

Actors facial expressions!

The music and the story being told without the use of language. Loved watching the children's expressions and how the actors kept their attention.

Suggestions for improvement were few and focussed on venues, rather than the performance.

I would have liked to have seen the lights but was unable due to lack of black out..

Seating for number of people.

There wasn't much space and it was hard to see at points





The Sonic Playground | Photo Neil Thomas Douglas

Sonic Playground

Comments for Sonic Playground highlighted enjoyment of the interactive nature of the installation:

Very interactive and relaxed.

Our children fully participated. It was a very good sensory experience.

The free flow experience with ability to interact with other children in an unstructured, creative environment.

*Anything interactive is always good with small children. Good colours too.
The interactive nature of the experience creating your own narrative.*

Certain parts of the installation, such as the ball run, also proved to be favourites.

Children loved the marble run.

And parents and children also enjoyed the sound effects

The sounds are very soothing without being unexciting.

Listening to the sounds and birds and waterfalls.

The section with the water sounds. They played really well there and really got a feel for the atmosphere because of the sounds.

Some parents also commented that they liked the fact that they too were involved in the installation.

Watching and playing with my grandchild in something different to explore.

Yes. It was fun to do with her.

For Sonic Playground there were some negative comments, and suggestions for improvement, mainly focusing on the fact that some children were not entertained in the installation for long enough, or would have liked more variety.

Not enough activity to interest children for very long. Not enough range of sounds.

Thought there could maybe have been more to do (re more tubes).

No – very basic. Thought more of a playground.

Only stayed 10 minutes. Cannot stress enough how disappointed I am with this event.

Too Many Cooks

Comments for Too Many Cooks focused on how engaged children were, and how funny they found the performance.

Annie sat the whole time on the cushions entranced

She was laughing and was pretty well taken with it – she sat still for 40 mins!

They both loved it! Completely engaged throughout.

They loved it. Focussed and also joined in with lots of chatter.

Parents also commented how entertaining they themselves had found the performance

It was funny, the actors were entertaining and lots on to keep infants entertained.

I loved it too. Very entertaining and so enjoyable to watch my children's reactions.

Yes, it was great to see a kids show that had so much attention to details and was of a high standard.

The puppetry, set and music were also particularly popular.

Simple set designs didn't distract from the performance. Sounds / music kept their attention

The music and using kitchen utensils – all very familiar objects to kids.

The oranges, lemons puppets and all the sounds.

The little fruit characters the children loved and the timing with the music.

Although comments were largely positive when asked some parents suggested that they would have liked some speaking in the performance, or interaction with the audience.

I think a bit of talking in the show would work really well.

Some interaction for kids would have been great

List of Performance Venues

Eastwood Park Theatre, East Renfrewshire
Greenbank Gardens, East Renfrewshire
Auchenback Resource Centre, East Renfrewshire
The Townhouse, Hamilton, South Lanarkshire
Rutherglen Town Hall, South Lanarkshire
Cambuslang Institute, South Lanarkshire
East Kilbride Arts Centre, South Lanarkshire
Lanark Memorial Hall, South Lanarkshire
Carnegie Hall, Dunfermline, Fife
Artspace, Craigmillar
Platform, Easterhouse
Mearns Library, East Renfrewshire
Neilston Library, East Renfrewshire
Clarkston Library, East Renfrewshire
Eaglesham Library, East Renfrewshire
The Tron Theatre, Glasgow
Aberdour Festival

Artist Biographies

Nik Paget-Tomlinson Biography

Nik is a musician, producer, sound designer and theatre practitioner working across the areas of performance, composition and music production.

Nik's practice encompasses the creation of live and prerecorded soundtracks for theatre and dance performance. He has been a collaborator on residencies with a range of dance companies and theatre practitioners. Credits include Enso (Lanua), To Bits (Hazel Darwin-Edwards/Imaginate/Lyra Theatre), Cloud Man (Ailie Cohen Puppets), Cargo (Iron Oxide/Edinburgh Mela) and Museum of Dreams (TAG Citizens Theatre).

Jennifer Edgar Biography

Jen is a theatre artist whose work consists of making theatre and creative experiences with people of all ages, and usually with a focus on movement. She is also a facilitator, deviser and performer, with her work heavily rooted in collaboration.

Some of her previous work has been with companies such as the National Theatre of Scotland, where she was an Emerging Artist and worked on projects including Flit; The Carnival of Unfortunate Stories; and Walls, (created and performed in Alexandria, Egypt). She has also worked extensively with the Tron Theatre, the Citizens Theatre, The Arches and Visible Fictions. Jen's recent performance work includes, The Interface Race, NTS Allotment, First Light, The Incredible Swimming Choir, Starcatchers, and Cloud Man, by Ailie Cohen and Lewis Hetherington.