Make/Shift

Evaluation Report Summary

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MAKE/SHIFT

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This is the summary of the Evaluation Report for Make/Shift, the Creative People and Places (CPP) programme for Amber Valley, Derbyshire.

The report explores the first year of delivery, covering April 2023 to March 2024. Make/Shift began in April 2022 with a development year that included consultation and staff team recruitment – then the programme started in April 2023.

Make/Shift is funded by Arts Council England (ACE) and hosted by the University of Derby.

About Make/Shift

Make/Shift wants Amber Valley to be a **place full of makers, where everyone's creativity matters** (Make/shift website).

Its approach is rooted in an Asset-Based Community Development model, where the stress is on neighbourhoods and local communities bringing about change.

This celebration of the strength of communities means fostering networks and collaborations is central to the work. Make/Shift has developed a number of important delivery partnerships this year all based in, or close to, the Amber Valley.

Make/Shift seeks to bring people, groups and organisations together through these networks and collaborations – making new connections and fostering growth through three levels of participation:

- **Friends**: Neighbours who attend, champion and get involved with activities generated by the network and invite their friends and neighbours along too.
- **Collaborators**: Makers, creators and doers working to create platforms (content, gatherings events, spaces, tools and more) which invite people to get involved.
- **Decision Makers**: Stewards, co-creators and guides shaping the strategy and direction of projects, how resources are allocated and inviting collaborators to get involved.

Nature and the environment are key to Make/Shift and how it thinks about the world. Therefore, the language it uses is rich in words and phrases from ecology (weave, interconnected, seeds etc).

> **It's very fulfilling to connect with people… especially as there isn't all that much here… it's been great to make connections and feel 'not so alone!' in being an artist in this area.**
>
> Survey feedback

What was delivered?

Make/Shift collaborated with 30 local groups, artists and organisation to host a range of more than 60 activities, events and workshops – inviting 3,000 people to get making, connecting and shifting in 20 different venues across Amber Valley.

Delivery included activities under three headings:

MAKE

This is about creating opportunities for neighbours to meet and make on their doorstep. This builds people's confidence in being creative and exploring the act of making.

CONNECT

Make/Shift aims to bring people together in new ways. This starts relationships and collaborations which support people to try new things together.

SHIFT

This explores testing new ways of working and learning together. The aim is to shift power and resources to communities to take action and make change together in their local area.

Reaching and inspiring

Is Make/Shift reaching and inspiring people across Amber Valley to get involved in the arts?

Make/Shift is engaging people in all the communities of Amber Valley – including those who wouldn't typically see arts as relevant to them.

It is clear that people are inspired through, and by, "making", and the use of this word is really effective in attracting people to come along.

Audiences and participants enjoy making together and want to engage further. And after attending events, they want to do more of the same. Events provide opportunities to meet new people or strengthen existing connections.

The locally-based creatives and organisations involved welcome Make/Shift's approach to doing things differently, and the energy and ideas that it brings.

Make/Shift has spent time considering how to involve people in an accessible way. This includes working through local organisations and thinking about physical access. The signage and the language used make everyone feel welcome and included.

A commitment to quality

Is Make/Shift supporting people to take a lead in making new work that excites and is meaningful to their communities?

Make/Shift believes that putting thought and effort into how you design and involve people in deciding and developing what happens is as important as the events that come at the end. There is a real commitment to ensuring quality in both the design and inputs at every stage.

People have responded really positively to Make/Shift's way of working and the activities they've been part of, they've also shifted how they see art, making, the community and their place in it. This is another sign of the quality of this way of working.

It is most noticeable in the quality of discussion, reflection and commitment to co-creation. Beyond that, it is also demonstrated by delivering community-owned and high quality work.

> **It feels great to sit around the table and meet new people that I wouldn't have met otherwise. Complete strangers have become friends**
>
> Makers in Residence participant

Learning what works

Is Make/Shift learning from what works and sharing this with others?

Underpinning how Make/Shift learns are its core principles. These are thought through, genuinely held by the Team and give a strong direction to the work.

The three ways to deliver – **MAKE**, **CONNECT**, **SHIFT** – give structure and a sense of change over time. They also provide a way to explain what Make/Shift does.

As Make/Shift is supported by a group of partners from very different backgrounds, they will help it become embedded in the Amber Valley and let others know about the programme.

There's a need to rethink how Make/Shift's ideas and work are articulated to wider audiences beyond those who already understand the programme.

In addition, if Make/Shift is to achieve its ambitious aims around shifts in power, there are considerable challenges around capacity and oversight.

The team are reflective – they think about how they work and what is achieved. They build in learning through the co-design and the development processes. Future plans include building on the learning from the work with communities this year.

This approach – sharing stories and making spaces to discuss different ways of approaching change ("action research") – is planned to continue going forward.

Conclusions and recommendations

It is clear that Make/Shift's approach is creating rich and meaningful connections in Amber Valley.

However, it is early days in what will be a programme of long term evolution and change. So it is perhaps too early to draw any definitive conclusions.

The approach to community-led design and co-creation is already developing unusual and effective partnerships for delivery. These allow Make/Shift to reach beyond those who might typically see 'art' as something they are interested in.

Both the work and approach are highly thought out. They consider all aspects of quality within the process of co-creation and implementation, producing deep outcomes which will undoubtedly begin to shift perceptions of self and place.

Recommendations

The Make/Shift Team should:

- **Continue with the slow, deep and thoughtful approach** which closely follows the core CPP ambitions and best practice learning from previous CPPs.
- **Work on sharing the learning and model more effectively**, to ensure community members and partners understand the approach and aims of Make/Shift. This requires work on a communications approach that considers all audiences.
- **Increase data collection** to get a better understanding of who is engaging in activities, and more evidence of the effectiveness of the approach.
- **Review access and inclusion**, particularly considering how to reach diverse audiences and ensure all feel fully welcome.

The Make/Shift Consortium should:

- **Make time to reflect on the role of the Consortium and Lead Organisation** and provide a stronger challenge in governance.
- **Work with the team to support the ambition to embed a more community-led approach to governance**.
- **Ensure the team has the support and structure needed to deliver** on the vast range of requirements and nuanced approaches of running a CPP. This needs to include ensuring all roles are filled – or temporary additional support added – and that all staff have the support needed to fulfil their potential.