



Arts Lab Year 2

A creative wellbeing programme
for young people in Cornwall

Impact Report 2023



Background

Following a highly successful pilot year of Arts Lab in 2022, made possible through connections between Arts Well, FEAST (Creative Kernow) and HeadStart Kernow, Arts Lab Year 2 was launched in 2023.

This second year of the programme sought to build on the vision of year 1: the need amongst young people for connection, expression and an enhanced wellbeing through creative exploration.

There was much to learn from the pilot year. The Arts Lab team – the partners named above – adapted and evolved the programme for Year 2 to build upon its successes and challenges. Thanks to further funding from The Cornwall Council Wellbeing and Public Health Service, Year 2 of the Arts Lab programme has continued to grow; the power of creativity in cultivating self-care and connection has been ever present.

This report shares insights from Year 2 of the programme. The end of the report gives a full picture of the whole programme so far.

Arts Lab Aims

Arts Lab matches young people's groups with local professional artists. With the young people's interests as a starting point, projects are delivered that prioritise:

- Using the '**5 Ways to Wellbeing**' as tools to improve mental health and resilience
- An opportunity for **co-designing** between the artist and young people
- Having some connection or visibility in the young people's **local community**

Arts Lab **Year 2** in numbers

24 projects commissioned

69 artists involved

Over **650** young people took part from

1 special school

7 youth services

10 primary schools

4 secondary schools/colleges

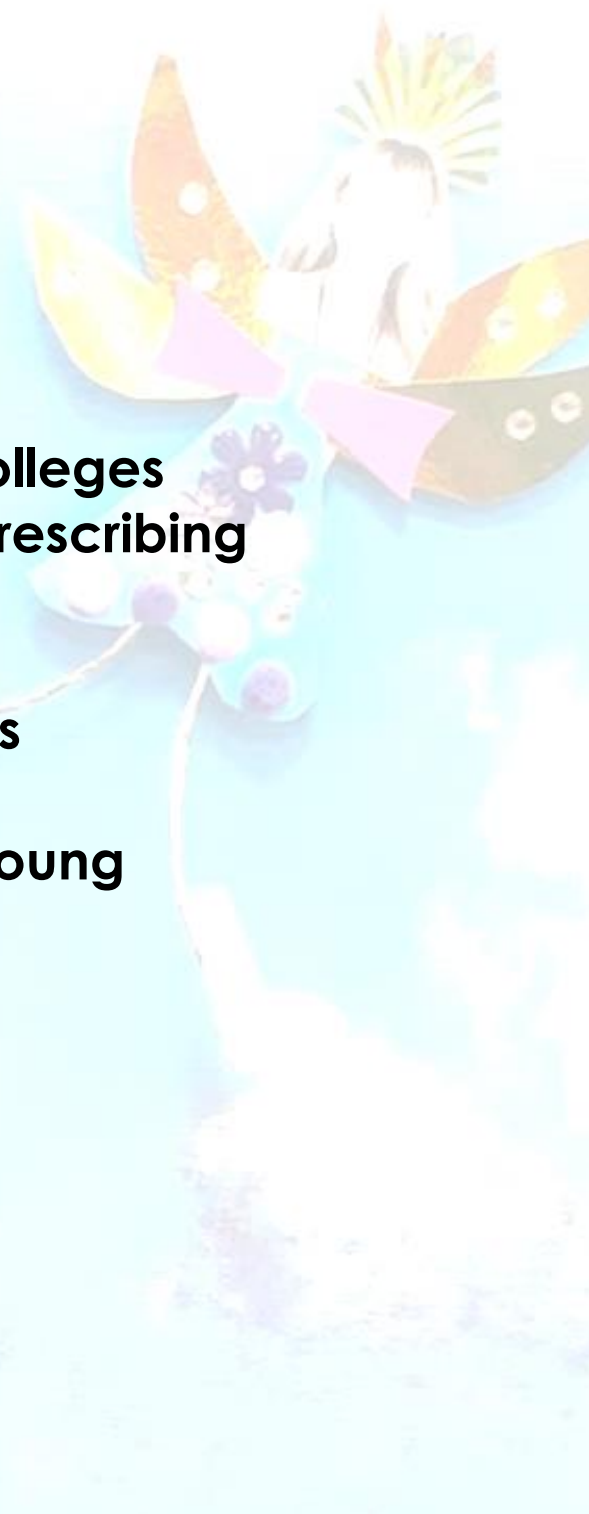
2 alternative provisions – a hospital school and a social prescribing service

101 teachers and/or youth workers supported the projects

100% of staff said projects had a positive impact on the young people's wellbeing

169 workshops and **15** community events delivered
(plus digital engagement of over 3,000 people)

£51,000 invested in local artists to deliver projects



Programme timeline

OCTOBER

Young people's groups invited to register interest sharing what art forms they are interested in and what personal goals they have // Artists submit project ideas

DECEMBER - JANUARY

Arts Lab team matches groups and artists based on artist expertise, group interest and location // Funding secured from Cultivator to fund training sessions

FEBRUARY - MARCH

Training delivered in '5 ways to Wellbeing', 'Trauma-informed Practice', 'Safeguarding and the Rights of a Child' to 28 artists working on the programme // Additional training in 'Trans Awareness' delivered to 28 artists Cornwall-wide // Artists begin to plan projects with their settings

FEBRUARY – AUGUST

Projects take place (most offer 4 – 6 workshops), some end with a sharing, e.g. performance, exhibition

APRIL - MAY

Funding from Cornwall Community Foundation secured to deliver an additional two projects // Two Arts Lab projects are featured on BBC Radio Cornwall

JULY – AUGUST

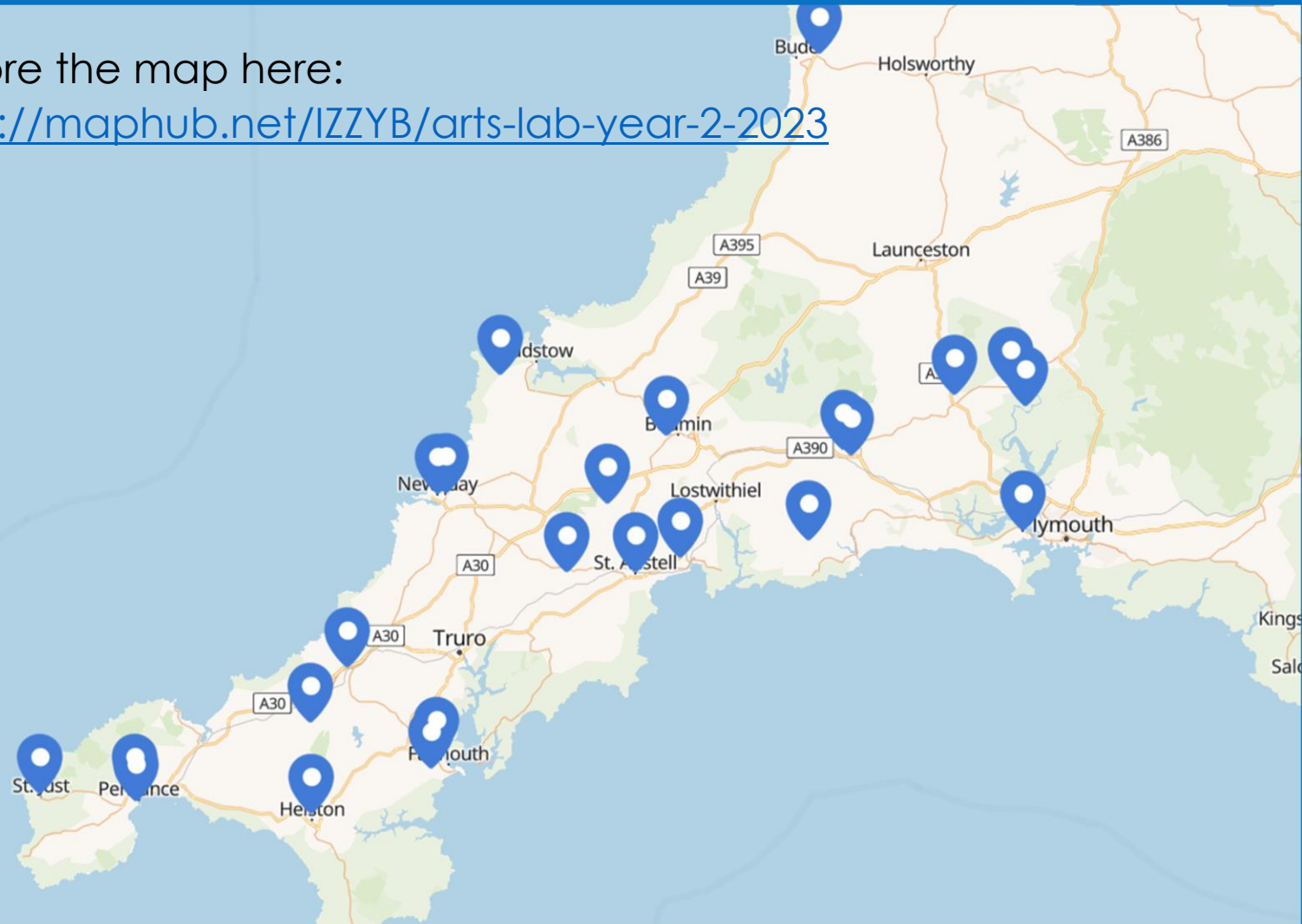
Evaluation with artists and groups via feedback forms and an artist reflective session to assess impact // Documentation – filmmaker engaged in to capture the programme // £65k from HeadStart Kernow confirmed for Year 3 of the programme



Project locations

Explore the map here:

<https://maphub.net/IZZyB/arts-lab-year-2-2023>





Art forms and skills

Artists, teachers and youth workers referenced a range of skills that they felt the young people had gained, including:

Life Skills

- Collaboration
- Cooperation
- Dementia awareness
- Emotional awareness & articulation
- Engaging in multigenerational conversations
- Experimentation
- Fine and gross motor coordination
- Generating & editing ideas
- Interview skills
- Leadership
- Listening
- Literacy
- Observation
- Overcoming challenges
- Patience
- Peer response, debate & encouragement
- Problem solving
- Tolerance

Creative Skills

- Animation
- Bio-sonification of sound
- Ceramics
- Choreography
- Colour-mixing & theory
- Costume design
- Construction skills
- Craft
- Dance & complex sequencing
- Design
- Drawing
- Film-making
- Foraging
- Haiku writing
- Installation
- Mural design & making

- Music-making
- Parkour
- Painting
- Performance
- Photography
- Puppetry
- Print making (screen, stamp & mono)
- Set design
- Sewing incl. using a sewing machine
- Songwriting
- Singing
- Storyboarding
- Theatre
- Writing
- Wet felting
- Zine-making

Final pieces

It wasn't necessary for artists to work towards a final product with the young people and showcase it, though some did. These included:

2 animations

1 film

4 exhibitions

1 set of zines

3 murals

10 public performances / screenings / sharings with friends and families

2 BBC Radio Cornwall features

1 banner

2 public artworks

1 logo

1 set of flags

1 song – created as an anthem for the Cornwall Air Ambulance where all income from streams and downloads will be donated to the charity





Young people's feedback

Feedback from young people was overwhelmingly positive. It was evident that many young people felt **a sense of belonging, pride** and **connection** with those they were working with through taking part in the projects:

[The project] makes me feel part of something... part of a vibrant community.

I was able to share this moment before we leave for secondary school and I will cherish this moment with my friends.

[The new mural we have created] makes people happy and excited to come here [to youth club].

It made me feel proud of myself.

Young people also shared their enjoyment in **discovering new things** and the **permission to be free in their creativity**:

We could let our imaginations run wild. We usually have to think about shapes and why we are doing something, but working in this way was very free.

I got a feel of what it would be like to be a proper photographer.

[I learnt that] plants and clouds can make music!

I am more confident ... cos of having more control, making decisions and people listening to me.

[I learnt] how to use the most simple things to make the most amazing things!

Through their art, young people were able to understand more about how to **articulate their feelings**, and **overcome challenges**:

Like a dandelion we can break through and PERSIST.

I didn't think I could do that, but I can.

I learnt how be creative and express my mind.

Having trees over the top of me is quite scary but the sound of the river is really peaceful.

One young person summarised his experience as: **Good times infinite!**

Young people also shared feedback on what could have been improved / would have liked more. Some also felt discomfort:

It made me feel embarrassed.

[It would have been better] if I added some glitter on my dress.

Would like to miss lessons to attend [Arts Lab sessions].



Teacher & Youth Worker feedback

Staff at the young people's settings shared a range of benefits gained from the projects for the young people and for themselves:

*I think the young people have gained a lot from it, there's been a lot of buzz and excitement around the building. **This has given them a sense of ownership.***

*I think all the **children were amazed at how far their creative ideas went...** we were amazed at the language and ideas that they were able to apply.*

*They were some **great moments of intensive interaction** between staff and learners and also peer on peer non-verbal communication through movement. I think the **staff have noticed a clear connection between dance and communication** and will hopefully work on this in the future.*

*Students were introduced to meditation, yoga skills & breathing **techniques to manage stress.***

*The project offered the chance for the young people to better understand the link between ... aspects of ourselves and that **mental health is fluid**, and needs to be maintained at all times by everyone.*



100% of staff responded that projects had supported young people to explore the **5 Ways to Wellbeing**

I was surprised to see how this project **enabled relationships between the year 5 and 6 pupils** to be enhanced and developed.

Some children really blossomed working in this way on a collective project and particularly enjoyed creating a public mural in the village for Calstock in Bloom... The design was inspired by the work the children had already completed as part of the school project. The whole school was then involved in the painting of the mural which was a huge success and a **wonderful link with the community at large.**



It has really **allowed the children to see the creativity available to them in their hometown.** It... improved the children's professional development by **highlighting the creative industries in Cornwall.**

A young person who attended as part of juvenile court (15yrs) commented on **how he forgot how good it feels to be outside.**

Parents commented at how positively their children spoke about the sessions and that they looked forward to Thursdays. The **children enjoyed expressing themselves in ways they hadn't before.**

100% of staff felt that projects had a **positive impact on the young people's wellbeing**

Staff shared some long-term outcomes to come out of the projects:

The followers on our facebook page more than doubled with other parents in the local area joining, we now have at least **6 new children attending** [our youth club].

Two of the more challenging youngsters are **more willing to participate and interact with the other children in a more positive way** – they are now part of the group rather than fighting against everyone.

Support staff member has gained confidence in supporting a group of students in a creative project.

Young people using **dance as a method to regulate themselves**.

Students are enthused to **take art beyond GCSE**.

We have now **created a dedicated 'Art Lab' online classroom**. With a hope that students will share their art work.

I cannot promote enough the merits of working with outside artists, what they bring is an expertise and a vibrancy that not only makes art accessible to all but raises the profile of the subject within the curriculum. **It allows all children to feel part of something unique and special which values the contribution of everyone.**



Artist feedback

Many artists described the benefits to their practice of delivering projects. For some, it was an opportunity **to test and learn a** new approach, for others, the training in 'trauma-informed practice' inspired them to **think about their approach to facilitation differently**. Others said it has **increased their confidence** in working with new groups with diverse needs and has offered them a **professional development opportunity**.

The biggest benefit is the collaborative elements of working with young people and the zeal they have to create and explore; this generates further artistic expressions and concepts for myself and is inspiring.

The project has enabled me to further develop my own creative practice with a range of participants including those with complex support needs.

The more projects I do like this, the more I learn and in turn the more successful they become.

The well-being training was fantastic for me at the start I found it really inspiring and also the networking at the end was really beneficial to hear other ways of working and to meet other artists.



Case studies (names of settings have not been provided for confidentiality reasons)

I feel that every child benefitted from the project. The project was a huge success because it took into account the thoughts and ideas of the pupils and also allowed for the children to take the project in their own direction. I think every child felt proud with the finished photographs from their groups. They loved being able to share them with their families on the exhibition day and it was lovely that they had a photograph to take home as well. The whole project definitely had a positive impact on mental health and wellbeing and made everyone happy.

Primary School

I had a boy in my class who struggled to communicate his needs last year, we have been teaching him to use symbols and his communication book to express his needs and wants. He loved the dance sessions in the hall and we used a symbol on his schedule to get him down to the hall. When we ask him to complete table top work tasks in class we ask him what he would like to work for as a reward and he often chooses the dance symbol. He completes his work and then we send him to a room with some music with a member of staff so he can dance.

Sometimes he becomes dysregulated and will throw chairs over or throw items at peers and so we have been teaching him to use symbols to express ways to help him calm. He will quite often use the hall or dance symbol now to tell us what he needs and so in these instances now he calms immediately as he knows he can use movement to help him calm down.

Special Educational Needs School



I will call her 'Girl A', 13 years old, very shy, does not always stay at the [youth group] if she doesn't have a friend there, she will just go home with her mum again. She attended all 3 art sessions, and was one of the most active and interactive ones at the beach installation, she has been to every youth group since – on her own.

Youth group

Student X enjoyed the days so much. They suffer with mental health challenges and are on the ASD pathway. They were so happy during the days and very proud of what they achieved. A real boost to this self-esteem – this was then evident in their increase in engagement in class.

SEND group in mainstream College

One young man perhaps surprised the staff. He is a 19 year old young man... Autistic and the staff know him well and how best to support him in line with his care plan.

Until now, the staff have needed to prompt him to engage often, as well as to return him back to focusing on the task at hand. However, in this set up, staff reduced support and he still maintained his interest at all times which is unusual. He would turn up on time every week, stay until the end of each session and including himself fully in all activities and conversations.

At times the concepts were fairly metaphorical and may have been challenging for someone neurodiverse to process quickly. This young man was very vocal when this was the case, and asked for support when he needed it. Having come into the sessions with his main passion and focus being legal work... he found that he was incredibly passionate about art, and this type of art in particular. His teachers contacted the group to make them aware of the positive impact it was having on him, and how much he was enjoying the sessions. If we run anything similar again, he has asked if he can be involved.

Community Centre

Things to improve

The Arts Lab team brought artists together at the end of the programme to get an insight into what worked well and what could be improved, as was done in the pilot year. Below are the main themes that came up from these discussions, feedback forms and from the team's own reflections on the pilot year and how successfully they were built upon for Year 2 of the programme.

Year 1 learning	Year 2 action
Project design – longer lead in time for artists to prepare sessions in collaboration with schools and/or youth groups.	Artists were given between 1 - 4 months to plan their projects once matched, a longer lead in time than Year 1. The lead in time did not come up as a challenge for artists in Year 2.
Call Out stage – ensure the Call Out to schools and youth organisations is reaching a broad range of demographics, including home educated young people, and that there is clear evidence of commitment from the school or the youth group.	In Year 2 we did not reach home educated networks, though we did deliver more bespoke projects for targeted groups, such as a social prescribing service and a hospital school. Attempts were made via an additional call out to work with schools in the North East of Cornwall, as following our initial round we noted a cold spot in this area. This additional call out did not receive much interest, which has led to discussions amongst the team about the best approach to reaching groups.
Planning once groups are matched – offer artists a paid planning meeting with groups once matched to test the viability of the pairing; offer sufficient support to artists with regard to safeguarding and risk assessing.	Artists were offered a paid planning meeting in Year 2 which ensured they were honoured for their time even if the project was not able to go ahead. Artists were also offered training in safeguarding and were able to apply for Enhanced DBS checks through the Arts Lab team before beginning their projects.
Delivery – offer the option of project extensions for schools and youth organisations that would like	This was not offered to groups in Year 2 as there was no request for this from artists or groups. However, certain groups are seeking further funding to

longer-term projects and can resource the additional time themselves.	continue working with the artists, so this is happening organically.
Legacy – support artists to manage the endings of projects; provide resources and/or opportunities to young people who are interested in progression routes.	The Arts Lab team were on hand to support artists throughout planning and delivery. There were no artists in Year 2 who expressed the need for support with project endings. The team did not provide resources to support young people's progression but this is something that will be looked at over the coming years.

Additional learning from Year 2:

Artist training: artists expressed the want for Trans Awareness training in Year 1, which was consequently delivered in Year 2 prior to projects starting. Artists also reinforced the benefits for them coming together at the end of projects to reflect and share together. The team recognises the value of in person sessions and will seek to deliver the pre-project training in person for Year 3 to book-end the programme cycle with two opportunities for artists to come together.

Community connection – many projects connected with the young people's local communities and the value of this was evident. The team will work to incorporate more focus on connecting young people with their communities into the Year 3 Call Out.

Group buy-in: this year, the Arts Lab team created a contract for schools and youth centres to sign that confirmed their buy-in to the project prior to its start through school staff support, space and resource to the project. Despite this, not all artists felt supported, with inconsistencies in school staff and spaces to deliver being the case for some. The team recognises it needs to do more to ensure commitment from group settings and has put a plan in place for Year 3 for this.



Conclusion

The second year of Arts Lab has demonstrated:

- The continued **need** for creative wellbeing projects for young people who are experiencing many forms of challenges that are affecting their mental and emotional wellbeing.
- The **power** of the arts as a tool for ALL young people to regulate, articulate and cooperate, regardless of their identities and experiences.

Arts Lab has continued to be successful thanks to some key ingredients:

- The framework of the **Five ways to Well Being**: Connect, Be Active, Notice, Keep Learning, Give – supports artists and young people to explore approaches to better wellbeing in a simple and creative way.
- The extraordinary **range of talented creatives** we have in Cornwall is an asset to our region. Teachers and youth workers could not sing artists praises highly enough. They bring something to schools and youth centres that enables young people to be seen and heard in new ways.
- Young people **owning** their creative choices, **collaborating** and **taking pride** are key pillars to Arts Lab leaving something meaningful behind for the young people.

The ongoing demand from groups to be involved – which is far greater than we can currently meet in terms of the funding we have available – shows that the programme has gained traction since its pilot year. There is an encouraging appetite amongst schools and youth centres for creative activity, that comes with a recognition of the huge value creative interventions can have for young people.

Arts Lab has another 2 years' funding confirmed from Public Health Cornwall (PHC) which we will be seeking to match fund. We are happy to be working with PHC to analyse best practice in commissioning through a test and learn approach. We have also secured further funding from HeadStart Kernow which will enable us to broaden the reach of Year 3. It is Arts Lab's aspiration that we can deepen and diversify the reach of the programme. We will challenge settings to develop their engagement alongside us and open more doors to young people's groups which are not in the mainstream or for which the kind of opportunities Arts Lab offers is traditionally out of their comfort zone. This second year has given us much that the team can work on to ensure the programme can flourish and continue to support and celebrate young people in Cornwall.

A background image showing several children sitting on a dark floor, engaged in a large-scale art project. They are drawing on a large white sheet of paper spread out around them. One child in the foreground is drawing a pink flower. Another child is drawing a yellow shape. A third child is drawing a blue shape. There are various art supplies like markers and a palette visible. The overall scene is one of creative activity and collaboration.

Arts Lab Year 1 & 2 in numbers

63 projects commissioned

115 artists involved

Over **1,700** young people have taken part

Over **248** teachers and/or youth workers supported on projects

100% of staff said projects have had a positive impact on the young people's wellbeing

417 workshops and over **30** community events delivered
(Plus digital engagement of over 15,000)

Over **£150,000** invested in local artists to deliver projects

Watch the Arts Lab film here - <https://youtu.be/WV1FzKp7i0k>



Partners



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