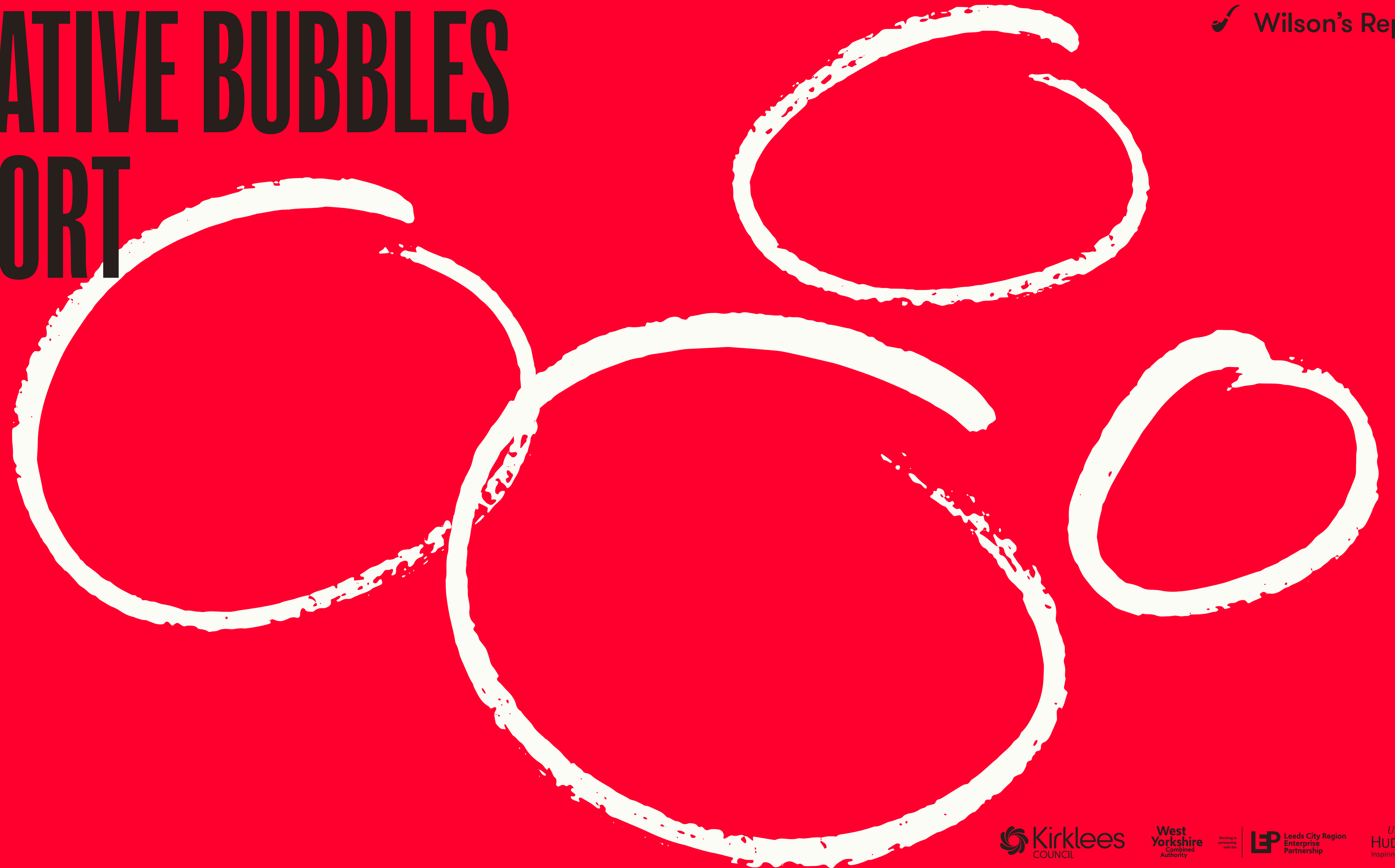


CREATIVE BUBBLES REPORT



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Wilson's Republic CIC is the Huddersfield creative network. We believe in the wealth of creative talent we have and think we should get together once in a while... Share stories, build bridges and make things happen.

Formed in 2015, Wilson's has hosted 7 previous events where invited speakers tell their stories to the creative community of Huddersfield. Our largest event, WRConf in 2019 was badged as Huddersfield's first design conference and attracted over 180 creatives from across the region and wider.

CONTEXT

COVID has brought many challenges to businesses, freelancers and practitioners across all creative disciplines in Kirklees. The Cultural Economy team have been tasked with developing a programme of support, with a long term and strategic aim being to foster a sustainable creative economy in the region.

Wilson's Republic has been briefed to design a process of research and engagement to get a better understanding of the needs of a diverse creative community across the Kirklees district to understand what the creative infrastructure might need in order to survive and thrive.

APPROACH

This is a design-led approach. Spending time with creatives to listen, observe and uncover insights and opportunities for change. The ultimate aim is to feed the insight and themes gained into an ideas generation process for a collaborative, co-created outcome.

As a method of engagement, we have developed 'Creative Bubbles', essentially these are peer-to-peer action learning sets comprising of five individuals. Each Bubble contains a diverse mix of creatives from different creative disciplines, business maturity, location, age, gender and ethnicity.

This approach has two purposes:

- It provides a holistic method of engagement with the creative community to uncover insight.
- A way of prototyping/testing Bubbles as a support mechanism itself.

Each Bubble met online using a structured framework of three, one-hour sessions over a period of three weeks. Each session focused on a different topic. We also held one in-person session.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: HEADLINES

OUTPUTS

Online Bubble:
15 creatives, 3 hours each. 45 hours in total.

In person Bubble:
4 creatives, 2 hours each. 8 hours in total.

Total 19 creatives.
53 hours of engagement.

A further 80 creatives were consulted at
WR8: Resilience we hosted in March.

RUNNING A BUSINESS

Creative freelancers and micro businesses tend to wear many hats for different income streams - this has helped some survive the pandemic. There is no 'business support' model for this.

Lack of awareness about where to go to learn the 'basics/foundations' of being a freelancer or start up creative business. 'Nobody teaches you how to be a freelancer'.

Support has to be tailored to individuals to be effective.

'Business Growth' is not a goal that creative businesses aspire to.

NETWORKS & AWARENESS

Whilst there are isolated pockets of networks and collaboration, this is a large, yet disparate and disconnected creative community - more joined-up communication is required to enable connections for things to happen.

They would like 'one place' to go to find out who their peers are, what support is available and where they go to get it.

There is low awareness of funding opportunities or what's available to creatives - many decry that they only find out when it's too late.

There is no such thing as a 'career path' for creatives. The creative community has to inspire and develop its own talent pipeline.

SPACE, PLACE & IDENTITY

The creative community want more suitable and affordable workshop space including a desire for more shared working space.

The perception seems to be that there is a lot of empty space. Why can't it be used?

There is a sense that Huddersfield has a lack of identity and doesn't know what it is.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: RECOMMENDATIONS

What we have discovered is not about business growth or job creation, it is about the growth of a sustainable, resilient creative sector that can build a legacy not solely reliant on funding streams to make it prosper. Building a lasting, supportive community and a sense of place is the vision, seemingly this may be shared.

Following the Bubbles feedback and design-led approach, the following action forms the next stage of the plan.

- Implement Creative Bubbles as a scalable, peer-to-peer support network for the Kirklees district to increase collaboration and open up opportunities.
- Empower the community to co-design ideas for support in answer to the challenges uncovered. This should also include the Local Authority, University and other key stakeholders, ensuring support is targeted, appropriate to the audience and more importantly understood by all.
- Select ideas based on a combination of legacy and impact criteria. Chosen ideas should be prototyped in lo-fidelity to test viability first. This ensures any budget is utilised to test many ideas rather than one.



INTRODUCTION



COVID has brought many challenges to businesses, freelancers and practitioners across all creative disciplines in Kirklees. In response, the Cultural Economy team have been tasked with developing a programme of support, with a long term and strategic aim being to foster a sustainable creative economy in the region.

As we emerge from the pandemic, we have a unique opportunity to shape a package of business support which is tailored specifically for creative businesses. Teaming up with the Arts and Creative Development team at Kirklees Council and the University of Huddersfield, Wilson's Republic has been asked to design a process of research and engagement to get a better understanding of the needs of a diverse creative community across the Kirklees district to understand what the creative infrastructure might need in order to survive and thrive.

This report outlines our approach and insight based on our Creative Bubbles program and Wilson's Republic #8 event.

OUR APPROACH

Firstly, it should be noted that this is a design-led approach. This process is about being led by what we find, rather than making any pre-determined assumptions and then finding an answer to fit. The ultimate aim is to feed the insight gained into an ideas generation process for a collaborative, co-created outcome.

The collated insights we have gained through the process have led to the creation of problem or challenge statements which can be used as a starting point to develop ideas. These can be found in our **recommendations**.

This Creative Bubbles programme has two purposes:

A.
As a method of engagement with the creative community to uncover insight.

B.
As a way of testing the Bubbles as a support mechanism in itself.

The Bubbles are designed to follow a different path to previous engagement with the creative community. This included online surveys, casting the net wide across the district and focus groups with small numbers of participants from the same creative disciplines.

It felt important that we didn't repeat any previous research work that had been carried out by the Council.

Whilst valuable data can be gleaned from surveys and focus groups, our Creative Bubbles were designed to focus on where the opportunities lie and uncover any threads or patterns in what the community might value.

It was important that we didn't create an echo chamber of thoughts. Therefore we have taken a multi-disciplined approach, bringing people together that wouldn't normally meet under normal circumstances. Yet they were all linked through their creative discipline. This was a community-led approach, rather than a 'top down' approach, in order to keep conversations open, honest and focused.

OUR APPROACH



DESIGNING THE BUBBLES

We based the Creative Bubbles on peer-to-peer action learning sets, each comprising five individuals. We then set the following recruitment criteria for an optimum mix of diverse views and experiences:

- Creative discipline. Different disciplines across the creative community, e.g. design, the arts, textiles and digital.
- Creative maturity. From students to start-ups to established businesses and freelancers.
- Location. Across the Kirklees district.
- Gender and ethnicity. Whilst achieving a diverse mix of disciplines was our key driver, gender and ethnicity were also important factors in our decision making.

RECRUITMENT

We used existing networks to recruit the Bubbles. This included an open call for interest, using the Wilson's Republic email database and social media channels, over the course of three weeks.

At the close of entries, we had 42 registrants interested in taking part. Please see the [participants](#) section of this report for details.

The chosen participants were sent a guidance document outlining the meeting logistics and shared values and principles as a way of setting the ground rules.

Bubbles values and principles:

- Be ready to share.
- Be honest.
- Be empathic.
- Be supportive.
- Be collaborative.
- Let others speak.
- Raise your hand before talking.



OUR APPROACH

HOW THE BUBBLES WORKED

Each Bubble (A, B and C) ran for a total of three one-hour sessions held online using Google Meet. These were held early evening 6-7pm over three consecutive weeks. Each Bubble was facilitated by Wilson's Republic who led the discussion and prompted questions to keep it flowing and relevant. Each discussion was recorded and subsequently transcribed for review.

Bubble D was an extra, one-off face-to-face meeting held with those participants who couldn't make some of the online sessions or who it was deemed could provide additional detailed insight. We ran the same exercises but within a shorter two-hour time frame.

Topics and themes for conversation included:

- Their needs and wants as a creative business or organisation.
- What support might look like for them.
- What support would they value?
- What effect has COVID had?
- What is it like running a creative business in Kirklees?
- What are the current barriers and hurdles?
- What might 'good' look like?

SESSION 1

Focused on introductions, with each participant giving a five minute overview of who they are and their practice. We then used the online whiteboard Mural to run an exercise called Sailboat. This asks participants to write down what is currently driving them on and what is holding them back.

SESSION 2

A facilitated discussion with the opening provocation, 'if we say the words business support, what's the first thing that comes to mind'. We let the conversation take its own path, ensuring we stayed on topic.

SESSION 3

Another facilitated discussion with the opening question, 'what's it like running a business in Kirklees'.

The resulting transcriptions were reviewed and quotes extracted which were then subsequently clustered and themed to map the overarching patterns.

OUTPUTS

Online Bubble. 15 creatives, 3 hours each. 45 hours in total.
In person Bubble. 4 creatives, 2 hours each. 8 hours in total.

Total 19 creatives. 53 hours of engagement.



OUR PARTICIPANTS

We had 42 registrants onto the bubbles programme.

We chose 15 participants and a further five were recruited for the two hour, face-to-face meeting, but only four attended.

The Wilson's Republic event on the 24th March attracted a further 80 creatives where we captured additional information.

68% FEMALE
32% MALE
INC 10% FROM ETHNIC MINORITY GROUPS



BUBBLE A PARTICIPANTS

Fashion designer-maker. Female. 30s. Sole trader. Also part of a CIC.

Graphic designer. Male. 30s. Employed in an agency but about to go it alone with a new start-up venture.

Artist/Maker. Male. 40s. Sole trader.

Ex-design and technology teacher. Male. 50s. Recently left teaching for a break and now back covering part-time.

Ceramic artist, business owner and arts project manager. Female. 50s.



BUBBLE B PARTICIPANTS

Multi-disciplined digital creative. Music/design/art. Male. 40s. Sole trader.

Textile designer. Female. 40s. Sole trader.

Freelance graphic/brand designer. Female. 30s.

Performing arts manager. Female. 40s. Business owner.

Digital website designer. Male. 40s. Co-owner of an agency.



BUBBLE C PARTICIPANTS

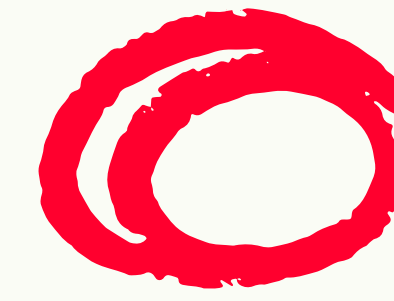
Artist. Male. 20s.

Graphic designer. Female. 20s. Post-graduate.

Exhibitions manager and the contemporary arts manager. Female. 30s.

Music promoter/Musician. Female. 50s.

TV producer/director. Female. 40s.



BUBBLE D PARTICIPANTS

Artist/producer. Female. 40s.

Graphic designer. Female. 20s. Post graduate.

Graphic designer/artist/entrepreneur. Female. 40s.

Artist/performing arts/producer. Female. 40s.

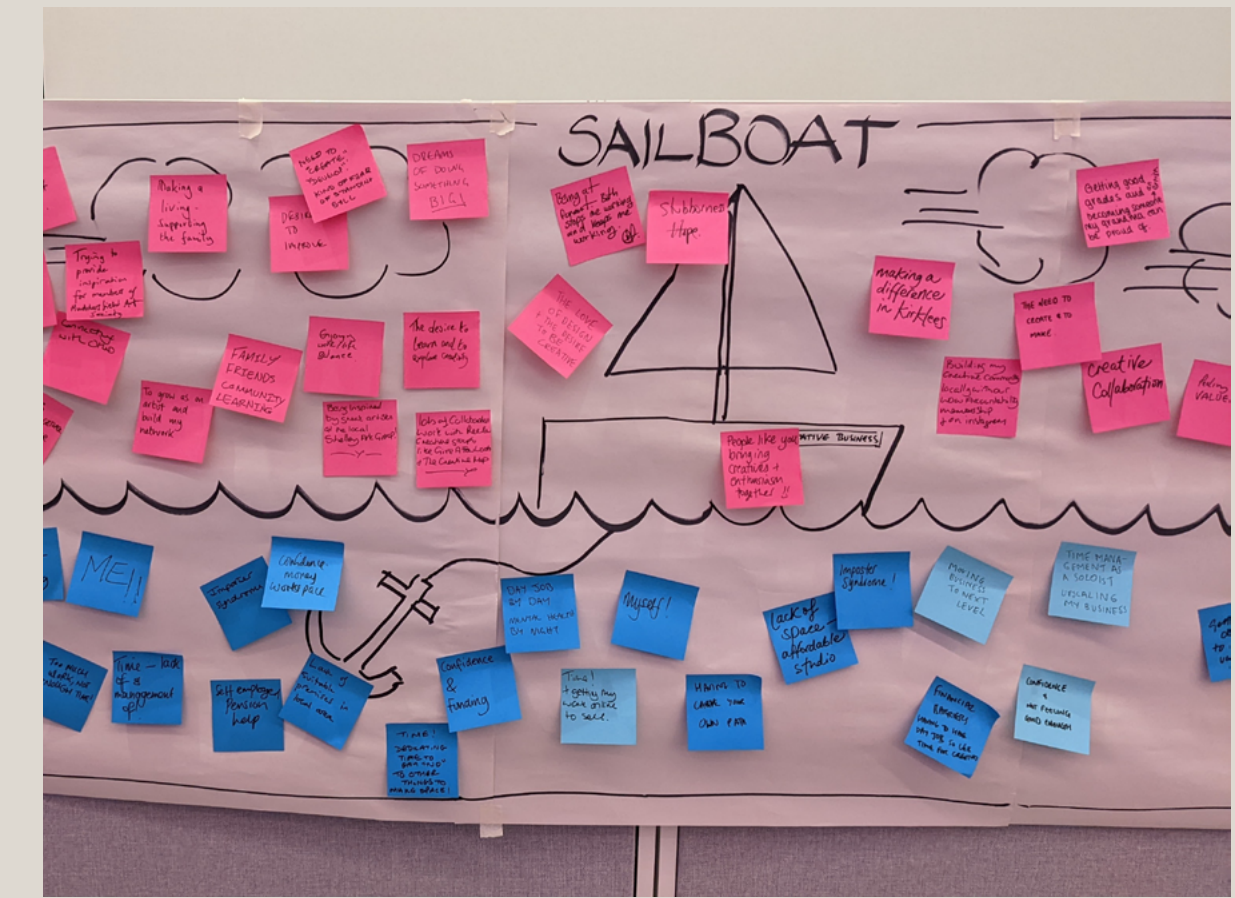
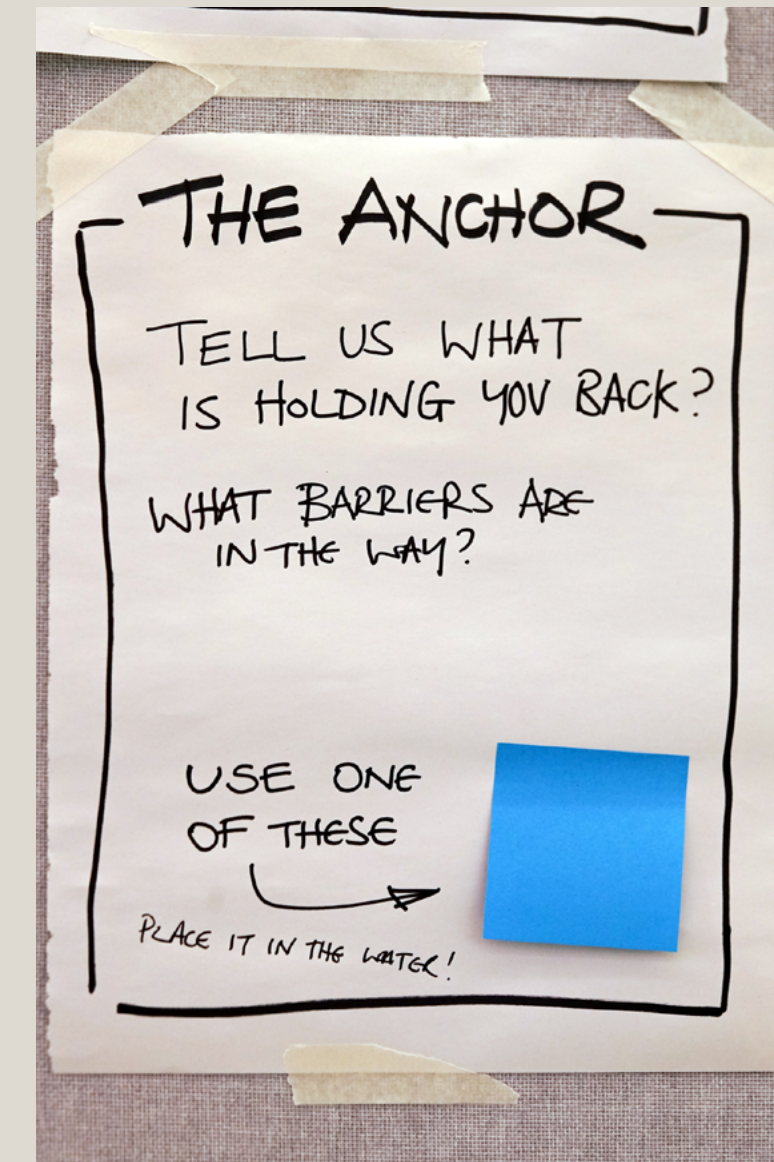
WR8: EVENT

As part of our research work we hosted our 8th Wilson's Republic event at the Barbara Hepworth Building, University of Huddersfield on the 24th March, 2022.

Approximately 80 members of the creative community attended where we asked them to provide further insight based on similar exercises we ran during the Bubbles sessions:

- Sailboat. What is driving you and what is holding you back?
- Support. What support would you value?

The input received from the event was collated with our Bubbles insight. [Appendix 4](#) illustrates what we received on the night.



WR#8 RESILIENCE



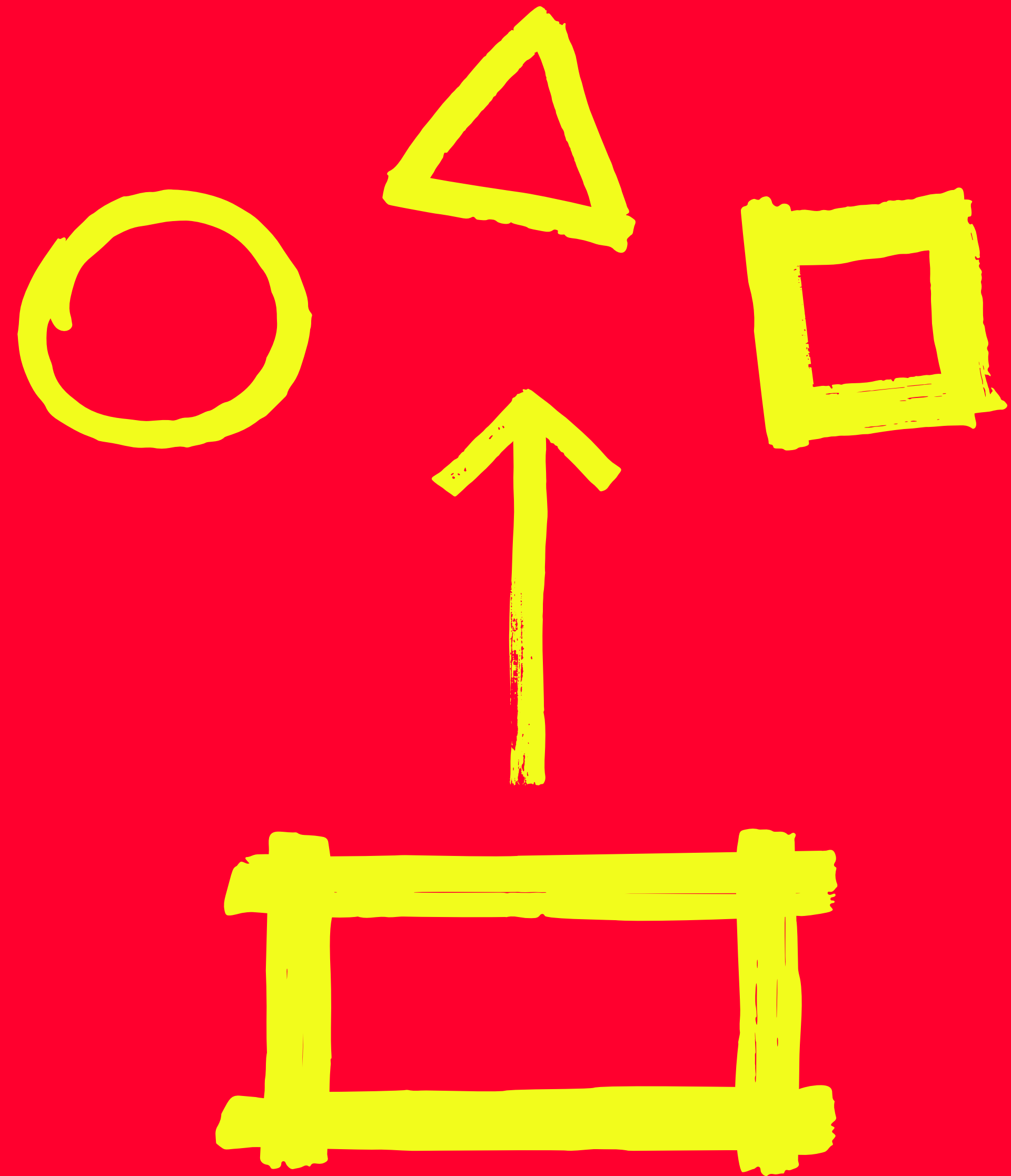
FINDINGS

We have let the insight dictate how our findings are structured.

We trawled the transcripts picking out the relevant soundbites covering people's experiences. These snippets were then clustered by their overarching 'theme'. Each theme was then named. This helped us to make sense of the information and spot emerging patterns.

In this findings section we have included a number of select quotes and soundbites. For the purposes of transparency and 'telling it like it is', these have been taken directly from the transcribed conversations. So please excuse all of the glaring typos and grammatical errors. These are the result of the direct transcriptions. Names and any reference to participants have also been removed in the interests of GDPR and preserving anonymity.

A longer list of quotations can be found in [Appendix 1](#).



FINDINGS: THE HEADLINES

The overarching and cross-cutting themes revealed from our engagement can be grouped into three headline categories.

Clearly, these are not siloed but deeply interconnected.

RUNNING A BUSINESS

Creative freelancers and micro businesses tend to wear many hats for different income streams - this has helped some survive the pandemic. There is no 'business support' model for this.

Lack of awareness about where to go to learn the 'basics/foundations' of being a freelancer or start up creative business. 'Nobody teaches you how to be a freelancer'.

Support has to be tailored to individuals to be effective. Most early stage business support is too generic for creative businesses.

Growth is not a goal that creative businesses aspire to. Exploring different ways and means of adding value is.

Peer-to-peer support and mentoring are highly valued and wanted.

Finding and applying for funding is an arduous task and many creative businesses just don't 'tick the box'.

NETWORKS & AWARENESS

This is a large, yet disparate and disconnected creative community - more joined-up communication is required to enable connections for things to happen.

They would like 'one place' to go to find out who their peers are, what support is available and where they go to get it. This might be a directory or something else.

There is low awareness of funding opportunities or what's available to creatives - many decry that they only find out when it's too late.

Creative practitioners who work with other creatives and start ups (let's call them connectors) have low awareness of where to signpost others for specific business support and advice.

There is no such thing as a 'career path' for creatives. Local schools don't have the resources to advocate creative careers. It's up to the creative community to engage with schools to inspire school children who want to follow a creative career. The creative community has to inspire and develop its own talent pipeline.

SPACE, PLACE & IDENTITY

The creative community want more suitable and affordable workshop space including a desire for more shared working space. 'A place to work, a place to meet.' A home for the community.

The perception seems to be that there is a lot of empty space. Why can't it be used?

They want more places (and spaces) to display work.

There is a sense that Huddersfield has a lack of identity and doesn't know what it is.

FINDINGS & SUMMARY

1. RUNNING A BUSINESS

2. NETWORKS & AWARENESS

3. SPACE, PLACE & IDENTITY



1. RUNNING A BUSINESS

CREATIVES WANT TAILORED SUPPORT

There was an almost universal call across the bubbles for tailored support. Delivered by people who ‘get’ their business. This doesn’t mean that the basics aren’t required but even the most basic marketing and accountancy advice could be delivered using a creative tone or flavour or at least with empathy for the sector.

There was much discussion about the flexibility of wearing many hats to generate multiple income streams. Some participants said that this is what ‘saved’ them during the pandemic – being able to pivot is crucial as a business, yet is also indicative of the creative mindset – ‘I don’t want to be pigeonholed’.

This feels like an opportunity for very specific business advice and the basis for a sustainable industry if it can be accepted and embraced that this is how business is – not necessarily about continual growth, specialising or narrowing the focus. It feels that this almost defines a creative business and is one of the reasons that many participants lamented the ‘I don’t fit the tick box exercise’ of support and funding applications.

“...nobody teaches you how to be a freelancer, so I feel like I’ve spent a lot of the last nearly three years just having conversations with people and trying to work out how other people do it and what fits to them and what I might take from that and what might work for me, and trying things and things not working and adapting and trying to go with the flow and change things as I go.”

-

“To be honest, I haven’t had a very positive experience with one-to-one business support. I’ve often felt like your sitting in front of somebody who’s just saying the things they say to everybody, but it’s not particularly tailored to what I do, and I’ve always craved something a bit more tailored, like somebody who actually knows more about my industry...”

-

“Certainly in my experience, any of the official business advice I’ve had has generally been very generic and very poor for my needs. And has been based on all those very generic

business ideas is about growth, about scaling up and selling different markets and all those things that actually never really held much meaning for me. And I think all the best advice and support that I’ve had has been from those horizontal networks that are more like your peers and colleagues. And they’re the people who can provide you all that really crucial advice, like what to put in a contract and how not to get caught in certain situations and stuff like that.”

-

“...and the thing is I don’t want to grow a big agency either. It’s almost like being a company of one’s lovely. I like the flexibility and I staff up when I need to and I’ll outsource things when I need to, but I don’t have the dream of having a massive, big agency because I worked in one in all that time and I got sick of the management and that’s why I went to go away to do the creative. You can feel penalised for that. For not saying you want to grow it to be this massive enterprise.”

“I think when you’re a maker, an artist, a designer, a creator, a writer, singer, whatever it is, your growth is very different. Your growth is personal. It’s about new ideas.”

-

“The grey area between freelance and business owner now. It’s becoming, it feels as though it’s becoming a lot more blurred.”

-

“I’ve never come across it being geared to arts and culture. Business support is business. I think it’s very set in traditional and fixed views about business, and success. And success equally, apparently money and growth, not social value, education, learning development, and that type of thing. So, yeah. I generally have not found it very helpful for arts and culture people.”

1. RUNNING A BUSINESS

FUNDING IS HARD TO FIND AND HARDER TO WIN

We were careful not to push the agenda of funding as it can become too much of a focus for some. We know access to funding is an essential survival mechanism for many creative businesses but we wanted to guide discussion around other support mechanisms too. However, many individuals' perceptions of support is funding, so it didn't take long for that subject to appear.

In general, funding is perceived as hard to find unless you're in the know or move in those circles. If you find the funding then it's a hard task to win it unless you're lucky enough to employ someone who is experienced at bid writing. Criteria for accessing funding is constantly changing and they tend to favour new ideas and ventures rather than focusing on long term benefits. Whilst we can't change the funding landscape there may be benefit to pooling resources as a community to bid for larger pots.

“But things like applying for funding and things that, I always seem to find out about things after it's already happened. And I think that's because it's just so competitive that people like to keep it to themselves when they're going through the application process. And then you find out if someone's successfully been given some funding for something and you are just out of luck because you've heard about it after the fact. So that's been my struggle really and my experience of support. And just the general feeling that it's just hard to find out about what is on offer, really.”

•

“And the other thing you touched on is finding funding and applying for it has now become another specialized job, hasn't it?”

“I'm just going through the process of going for the Developing Your Own Practice Grant at the Arts Council. And it's the worst because I'm just not used to asking for money for me and the work being about me. It feels very alien to me having been a community artist and educator for so long. But what I have learned is in terms of applying for funding in itself is a minefield.”

•

“And it is definitely something I'd feel I'd be at a disadvantage to do myself because I feel like there's a definite skill in applying for funding. And I think there's a certain amount of fluff involved in writing a funding bid and it's not one of my skills. I'm very matter of fact and straightforward, so the wording and putting a spin on it is not something I've got a lot of practice at.”

“Yeah, just to connect with what [name] was saying, one of the barriers I hit when I was searching funding was your business isn't big enough. If you want this support, you can get support for your staff to train up in this. I was looking at a lot of support for film creation because that's something I need to develop on the side of the label and bring it in-house and they were like, yeah great but you need to have a company with staff.”

•

“I've just finished a DYCP grant and it was really good. It saved me last year, in fact. So don't lose heart with your application. Go for it. It's a really worthwhile bit of funding, definitely.”

1. RUNNING A BUSINESS

AWARENESS OF WHAT'S AVAILABLE AND THE CONFIDENCE TO GET IT

Confidence is a big factor in how some of our participants had performed as businesses. 'Imposter syndrome' was mentioned (unprompted) by four Bubble participants in the first meetings. Whilst this is not unique to just the creative industries, there is something in the nature of the creative mindset - the ability to iterate and critique - the very thing that drives creative businesses, which may also be the thing that holds them back. What was also apparent was that it's not just businesses that have a low awareness of where to go for advice and support – experienced coaches don't either. There may be a need for those members of the community who already mentor and coach to be educated on sign posting to the best resources and people who can support. Lack of awareness of opportunities was also a discussion point as is also highlighted in other sections of this report.

“I definitely have suffered in that as a freelance artist because I just didn't believe, similar to what [Name] was saying about the funding, I thought that was for the people in the know, and they'd never give that to me.”

•

“Coming out of the pandemic now I'm seeing how many people are raring to go and really engaging. And maybe it's my attitude towards it's changed as well because I'm trying to take this more seriously and put myself out there more. But I think that massively, imposter syndrome for me, held me back for a long time.”

“Being undervalued and undervaluing myself, just because of lack of knowledge and pricing and all that kind of stuff. I think I've definitely under sold myself massively.”

“People very much need a bullet proof handholding, this is what you do guide, because I'm always like, I wish I could help, but I can't. I'm not an expert in those areas. And I just generally don't know where to sign point people.”

•

“Yeah. There should be more bits of support for people who are just starting out and stuff. And then support with financial goals as a business. I think. And knowing how much to charge based on everything that you spend on a business as well. And getting the support with financial goals.”

“Are there opportunities not always being visible? And I'm not just talking about local authority funding grants. It's everything. The jobs, the commissions. That's the thing, that's our bread and butter. That's what we need to sustain ourselves. And we don't always know about them. We're often finding about them after they've been awarded.”

1. RUNNING A BUSINESS

WORKING WITH SOMEONE WHO UNDERSTANDS MY SITUATION

Mentoring (and not coaching) emerged as a continual theme of discussion across the Bubbles. It is definitely something that creatives would value within any package of support. Bubble participants gave examples of mixed experiences of mentoring; again, the message is that any mentoring needs to be tailored and that finding the right mentor match is very important – particularly having the choice to select based on criteria such as shared values and specific experience – ‘someone who gets me’.

“I think at the moment, especially on social media, God, you can swing a dead cat and hit like a million self-confessed coaches, it’s doing my head in.”

-

“I was matched with a mentor who specialized in IT and tech and this world was completely foreign to me. He had no idea what I was going on about out. He’s like, “Okay. So yeah, you make clothes. I don’t really know anything about clothes except what size T-shirt I am.” And I was like, “Great.” And the first thing he said to me was, “If you need any help with bookkeeping or tax or anything, I don’t know anything about that.” And I was like, “Well, can you tell me where to go for that then?” So felt like a roadblock throwing me off.”

-

“...And sometimes it’s about finding the right mentor as well. I wouldn’t have considered going to a coach I don’t think beforehand. I was offered

this particular person who has been leading me through a grant application. I know I can whiffle on forever, but she’s really good at pulling out those core ideas and picking up on things that I don’t notice myself when I’m saying it. And actually as a result of that, though, I’m probably going to keep going back to her and in the future, investing in working with her because it’s been so valuable to me.”

-

“... Just very generic advice, no real applicable experience with working in creative industries. And also from a very corporate stance. So the advice I was being encouraged to outsource my work to, “Why aren’t you looking at manufacturing in China and stuff that and scaling up?” And I was like, “Well, I’m not interested in scaling up. I just want to know how to be a freelancer, basically.” And that kind of advice just wasn’t there. So what I felt I needed was a peer mentor, a one-to-one mentor or somebody who was in a similar industry than me, but maybe 10 years further down the line or more

who could just share their experiences, which I’ve gathered as I’ve gone along as I’ve met people and things.”

“...She’s got the right contact to ask the right questions at the arts council, for example. And that kind of mentoring is very personal. It’s very individual. And I think particularly for creatives, that’s what we need. We need someone that mirrors back and asks those difficult questions.”

-

“So, yeah, I think the whole, for me, it’s been so valuable to do this Creative Leader’s Group thing where every month we’ve got like a group session, but then a kind of homework session where they put two or three of you together to go over, whether it’s about networking, whether it’s about imposter syndrome, whether it’s about money and asking for your worth and all that. And then also we, so I had like a monthly coaching session from one of the two leaders and it’s so great to have that sounding board, especially when you’re a one person business.”

2. NETWORKING & AWARENESS

THE COMMUNITY WANTS TO BE CONNECTED

There are no shortage of existing networks and groups meeting across the region. However, they are small and disconnected. It feels that a better-connected wider community would provide the mechanism and grounding for improved peer-to-peer support – something that came through loud and clear as a need.

The Bubbles highlighted that the people involved wouldn't necessarily meet under normal circumstances. 'Where else would a design and technology teacher talk to a ceramicist and a brand designer?'

We also heard that many would be happy to pay for something they see as delivering value. Even the idea of a co-operative was tabled, shared ownership in the support delivery which may provide a better chance of leaving a legacy rather than a typical 'stop when the funding does' programme.

"When I first moved to Huddersfield, there was something called cultural industries in Kirklees. Although it sounds really dry, it was an artist-led organisation. I think it was a secondary co-op that was really useful. It was a minimal joining fee. I think it was partly funded by the council. And then after a few years, that funding disappeared and it slowly wound down. But for about a good three or four years, and certainly for me when I first came to the area, **it was that horizontal network was really, really, useful, just in terms of meeting other people. And it was a really wide range of different creatives.**"

•

"What really was beneficial was me speaking to a fellow label owner, business owner that had, I was like trying to get my new business insurance. I got a quote from a friend who knows someone and it was twice the price of when I got this business support and I had conversations and I got directed to the right people and so it was more, I got some really good contacts, some really good advice

and to be honest, that was more valuable than six hundred quid so it's not always about money"

•

"The Goldman Sachs (10,000 businesses) thing that I did was unbelievable actually and that transformed my business because we went from... I'm a graphic designer so I didn't know anything about running a business, you're kind of making it up as you go along, trying to do your best and then I went on this course, I'm like, oh man, I'm shocking. I'm terrible and you know what I mean? So there was some real practical advice on that course, but then post the course, the network of people and business owners that are met on that has become invaluable to me and I think over and above money, that style of support."

•

"I love talking to other business owners like we're doing now and chatting about problems that you've had, problems that you can see coming, stuff that you might have found out

and you can share it with the rest of a group. I get this might be where this ends up, I don't know and this might be your mission with all this anyway, but like **a more localized version of that I think would be really cool actually.**"

•

"Just a community. Just a sense of **having people to share ideas with and bounce ideas off, and to hear how they approach things.** I think that's probably coming from what I said the first week about feeling quite isolated in working on my own a lot. It's probably very led by that, but that's a big thing. Finance as well."

•

"We were talking last week about a directory and all, in Leeds and stuff, even that would be nice, **just to have that really basic sense of network and community in the area,** I think, to be a part of and that's before you even get into events, business support, mentoring, coaching, and all that sh*t."

2. NETWORKING & AWARENESS

NOBODY TELLS SCHOOLKIDS THEY SHOULD FOLLOW A CREATIVE CAREER

Thinking about how the creative industries support new talent - there was discussion about how to bring young people into work through internships and apprenticeships and raise awareness of the local possibilities across the district. Some businesses have experience of apprenticeships but it was limited. It seems there is a skills gap for young people to be able to enter creative businesses outside of the more established routes (into design for example). Barriers to business owners such as lack of enough time and funding to take staff on are very evident and there is a lack of appropriate entry-level skills training for the creative industries.

Representation from education in one of our Bubbles reminded us of the need for the creative industries to be visible to school kids – because no one else flies the flag for pursuing creative careers. This needs to be driven at a local level by the creative community itself.

The career path for a creative is not straight forward and needs a complete rethink, starting with developing awareness in school children of potential careers in the creative industries.

“I think the idea of a career path is quite an outdated concept, to be honest, it’s better saying creative industries, because it’s not linear, it will change, and you’ve got to be open to going in a different direction to what you studied or anything you ever imagined for yourself.”

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“So there’s some massive gaps going on in what skills people can learn, but the creative industries do change a place, they do. We talked last week about what’s happened in Slaithwaite and how vibrant it’s become, but it’s vibrant for people of a certain age, it’s vibrant for people who can afford to go out, who can afford a night class, who can afford to go out for a nice meal. It’s not vibrant for young people who are in that inbetween stage.”

“It’s like learning to drive, you don’t really learn to drive until you pass your test, and it’s the same kind of thing. So to be doing a course in a practical subject, that’s completely theoretical, and then going out into the world of work and not having had that hands on experience, there seems to be this massive disconnect, I think.”

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“I was just going to say, from the point of view of taking interns and things like that, I get asked every year and I always say no, because I’ve not got the support or I’ve been asked to take them on, but I’ve been given no signposting to the things I need to do to be able to offer someone a good experience. And just all the other hoops to jump through, like having insurances in place and risk assessments and all that sort of thing, I don’t know where to look for that information.”

(context: choosing GCSE options)
It’s not options at all, you’ve got one choice and that’s it, that’s your thing. And what might help, a bit like I think what you were saying there [Name], was for options evening, the designing technology departments, they’ve had some stuff from the D&T Association, but just selling what they can actually do. Because a lot of them, they say, “All right, where am I going to work then? Oh, my dad works down David Brown’s. All right, well, I don’t really fancy that because that sounds a bit crap, doesn’t it? My granddad works at blah, blah, blah.” And you get all of this and you’re going, “God, you guys, there’s so much that is actually going on that you can’t actually see, that will be absolutely brilliant for you.”

3. SPACE, PLACE & IDENTITY

A SPACE TO WORK AND COLLABORATE

Available and affordable space was high on some people's wish list. Interestingly, they almost exclusively talked about this in terms of 'old mills' or workshop spaces rather than just office space – which seems obvious but maybe speaks more to what they have experienced in, say, Manchester or Leeds. There is a perception (rightly or wrongly) that the district has a lot of empty mill space that could be utilised and the need for a permanent 'home' for the arts, particularly in a town the size of Huddersfield, is strong. This would focus the community and provide a space to hold business support workshops. The space would need to offer flexible and affordable rates as some individuals wouldn't want a permanent address. Whilst the conversation was weighted mainly towards artists talking about workshop space, it did feel that combining other creative businesses in the same building would lead to a much deeper and dynamic sense of community.

“I think one of the really useful things that funding and support could do would be to help the creative sector to be able to access affordable space for work.”

-

“... that's one thing that really has always been a real problem. When I first came to Huddersfield, I thought I'd be able to find a workshop really easily. I thought, “There's all these old mills and stuff around.” I've just always found it really hard.”

-

“It doesn't feel like a very cohesive approach to supporting these people and helping them, and looking for opportunities for them. I think a workspace would be really amazing.”

“I think if it was a committed space, then there's that feeling of permanence, where there's a real commitment to it, and there's a commitment to try and continue to grow the community. Which would probably make people feel a lot more rooted to it and proud of it.”

-

“They want permanent residencies. Affordable, sustainable, permanent residencies. And the opportunity to be completely independent within those residencies as well. Not go solo, go alone. Or shared space possibility, but still hanging onto your identity as a business, your brand as a business, and operating within, I don't know, a bigger shared space.”

“I also think it'd be great to have a sort of co-working or hot desking thing for creatives that would be no cost or low cost where you could actually have that as a resource in Huddersfield or in Kirklees because most of us wouldn't be able to afford to rent in an office the entire time.”

-

“...where do you find rental properties that are suited to creating businesses or arts organisations? Because as long as rentals stay really high here and there isn't funds or startup grants or any business financial support to help you on your way, I'm never going to have a permanent home. I'm never going to choose to set up this space in Huddersfield.”

3. SPACE, PLACE & IDENTITY

A PLACE THAT WE CAN CONNECT TO

Place clearly has a role to play in supporting the creative industries and although it wasn't a large part of the conversation, the subject of identity weaved its way through the sessions. There is a feeling that the district (and particularly Huddersfield) has no real sense of identity or doesn't know what it is or represents.

Many felt that the creative industries had a part to play in defining this identity. The size of the district is clearly a barrier to creating a cohesive approach but there is an appetite there, however small our sample group was, to come together as a community to make a difference.

"I obviously went to school in Huddersfield, but then I went to college in Halifax, because I couldn't do all the design subjects I wanted. So I went to Halifax. Then I went to university, and I've just never ended up in Huddersfield, short of a couple of jobs working in the center of town. Then I've ended up moving to Leeds or Manchester for work. So it's almost like there wasn't the basis for the work here to start almost, so I've just automatically moved out of the area..."

"...it's very disparate in terms of there isn't really a draw there for anything creative. There's nothing to go there and see, and then I think all the creatives just seem to be quite isolated and independent and the agencies are scattered about..."

"I think Huddersfield hasn't really worked out what it can offer, particularly young people. And I think that's probably a really interesting question for the whole of Huddersfield, I guess also particularly for the creative sector."

"We were talking about having a place and workshops and where to go. I just feel like Kirklees is too bloody big. I'm just thinking it's so disparate. I don't know how you bring a cohesion to such a large area that are also distinctively very, very culturally different. Dewsbury has nothing in common with Meltham."

"I don't really feel that there is that community specifically for Kirklees or Huddersfield. And I know that sounds like... Kirklees is massive. That's really broadly speaking, because obviously there's different stuff going on in Bradford and things. But I tend to dip in between Manchester and Leeds, so I bounce between those two, and literally home is the gap where I don't seem to have any real community network."

RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this programme was to understand what support creatives needed as we emerge from the pandemic.

What we have discovered is not about business growth or job creation, it is about the growth of a sustainable, resilient creative sector that can build a legacy not solely reliant on funding streams to make it prosper. Building a lasting, supportive community and a sense of place is the vision, seemingly this may be shared.

This approach has legacy at its heart. We can't risk support disappearing when the funding runs out. One funded idea can not deliver everything, we need lots of ideas. Luckily, our audience is not short of these.

Joining the creative sector up in the first instance feels like a priority action from which all other needs and wants would spin out of.

We are recommending three points of action as next steps.

1. Implement a support network
Refine the approach based on feedback already received and establish a wider roll-out of the Creative Bubbles providing a scalable, peer-to-peer support network for the Kirklees district.
2. Tackle the **jobs to be done** by co-designing ideas
We have created a number of **challenge/problem statements**. These should be used to facilitate ideas sessions involving the creative community, Local Authority, University and other key stakeholders to collaborate and co-create support for the community, by the community.
3. Prototype chosen ideas to test viability
Select ideas based on a combination of legacy and impact criteria. Prototype to test their viability before committing any further funding.



This will ensure funding is targeted to the most impact.

JOBS TO BE DONE

OUR STARTER CHALLENGE STATEMENTS

RUNNING A BUSINESS

How might we develop a sustainable mentoring programme for the creative community across Kirklees?

How might we develop a 'how to be a freelancer 101' course for creatives across Kirklees?

How might we develop a business support mechanism for creatives who have multiple income streams?

How might we make business support and advice easier to access and digest for visual thinkers across Kirklees?

NETWORKS & AWARENESS

How might we implement Creative Bubbles to connect the creative industries together across the Kirklees district?

How might we ensure that those existing connectors, coaches and mentors can effectively signpost creatives to skills, resources and advice across the Kirklees district?

How might we ensure that the creative community across Kirklees is kept informed of opportunities for funding, spaces and collaboration?

How might we inspire the next generation of creatives within schools across Kirklees?

How might we make it easier for creatives to work with schools across Kirklees?

How might we develop a schools liaison role to connect the creative community and schools together?

How might we support the creative industries to take on more internships and fill the skills gaps?

SPACE, PLACE & IDENTITY

How might we nurture spaces across Kirklees for creatives that they can own and develop?

How might we set a shared vision for the creative community in Kirklees?

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APPENDIX 1: THE DETAIL

Further detail of soundbites from the
Bubbles conversations.



RUNNING A BUSINESS

EXPERIENCE OF ONE-TO-ONE SUPPORT:

“To be honest, I haven’t had a very positive experience with one-to-one business support. I’ve often felt like you sitting in front of somebody who’s just saying the things they say to everybody, but it’s not particularly tailored to what I do, and I’ve always craved something a bit more tailored, like somebody who actually knows more about my industry, or what I’m trying to do, not just rolling out the standard business talk.”

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“Certainly in my experience, any of the official business advice I’ve had has generally been very generic and very poor for my needs. And has been based on all those very generic business ideas is about growth, about scaling up and selling different markets and all those things that actually never really held much meaning for me. And I think all the best advice and support that I’ve had has been from those horizontal networks that are more like your peers and colleagues. And they’re the people who can provide you all that really crucial advice, like what to put in a contract and how not to get caught in certain situations and stuff like that.”

“...some people are very much like, are you a hospitality designer?” What kind of brand designer?” Do you only want to do brand design for small businesses? And it’s like, well no because I have a really nice mixture of clients, but it seems like it’s almost like the wrong thing to do to say you’re a bit of a creative tart and you’ll follow the beautiful creative work, which is how I just position myself now.”

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“I definitely have suffered in that as a freelance artist because I just didn’t believe, similar to what [name] was saying about the funding, I thought that was for the people in the know, and they’d never give that to me.”

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“For me. It always makes me think of workshops because I used to live in Manchester and I’m signed up to their business support

...you can see they’re working hard to sell you a process or advice. But actually, because we are not cookie cutter philosophies or something, it

becomes redundant, doesn’t it? And then like I said, it loses its credibility really quickly.”

“...when I first became a freelancer I went to a workshop that taught me how to do my accounts. I went to a workshop that talked about doing a business plan. So someone from Lloyd’s bank came and did a talk about what they expect to see on a business plan if you were going to ask for money. Someone from the council came and did a workshop saying, what money was available to sole traders and how to access it, what type of language to use on the applications?”

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“At the moment I’ve been using YouTube. Because that’s the only place that I’ve thought I could go to.”

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“You’re in charge of your ins and your outs and your tax and everything. So, I guess as a freelancer you would probably need links to business support and things like that one, yeah.”

“So to me, my experience of business support is very clinical, very formal. Boring at times. PowerPoint presentations that will send you to sleep. Lack of creativity. So I think they need to be more bespoke, which is what you’ve touched upon. Often it’s the same package to every sector, and it doesn’t work. Then speakers, trainers, need to be more diverse to reflect our community. And also, it still feels like people with the business... What’s that? Suit and tie... Which is very much the heritage sector that I used to be part of, which is slowly changing. But it’s just that perception. And even the language that’s used, and the flyer, and all of that, is so truly boring. It’s just not inviting enough.”

•

“the sort of business training that I had along with my degree, was all how to build your business plan, all that sort of thing, how to do your taxes, but not so much how to identify different revenue streams, how to approach people, building your confidence and resilience and all that, those sorts of things that are so important, and when you first start out,

especially if you’re young or you’ve not had that much industry experience before you’ve gone into starting your own business or being a freelancer, they can really deter you from carrying on. You face setbacks and you feel like packing it all in.”

RUNNING A BUSINESS

GROWTH AS A GOAL FEELS LIKE IT'S NOT FOR US:

"I think growth's a dangerous... I don't know. It's a dangerous thing to go down maybe because you can grow and still be true to what you believe or how you set out, can't you? Not to say cautious, but you still believe in why you're doing it. Whereas other people, the minute you talk about growth, I don't know, you have mindset changes and you lose a lot of the stuff that you thought was important. It becomes redundant.

...and the thing is I don't want to grow a big agency either. It's almost like being a company of one's lovely. I like the flexibility and I staff up when I need to and I'll outsource things when I need to, but I don't have the dream of having a massive, big agency because I worked in one in all that time and I got sick of the management and that's why I went to go away to do the creative. You can feel penalised for that. For not saying you want to grow it to be this massive enterprise."

"It's all about growing your business, growing your business, growing your business, which kind of is great, but I know you mean [name], it's like, why do we have to have this continual growth? When do I stop growing? You know what I mean?"

-

"It's like you either have the vision of growing your business to be this huge, like 50, 50-person agency or smaller, growing something small just doesn't seem to be, you're all or nothing, there's like no in between, no discussion."

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"It seems that there's a difference between people who create businesses in order to create business and grow a business and become a manager of a business. And it's almost like the goal is to step away to some extent and get other people to do all the heavy work. And I think

when you're a maker, an artist, a designer, a creator, a writer, singer, whatever it is, your growth is very different. Your growth is personal. It's about new ideas. It's about finding a way to sustain that and enable you to keep creating so that the business doesn't completely swamp you as it is doing me at the minute with phone calls all day long. And it's being able to keep hold of that creative core because actually if you grow and you bring too many people in, it's no longer your creativity that's the core of what you do. It's someone else's."

RUNNING A BUSINESS

AM I A BUSINESS OR A SOLE TRADER OR A FREELANCER? WHAT AM I?

“Honestly, I think about this all the time. Should I be a company then? How do I do my tax? Is it worth it? Isn’t it. And just to have that conversation with you, I’ll be more than willing to. Wouldn’t it be great if we had somebody who was an accountant in the creative industry that could say, here are the benefits. Here are the negatives.”

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“The grey area between freelance and business owner now. It’s becoming, it feels as though it’s becoming a lot more blurred. Freelancers were originally literally contract workers, white label, only work for themselves whereas people seem to dip in and out of it a lot more now so I do have people who I will go and work with agencies and take contracts, but then I’ve also got a whole pool of my own stuff which I have to have legal stuff in contracts in place and I employ people and I contract people in and I contract people out, but then I still don’t have like a definitive position for that.”

“It’s freedom for me. It’s like, it’s one of the things that the whole point of why I do it’s for the freedom to be able to move and change, be able to flex and change clients and change the kind of nature of the work and stuff and keep it going because otherwise if you feel like you’re getting niched and pigeonholed, you just feel like you’re starting to go through the motions after a while and then that’s what was starting to like, I’ve starting to get itchy feet again and it’s always been the same. I think it’s just being a creative isn’t it? It’s part of the deal isn’t it?”

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“Yeah. I mean, it’s interesting that you consider yourself as a business [name], and I think that’s the right thing, because for years I was a freelancer and filling in my tax thinking, why am I down there as a sole trader? And it’s only really in the last six months, I mean, maybe during COVID and what people were getting as being self-employed that I start to think, “God, I am my own business.” Am everybody in my business. I am

a company and I have seen myself before that as just a freelancer that dipped in and out of roles in, well, it’s always in media industry, but yeah, I’d see myself differently. And it’s only recently I’ve realized, “Yeah, I am my business.”

-

“I have to be efficient with my time, you’re getting paid to just have meetings and stuff like that so kind of I definitely prefer the hybrid element of I’ve got this business, but I also freelance. I can adapt and pivot.”

RUNNING A BUSINESS

I DON'T FIT THE FUNDING / SUPPORT MODEL:

“Certainly lot of what I do is you’re constantly reinventing the wheel all the time. So that kind of advice that is based on, “X plus Y equals Z. You do this to do this,” doesn’t really count. And actually having contact and chats and experience and knowledge of your peers and fellow compatriots is much more useful quite often than some of that hard business knowledge.”

-

“...when it comes to support and funding, God, I don’t even know how to describe myself as a natural model half the time.”

-

“Yeah, find it, research it and then go through, obviously go through the motions of like where you’re at and what you’re doing and what you’re covering off and stuff and like [name] was saying as well, I think the boundaries were a lot tighter, like exactly how do you explain what you do and who you are as a business and who you’re working for? And it was like, when I first went on my

own, it was almost like (in my own head), it was very black and white. Do you white label for agencies as a freelancer? Or do you have your own clients? It was like, well, why can’t I have both? But at the time it was almost like I was pigeonholed, but I have a mixture of kind of three bases now, which still takes some explaining and then I’ve got a creative coach that I pay for myself just because its... I just, it’s not almost worth the time to do all the jumping of hoops to find somebody so I just pay for it myself and crack on with it. [FUNDING]”

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“And I think that’s how a lot of the funding things have worked out. When you look at anything that’s funded, you have to literally box tick what are you, an agency? Are you a freelancer? Are you things that shout? Well, I do a bit of a mixture of all of them, but there isn’t a box to tick for that so then it’s like then you’re starting to fall out of a category and it’s like well, how can you justify this?”

“Just someone that just goes, all you need to do is this, one, business plan. Two, register at this. Get solicited to look over your lease. Just hand holding through the process, if it was ever to become a permanent thing. But I’m not sure. I don’t always feel it’s... In fact, no. I’ve never come across it being geared to arts and culture. Business support is business. I think it’s very set in traditional and fixed views about business, and success. And success equally, apparently money and growth, not social value, education, learning development, and that type of thing. So, yeah. I generally have not found it very helpful for arts and culture people.”

RUNNING A BUSINESS

HAVING A FLEXIBLE SKILL SET STANDS YOU IN BETTER STEAD:

“I mean all the way through that course, that was like a really intense course that I did, they’re saying you need to specialize because you’re a jack of all trades. I’m like, do you know what, that’s what saved us in COVID. We had so many stuff spread across so many centers, it’s like, if I’d have gone with what you said we’d have been stuffed, do you know what mean?”

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“...what helped me survive COVID was definitely having a broad set of things, I’ve got a freelance job here for a website. I’ve got a track and record some vocals on. I’m getting some revenue from releases and I’m doing this and that’s kind of how I maintained through COVID because I didn’t really get no support like that either.”

-

“...even though I’ve got a wide set of skills, each discipline, I do a very specific thing within the disciplines.”

“...as I’m trying to sell my work in a very niche world, and it’s just understanding that world and getting access to that world. It’s not really... So sometimes I have more in common with other... Not necessarily weave businesses, but people who are selling ceramics or leather work or something. It’s not really even necessarily about the product that I’m making sometimes, it’s about selling yourself in that particular market, if that makes sense.”

EXISTING EXPERIENCE OF OTHER SUPPORT MECHANISMS:

“...we get it through that Creative Leaders Group locally, and other networks. I find it works really well, I think, as a group. It’s our group. It belongs to us. The council attend, but we decide on the direction that we’re going in. And it’s fairly specific within that, and it means that we get the information we need, and we can share it with each other.”

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“Another place that I’ve found support, not so much for the practical guidance side of it, but more for a mindset, is an online community called Indie Roller. So it’s designed for creative, small businesses and it’s basically a community. And it’s led by one person who’s got 17 years in business. She’s run four different businesses and she’s now a qualified coach. So it’s her coaching she’s designed. So I pay for that. It’s something 27 pounds every three months or something for membership. And I can go in, I’ve got my own login. I log in and she’s got a framework of classes, which you can do in your own time, which I don’t do much of because I don’t find time to just sit there and do it.

“...but there’s a Facebook group and stuff like that. And it’s always that Facebook group is the first place I go if I’ve got any questions about wanting advice on, “Oh, I’m in this sticky situation. Has anyone faced this before? I’ve had this request and I don’t know how to cost it,” or whatever. The best thing I’ve found about it is just the guidance for my mindset and wellbeing on developing confidence in what you do, sticking to identifying what your values are, why you are doing what you’re doing so that you don’t get pulled away from that. And just developing that resilience to keep going through challenges and stuff.”

-

“And yeah, I feel I get more support from peer to peer, than any official service. So the network that I mentioned earlier, [Name] was saying that people said, oh, [Name] actually does this type of work. You should speak to her. Then suddenly I’ve got a gig. It’s really helping to generate income.”

RUNNING A BUSINESS

WHAT GOOD MIGHT LOOK LIKE:

“I think for me, support is just having that person to be able to talk to and ask questions who is knowledgeable about the industry and knowledgeable about anything to do with business. For me, that’s what I would want money aside. It’s just having a conversation with somebody is support.”

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“I was just going to compare the commercial against arts funding or however you make your money. And is the business support different? And I think you can have very niche bespoke support, but actually, so some of like marketing, accountancy, office space, networking events to meet people, I think as creatives, no matter where we’re getting our money from, yeah, we need a lot of the same support. And I think we can have that.”

•

“...business support, can obviously be non-monetary. And in terms of whether it’s a kind of publicly funded or office space or training or these softer things, but also as I kind of try to get back into getting everything going again, I’m sort of trying to be more creative in my thinking of cer-

tainly building my network more locally, because I’m very sort of well-connected across the Atlantic and all that because of who I work with. Bit of bartering even. That maybe like a sponsorship thing would be, well, they’re not going to give me any money, but maybe they’d give us all the beer at a discounted price or a space for a workshop or a concert stuff, like this. So I suppose in the same way for any small business you could maybe have a kind of exchange of things that isn’t necessarily in cash money.”

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“Advice that’s relevant to what you... Doesn’t have to be necessarily specific, but it has to be in your world and what you do and what drives you.”

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“I think most creatives I know, what they really want is someone to take the weight of the baggage off the accounts, the phone calls, the admin, so that they can create, that we can just keep creating. That’s the goal of a lot of people that I know in my field of work. It’s two quite different things, isn’t it?”

“Yeah. There should be more bits of support for people who are just starting out and stuff. And then support with financial goals as a business. I think. And knowing how much to charge based on everything that you spend on a business as well. And getting the support with financial goals.”

THE ALTERNATIVES ARE NOT GOOD:

“...this real layer of all these popup training and courses and people and unqualified people selling training in things not qualified in to other creatives. The amount of design ones at the moment is horrendous.”

RUNNING A BUSINESS

AWARENESS OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES:

“But things like applying for funding and things that, I always seem to find out about things after it’s already happened. And I think that’s because it’s just so competitive that people like to keep it to themselves when they’re going through the application process. And then you find out if someone’s successfully been given some funding for something and you are just out of luck because you’ve heard about it after the fact. So that’s been my struggle really and my experience of support. And just the general feeling that it’s just hard to find out about what is on offer, really.”

“And the other thing you touched on is finding funding and applying for it has now become another specialized job, hasn’t it? Basically, unless you either have done that a lot, then you either need to find someone who’s very good and skilled at it. It’s become yet another one of those bits of the job that’s specialized and siloed off. And that can be, I think, quite difficult and quite another reason that makes access to funding a lot more difficult, doesn’t it? I think certainly in the last 10 years, to me from my perspective, it’s definitely meant I think that organizations particularly who can access someone with those skills especially have tended to thrive. And if you can’t access that, that’s another block to how you can get on.”

RUNNING A BUSINESS

APPLYING FOR FUNDING IS AN ARDUOUS TASK:

“I’m just going through the process of going for the Developing Your Own Practice Grant at the Arts Council. And it’s the worst because I’m just not used to asking for money for me and the work being about me. It feels very alien to me having been a community artist and educator for so long. But what I have learned is in terms of applying for funding in itself is a minefield.”

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“I think what I’m seeing, though, is that there is funding coming back round after the pandemic, in terms of working with communities and young people and wellbeing and mental health. I think there’s a recognition that there’s work needs to be done around that. And that is absolutely where creative industries comes into its own because working with young people or older people around wellbeing, the creative process is an ideal way to go.”

“And it is definitely something I’d feel I’d be at a disadvantage to do myself because I feel like there’s a definite skill in applying for funding. And I think there’s a certain amount of fluff involved in writing a funding bid and it’s not one of my skills. I’m very matter of fact and straightforward, so the wording and putting a spin on it is not something I’ve got a lot of practice at.”

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“Graft. It’s graft. It’s hard work. It’s hard graft to try and get that support basically. It’s, oh, it’s a job in itself.”

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“In all my years, it’s only really in the last couple of years I’ve got some business support. In the last 20, leading it up to it, I’ve tried and I’ve tried and I’ve tried and don’t get me wrong, I recognize certain amount of it you’ve got to be at certain level, but I was there five years ago to get some support. It’s been quite hard.”

“Once I’ve been established and I am doing these things and I am getting results, it’s been hard to dedicate the time to hunting it down and then filling in these forms and ticking the box that they want to tick, but again, I’d say it’s the last couple of years that I’ve seen any kind of substantial support, like really from any organisation or people and that’s come from the reaction to things and kind of like realising they’re going to have to help business people out of COVID and then of obviously the cultural factor of Black Lives Matter and realizing that it’s not as... Not everyone’s got a fair crack at it.”

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“Yeah, just to connect with what [Name] was saying, one of the barriers I hit when I was searching funding was your business isn’t big enough. If you want this support, you can get support for your staff to train up in this. I was looking at a lot of support for film creation because that’s something I need to develop on the side of the

label and bring it in-house and they were like, yeah great but you need to have a company with staff.”

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“Well, the arts council funding is quite interesting actually. And to me as somebody who’d been very much completely self starting, whose done... Did all my events for five years with no help whatsoever. I’m just on a gamble that I can sell this many tickets so I’m a good marketer and I’ve got all that background. It was funny and one of the things, when I see them leading courses what really phases people is, you’re not allowed to make a profit on the event, on the project, for project grants funding, which is their main one. So it’s kind of interesting because how that funding then trickles down to the broader creative thing in terms of work that needs doing.”

“There’s tiers to funding, you could get a small bit of support, maybe under a thousand pound and that can go towards stuff and then there’s maybe around the five grand area, then there’s around the 10k and upwards you know? And even at that low level of trying to get the, I don’t know, 500 pounds towards a piece of equipment to... That has been eternally hard to start out and then in these last two years, things are catapulted forward.”

RUNNING A BUSINESS

APPLYING FOR FUNDING IS NOT ALWAYS A BAD EXPERIENCE:

“We had some success with... It was a digital enterprise fund.”

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“I’ve just finished a DYCP grant and it was really good. It saved me last year, in fact. So don’t lose heart with your application. Go for it. It’s a really worthwhile bit of funding, definitely.”

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“We tend to apply for all the digital growth vouchers and all that kind of stuff and we do take advantage of the R&D tax stuff and where possible we’ll get whatever we can.”

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“I mean if we’re doing it, we either get better kit for the staff so we can be more efficient, that kind of thing and with the training stuff, obviously it benefits them personally, but we always say it has to benefit us as a business as well.”

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“So in the main, I think that kind of stuff (funding), we get pretty good support, I think, but if I’m being

honest, we don’t really go looking for it either. It’s almost like we still are busy doing other stuff that we probably don’t take the time to go and see what’s really out there.”

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“So primarily I have gone and looked for arts funding, but then I’m also thinking about the sponsorship thing as a secondary thing. So one, because it shows, it strengthens your arts funding application. And two, because it builds little relationships with local business.”

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“So it’s been funding to work with refugees and migrant groups. There’s quite a lot of funding available for working with those groups at the moment, which is exactly what we want to be doing so that’s great. But it’s very short lived and it’s one of those projects where you just parachute in and then you’re done. And when the funding’s gone, you’re done and you think, “Well, these people need support more long term,” but it’s just in little micro pockets, basically.”

RUNNING A BUSINESS

THE CONFIDENCE TO KNOW IT'S FOR ME AND KNOWLEDGE TO KNOW WHERE TO GO WITH GETTING SUPPORT:

“I definitely have suffered in that as a freelance artist because I just didn't believe, similar to what Maria was saying about the funding, I thought that was for the people in the know, and they'd never give that to me.”

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“I think that has held me back for a long time from actually trying to do anything at all and my own confidence. Because my art wasn't really selling at first and people weren't really buying it. So, I was like, “Oh, well it's not for me.”, But actually coming out of the pandemic now I'm seeing how many people are raring to go and really engaging. And maybe it's my attitude towards it's changed as well because I'm trying to take this more seriously and put myself out there more. But I think that massively, imposter syndrome for me, held me back for a long time.”

“The imposter syndrome (has held me back), unfortunately, I think every freelancer feels that at some point.”

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“Being undervalued and undervaluing myself, just because of lack of knowledge and pricing and all that kind of stuff. I think I've definitely under sold myself massively.”

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“I get asked about tax all the time in PDBs, and we don't do business support. We don't give advice and guidance. And I have no idea where to sign post people. And it's like, people just want to bullet points, like you don't need to register as a self-employed for at least 18 months. You're able to earn 10 grand in your first years of freelance practice without any taxable income. People very much need a bullet proof handholding, this is what you do guide, because I'm always like, I wish I could help, but I can't. I'm not an expert in those areas. And I just generally don't know where to sign point people.”

“At the moment I've been using YouTube. Because that's the only place that I've thought I could go to.”

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“Yeah. There should be more bits of support for people who are just starting out and stuff. And then support with financial goals as a business. I think. And knowing how much to charge based on everything that you spend on a business as well. And getting the support with financial goals.”

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“Now there's a touch point that would be brilliant for me as coach, and for persons that I'm coaching, is actually the identified need for a particular set of skills or specialist, like tax or a particular element of business support where I'd love to be able to go. Oh, you should check out this person, or go to that service.”

RUNNING A BUSINESS

WE DON'T ALWAYS GET TO HEAR ABOUT OR SEE THE OPPORTUNITIES:

“...This sense of people not really know like who you are, what you do. Or knowing it, but just kind of forgetting about it. There’s years and years of experience of people that I work with, and some people are at an early stage of their career. And yeah, it’s like sometimes you see an opportunity and you’re like, well, that’s kind of what I do. Have you just forgotten that I’m here as well? Because other people trusting in me and providing those commissions or those work opportunities is a thing. The very thing that keeps me afloat when there isn’t any funding on the table. So, people are having a better insight and trust and value for what.”

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“Are there opportunities not always being visible? And I’m not just talking about local authority funding grants. It’s everything. The jobs, the commissions. That’s the thing, that’s our bread and butter. That’s what we need to sustain ourselves. And we don’t always know about them. We’re often finding about them after they’ve been awarded.”

“There’s just not that place where they’re just clearly presented. Everybody’s got a right to go for it and put themselves forward. Job opportunities, whatever that might be, and lack of insight. We all lack insight in certain areas. I’ll hold my hands up to that as well. Lack of insight of operating instructions that I don’t work within. Lack of different cultures of institutions, and their limitations, and their stress points and pain points. We all have that. But it definitely feels like this one’s very much linked to people not knowing what you’re doing. There’s a lack of insight in who we are, or we just go for the same person that we’ve given the contract to time and again for 10 years. And that doesn’t lead way for new people and new skill.

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“And yeah, I feel I get more support from peer to peer, than any official service. So the network that I mentioned earlier, [Name] was saying that people said, oh, [Name] actually does this type of work. You should speak to her. Then suddenly I’ve got a gig. It’s really helping to generate income.”

“I think it’s just that because I’ve decided after years and years I’ve been in agency, I’ve been in agencies ever since I graduated and then at the age of 35 or 36 I said, do you know what, I’m going off and I’m going by myself. I almost had the fear put into me and the agency said, “Can you do it?” “Are you sure though?”

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“...But I definitely feel that there’s a core strand of freelance practitioners in particular not feeling that they hold the same space. They have all of this experience, this insight. And, they’re often not around the table, or helping to bring about change. And yeah, it’s like sometimes you see an opportunity and you’re like, well, that’s kind of what I do. Have you just forgotten that I’m here as well?”

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(Context: choosing GCSE options)
“It’s not options at all, you’ve got one choice and that’s it, that’s your thing. And what might help, a bit like I think what you were saying there [Name], was for options evening, the designing

technology departments, they’ve had some stuff from the D&T Association, but just selling what they can actually do. Because a lot of them, they say, “All right, where am I going to work then? Oh, my dad works down David Brown’s. All right, well, I don’t really fancy that because that sounds a bit crap, doesn’t it? My granddad works at blah, blah, blah.” And you get all of this and you’re going, “God, you guys, there’s so much that is actually going on that you can’t actually see, that will be absolutely brilliant for you.” “I think especially that age, it’s difficult, isn’t it, because so early on, you’re asking to plot out your career path. And like you say, it’s transferable skills, isn’t it? Unless someone who does something tells you, that’s a career path. You’re at the mercy of how good your careers advisors, aren’t you, because you don’t know what exists in... It’s massive, isn’t it.”

RUNNING A BUSINESS

MENTORING NEEDS TO BE TAILORED TO ME:

“I was matched with a mentor who specialized in IT and tech and this world was completely foreign to me. He had no idea what I was going on about out. He’s like, “Okay. So yeah, you make clothes. I don’t really know anything about clothes except what size T-shirt I am.” And I was like, “Great.” And the first thing he said to me was, “If you need any help with bookkeeping or tax or anything, I don’t know anything about that.” And I was like, “Well, can you tell me where to go for that then?” So felt like a roadblock throwing me off.”

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“...And sometimes it’s about finding the right mentor as well. I wouldn’t have considered going to a coach I don’t think beforehand. I was offered this particular person who has been leading me through a grant application. I know I can whiffle on forever, but she’s really good at pulling out those core ideas and picking up on things that I don’t notice myself

when I’m saying it. And actually as a result of that, though, I’m probably going to keep going back to her and in the future, investing in working with her because it’s been so valuable to me.”

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“And I think I had two mentors in the end I went through two, and it was the same situation both times. Just very generic advice, no real applicable experience with working in creative industries. And also from a very corporate stance. So the advice I was being encouraged to outsource my work to, “Why aren’t you looking at manufacturing in China and stuff that and scaling up?” And I was like, “Well, I’m not interested in scaling up. I just want to know how to be a freelancer, basically.” And that kind of advice just wasn’t there. So what I felt I needed was a peer mentor, a one-to-one mentor or somebody who was in a similar industry than me, but maybe 10 years further down

the line or more who could just share their experiences, which I’ve gathered as I’ve gone along as I’ve met people and things.”

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“...She’s got the right contact to ask the right questions at the arts council, for example. And that kind of mentoring is very personal. It’s very individual. And I think particularly for creatives, that’s what we need. We need someone that mirrors back and asks those difficult questions.”

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“I’ve flirted with it, met someone, they didn’t get me. They didn’t, they weren’t creative at all. I just kind of like, okay, this isn’t... This look, this isn’t working basically, he’s just, he doesn’t quite get it. I’m explaining the basics of what I do and he’s like, “So Illustrator, what’s that?” “Well, that’s how you design a poster, a flyer, a product.” “Oh, right. I see.”

So it was just kind of like, yeah I had to leave that alone. It wasn’t going to go anywhere really. He didn’t understand.”

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“Yeah, tailored business support to what you are doing and not just general. Somebody who’s already got experience in the creative industry. So somebody who is a creative person, who’s in the creative industry, and has a lot more experience. And that can tell me their experiences.”

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“I think if they’re not in the creative industry, if they’re not from a creative background, then I don’t think they know what possibilities are, where, and if... That might sound really harsh but I think there’s typical business models isn’t there, where there’s, if you’re in a creative area and you’re able to kind of move and pivot towards a slightly different dis-

ciplines, but they’re not from that background, they don’t understand the possibilities of your sector. So it kind of just a waste.”

RUNNING A BUSINESS

MENTORING CREATIVES :

“It’s somebody experienced to keep you accountable as well to what you’re doing and keep you to in check because especially when you’re creative, you tend to go from loads of different directions and I was holding myself back massively at the start because I thought I had to come out the trap and then set all these specific goals to hit before I thought I could then chase that kind of work or that kind of client, or I had to very much like, everybody’s nicheing themselves down and it’s like, to what degree do you want to niche down?”

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“Yeah. And absolutely a mentor will be... So if I wanted a mentor right now, it would be someone who has identified space and created a commercial business within a space. Hand hold me through that process that you went through.”

“I’m really interested in the creative coach because I’ve never heard that before actually so we... I hear a lot about business coaches and stuff like that, but I’ve never heard that before. So that sounds cool and different and interesting.”

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“There’s a little bit more kind of probably practical stuff in it or maybe slightly more emotive stuff in it as well as some of the business stuff, which I think is really helpful when you’re on your own.”

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“Sometimes a bit of resistance is useful. Someone going, checking in and you go, hold up, hold up, is that right? And I do have peers, some of the discipline that we have pow wow together and sit down and go for Chinese and chop it up together.”

“...And then the coach, it just been really valuable to me having that out with that person who kind of draws out of you, well how did you come to achieving that? Or what do you think you’ve learned from this?”

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“So, yeah, I think the whole, for me, it’s been so valuable to do this Creative Leader’s Group thing where every month we’ve got like a group session, but then a kind of homework session where they put two or three of you together to go over, whether it’s about networking, whether it’s about imposter syndrome, whether it’s about money and asking for your worth and all that. And then also we, so I had like a monthly coaching session from one of the two leaders and it’s so great to have that sounding board, especially when you’re a one person business.”

“On one of the monthly group sessions where, like I say, where we’ve had different themes we’ve gone through with the difference between coaching and mentoring. And obviously sometimes it kind of crosses a bit, but this has been more coaching. So each month I would have to update my coaching sheet and send it the day before sort of we’re at the outset of sort of decided my goals for the next six months while I’m on this course and what my values are, my core values for me and my business, whatever. And then each month what I’ve kind of achieved towards these or my work and it’s just even that very act of getting it down on my paper, but having to update it because you’ve got an appointment to meet and it obviously we did on Zoom but, so that’s really helpful, just getting it straight in your head as to, “Well, what have I done? What have I achieved or not done that I was supposed to do.”

“But I believe... And it’s not business support, but it is a total network led program where you say, well, I’ve got expertise in this and skills. I could share my skill and time in this area. And then someone else would be like, I can teach guitar for an hour. And it’s just like, right. I’ll do coaching. You teach me guitar. Do you know what I mean? So it’s this time swap kind of system, which I’m not advocating we create something like that, but maybe a model like that would work. So have you got time, expertise, to be a mentor to start with? Would you be happy to be a volunteer mentor? Then it becomes the yellow pages of mentors. I can mentor in these areas.”

RUNNING A BUSINESS

WHERE DO I FIND A MENTOR?

“They work best when mentee is identifying who they want as their mentor.”

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“Like Trust Pilot for mentors you know? Because I think recommendations is everything isn't it and if you've done it somewhere else and you've met a success there, is you going to do it again in it, but I don't know.”

“I like the idea of the Trust Pilot thing, because yeah, if someone's a bit shit, people need to know, if they're no good at mentoring as well so, I like the idea.”

“Even like a Tinder for it or something you know, like you can match, you know what I mean, like a matchmaking side of thing.”

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“What I've really thought about often, is just a mentor, or somebody who's working within my industry who knows how helpful that would be. But I haven't really known how to go about that.”

BAD EXPERIENCES OF MENTORING:

“When you first start out, you don't know what you need to do to protect yourself. Not just in a money sense, even just protecting your ideas and that sort of thing. Because through the mentoring, I got a lot of the sense that the reason maybe for these people with business experience becoming mentors was to almost, not poach ideas, but speak to people and listen to people's ideas for innovation and feed that back into their own businesses and their own ideas and stuff. So it didn't really feel a genuine process of just wanting to help people starting out, which is a shame, really.”

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“I think for me, moving forward at some point, that might be something that I look for. But I think we said it's important to have that, it's that cross pollination thing, it's important to have experience that's going to ... you don't necessarily have to find someone like-minded, because that actually doesn't work because you want different experiences to help

you. But I think there has to be some synergy, and it's almost the stuff we talked about, the business federations and stuff that is disconnected. So I think if I go down the mentoring route, I want someone who appreciates what I do and what I need, but actually they can come from a different background, I don't think that particularly matters really.”

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“When I first started, I dabbled a bit in the Prince's Trust Enterprise game, which I'm no longer eligible for because it's only up to 30. So that boat sailed for me. That was interesting, but it's very generic advice and I found it not applicable specifically to creative businesses. One of the main things I wanted to get out of it, I wasn't going to apply for, you can apply for a grant through them. And that wasn't really something I felt like I wanted to do, but it was mainly for the mentoring. And it took months so it was a long waiting period to get assigned a mentor.”

“I think at the moment, especially on social media, God, you can swing a dead cat and hit like a million self-confessed coaches, it's doing my head in.”

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“...If you're paying for somebody, they'll have your interests at heart to a degree, but if they're also doing it for lots of others, or if they're already invested in the company, to have like a business partner, that's obviously financially invested.”

NETWORKING & AWARENESS

IT'S NOT REALLY THAT CONNECTED AROUND HERE:

“We were talking last week about a directory and all, in Leeds and stuff, even that would be nice, just to have that really basic sense of network and community in the area, I think, to be a part of and that’s before you even get into events, business support, mentoring, coaching, and all that sh*t.”

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“I figured that potentially there was just this really cool movement going on, or this inner group or sect that was happening, and I’m just either on the cusp of it, unaware of it, or I’m not cool enough to be in it. But you just assume somewhere there is a network, you just don’t know how to get to it or tap into it. But I don’t know if there is one or not.”

“It might just be my naivety or newness to the district that I’m not aware of some of these other things that do that connecting up. But from my point of view, that might be some of the things that are missing to connect the dots a little bit.”

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“Actually there’s a massive opportunity to do something really interesting and quite dynamic. It doesn’t, as I say, have to be long-term. That all over the council area that could be really fascinating and interesting, just by giving people permission to use space.”

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“I think from, say, a teaching point of view, something as simple as a website or just WhatsApp group, where like [Name] was saying, you’re sharing with like-minded people. “Do you want to work in schools? Do you want to work with other people so you can...” You have your filter and then people, like you said, sign up for

it. And then people from schools or want to work with certain groups of people or certain people that want to go into schools or even just see what the schools are like sometimes. Teachers have a variety of WhatsApp groups, “What do you think about this? How about that? Oh, can I use that?” And that’s exactly what [Name] was saying. Long gone are the consultants and local authority people, and they’ve got to create their own network of ideas and things.”

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“We had a meeting the other day from, it was the treasurer from Huddersfield Textile Society, and he’d got in touch with us as [Name], and I’d never even heard of him, I’ve been working in textiles all this time and I’d never even knew there was a Huddersfield Textile Society, but they have a problem at the moment where their memberships been waning, waning and waning. And obviously the last couple of years, it’s just really diminished.

They’ve got this aging population, aging membership basically, and although it’s quite big wigs in textiles, all the big mills and carpet manufacturers and all that kind of thing, but they just don’t have the new blood coming through. But they’re a completely closed off sector, they don’t have school trips or any kind of access where people get to see what goes on in a carpet mill, for example. And they don’t have schools to train menders and weavers and things, those jobs still exist, but there’s nobody teaching them how to do it.”

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“...there should be a proper hunger for it and a real good connection to the youth. So it’s such a shame, isn’t it, that it’s there, but again, it’s connecting these dots and making people aware and inroads into these kind of businesses and stuff and realize that one can’t survive without the other.”

NETWORKING & AWARENESS

THERE IS HUGE VALUE IN CREATING NETWORKS AND SHARING:

“When I first moved Huddersfield, there was something called cultural industries in Kirklees. Although it sounds really dry, it was an artist-led organisation. I think it was a secondary co-op that was really useful. It was a minimal joining fee. I think it was partly funded by the council. And then after a few years, that funding disappeared and it slowly wound down. But for about a good three or four years, and certainly for me when I first came to the area, it was that horizontal network was really, really useful, just in terms of meeting other people. And it was a really wide range of different creatives.”

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“What really was beneficial was me speaking to a fellow label owner, business owner that had, I was like trying to get my new business insurance. I got a quote from a friend who knows someone and it was twice the price of when I got this business support and I had conversations and I got directed to the right people and so it was more, I got some really

good contacts, some really good advice and to be honest, that was more valuable than six hundred quid so it's not always about money, but yeah, that is... That's where it, sometimes the business support was useful and stuff like that.”

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“The Goldman Sachs (10,000 businesses) thing that I did was unbelievable actually and that transformed my business because we went from... I'm a graphic designer so I didn't know anything about running a business, you're kind of making it up as you go along, trying to do your best and then I went on this course, I'm like, oh man, I'm shocking. I'm terrible and you know what I mean? So there was some real practical advice on that course, but then post the course, the network of people and business owners that are met on that has become invaluable to me and I think over and above money, that style of support. “

“I love talking to other business owners like we're doing now and chatting about problems that you've had, problems that you can see coming, stuff that you might have found out and you can share it with the rest of a group but I think that's been the best thing out of the Goldman Sachs program that we've got actually and stuff, so more of that would be great, I think but even, I guess, I get this might be where this ends up, I don't know and this might be your mission with all this anyway, but like a more localized version of that I think would be really cool actually.”

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“I think purely from a practical point of view, I'd much rather be having this chat in a room maybe with a pint or something like that, or some nibbles, I don't know because I think we all said last week didn't we, that this is great, it's a great tool, but that you can pick up on so much more body language so the local thing really was me about just actually being in same room with someone.”

“there's a Creative Leaders Group. So again, have you heard of that within Kirklees? So some time ago, the local authority used to have a small funding round every two or three years I think they used to do it. But they were very small amounts of money up for grabs. It might be three or 4,000 a year at most, that you would get from them. And as part of that, we attended meetings, and had a group of us that used to meet who got that funding. And that funding stopped, but the leaders carried on meeting. We were encouraged to carry on and we did off our own back largely. And so we still do, and that's a really useful thing to be part of.

The council attend fairly regularly and give us updates, so if we have questions of people who might impact us in terms of our work and how we function as a creative sector, then we invite people along to inform us. We ask questions of them and do that collectively. We share ideas, we share thoughts on things. We've led on a couple of things, where we've wanted to make a difference.

Whoever's there (at the meeting) are the most important people in the room. It's that principle. So it doesn't stop us making decisions if not everyone's there. We still carry on regardless and make those decisions and move things forward, which is really useful.”

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“Just a community. Just a sense of having people to share ideas with and bounce ideas off, and to hear how they approach things. I think that's probably coming from what I said the first week about feeling quite isolated in working on my own a lot. It's probably very led by that, but that's a big thing. Finance as well.”

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“...there's a real human aspect to it, which almost we forget about when we're trying to run businesses, and you're trying to do work. You've got all the focus, but the emotive side of it often gets pushed out of the way.”

NETWORKING & AWARENESS

CONNECTING THE CREATIVE INDUSTRIES WITH SCHOOLS IS REALLY IMPORTANT:

“We talked quite a lot about schools and school offers and what have you, last week. And I think someone suggested that it would be good to have a particular point of contact for schools to connect with creative industries, and know that there is a bridge organization that could to field that maybe. But what I was thinking is it would be great to have schools to have a way to get in touch ...

But it would be really good if within that, there was some sort of process that would support schools in how they approach artists and how they look after their artists that they employ. And a recognition that the way that they pay other contractors, isn't the same way that a sole trader artist can function. Certainly the experience I've had recently. And we

talked about it being a Kirklees thing, that they follow the Kirklees pattern, but actually as far as I know, schools have a certain autonomy, depending on how they're structured and whether they're academy or what they are, but they have more autonomy on how they handle their finances than they used to do in the past. And so it's really what we need is a guide as how it will work and how it could work for them, just to save creatives having that same discussion every time they go to a school.”

NETWORKING & AWARENESS

THE TIME TO INVEST IN NEW PEOPLE AND SKILLS CAN BE A BARRIER:

“I almost wonder as well though if there’s almost like a thing at grass-roots which is missing somewhat because I remember we took an apprentice when I was at one of the agencies and he’d done, he was from Leeds University and he had done something like communication design. It was a very “overarching” degree, but he didn’t have the basic skills so he came into a digital and a design agency, he couldn’t use Illustrator correctly, he wasn’t particularly fluent in a lot of the packages, which then takes a lot of time for another person to sit, teach them really, really basic skills and I know a lot of people will like watch a YouTube video and pick it up and learn it now, but there was like a whole actual practical element that was missing of some of these graduates that were coming out. They just didn’t know actually quite how to like use some of it, they could think big, but they couldn’t actually like execute it.”

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“Yeah, but we are getting asked about the stuff we are doing with

a view to creating an apprenticeship for that position so that’s interesting as well.”
(In response to the above) “Well then should it be the apprenticeship services be paying you to instruct them how to put together their course, rather than the other way around.”

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“So there’s some massive gaps going on in what skills people can learn, but the creative industries do change a place, they do. We talked last week about what’s happened in Slaithwaite and how vibrant it’s become, but it’s vibrant for people of a certain age, it’s vibrant for people who can afford to go out, who can afford a night class, who can afford to go out for a nice meal. It’s not vibrant for young people who are in that in-between stage. And as a creative industry, what would be really helpful for me is it’s a big step for me to employ somebody, it’s a big reach to make that commitment. I’ve got someone working with me now, but she’s currently freelance and she’s got the skills, she’s got the similar level of skills to me, so I’ve not had to teach her things. But for

me to invest financially in someone that I have to train up, because there isn’t the training out there for them, it’s just unaffordable.”

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“I did a pattern drafting demo as part of our community pop-up that we’re doing in Holmfirth at the moment, I had a few ladies come on, so it wasn’t a workshop, it was just a very brief going through what’s involved in pattern drafting and stuff. And the ladies that came to it were like, “Oh, wow, this is so complicated and in depth, it’s not something you can learn just in a snapshot.” And I was like, “No, it’s something, even if you studied for three or four years and done just that, it is something that you learn once you’ve gone into it.” It’s like learning to drive, you don’t really learn to drive until you pass your test, and it’s the same kind of thing. So to be doing a course in a practical subject, that’s completely theoretical, and then going out into the world of work and not having had that hands on experience, there seems to be this massive disconnect, I think.”

“It feels like ceramics is something that people take up when they retire, and it’s such a shame because everyone needs a mug and the plate. And the thing is, there’s so are many design skills and scientific skills and technical skills, it’s a lifelong learning job, you never ever stop learning with it, but kids are just not getting to do it. I’ve been to schools where they’ve done a project and they’ve said, “Oh, we threw all the wheels out last week.” And you’re like, “Do you know how many thousands of pounds you’ve just thrown in the skip?”

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“I mean, it’s really, really sad because we’ve done quite work with Portmeirion Group over the years. So you’ve got Spode, Portmeirion, and a lot of them, especially work we do with Spode, it’s kind of edging into fashion-led. So actually there’s a real connection, for the youth, within the brands, because they’ve got such a big portfolio, there should be a proper hunger for it and a real good connection to the youth. So it’s such a shame, isn’t it, that it’s there, but again, it’s connecting these dots

and making people aware and inroads into these kind of businesses and stuff and realize that one can’t survive without the other.”

-

“I was just going to say, from the point of view of taking interns and things like that, I get asked every year and I always say no, because I’ve not got the support or I’ve been asked to take them on, but I’ve been given no signposting to the things I need to do to be able to offer someone a good experience. And just all the other hoops to jump through, like having insurances in place and risk assessments and all that sort of thing, I don’t know where to look for that information. So I think in terms of schools and new universities approaching creative practitioners to have placements and things, there needs to be that sign posting of if you want to do it and you’ve never done it before then here’s some information to look at, so you can make a fully informed decision.”

NETWORKING & AWARENESS

THE CAREER PATH FOR CREATIVE INDUSTRIES NEEDS A RETHINK:

“And the other thing that’s put me off is I’d really love to do it, but I also don’t want to put someone off a creative career, because to me, I think the idea of a career path is quite an outdated concept, to be honest, it’s better saying creative industries, because it’s not linear, it will change, and you’ve got to be open to going in a different direction to what you studied or anything you ever imagined for yourself. So I think to begin with that needs to go, so that we can open up people’s minds a bit.

Because to me, the sort of business training that I had along with my degree, was all how to build your business plan, all that sort of thing,

how to do your taxes, but not so much how to identify different revenue streams, how to approach people, building your confidence and resilience and all that, those sorts of things that are so important, and when you first start out, especially if you’re young or you’ve not had that much industry experience before you’ve gone into starting your own business or being a freelancer, they can really deter you from carrying on. You face setbacks and you feel like packing it all in.”

SPACE, PLACE & IDENTITY

WE NEED A SPACE TO CALL HOME:

“I think one of the really useful things that funding and support could do would be to help the creative sector to be able to access affordable space for work.”

•

“... that’s one thing that really has always been a real problem. When I first came to Huddersfield, I thought I’d be able to find a workshop really easily. I thought, “There’s all these old mills and stuff around.” I’ve just always found it really hard. It was only about six years ago, I managed to actually start to be able to afford a workshop. Before that, I was doing a lot of work away so I was basically based out of the back of my van for years. And I occasionally I’d blag a bit of space in someone else’s shed or something. But I think for that access to affordable space in a nutshell would be really good.”

“But the thing is, there are places all over Kirklees that they could really use this method to bring it to life, to support new and creative and vibrant business to start themselves up in a cheap unit. And then the knock on effect of that is the whole area gets lifted. The whole village, the whole town gets lifted.”

•

“I think there needs to be some long term planning about how we use it possibility to rejuvenate places around Kirklees, but how we make sure that those businesses that did that, brought the life to it aren’t the ones that end up being kicked out by someone with more profit?”

•

“Like grants, startup schemes. I know that uni for example, they offer an office for a year if you want to start off your own business.”

“It’s interesting listening to what everybody said, because honestly this idea of a shared space where you’d have to pay a lot to go, you get out, you get out your house, you get used to somewhere, you meet other people, you talk - I’ve thought about that a lot. And I think that Kirklees would really benefit from having somewhere like that. And if it was a place that creatives were going to, that’d be the ideal place to put on workshops that we all need.”

“...it might be interesting if there could be some more supported workspaces, or some places using some old buildings, maybe to try to create studios which support each other as well. I know there are some...”

•

“West Yorkshire, I know has so many people doing high-end, amazing craft, not just textiles, but it’s there. I think everyone, a lot of people I talk to, do feel like they’re very much doing it on their own in a way. They’re just getting

through, and there’s not really a cohesive... I don’t know. It doesn’t feel like a very cohesive approach to supporting these people and helping them, and looking for opportunities for them. I think a workspace would be really amazing. There’s plenty of old mills around. I know people are doing that. They are finding mills anyway. But just something where it felt a bit more supported might be interesting.”

•

“Well, as long as I’ve been here, I’ve said there needs to be an arts centre. A building that’s an arts centre, that caters for lots of different arts activities, whatever that be. And there isn’t. There never has been. They’ve relied on Bates Mill maybe doing a bit, but they don’t really. And there’s nothing really. There’s no hope, and there needs to be.”

CONTINUES TO NEXT PAGE



SPACE, PLACE & IDENTITY

WE NEED A SPACE TO CALL HOME: (CONT)

“I think if it was a committed space, then there’s that feeling of permanence, where there’s a real commitment to it, and there’s a commitment to try and continue to grow the community. Which would probably make people feel a lot more rooted to it and proud of it.”

-

“I guess that’s what Temporary Contemporary has shown in the heart of Huddersfield, that you can actually take an empty shop and you can make something interesting out of it, without a lot of investment, quite frankly. Just time and effort and energy from the creative partners involved.”

-

“...actually there’s a massive opportunity to do something really interesting and quite dynamic. It doesn’t, as I say, have to be long-term. That all over the council area that could be really fascinating and interesting, just by giving people permission to use space.”

“And then, in terms of meanwhile, a new space throughout the town, not necessarily council property, but private landlord property. It’s making sure that the artists aren’t exploited just to be in there as space fillers, because ultimately if the agenda is to let the property... Oh, you can have this space, make it look pretty, but ultimately we want this to go to a commercial let for full rental value. That’s just using the artist really.”

-

“They want permanent residencies. Affordable, sustainable, permanent residencies. And the opportunity to be completely independent within those residencies as well. Not go solo, go alone. Or shared space possibility, but still hanging onto your identity as a business, your brand as a business, and operating within, I don’t know, a bigger shared space.”

“I think there’s lots of good things covered that just really made me think like one [Name] I think said the whole thing about is being in our little silos and you don’t really get to talk to anyone. And I think [Name] did as well. And obviously that’s been kind of exacerbated by the pandemic but generally as a freelancer, a lot of the time you’re just working away in your own little space. So, I also think it’d be great to have a sort of co-working or hot desking thing for creatives that would be no cost or low cost where you could actually have that as a resource in Huddersfield or in Kirklees because most of us wouldn’t be able to afford to rent in an office the entire time, but it’d be great to have something that’s not just your spare room and you could actually go in. And I suppose, I suppose something that’s more kind of dedicated to that rather than just meeting in a cafe or something.”

-

“...where do you find rental properties that are suited to creating businesses or arts organisations? Because as long as rentals stay really high here

and there isn’t funds or startup grants or any business financial support to help you on your way, I’m never going to have a permanent home. I’m never going to choose to set up this space in Huddersfield. As long as the rents are a grand, two grand, 1500 pound. They have to be rents that work for the creative industries in the same way we create affordable homes for people.”

SPACE, PLACE & IDENTITY

SOME PLACES HAVE GOT IT RIGHT:

“The Granby Workshops in Liverpool. Have you come across those? They’d been knocking terraces down and the local community managed to save these terraces and they worked with them. And they’ve got a ceramic studio in one of the terrace houses in the middle of the houses. And they made all the door handles, which they then smoke fire in barbecues on the street to give them the color. They made the tiles. They made the lighting. And their whole idea is that you’ve got people living there residentially. But bang in the middle of that, you’ve got this small scale industry so people can actually see how it works and how things are made. And I just think it’s a really lovely idea.”

-

“Honestly, I really struggled after living in Manchester, where there was quite a lot of free office space around. I’m going to mention Lloyd’s bank again, I don’t know why, but they opened up a big bank and then they invited their customers in, for free office space upstairs and it was free coffee and you got power and there was USB plugs, it was pretty brilliant to have somewhere to go and work where you got free coffee. You

didn’t have to feel guilty in the cafe but you actually got out of your bedroom and you saw people. And they were actually doing differently working events and anyone could go to them, but yeah, it just strikes me that we all have our niches and we all have our different needs, but I do think there’s a sweet point in the middle that actually we all kind of... We need some of the same things and that could be provided for.”

-

“...this is just an example, like Duke Studios in Leeds. I know that they do some sort of like scheme. I don’t know if they still do or they did. They did one or two people in a month and they get it discounted, something like that. Again, that’s very networking. It’s a lot of people in one space and that’s very creative.”

-

“It’s funny because [Name] said Duke Studios, I think we’ve got this Leader’s Network thing I’m doing with Brighter Sound, which is just coming to the end of its six months. I think we’re having our final thing there in a couple weeks and it looked really

cool, like a bit more, not so corporate or straight lace, but more of like a creative kind of space. And the interesting thing... I mean the whole thing about what is happening to our town centres, retail on its ass. Rents have been really expensive for so long, but is that really the future of Huddersfield field town centre? You know what I mean? There must be all these bloody spaces going begging and this could be part of a whole kind of reimagining of a better use of a lot of this. So yeah, that’s one thing.”

SPACE, PLACE & IDENTITY

HUDDERSFIELD, THE CREATIVE TOWN? OR HAS LOST ITS IDENTITY?

“I obviously went to school in Huddersfield, but then I went to college in Halifax, because I couldn’t do all the design subjects I wanted. So I went to Halifax. Then I went to university, and I’ve just never ended up in Huddersfield, short of a couple of jobs working in the center of town. Then I’ve ended up moving to Leeds or Manchester for work. So it’s almost like there wasn’t the basis for the work here to start almost, so I’ve just automatically moved out of the area...”

•

“...it’s very disparate in terms of there isn’t really a draw there for anything creative. There’s nothing to go there and see, and then I think all the creatives just seem to be quite isolated and independent and the agencies are scattered about, and then independents, and everyone’s...”

“I get the impression, one of the things that Huddersfield suffers from is it was so close to Leeds and Manchester and Bradford and Sheffield, that it seems like it’s quite hard for Huddersfield to find a place of where ... you can go to other places so easily. I think Huddersfield hasn’t really worked out what it can offer, particularly young people. And I think that’s probably a really interesting question for the whole of Huddersfield, I guess also particularly for the creative sector.”

•

“Is this something to do with the identity of the town maybe, because it used to be very much that it was a mill town, and Huddersfield was the fine wares, and Dewsbury areas was the shoddy stuff. And I suppose over time, because that industry doesn’t exist in the same way, that maybe that’s impacted the image of the town, the identity of it, it’s brand if you like. So what is it known for? So it hasn’t got a specific driver,

maybe that’s partly why the council are working on, or seem to be working on, a couple of areas, which is the woven stuff.”

•

“There’s a lot of negativity, I think as well. The only things we ever hear about Kirklees and Kirklees Council, is always really negative stuff socially, and doesn’t seem to be that much positive, good news and real pushes for things, just always seems to be a bit neggy.”

KIRKLEES, THE DISTRICT THAT’S HARD TO PIN DOWN?

“We were talking about having a place and workshops and where to go. I just feel like Kirklees is too bloody big. I live in Dewsbury, and honestly, f*** all happens in Dewsbury, really. You’ve got to go to Huddersfield, and Huddersfield seems to be the main centre. But when you live in Dewsbury, actually that’s a half an hour away, really. That’s not close.

Then I was thinking actually about [Name], that’s across from me, who lived across Meltham. That’s miles. That would take like an hour to get there. I’m just thinking it’s so disparate. I don’t know how you bring a cohesion to such a large area that are also distinctively very, very culturally different. Dewsbury has nothing in common with Meltham.”

•

“I don’t really feel that there is that community specifically for Kirklees or Huddersfield. And I know that sounds like... Kirklees is massive. That’s really broadly speaking, because obviously there’s different stuff going on in Bradford and things. But I tend to dip in between Manchester and Leeds, so I bounce between those two, and literally home is the gap where I don’t seem to have any real community network.”

SPACE, PLACE & IDENTITY

THERE ARE OPPORTUNITIES TO BE MADE:

“Whereas you come over to Huddersfield, there’s all sorts of crazy, quirky, weird things going on, and I think that’s what really draws me here, is that there’s a lot of history in Huddersfield, a lot of really important history. And there’s a lot of real creative people that are here, but there’s that quirky nature that seems to follow it around, like with the moonraking, like with the light festival, like with the Magic Rock stuff and things like that, they’re all great products, but there’s a little bit of a twist and a turn. And that’s what draws people in from the corporate things that go on in Manchester, or Leeds, or Sheffield, really big things. I think we need to concentrate on, I don’t know, small quirky things, but not that it’s just a throw-away, because there’s some brilliant, brilliant things that go on.”

-

“...what would make Huddersfield a creative town ongoing, is to ensure that those that live here or are coming here and training and developing their skills, aren’t then disappearing.

And is there a call therefore for business support in terms of apprenticeships and kickstart schemes and that post-graduate apprenticeship, so that they’re encouraged to employ and it’s affordable, as a starting point, and they’re encouraged to stick around and do that.”

-

“Well, I guess from my perspective, I’d say most of my work had been about events, so even before COVID, I think, austerity had slowly chipped away at a vast amount of the events that were happening in Kirklees. And linking back to what I was saying earlier, once all those events like the festival of light and moonraking and that, all started disappearing, those kind of things just all help show the creative and cultural life of a place. And they bring acts and things in, and also provide opportunities for local people to engage in stuff. So I think, yeah, from my perspective, the real lack of stuff, visible stuff that happening in the streets and towns is what’s missing.”

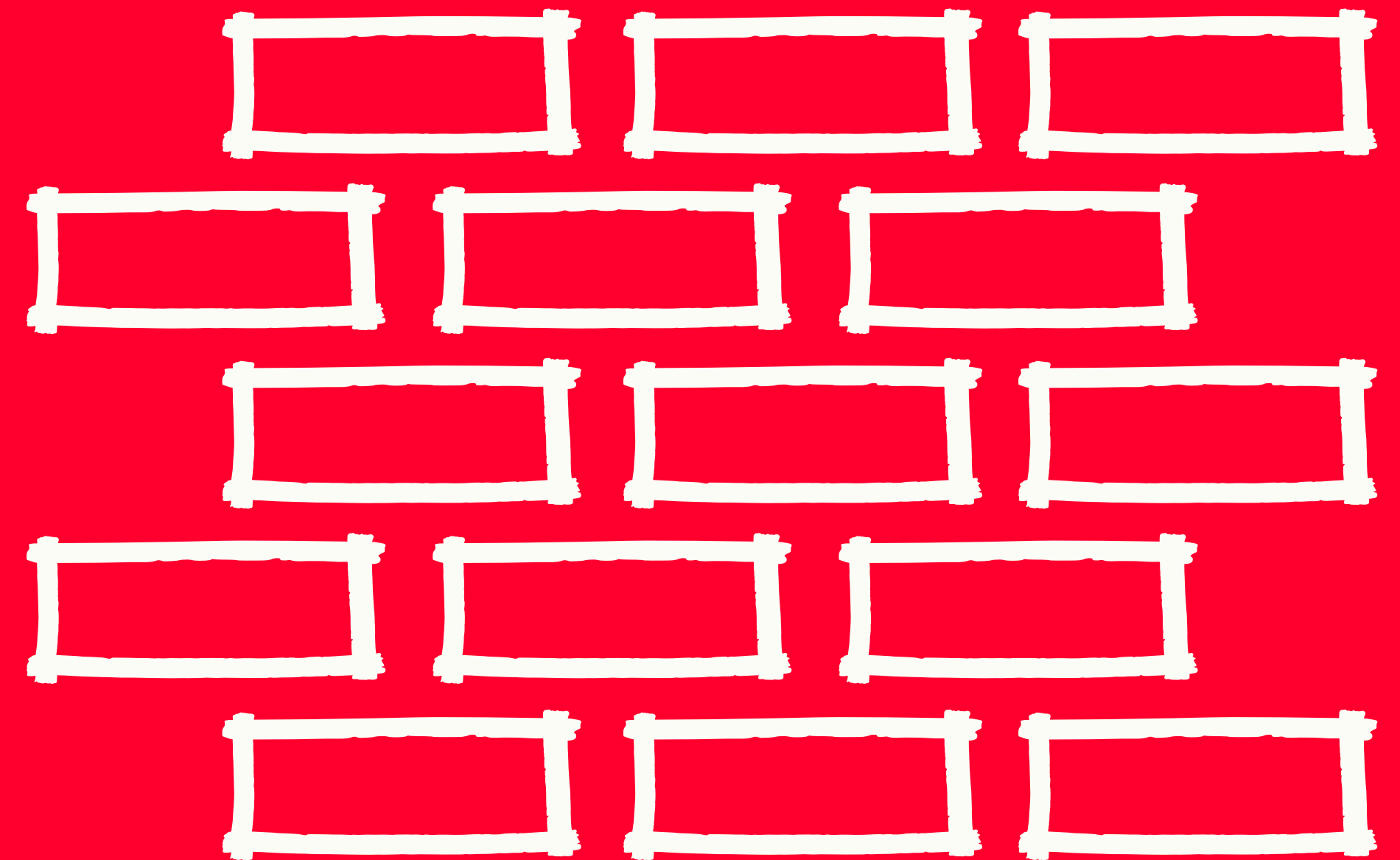
“How empowering to be part of something as well, like [Name’s] got a group where they’ve got a purpose and a name, and to be able to then bring a collective of creatively-minded people from shit-loads of different sectors together, with the purpose of trying to... I hate the word elevate. I’m not going to say the word elevate. But trying to raise the profile of a town and do good and charitable things, and bring back and allow people to be a part of that, to want to be a part of it, is really exciting. I’d be bang-up for that.”

-

“Just thinking about what [Name] was saying, that it’s the people and the businesses that make a place vibrant. It really is.”

APPENDIX 2: DRIVERS AND BARRIERS

As a way of breaking the ice (and capturing the backdrop), we asked our Creative Bubbles what was driving them and what was holding them back...



DRIVERS

WHAT IS DRIVING PEOPLE ON?

Using the virtual whiteboard, *Mural*, we asked participants to tell us what the wind in their sails is, or what is currently driving them?

The answers are unedited. We have clustered them by emerging themes.

A SENSE OF COMMUNITY

- The support of the right people.
- Building my creative community locally with our wow accountability membership and on Instagram.
- Being inspired by great artists at the local Shelley Art Group.
- Creative collaboration.
- Bringing people together safely after hard times.
- Family. Friends. Community. Learning.
- People like you bringing creatives and enthusiasms together.
- Connecting with others.
- Feeling valued.
- Trying to provide inspiration for members of Huddersfield Arts Society.
- Lots of collaboration work with creative groups - 'Give a few words' and the 'creative map'.
- Others believing in my skills.
- Support from peers.
- Feeling 'the potential' - positive energy collectively.

DRIVEN TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

- Making a difference in Kirklees.
- Wanting to make a difference and be part of driving change in fashion (which is a real ugly industry in a lot of ways - ironically!)
- Always about doing a cracking job for the client.
- Legacy - leaving something valuable behind for those who arrive 500 years from now.
- Making a positive mark on the world
- Desire for change.
- Helping small businesses with my services.

BEING VALUES DRIVEN

- Making a living. Supporting the family.
- Enjoying work life balance.
- Trying to make my family proud drives me on when things start to feel like an uphill struggle.
- Loving what I do for a living - idea-tion, creation (living my values)
- Responsibility to the team and to the clients.
- Our actors and students, their commitment to what we do.
- Supporting others.

CREATIVE PASSION

- Ideas bursting to get out.
- The love of design and desire to be creative.
- Dreams of doing something big.
- Creative freedom.
- To discover the enjoyment and craft in what I do.
- Desire/ambition to make something.
- Feel like I've got a second wind in my career.

PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

- To grow as an artist and build my network.
- Getting good grades and becoming an artist my grandma can be proud of!
- Desire to improve.
- The desire to learn and to explore creativity.
- Need to create/develop. Fear or standing still.
- The need to create and to make.
- Growth of online sales and taking control.
- The wind in my sails has been an unexpected route into creating public art, installations and beginning to be seen as an artist in my own right rather than a producer.
- The vision for the future.
- Controlling my client base.
- My vision and goals for my future lifestyle.

BARRIERS

WHAT IS HOLDING PEOPLE BACK?

Using the virtual whiteboard, *Mural*, we asked participants to tell us what is holding them back?

The answers are unedited. We have clustered them by emerging themes.

CONFIDENCE IN MY ABILITY OR CURRENT BACKDROP

- Confidence and not feeling good enough.
- Imposter syndrome.
- Mindset of myself and those around me. I always want to do more and do better.
- Insecurity, anxiety about the future. The economy, Brexit.
- Negative self talk and the 'noise' of the online life - it's worse now it's all digital.
- Frustration that we're not reaching our full potential.
- Feeling as if I have to incorporate marketing into my job roles to be more "worthy" to clients/studios.
- Undervaluing myself.

HAVING SOMEWHERE TO WORK

- Workspace.
- Lack of space - affordable studio.
- Premises - unable to run workshops from my current studio.
- Lack of space to create.
- Lack of permanent space is stopping long term planning.

ACCESS TO OPPORTUNITIES

- Finding the right opportunities at the right time.
- Lack of visibility. No matter how much work I put into marketing and networking, it still feels like a slog to get seen and connect with potential funders etc.
- Working From Home has given me a lack of visibility with the few TV production companies in Yorkshire.
- Lack of insight.
- Opportunities are not always visible.

LACK OF TIME/TIME MANAGEMENT

- Too much work, not enough time.
- Time management as a soloist.
- Time. Dedicating time to say no to other things to make space.
- Juggling multiple roles/businesses.
- Spinning too many plates!

LACK OF CONNECTION(S)

- A lack of support networks locally ie. outside directory / listing for go-to support when I need to sub-contract.
- Lack of joined-up thinking.

SPECIFIC ADVICE ON WHAT TO DO

- Self employed pension help.
- Business planning.
- Funding.
- Upscaling my business.
- Moving business to the next level.
- Getting my work online to sell.
- Lack of experience - learning most business stuff as I go (and how to be a freelancer!) and making lots of mistakes!

COVID-RELATED

- Continuing Covid restrictions - feeling we could be left behind.
- Isolation.
- Time, money, uncertainty about returning audiences for business planning.
- Lack of creative jobs available after Covid.
- The ongoing uncertainty over the pandemic and worrying about keeping audiences and artists safe, is holding me back.

FINANCIAL BARRIERS

- Having to have a day job so less time for creativity.
- Fear I guess of taking a bigger leap (the dreaded financial security) and premises.
- Funding.
- Lack of funding and modest resources.
- Mostly having to self-fund.
- Slow external processes/systems enabling funding.

APPENDIX 3: BUBBLES FEEDBACK

Shows details of feedback received on the Bubbles themselves. This is a mixture of unprompted comments during the meeting sessions and also a post-Bubbles call for feedback.



BUBBLES FEEDBACK

IN-CONVERSATION COMMENTS AND FEEDBACK DURING THE BUBBLE MEETINGS:

“I think it’s nice for me because it’s all confidence building and it’s really good to have a space where we can talk. And things that everyone is saying is helping me along the process. Yeah. It’s just nice to see everybody just be able to help each other in this situation. So it’s good.”

•

“I think even doing three weeks of this has been really interesting though, to meet other creative people in a creative business, and creative business owners locally. I don’t know how else I would have met you guys otherwise. That simple.”

•

“...it would be great to have some cross-conversation. Because this has been really informative and really useful, coming to this, because obviously we work in a not-for-profit, we work for an arts organization. But talking to people from a more commercial world, you get a different insight. I mean, my background’s business, so I understand that world anyway. And I think that is sometimes lacking within the arts. It’s something I’ve banged on about for years, that arts people are not the

best people to be running businesses. And let’s face it, these are businesses, whether you’re not-for-profit or not, you’re still a business.”

•

“...there’s only been a handful of us in each bubble, but that tiny little sense of a community group sort of thing, that real mix and fusion of people as well, who I wouldn’t have even known about necessarily, unless we’d been on these calls, but also knowing that there’s obviously all these other bubbles dotted around, and if that collective was something that came together to start a foundation of something, even if it was just a group in the area, nothing more than a directory almost.”

•

“I think Kirklees is at a really good stage now where there is a lot of happening. It feels like it’s ready for something like this to just come in. All the things we’ve talked about, really. Speaking to you guys, it just seems like there’s so much interest in that.”

BUBBLES FEEDBACK

DIRECT FEEDBACK COLLATED POST BUBBLES (AFTER THE END OF THE THIRD SESSION).

We used the *rose, thorn, bud* feedback system. Asking for one positive (rose), one negative (thorn) and one opportunity (bud).

ROSES/POSITIVES

Some really thought provoking discussion that left me feeling more hopeful.

Connecting with wider creative world in Kirklees.

Hints of possible ways forward.

Good to feel part of the wider conversation.

Connecting with like-minded professionals, gaining perspective on the industry.

Loved meeting some of the creatives of Kirklees. They began to feel like friends. It really felt like a safe and supportive place.

THORNS/NEGATIVES

Was great the sessions were timed, but could have talked/listened for hours.

Tricky timing - bedtime and tea-time slot for the kids!

A lot to cover in one hour! But it was a good start on a broad topic.

I would have like some more activities to get the creative juices flowing.

Liked the use of mural on the first session.

Not the best timing for me, missed last session.

My webcam is brutally honest.

BUDS/OPPORTUNITIES

Breakout sessions to discuss some issues/questions further...?

Live Bubble event/day with opportunity to spiral out into multiple bubbles & pull together some Kirklees threads...?

A little bio about each of us shared ahead of the meeting.

It would be great to have a follow up of some sort, to continue the feeling of being included in the conversation and it's possible outcomes.

I love the bio idea someone posted. I would love an in-person event. Nice to have a date in the diary for any action that happened as a result of this.

An introduction to the Wilson Republic database/spreadsheet of creatives ;)

THANK YOU

Wilson's Republic CIC is the Huddersfield creative network. We believe in the wealth of creative talent we have and think we should get together once in a while... Share stories, build bridges and make things happen.

Say hello:
hello@wilsonsrepublic.com

Find out more:
wilsonsrepublic.com

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