



West of England Music and Arts' Cultural Education Hub

Impact Report 2024-26 Summary

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The Cultural Education Hub

The Cultural Education Hub represents a major initiative across the West of England region, supported by £310,000 of initial funding from the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority (WEMCA) and Arts Council England. Its primary aim is to 'build connections between schools and creative practitioners to offer young people quality cultural education opportunities in the West of England'.

The Cultural Education Hub model facilitates creative connections and networks, to provide a catalyst for the introduction of new activities and opportunities, and to use this to offer quality enhancement for cultural education across the region. It does this through playing a key practical and strategic role, aiming to target resource to respond to local need and maximise impact by delivering and coordinating carefully planned programmes which embed key elements including mentoring, professional development, evaluation and network development. Its core work has included the creation of a set of programmes which partner creative practitioners with schools, deliver continuing professional development opportunities and provide creative careers events.

Purpose

West of England Music and Arts (WEMA) commissioned the University of the West of England to conduct a high-level review of the impact of its Cultural Education Hub between 2024 and 2026.

The review was conducted through secondary analysis of a wide range of evidence collated by WEMA across this period, including stakeholder feedback, project reports, commissioned research, engagement data and project films. This data was supplemented by additional collection of impact testimonials and an interview with the Hub's Programme Lead. The full impact report is available at <https://wema.org.uk/CEH-Impact-26>

Reach and Engagement

The Cultural Education Hub has achieved significant reach across the West of England through creative experiences, partnerships, professional development and careers activity, which benefit children and young people, teachers, creative practitioners, schools and enhancing regional infrastructure for creative education. Key engagement data and regional coverage are shown in figures 1 and 2 below.

Cultural Education Hub Impact Dashboard

West of England | 2024-2026



Figure 1. Cultural Education Hub Impact Dashboard

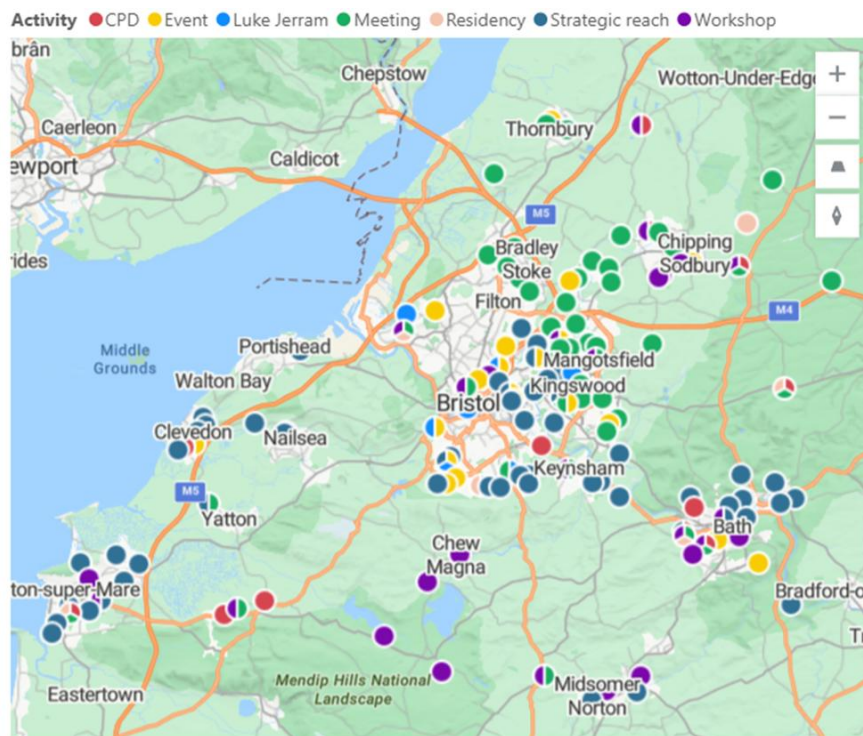


Figure 2. Cultural Education Hub Activity Across the West of England

Key Areas of Impact

Analysis of feedback, research and engagement data identified four key areas of impact across the Cultural Education Hub's programmes. Together, these findings demonstrate how the Hub has generated benefits for children and young people, teachers, creative practitioners, schools and communities across the West of England.

Impact Area 1: Enhanced Creative Skills, Confidence and Capability

Evidence indicates that participation in opportunities coordinated by the Cultural Education Hub has strengthened creative skills, confidence and expression amongst children and young people. Meanwhile, for teachers and creative practitioners, the programmes have led to increased confidence and capabilities in the provision of creative education within formal education settings.

“It made me more confident, because I was picked to do something in front of the whole class. I didn't think I would ever do that.”

Young Person - Creative Careers

“Many children didn't consider themselves arty, but the simplicity of the workshop and all the scaffolding that supported it enabled those less confident to do a lovely piece of work.”

Teaching Assistant - Creatives in Schools

Impact Area 2: Increased Access and Participation in Cultural Activity and the Creative Arts

The Cultural Education Hub has expanded access to creative experiences, cultural organisations, creative environments and professional learning opportunities, enabling children and young people, teachers and creative practitioners to build skills and confidence through opportunities that may not otherwise have been available.

“The highlights - going over to the Bottle Yard [Studios] and our children being able to see what was in place over there and so close on their doorstep.”

School Senior Leader – Creative Residencies

“Opportunities for these sorts of things are really, really important in actually giving young people in this area, in such an area of disadvantage, an opportunity to express themselves through theatre, through drama, through the arts.”

Headteacher – Creative Residencies

Impact Area 3: Strengthened Regional Infrastructure and Capacity for Cultural and Creative Education

Through funding, mentoring, professional development and brokerage, the Cultural Education Hub has strengthened regional infrastructure and capacity for cultural and creative education. This has included enhancing creative practitioner capability, supporting schools to sustain and develop creative activity and introducing a coordinated and collaborative approach to cultural education across the West of England.

“This time last year we didn't have a cohort large enough to run a Performing Arts or Drama BTEC and just by running this one project we now have a class of 30.”

School Senior Leader – Creative Residencies

“I have since delivered 16 more workshops, adjusting the plan to suit younger year groups. I have also been able to use the resources again for these additional workshops.”

Creative Practitioner – Creatives in Schools

Impact Area 4: Improved Connections, Pathways and Creative Futures

The Cultural Education Hub has acted as a regional connector across the West of England region, bringing together schools, creative practitioners, cultural organisations and communities. For young people it has increased awareness of creative career opportunities and influenced career aspirations, whilst strengthening and developing professional networks and enabling new local partnerships for teachers, schools and creative practitioners.

“(I learned) there are many different jobs... for example in theatre there isn’t only acting, there is design, lighting and costumes.”

Young Person – Creative Careers

“As a solo creative educator, it is almost impossible to make initial contact with new schools and thereby broaden the range of young people and educational establishments with whom I work. The Creatives in Schools programme gave me exactly that.”

Creative Practitioner – Creatives in Schools

Impacting the Regional Cultural Education Ecosystem

Analysis indicates the impact of the Cultural Education Hub extends beyond individual projects and activities. Evidence suggests that one of its most significant contributions may be its role in connecting schools, creative practitioners, cultural organisations and communities, through a coordinated and carefully planned model of funding, brokerage, mentoring, professional development and partnership working. The impact map in Figure 3 illustrates the interconnected and cumulative nature of the Hub’s work across the West of England region.

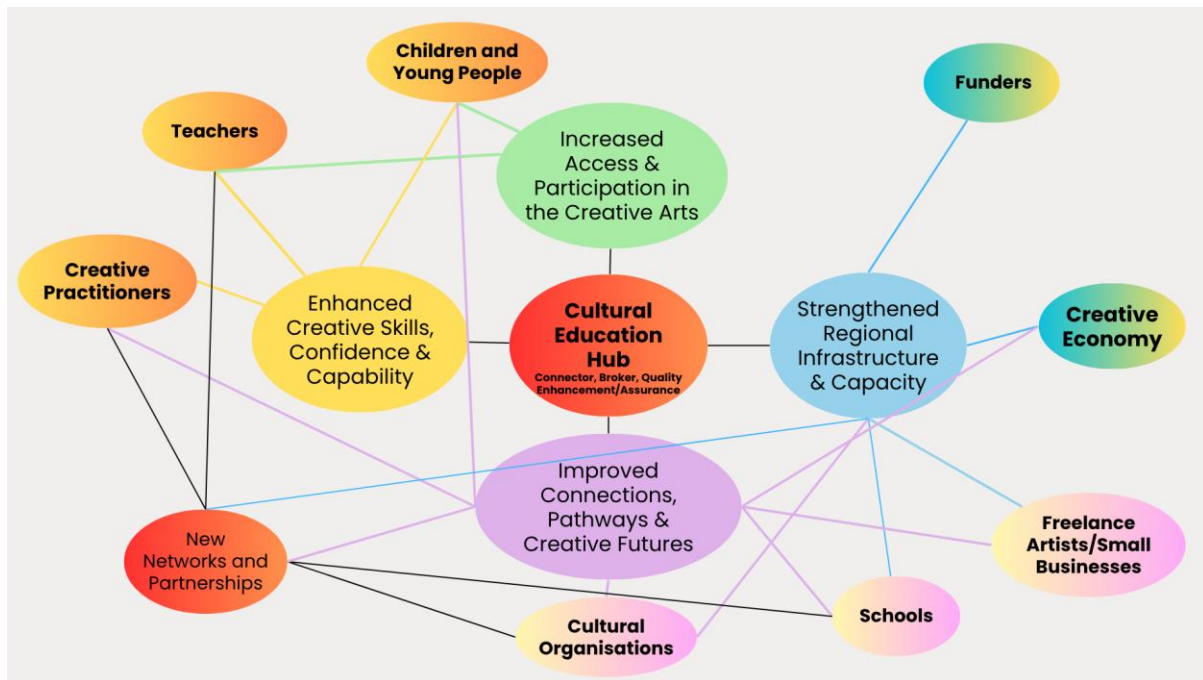


Figure 3. Cultural Education Hub Impact Map

Key Learning

- **Connections create opportunity.** Strategic brokerage and partnership-building helped schools, practitioners and cultural organisations access new opportunities and relationships.
- **Capacity-building enhances impact.** Combining funding with mentoring, professional development and collaborative design strengthened both practice and provision.
- **Place-based approaches generate wider benefits.** Tailoring activity to local needs and contexts supported inclusion, engagement and meaningful cultural participation.

Conclusions

The Cultural Education Hub has demonstrated how strategic investment in cultural education can generate impact at multiple levels: enriching opportunities for children and young people, strengthening professional practice, supporting schools, and building connections between education, culture and communities. The evidence suggests that the Hub has established an effective model for developing a more connected, ambitious and sustainable cultural education ecosystem across the West of England.