Artists Development Report

Coventry Artspace is grateful to Coventry City of Culture Trust for funding this research

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INTRODUCTION

Coventry Artspace is a member of Coventry Art Forum, a strategic group of leading visual arts organisations in the city, who have been working together to develop a collective vision on how Coventry can become a city that loves art by 2030. This group identified the importance of artists self-organising to fundraise and deliver artist-led projects in the city.

Coventry Artspace is positioned to support local artists to develop the confidence and skills to self-organise, however over the course of recent months conversations and experiences with artists have identified some areas of essential training, such as: dealing with complaints; equalities awareness; confidentiality and safeguarding that are not automatically available to freelance artists, leaving them potentially exposed when running their own projects.

As artist development, empowerment and collaboration are key objectives for Artspace, Mindy Chillery (Mindy) decided to investigate the training requirements of local artists in greater detail and consider effective and efficient ways of meeting them. To achieve this, Coventry Artspace has brought together input from a range of sources, such as artist network forums, case histories, an artists' development consultation meeting and a specific piece of research undertaken by Hardish Virk (Hardish) between 2 November and 4 December 2020 to:

- Identify the training and development requirements of local artists, including those wanting to lead projects or work with other artists
- Identify how these could be met

Coventry Artspace has used this information to design a sustainable and effective Artist Development Programme (draft) taking into account Covid-19 measures. Broad aims of this programme are to:

- Create a transparent and accessible development programme based on 3 levels: **Groundwork**, **Building** and, **Extension** (see Appendix 1, proposal for 2021-22). The information and opportunities available will come in a variety of forms, being clear what is information, guidance, professional advice or statutory/industry requirement

- Identify financial implications of the development programme and define budget required + funding streams/fundraising required. Coventry Artspace recognises that the price of training should not be a barrier to learning, whilst acknowledging that costs are involved in delivering the quality and relevance that artists have requested. Develop a transparent and equitable range of ways to pay/contribute to costs, such as 'pay what you can model', volunteering/skills exchange and bursaries

- Provide appropriate information / signposting to development opportunities for artists, with a range of accessible delivery options, i.e. online, in-person, ; utilising case studies/artists stories/example applications where possible to illustrate key learning points

- Establish the development of mentorship and critical discourse schemes to help artists feel more confident in their own practice; engage and embed continual professional development; lead their own projects and increase activity/take up of opportunities

- Utilise Coventry Artspace Audience Development Strategy with application to individual/groups of artists, projects, and collaborations

- Ensure the plan and delivery sessions are accessible and inclusive, for example using pictorial and game scenarios not just text/verbal. Performance measures will be both quantitative and qualitative, considering ease of access and outcomes particularly across protected groups, culturally diverse and neurodiverse artists, those facing economic challenges. Feedback mechanisms between artists, providers and Coventry Artspace should be robust, effective, and responsive

- Where possible utilise the skills, experience, capacity and funding available within the resources known to Coventry Artspace (Artists Listings artists, Trustees, local organisations) that can be utilised for mutual benefit to deliver the development plan. Support successful and sustainable projects/collaborations led by artists, including socially engaged practices, to support their ability to develop methodologies that are legally compliant, demonstrate best practice and manage risk effectively

ARTISTS' TRAINING NEEDS RESEARCH

Coventry Artspace engaged consultant, Hardish Virk who is a member of the Artspace Board and has a background/experience in Audience Research as well an established network across the multicultural communities of Coventry, making him well-placed to support delivery of this piece of work.

Hardish and Mindy developed the survey questions and then Hardish undertook the analysis and produced an initial 'Artists Training Needs Report' (see Appendix 2 and 3). The surveys were promoted using SurveyMonkey through Coventry Artspace networks email list, plus the social media channels of Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. The survey was introduced as follows:

Artists' Training Needs Research Survey

Introduction

Coventry Artspace is working with other leading visual arts organisations in the city to make Coventry a city that loves art by 2030. As part of this we recognise the importance of artists self-organising to fundraise and deliver artist-led projects, and we are keen to support their confidence and skills to do so. We know that some training which is is essential to good project management is not easily available to freelance artists, leaving them potentially exposed when running their own projects. We are investigating these training needs in greater detail and this survey is designed to help with that. The findings will inform a report which will identify training needs, how best to deliver training and by whom. The research is funded by Coventry City of Culture Trust.

At the end of the form there are a few quick equalities questions. These will help us to understand levels of participation in our survey and where there might be gaps in the information collected. The survey is anonymous and so your personal details will not be collected. All questions are optional. The survey should take approximately 5 minutes to complete.

Deadline for submission: 5.00pm on Friday 20 November 2020

We thank you in advance for completing this survey.

Hardish also undertook desk research into existing training available regarding training identified in the first 9 key training areas in the survey (Question 7, Appendix 1).

Coventry Artspace engaged freelance artist, IJE to write this Artists Development Report, utilising the range of information from the survey, case studies, consultations, and feedback.

IJE is also a member of the Artspace Board and her experience at a senior level developing local, regional, and national strategies and working with partnerships in the local government/health/voluntary sectors lends itself to bringing the key issues into focus for action and ensuring that the proposed Artspace Artists Development Programme is relevant, stretching though achievable, and evidence based.

KEY OBSERVATIONS FROM THE SURVEY RESEARCH

There were 48 online surveys completed representing only a small proportion of the local artists' community. Not all questions were answered by every respondent and some questions had multiple responses. Most respondents were visual artists, many of whom had more than one practice area. All artists welcomed the idea of training and development opportunities, especially if they were relevant to their practice, could enhance their technical/practical skills, help them identify/access funding and/or exhibition opportunities and, work better with others/manage projects.

- 73% of respondents identified as female, with 4% non-binary/described another way. 17% of all the artists considered themselves part of the LGBTQ community
  Most artists were aged between 25-44, with only 8.5% 65+ and 6.4% 18-24. Just under 44% of the artists declared a disability or long-term condition
  Whilst 50% said they did not consider themselves to have economic challenges (e.g.

benefits or a low income), significantly 37.5% of the artists did and 12.5% preferred not to say

- Just under 23% of respondents identified as ethnically diverse, with just 16% who identified as Mixed Race, Black, Asian British, Indian, Beninese Congolese and Guadeloupean or black Caribbean and Indian Caribbean. This is significantly lower than 33% of Coventry population being ethnically diverse (mid-2018 statistics) although it should be noted that the survey also included artists living in Warwickshire with arts practice connections to Coventry Artspace/Coventry, where diversity rates are lower

- Majority of the artists had some level of socially engaged practise and whilst most of the artists worked with other artists (25% regularly and 54% sometimes), it is important to note that 21% were solo artists
Less than 7% were new artists with a practice less than 12 months old, and 56% had been a practising artist for over 3 years
Most of the artists earned less than 10% of their income from working as an artist whilst only 21% said they earned 50% or more of their income from their art

- It was difficult to disaggregate by percentage between answer choices re the question on art education, however a significant majority of artists had a degree and/or postgraduate level of art education with just 10% having no formal art education

- The most accessed training in the last 3 years was health and safety, safeguarding, general data protection regulations (GDPR) and risk assessment
The next cluster included introduction of Equality Act 2010, ethics and confidentiality, social media management, website development and marketing. Copyright law, complaints and dealing with galleries were the least accessed
A small number of artists had received other training such as: applying for Arts Council funding, art handling, 1st Aid at work and, bespoke training in time lapse cinematography

- The top 6 areas of training from the list given that artists would find most useful were (in order of popularity), working with galleries, contracts and agreements, website development, technical skills, curatorial skills, and copyright law
Other training artists would like to see were: unconscious bias training, public speaking, selling art and products, translating studio practice into exhibition opportunities/applications, and shaping residency applications

- The question in relation to how much artists are willing to pay was a challenge to disaggregate, in all likelihood because the amount was dependent on a range of factors, such as level of training, relevance, quality, duration and, whether skills gained would directly improve practice. There were a few artists that said they could not afford to pay. The average amount artists could afford to pay for training was £100, from 28 responses that gave a figure (this does not include 2 artists who would pay up to £2,000 for very experienced, relevant training)

- And finally, in response to other comments on training, artists would like to see available to artists running project in Coventry can be grouped into 5 main areas:
    - o **Finance**: applying for funding (particularly Arts Council England) /grants/residencies/projects; bid writing; free opportunities
    - o **Working With Others**: working with non-arts organisations; working with fabricators/technicians/curators; management/administration such as health and safety, contracts, payments, general office skills; collectives/groups and websites
    - o **Writing Proposals**: creating a good CV; applications for exhibitions/to galleries; writing about your work; ongoing research
    - o **Mentoring**: continuous personal development; supporting recent graduates/new artists; developing an artist profile; navigating the 'art world' locally/nationally; networking
    - o **Digital**: affordable/appropriate software including 'open-source', technical skills, IT safeguards, website development,

KEY OBSERVATIONS FROM THE DESKTOP RESEARCH

The desktop research was undertaken by Hardish to identify local, regional, and national organisations leading on training identified in the first 9 key training areas in the survey (Question 7, Appendix 1).

Equalities Training	Ethics & Confidentiality
Copyright Law	Risk Assessment
Health & Safety	Safeguarding
General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)	Contracts
Complaints Procedure	

- The research showed that there were a range of options in these areas at venues and online, with topics like equalities being more widely available than copyright law. There was also a range in the duration and level of training offered

- In point 10 on the table, there are a number of arts organisations who offer more arts specific training such as copyright law, contracts, social media management, website development, marketing, working with galleries, technical skills, curatorial skills and fundraising

- Some training might not need an external service provider as it might be possible for it to be delivered internally (e.g. Trustee) or with/ by a partner (e.g. local authority, council for voluntary organisations or gallery)

- The impact of Covid-19 pandemic (e.g. lockdown, lack of uptake, financial challenges) may result in some training organisations being temporarily or permanently closed

KEY OBSERVATIONS FROM ORGANISATIONAL LEARNING AND ARTISTS' FEEDBACK

In recent years Coventry Artspace has occasionally become involved in situations to support artists/organisations when things have not gone to plan and difficulties have arisen. Learning points from these experiences have informed our conclusions, alongside the evaluation pilot of the Art of Coventry programm; feedback from Artspace monthly Artists Meetings; and the Artist Training Focus Group Zoom meeting 9.12.20 (see Appendix 4, comments and notes)

- It is important that artists who have socially engaged practices, those working/collaborating with community groups/organisations or engaging with the broader public in a formal way have basic knowledge of equalities, confidentiality, GDPR, safeguarding, risk management, copyright and contracts. They also need to be able to seek information/guidance from reliable sources – this could be a key role for Coventry Artspace

- Several generic courses (non-arts specific) can be identified and the providers and rationale about why these would be beneficial for artists could be on the website for information and signposting

- Coventry Artspace should create its own suite of information, training, and guidance

- There are opportunities for entrepreneurial activity and engagement within the business sector

- Where requests have been made for broad subjects like website design or funding advice – these need to be drilled down to what will be useful, to whom and how best is this accessed

- Learning about equalities, diversity and accessibility could be enriched by delivery/illustration/examples from artists who have had direct experience of these issues, particularly helping artists with the nuancing often involved these areas

- An important, yet often neglected and/or costly area for artists is digital software to enhance/change their practice. A number of artists fed back that this was a key issue for them, how to find and know what open-source software is available/suitable, plus support with coding, moving image/sound editing and becoming proficient

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