



# **South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority**

## **Culture, Arts & Heritage Engagement Report**



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**“Less suits, more  
weirdness!”**

“

**There is a gap between establishment art institutions and that of amateurs and those embedded in the community. This gap is justified by art institutions on the basis of preserving standards. This division is not so apparent in other cities and stultifies creativity. We need to recognise and celebrate all art from wherever it derives.**

”

# Executive Summary

The success of our engagement process over the past five months relies on the enthusiasm and time of hundreds of people working across the region in Culture, Arts and Heritage (CAH). This includes freelancers and volunteers, as well as people working in public institutions, private organisations and community groups. We are deeply grateful for their input and energy. We also recognise that too often people are consulted, 'engaged with' and ultimately left fatigued and disengaged by the lack of tangible outcomes.

The purpose of this work was to devise, manage and run a programme of engagement with CAH organisations and practitioners across South Yorkshire. We wanted to reflect the diversity and richness of those actors through open dialogue, as part of a wide-reaching and participatory process. Our aim was to understand the remit and role of the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA) in reversing the conditions which have led to an under-investment in CAH across the region. We believe this report can act as a basis for the SYMCA to take on a transformational remit and leadership role in this innovative, complex and critical ecosystem of actors and organisations who do such valuable work.

The report finds that by the very nature of their passions, experiences, expertise and the often under-resourced reality of their endeavours, the contribution of people, groups and organisations in South Yorkshire working on CAH is pluralistic, economic, innovative, adaptive, at times weird and often wonderfully inspiring. The work of the CAH

sector coheres pride, place and person where they are. Often grounded in particular places and in service to those communities, their work is integral to the social bonds which bind us as a region. CAH has a unique and innovative role to play in how we define and redefine ourselves amid the rapidly changing contexts and challenges of the world and region we live in.

Our report shows that the boundaries which inform the CAH sector are porous, multigenerational and multi-disciplinary. If the engagement work of the last few months reveals anything, it is that a failure to recognise, lead-in-service, and value this characteristic of CAH – by institutions, economies, organisations and cross-sectoral beneficiaries – is at the root of the region's failure to capitalise on the opportunities that CAH offers for greater prosperity, improved health and wellbeing, social cohesion and better educational and employment outcomes.

Our conclusions call for SYMCA to recognise the sum contributions of the CAH sector as a 'glue' which narrates, inspires and directly informs the health and innovative capability of our region's social, environmental, political and economic fabric. It recommends that SYMCA, with its remit of regional coherence – must then strategically invest in sustaining, convening and brokering the entangled sum of those interactions across the region. At the same time, SYMCA must also invest in the granularity of CAH as a sector (of many sectors) of often directly parallel, pervasive and complimentary industries and communities – communities and industries



which would benefit from regionally-focused interventions which 'join up' infrastructure, capital assets, people and programmes across South Yorkshire.

Critically, the report concludes that the systemic failure of the region to value CAH holistically has a number of symptoms identified by our respondents. These include issues of equity, inclusion, visibility and authenticity in how public institutions, organisations and practitioners engage with each other across the sector. This is not a 'top down' challenge of mapping or making the invisible grassroots visible to decision-makers in ivory towers. It is a deeper challenge to create an equitable, inclusive and authentic 'gateway' through which

self-identified creatives and organisations may enter, and in so entering have agency, access and recognition for their work and its important contribution to the fabric of South Yorkshire.

The report contains a set of recommendations for interventions that SYMCA could make to begin this long-term and necessary transformation. It also offers a series of profiles on innovative methodologies, concepts and tools that could assist in this process.

Following the full set of recommendations, the report names five actions SYMCA could start work on immediately:

- ➔ **Make a bold and clear commitment about the value that all aspects of CAH has to SYMCA, as well as the level of long-term investment the MCA will provide to catalyse innovation in the sector. This statement should show how the MCA will be prioritising CAH in both the structures of the combined authority and the LEP.**
- ➔ **Convene leaders of local authorities and public funders for a series of relational meetings centred around the social and economic innovations and opportunities of CAH, sharing problems 'warts and all' and addressing regional collaboration and shared-investment strategies.**
- ➔ **In collaboration with local authorities, plan a large-scale public engagement exercise on a regional narrative for CAH which centres on the important contributions of the sector.**
- ➔ **Bring a diverse range of people in CAH together to begin co-designing a cultural framework for the region. This should include a regional narrative, an investment vehicle, a regional promotion strategy, and digital democracy tools to enable the whole sector to participate, network and convene effectively ongoing and on a regional basis.**
- ➔ **Develop a programme of investment to resource peer-to-peer training between CAH organisations that prioritises regional collaboration, grant funding, decision-maker access, cross-sector networking and the skills for delivering social and economic innovation.**

# Brief, Context & Scope

## Brief & Context

This project and final report arose from an 'invitation to tender' from South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA) in late 2021 "to devise, manage and run an engagement process across the creative sectors across South Yorkshire and offer recommendations for future areas of priority and action."

Central to this work's purpose are the ambitions outlined in [SYMCA's Strategic Economic Plan 2021-2041](#), which states that "to realise our full potential, we need a transformational programme of investment in our cultural and creative assets."

The SEP puts an emphasis on innovation as a driver for economic renewal. It acknowledges the importance of the economy and SYMCA's own remit within it, but critically it ties economic improvement to improvements in people's quality of life in the region: "We will grow an economy that works for everyone. We will develop inclusive and sustainable approaches that build on our innovation strengths and embrace the UK's fourth Industrial Revolution to contribute more to UK prosperity and enhance quality of life for all."

There is also an ambition to develop a formal strategy for Culture, Arts and Heritage in the region, which will "clearly set out the vision for the sector in the region, identify priority areas moving forwards and make the case for further investment in the sector," complementary to existing economic

strategies at SYMCA and able to act as a regional framework for cultural strategies and other work by the four local authorities.

For this project we have considered several other recently completed and ongoing pieces of work related to CAH, regionally and nationally. These include:

- ➔ The [\*Unlocking the Potential of Arts, Culture and Heritage in South Yorkshire\*](#) report, authored by ChamberlainWalker on behalf of SYMCA and the four local authorities.
- ➔ [\*The Economic Impact of Covid-19 on the Culture, Arts and Heritage Sector in South Yorkshire and comparator regions\*](#) report and associated research, published by the University of Sheffield.
- ➔ The national [\*Cultural Cities Enquiry\*](#) report.
- ➔ Central government's [\*Levelling Up White Paper\*](#).
- ➔ [\*The Case for Culture: What Northern Culture Needs to Rebuild, Rebalance and Recover\*](#), published by the Northern Culture All-Party Parliamentary Group.
- ➔ The [\*NP11 Place Strategy\*](#) consultation and interim report.
- ➔ [\*The Sheffield Culture Collective Strategy\*](#).
- ➔ Doncaster's draft Cultural Strategy and surrounding borough-level engagement work, supported by Doncaster Creates.

➔ Things To Do, Places To Go: Rotherham's Cultural Strategy 2019–2026.

- ➔ Historic England and Historic Environment Forum's Heritage Counts research, including detail about the economic impact of heritage.
- ➔ Joined Up Heritage Sheffield's A Heritage Strategy for Sheffield 2021–2031.
- ➔ The work of the South Yorkshire Music Board, founded by SYMCA in 2018.
- ➔ The content of various CAH events hosted or enabled by SYMCA, including the South Yorkshire Cultural & Creative Industries Network sessions delivered in collaboration with Showroom Workstation.
- ➔ Fifth Sector's data collection and research project focussed on the cultural and creative industries in South Yorkshire, which is running parallel to our work and was also commissioned by SYMCA in late 2021.

## Scope

As stated in the brief, this project represents “a programme of engagement with the region-wide sector with all its diversity and richness... a thorough and open dialogue with sector stakeholders in a far-reaching and participatory process, with a clear focus on our primary aim to reverse the trend of under-investment in South Yorkshire.”

Although it could form the basis for one, the development of a cultural strategy for South Yorkshire is not within the scope of this work.

Our engagement work has also been restricted specifically to people, groups and organisations who *work* or *volunteer* in Culture, Arts and Heritage in the region – not members of the general public.

For the avoidance of doubt, our engagement work has focused on Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham and Sheffield. It doesn't include the 'non-constituent' members of SYMCA – the council areas of Bassetlaw, Chesterfield, North East Derbyshire, Derbyshire Dales and Bolsover.

**“Great to see that this work is finally being done! It's so important that it's continued to be pushed towards the right decision-makers.”**

# Methods & Approaches

## Early Frames

From the outset of this engagement work we have approached the project with the following key issues in mind:

- ➔ Our methods of engagement have to be open, flexible and participatory. Given the range of stakeholders – from established institutions to voluntary community groups – this might mean different approaches to having different conversations.
- ➔ Stakeholders across the region are experiencing ‘engagement fatigue’. They have taken part in many similar exercises recently and they’re not always sure what *tangible change* happens as a result. Understanding these frustrations and trying to break down barriers to participation is critical.
- ➔ Given SYMCA’s desire to act to support CAH, this project is not primarily about making the case for or stating the value of CAH to South Yorkshire – it’s about understanding a complex web of stakeholder concerns and ambitions, and weaving them together into a coherent set of possible, practical recommendations for action by SYMCA.
- ➔ Given SYMCA’s strategic position in the region, and the opportunities this holds for supporting CAH, any recommendations need to look at its potential to act and think strategically and at a systems level – as a convener, a ‘thought leader’ and an institution that can see ‘across the piece’.
- ➔ It is critical that the people and organisations who take part in this project are part of an ongoing process and can see the impact of their contributions.
- ➔ As a Sheffield-based organisation, Opus must collaborate with partners working across the region to avoid ‘parachuting’ into communities, networks and places it has less knowledge of than people on the ground.
- ➔ Wherever possible and practical – to avoid being ‘part of the problem’ in sectors which are often unpaid or underpaid – stakeholders should be paid for their involvement in this work.

## Steering Group

A steering group was set up to scrutinise and strengthen this project. 15 people accepted an invitation to the group, with a wide range of stakeholders represented, from institutions and funders to individual artists and practitioners, with combined experience in CAH of many decades across all four local authority areas, and nationally. Individuals and smaller, non-salaried stakeholder members were paid for their involvement in the steering group.

The groups core functions have been:

- ➔ Providing Opus and the MCA with expertise, sense checking and access to networks.
- ➔ Ensuring inclusive practice across theme, geography, size and protected characteristics.
- ➔ Holding Opus and the MCA to account in this work.
- ➔ Provide constructive feedback for planned activities.
- ➔ Board members acting as ambassadors and connectors.

Members met four times across the lifetime of the project on virtual video calls, with contributions and critiques also encouraged over email before and after meetings.

## Regional Reps

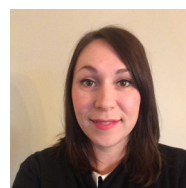
Acknowledging that Opus' work is centred in Sheffield, and therefore its first-hand knowledge of CAH across the region is less developed, we sought freelancer 'Regional Reps' in Barnsley (Hayley Youell and Jemma Conway), Doncaster (Olivia Jones) and Rotherham (Vicky Hilton) to support this project.

Each Rep brought on-the-ground knowledge of Culture, Arts and Heritage in their borough, as well as existing networks and ideas for how best to engage with stakeholders near them.

Regional Reps supported key stages of this project. They helped us map stakeholders, coordinated and hosted our roundtable events, conducted one-to-one interviews, and attended project steering group meetings.



**Vicky  
Hilton**



**Jemma  
Conway**



**Hayley  
Youell**



**Olivia  
Jones**



**Ben  
Jackson**



**Tchiyiwe  
Chihana**

### Our steering group members:

**Jon Guest** – SYMCA

**Sara Unwin** – University of Sheffield

**Leanne Buchan** – Acting Assistant Director for Culture, Sport & Tourism, Rotherham Council

**Iain Bennett** – Fifth Sector

**Vicky Hilton** – Producer and artist (Rotherham)

**Nathan Geering** – Theatre Deli (Sheffield)

**Finn Warman** – Andro & Eve (Sheffield)

**Hayley Youell** – Creative Recovery (Barnsley)

**Trevor Mitchell** – Historic England

**Juliet Farrar** – Doncaster Creates

**Ruth Nutter** – Heeley Trust, formerly Ruskin-in-Sheffield (heritage, community arts, wellbeing)

**Eelyn Lee** – Artist, filmmaker and co-founder of Social Art Network

**Kedisha Coakley** – Visual artist

**Tongesayi Gumbo** – Artistic Director at Khula Arts and multi-arts performer

**Olivia Jones** – Doncopolitan



# Project Phases

Before we started work, we broke this project down into distinct but overlapping phases:

- ➔ **Exploration Phase** – Establishing themes and priorities for surveys and interviews, designing questions and having 1-to-1 structured conversations with key stakeholders.
- ➔ **Design Phase** – Agreeing approaches, methods and range of stakeholders with SYMCA.
- ➔ **Mapping Phase** – With a view to engagement, understanding the landscape of potential stakeholders, what's already here and where the gaps are.
- ➔ **Engagement Phase** – Establishing themes and priorities for surveys and interviews, designing questions and having conversations.
- ➔ **Data & Evaluation Phase** – Collation and analysis of interviews and surveys.
- ➔ **Report Phase** – Reporting back to MCA on the priorities, recommendations and views collated.

# Design

In the first weeks of this project, building on our tender document, we fleshed out its design before we started engagement in earnest. During this period, we set out some core principles, outlined below.

## Definitions & categorisation

While stakeholders will be working or volunteering in Culture, Arts and Heritage, they will ultimately self-select to be involved. We will not 'police' what does and doesn't fall within definitions of CAH. For the purposes of ensuring some comparability between our engagement work and other related studies, we will use the *Standard Industrial Code of economic activity* (SIC) as a way of capturing what area(s) stakeholders are working in.

However, we will provide the option for an *Other (please specify)* category in our survey, and we will add additional fine detail below some of the broader SICs, e.g. *Performing Arts – Dance, Performing Arts – Theatre*, etc – as well as simplifying language where we can for accessibility reasons.

## The survey

Our survey should take no longer than 15 minutes to complete and we should take measures to simplify the process – e.g. offer 'tick any that apply' checkbox answers where possible, and limit the number of mandatory questions.

We will be proactive in seeking responses to our survey, taking advantage of the networks available to us via regional reps, the steering group, the MCA and other partners, as well as seeking to engage local and regional media.

## Engagement activity plan

On the advice of the project steering group, we will host our roundtable discussion events before going live with our survey, giving stakeholders a way into the project and 'teeing up' the survey launch.

The 'order of play' for our engagement activities will therefore be: roundtable events, survey, 1-to-1s, final reflective workshop.

“

**Attention and resource  
is still weighted to known,  
larger CAH organisations  
which do not have the  
same levels of expertise  
and collaborative, rooted  
networks to benefit  
the public good.**

”

# What We Found:

→ <u>Exploration Chats</u>	13
→ <u>Roundtables</u>	19
→ <u>Survey</u>	28
→ <u>One-To-Ones</u>	49





## What we found:

# Exploration Chats

**Aim:** Gathering context, understanding, regional intel and national picture.

**Who:** Key stakeholders and institutions, including funders, local authorities and people in the MCA's Policy team.

**How many:** At least 25 interviews.

**Format:** Conversation via video conference.

**Time commitment:** 40-60 minutes.

**Participant payment:** None - all participants salaried.

Starting at the very beginning of our project, we spoke to key stakeholders and institutions, including funders, the MCA policy team and institutions who interact regularly with CAH sectors, about our project with a view to understanding the wider picture in South Yorkshire and raising awareness of the project.

We have grouped our findings from these conversations under a few headings below. These cover both what stakeholders said about themselves, and what others said about them.

**“Involvement in any art form develops creativity, and creativity brings new solutions to old problems.”**

# General Points

- ➔ No organisation, individual, group or institution holds a truly regional understanding of CAH in South Yorkshire.
- ➔ The CAH 'sector' has many stakeholders and actors of all kinds, spanning almost every area of public policy. It's porous, dynamic and often self-initiated, which makes it challenging to fully recognise, understand and advocate for.
- ➔ There is a widespread recognition of strengths within places – but a lack of vision as to how to join these up and generate mutual benefits.
- ➔ There is a historic and ongoing lack of leadership within CAH in each local authority area, but in particular across the region. In this context, the appointment of a Project Director for Arts, Culture and Heritage to SYMCA has been universally welcomed.
- ➔ Many groups and organisations don't want to 'scale-up' in the business sense. This suggests a need to find more pathways to support and nurture CAH.
- ➔ People and organisations are exhausted with consultations and engagement exercises. This poses a challenge for meaningful future engagement work.

## Emerging Value Frames

Early on we found three central 'value frames' – drivers for why stakeholders work in CAH in the region. Most combine two or more of them in their work:

- ➔ **CAH for its own sake** – i.e. inherent value of output.
- ➔ **CAH for public good** – e.g. as a tool for addressing collective problems, like isolation or community cohesion challenges, by applying new thinking and creativity.
- ➔ **CAH for economic growth** – e.g. tourism/visitor economy, business, employment, gross value added (GVA).

# Stakeholders

## Local Authorities

- ➔ Each has a different preference/mix of the above value frames, but not all of them. This causes gaps in thinking and dissonance regionally. Different approaches are fine but need visibility and synthesis.
- ➔ Councils not talking consistently and effectively about CAH – with each other, or with funders and other stakeholders.
- ➔ Not clear where CAH ‘sits’ within different councils. Each approaching differently, has different resource and capacity.
- ➔ Each council is putting together a Place-Based Investment Plan, which could include CAH. Barnsley furthest along with this.

## SYMCA

- ➔ It's not clear where CAH sits within SYMCA at present. There is no existing team or board, and only one staff role directly associated with it.
- ➔ Other MCAs are further along in supporting CAH. For example, West Yorkshire MCA has committed £11m for CAH funding for three years and implemented a cultural framework for decision-making.
- ➔ SYMCA doesn't need convincing of the value of CAH or that it should act to support it. The question is: how can it act systemically to bring about a big change?
- ➔ SYMCA is not a funder. It can disburse targeted funding, but ultimately the Policy team and senior officers are more interested in strategic interventions.
- ➔ SYMCA has a role to play in convening councils and stakeholders of all sizes, creating breathing room and space for joining up.



## Educational Institutions

- ➔ CAH has a vital role in educational attainment and critical thinking.
- ➔ Lacking cultural leadership and strategy which advocates for how culture and education can mutually benefit one another.
- ➔ The lack of mobility (culturally and in terms of transport links) between 'places' in South Yorkshire.
- ➔ Importance of access to culture being framed as an 'entitlement' for those in education and the role of schools in contextualising CAH.
- ➔ Collaborations between organisations in Rotherham and Sheffield as an example of good practice in sharing development costs and mutual benefit.
- ➔ Dissonance between our ease in valuing sport and our lack of ease in valuing CAH.

## Working in Health and Wellbeing

- ➔ The pandemic had a positive impact on showing the relationship between CAH and health and wellbeing.
- ➔ Concerns around how the MCA might advocate for CAH and Health and Wellbeing (HWB) with the establishment of new regional health bodies (ICS).
- ➔ Health and wellbeing outcomes still not valued as strongly as economic outcomes, despite the interplay between them.
- ➔ Need for strong cultural leadership from the MCA advocating for health and wellbeing outcomes in CAH.
- ➔ Doncaster local authority well regarded in this space and example of DARTS as good practice in centering the relationship between CAH and health and wellbeing.
- ➔ Desire for more integration between CAH and Public Health portfolios in local authorities and in the MCA.

**“Help us make the connection between creativity, culture and education - and the link to positive future employment. This could and should be a SY-wide endeavor.”**

## Arts Organisations

- ➔ Kate Brindley's role in cultural leadership in the region is positive but needs more resources and convening power.
- ➔ A need for bold cultural leadership and strategic investment from the MCA and local authorities in CAH.
- ➔ Getting the balance right between local authorities 'ownership' of venues and CAH assets creating barriers for engagement, versus a lack of engagement and abdication of leadership from local authorities resulting in a lack of investment and appreciation of CAH by local authorities.
- ➔ In-fighting between local authorities creates a difficult environment for regional collaboration.
- ➔ Museums network as an example of good collaboration and information sharing in the CAH sector.
- ➔ The need to 'get real' about the visitor economy. It should not be prioritised as the most important impact of CAH.
- ➔ The importance of a regional narrative reflecting the lived experience and characters of people who live here.
- ➔ The unrealised opportunity for cross-sector collaboration in funding bids – for example between the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) and CAH.
- ➔ The importance of leadership and case studies which advocate for the role of CAH in communities and health and wellbeing.

## Funders

- ➔ New funding is already being teed-up for South Yorkshire, in recognition of historic relative lack of funding – e.g. ACE Priority Places (Rotherham and Barnsley), Levelling Up funding from central government.
- ➔ Funders are savvy. They expect to see public, private and cultural partners in the room. They will see through the insincere and the surface level.
- ➔ Funders want to invest in the conditions for growth and improvement in CAH – the ecology or ecosystem – not just capital projects like buildings or specific programmes of delivery.
- ➔ They want partnerships to be equitable, authentic, collaborative and multi-sector, and they don't always see this happening in South Yorkshire. They also want to be included in committees, working groups and steering groups – to be considered stakeholders in and of themselves.
- ➔ Leadership and 'buy-in' from local authorities is absolutely key to funder and investor confidence. "Local authorities often underestimate their own power," one funder told us. They can't "abdicate leadership" or "outsource their ambition".
- ➔ In some cases there is a notable gap between how local authorities see their relationships with funders, versus how funders see them.

“

**“Get the public into venues. Get art to the public (the ones in the crap housing estates). Grow cultural activity from small groups and people already doing stuff, don’t set up new festivals and high profile activities because another city has one.”**

”



## What we found:

# Roundtables

**Aim:** Local authority specific discussions, bringing out local-level issues.

**Who:** Representative selection of stakeholders working/volunteering in CAH in each of the four local authorities.

**How many:** 60-80 attendees (15-20 per local authority).

**Format:** 4 roundtable discussions, led by Regional Reps and hosted at centrally-located venues.

**Time commitment:** 60-90 minutes.

**Participant payment:** £40-100 (at discretion of Regional Reps, for non-salaried attendees or those not representing major institutions).

With support from our regional reps, we hosted four roundtable discussions to kick off our engagement project, covering each of the four local authority areas. There were nearly 70 stakeholder participants across the four local authority areas. Attendees were selected and invited by our Regional Reps, a mix of individuals and freelancers, organisations and institutions, from grassroots groups to councils.

Sessions were facilitated by Regional Reps (and by Opus in Sheffield) and framed around three discussion points: **What's working? What's not working? What would you change?**

Below we outline some of the key themes brought out by CAH stakeholders: firstly, issues that were brought across many or all of the sessions; secondly, issues that were unique to each session.

**N.B.** While the below doesn't include absolutely all contributions made at the roundtable events, some contributions listed under Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham and Sheffield came from a single attendee.



# What's Working?

## Cross-cutting regional themes

- South Yorkshire is 'getting on with it' - DIY approach, not asking for permission.
- Collaborative, cross-sector working is second nature to many individuals and organisations.
- Strong sense of place and identity within lots of CAH work in the region.
- Appetite for more CAH activity within town/city centres - to make them a destination for culture.
- Some good common/easily-accessed physical spaces available - galleries, museums, historical sites, etc.
- Many volunteers who are passionate about CAH.
- Young people are engaged, ambitious and doing their own thing.
- There are some funding opportunities, despite barriers.





## Barnsley

- ➔ Strong on: spaces and venues – library, museums, Lamp Room, colleges, galleries.
- ➔ Good connections with Council. Culture is important to them.
- ➔ Unique identity – “Famously tough crowd.”
- ➔ Loyalty is important to Barnsley audiences.
- ➔ CAH has good support from local businesses.
- ➔ A strong visual arts sector.

## Rotherham

- ➔ Strong on: spoken word and poetry, tourist attractions, international acts and people from Rotherham.
- ➔ “Quietly brilliant and aching with potential.”
- ➔ There are two Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs) in Rotherham.
- ➔ Good places to meet – for formal meetings or community table events.
- ➔ Females leading – e.g. WOW: Women of the World Festival.
- ➔ Communication between users and those heading the projects is strong.
- ➔ Recent improved advocacy in heritage and culture.
- ➔ University Centre and 2 colleges – their contributions should be celebrated.

## Doncaster

- ➔ Strong on: live music, indie galleries, sport.
- ➔ Low rents.
- ➔ People have facilitated spaces and buildings for CAH use – e.g. Art Bomb.
- ➔ Fewer students moving away than previously, which benefits CAH.
- ➔ The local authority CEO is good on culture and has some good people on the Council culture team.
- ➔ Collaborative culture makes things feel more inclusive, less ‘tiered’ or elitist than other places.

## Sheffield

- ➔ Strong on: festivals, DIY music, new talent.
- ➔ Community response to Covid, during pandemic and now, has been strong and inspirational.
- ➔ ‘People power’ is working – e.g. 2021 popular vote for Council to move to committee system.
- ➔ People see Sheffield as an attractive place to move to; this is good for CAH.
- ➔ A sense that minority voices and under-served communities, having fought for more agency and visibility in Sheffield, are beginning to be heard more in CAH.
- ➔ The positive impact of Covid-19 in mobilising calls for greater equity and representation in CAH.
- ➔ Young people building more projects and making their own spaces.

**“Invest, enable collaboration; don’t just work with the big players.”**

# What's Not Working?

## Cross-cutting regional themes

- ➔ Lack of knowledge of SYMCA: who it is, what it does and why.
- ➔ Wider ecosystem of CAH – much of it informal, grassroots, self-initiated – not acknowledged (e.g. by councils, media), not supported or developed.
- ➔ Public transport is a barrier to accessing CAH – particularly in out-of-town areas.
- ➔ All four local authority areas are too centralised in general. Outer areas struggle to get involved, collaborate, access funding etc.
- ➔ Lack of joined-up plans leads to poor circulation of information and gaps in awareness.
- ➔ Council comms are patchy, often not inclusive or strategic.
- ➔ Organisational communications are not coordinated. This leads to duplication, competition and lack of awareness.
- ➔ Everywhere except Sheffield is often perceived – or feels it is perceived – as not being 'big enough' to pay attention to.
- ➔ Lots of people are working for free, whether on passion projects or as volunteers.
- ➔ Talented people leave the region because there are not enough opportunities, particularly outside Sheffield.
- ➔ Funding can be bureaucratic and inaccessible – again, especially for people working in out-of-town areas, or those not as well networked. It can push people and organisations unwillingly into 'professionalising' – changing what they do, who they work with, what language they use to talk about what they do, etc.
- ➔ A perceived separation between informal grassroots CAH activity (i.e. smaller venues, local bands, freelancers) and larger institutions working in CAH.

## Barnsley

- ➔ “This event is the first time being able to talk to like-minded individuals/orgs.”
- ➔ There is no Barnsley-specific network/forum [for CAH]. There is a lack of connections due to geography, funding, time, space, people, etc.
- ➔ Lack of professional leadership.
- ➔ Local press is intermittent in its coverage of CAH.
- ➔ Clique groups – ‘one rule for one, one rule for others.’
- ➔ Outside perception of Barnsley [is negative].
- ➔ Lack of suitable venues in the whole borough. Need a music venue, e.g. like Leadmill, Greystones or the Academy in Sheffield.
- ➔ Not enough investment in the sector.
- ➔ A lack of studio spaces to support the visual arts sector.

## Rotherham

- ➔ High cost and unavailability of meeting space.
- ➔ Council dominance in the arts is not creating space for the grassroots. Council staff turnover is high and Council bureaucracy is a barrier when trying to get something done.
- ➔ Many people and organisations are working on project by project basis, so work falls off and is unsustainable.
- ➔ There is no way for people to access information about Rotherham places, after a similar project to Visit Sheffield fell through.
- ➔ People from marginalised backgrounds are asked to do things for free and there is a lack of representation in decision-making which leads to stereotyping.

## Doncaster

- ➔ Funding opportunities are not shared widely. Elitism and sense of competition.
- ➔ Access to funding can be really hard – one example: Additional Restrictions Grant during Covid. Many gave up due to complexities.
- ➔ Local authority connectivity is not good – under-resourced, no arts officer, can be managerial in approach. Need to push LA to increase spending.
- ➔ ‘Art for art’s sake’ is not being argued. Definitions of culture are too narrow.
- ➔ All events (“especially those for queer people”) are in ‘wet’ venues. Licences to serve alcohol often exclude youth involvement, which is key.
- ➔ High earners who work in Doncaster don’t live in Doncaster – so often not enough economic and cultural buy-in from the people who are making decisions.
- ➔ The region is ‘Sheffield-centric’. Doncaster is overlooked as a result.
- ➔ CAH work is outsourced to people outside Doncaster. More focus on local talent is needed.

## Sheffield

- ➔ Heritage is not being preserved or prioritised.
- ➔ Local authority policies are incoherent and disconnected. e.g. despite a wealth of empty/disused space, there is currently no city plan for ‘meanwhile use’ of property.
- ➔ There is a lack of understanding about the real impacts of Brexit on CAH.
- ➔ There is a lack of diversity – in cultural leadership specifically.
- ➔ Culture often linked to tourism but they’re not the same thing: tourism encourages spend; culture is about experiences.

# What Would You Change?

## Cross-cutting regional themes

- ➔ Better transport links to outer areas, particularly later services for night-time events.
- ➔ Better access to funding.
- ➔ Better communication across CAH sectors.
- ➔ A joined-up, coherent plan for CAH sectors.
- ➔ Educating and upskilling local authority representatives, so that they value and can advocate effectively for CAH.
- ➔ There is too much dependence on volunteers - we should pay people working in CAH.
- ➔ There should be better opportunities for people from diverse backgrounds to take on leadership roles in CAH.
- ➔ More equity of funding and opportunities is needed. 'Sheffield-centric' is a common theme in all areas outside Sheffield.
- ➔ 'More meetings like these' [roundtable discussions], to happen regularly.
- ➔ Capitalise on 'wasted' spaces in town/city centres left empty.

Could do more  
to empower  
women across  
all communities

24

of im



Projects.

Not using  
empty spaces.  
And professional  
spaces.

Lack of pride  
from some  
of the Rother-  
ham community.

## Barnsley

- ➔ Barnsley needs external representation to be the 'voice of the sector' to government, funders, business.
- ➔ We need to better recognise the contributions of CAH to Barnsley – financial, social, cultural, health and wellbeing.
- ➔ More support for places where culture and community happen.
- ➔ More emphasis on Barnsley's unique identity is needed, and associated development work.

## Rotherham

- ➔ "Proper", joined-up marketing of events is required.
- ➔ More engagement with business and volunteers, creating pathways for volunteers to get into paid employment.
- ➔ More ambassadors and strategic champions for Rotherham's CAH sectors.
- ➔ More collaboration with education sector.
- ➔ A joined-up heritage trail for Rotherham is needed, linked with events and festivals.
- ➔ New funding pots, like artistic residencies.

## Doncaster

- ➔ A central hub for creative things in Doncaster; a creative academy with scouts (like football!).
- ➔ More artists should be encouraged to set up businesses and social enterprises.
- ➔ Funding opportunities need to be more visible, with less paperwork attached.
- ➔ More safe spaces are needed for CAH, especially 'dry' venues which are friendly.
- ➔ We need to widen perceptions of what culture is. Doncaster still has an industrial, 'learn a trade' mindset.
- ➔ More designated arts staff are needed within LA: artists in residence in LA departments? Cultural lens applied to all decision-making? "Less suits, more weirdness!".
- ➔ More life-changing experiences and disruption of the everyday is needed, to break down barriers for involvement and appreciation (e.g. 'Ice Cream Opera' in Bradford).

## Sheffield

- ➔ We need to take the climate emergency seriously – through CAH.
- ➔ We should upskill and educate decision-makers to understand culture and be able to advocate for it.
- ➔ The board structures of large cultural venues should change – bring young people, communities in, for example, and use this to inform a wider strategy.
- ➔ Support people from grassroots to have their voice heard, to be able to understand and influence these structures.

**"We see the same old white, middle-aged, cis het males soaking up a lot of the work. Let's lift up the next generation."**







“

**Disadvantaged communities are excluded from the mainstream - it's about perceptions, marketing and engagement - but it's ultimately about having the resources (money and time) to engage and a narrative that is inclusive.”**

”

## What we found:

# Survey

**Aim:** Broadest engagement: statistics, key themes and quotes.

**Who:** All CAH stakeholders identified during mapping phase, plus others.

**How many:** 238 survey responses from across the region.

**Format:** Google Form circulated via email. Follow-ups via other means, with support from Regional Reps in Rotherham, Barnsley and Doncaster. Link shared more widely via social media, steering group members, local groups/partnerships, etc.

**Time commitment:** 15 minutes maximum.

**Participant payment:** £60 cash prize draw for ten randomly-selected participants.

With support from our Regional Reps, steering group and CAH networks alongside a dedicated PR campaign, we received 238 responses to our public survey in the space of four weeks. This met our expectations for the number of responses we might be able to gather in the timeframe.

The survey was designed to take 10-15 minutes to complete and we were careful to limit the number of open response questions to make the survey as accessible and easy to complete as possible. This also enabled us to capture a range of quantitative and qualitative data to inform our conclusions and recommendations.

Overall, we were pleased with the distribution of those responses across local authority areas, sectors and different-sized organisations and individual practitioners. We note that, in terms of demographics, more responses from diverse identities of gender, ethnicity and age would have been preferable. To mitigate this we have attempted to prioritise those voices from under-served groups in our drawing of data from the report and in the conclusions section.





# Key Themes

Below we outline some of the key themes to come from the responses to the survey as a whole, followed by a more detailed breakdown of the quantitative data from respondents.

Following this we articulate key themes which came from the qualitative, open response questions in the survey around innovation, the role of place and anything else that respondents felt we should know.

## Top level findings:

- ➔ Responses largely congruent with roundtable outputs.
- ➔ A lack of funding and access to funding, particularly for small to medium-sized organisations.
- ➔ The need for more diversity in cultural leadership in CAH.
- ➔ A lack of access, investment and engagement from local authorities.
- ➔ A lack of 'joined-upness' and collaboration across the sector and with other sectors.
- ➔ A desire for a shared message or narrative for the region.
- ➔ A lack of understanding of CAH and its value by local authorities.
- ➔ A lack of good transport links.
- ➔ A lack of engagement with grassroots by both institutions and large organisations.
- ➔ The need to capitalise on 'wasted' spaces in town/city centres left empty.
- ➔ A lack of understanding as to what the MCA is and its remit.

# Demographics of respondents

We felt that the rate and range of respondents to the survey was positive. The responses we received felt impassioned and led by experience. We obtained 238 responses to the survey in under four weeks with a strong regional and cross-sector spread.

Our approach to getting participation in the survey included the leveraging of both informal grassroots relationships and more traditional and established creative and voluntary sector networks. This generated a plurality of responses and insights which we were really pleased with. It enabled us to showcase a number of voices and experiences which are rarely visible in reports for large institutions on CAH.

Positively, both respondents and our steering group commented on the design of the survey questions as having been effective in opening up and generating authentic engagement from people working in CAH across the region.

Where improvements could (always) be made is in the number of respondents working in CAH who identified as either young (18–24) or from non-white ethnicities. While we did receive responses from young people and a range of people who identified as not having a White ethnicity, more responses from across these identifications would always improve the data. In doing so, we would get a more nuanced regional understanding of the experiences of often underserved communities and individuals.

## Summary analysis on demographics:

- ➔ **56.4%** of respondents identified as female
- ➔ **78.2%** of respondents identified as 'White British'
- ➔ **90%** of respondents maintained their assigned birth gender
- ➔ **26.4%** of respondents were between 25–39 years old
- ➔ **2.1%** of respondents were 18–24 years old
- ➔ **45%** of respondents were over 50 years old
- ➔ **78.2%** of respondents identified as heterosexual
- ➔ **20.1%** of respondents identified as having a disability or health condition

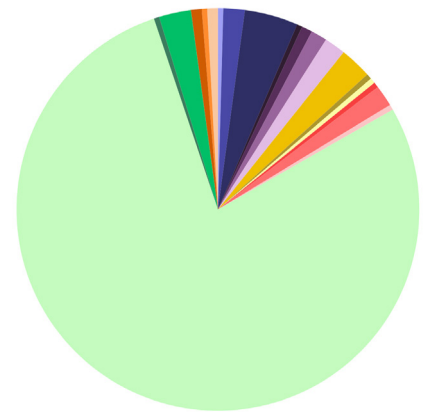
## How old are you?

- 18-24 (2.1%)
- 25-29 (5.2%)
- 30-34 (11.6%)
- 35-39 (9.4%)
- 40-44 (11.6%)
- 45-49 (9.9%)
- 50-54 (11.6%)
- 55-59 (9%)
- 60-64 (7.3%)
- 65+ (17.6%)
- Prefer not to say (4.7%)



## Which of the below best describes your ethnicity?

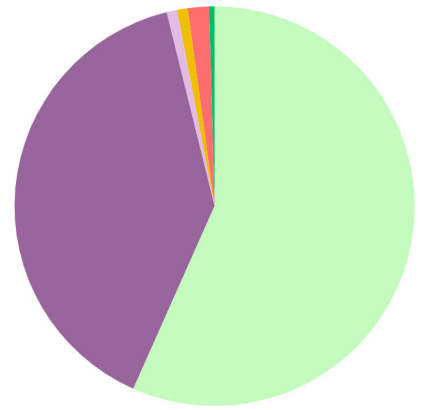
- Any other Asian or Asian British background (0.4%)
- Any other mixed or multiple ethnic background (1.7%)
- Any other white background (4.3%)
- Arab (0.4%)
- Asian or Asian British Chinese (0.9%)
- Asian or Asian British Indian (1.3%)
- Asian or Asian British Pakistani (1.7%)
- Black or Black British African (2.6%)
- English Romani Gypsy (0.4%)
- Humani (0.4%)
- Of African/Bantu descent (0.4%)
- Prefer not to say (1.7%)
- Roma (0.4%)
- White - British, English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish (78.1%)
- White - Gypsy or Irish Traveller (0.4%)
- White - Irish (2.6%)
- White/Asian (0.9%)
- White/Black African (0.4%)
- White/Black Caribbean (0.9%)



**“This survey is encouraging to see, because the questions seem like this is being taken seriously...”**

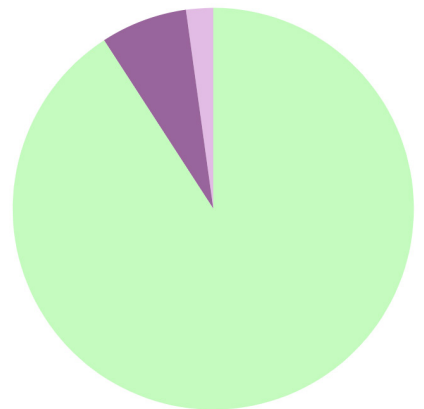
## Which of the below best describes your gender?

- Female (56.7%)
- Male (39.5%)
- Non-binary (0.9%)
- Genderfluid (0.9%)
- Prefer not to say (1.7%)
- Human (0.4%)



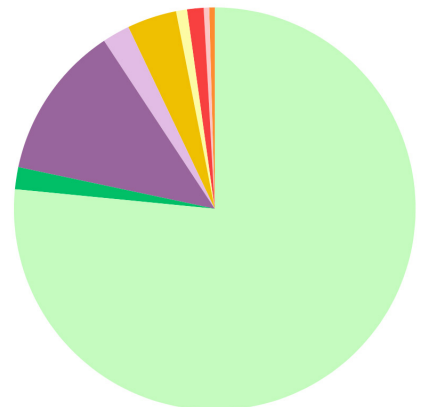
## Is your gender different from the one you were assigned at birth?

- No (90.8%)
- Yes (7%)
- Prefer not to say (2.2%)



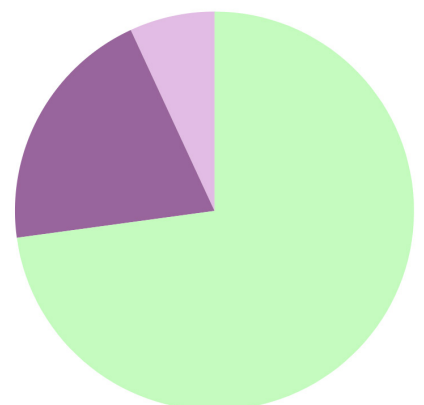
## Which of the below best describes your sexuality?

- Heterosexual (76.5%)
- Queer (1.8%)
- Prefer not to say (12.4%)
- Gay man (2.2%)
- Bisexual (4%)
- Pansexual (0.9%)
- Gay woman/lesbian (1.3%)
- Human (0.4%)
- Celibate (0.4%)



## Do you consider yourself to have a disability or health condition?

- No (72.8%)
- Yes (20.3%)
- Prefer not to say (6.9%)

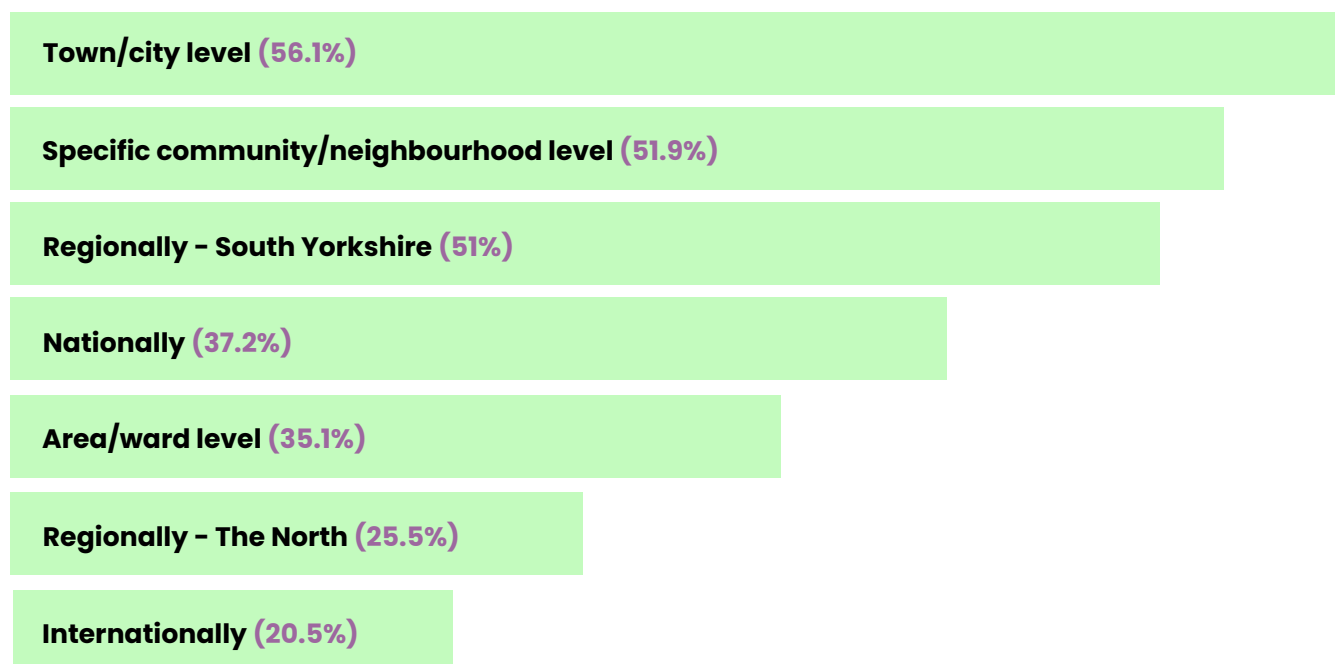


# Where do you work?

## Summary

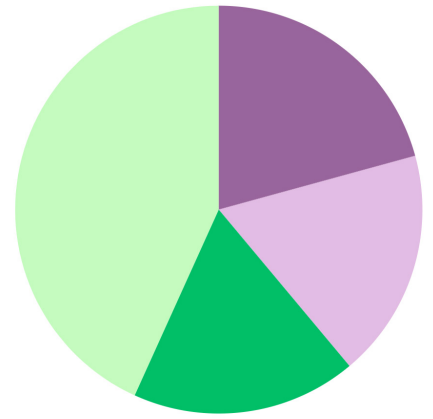
- ➔ We obtained responses from across the region, covering the majority of postcodes.
- ➔ We surpassed our ambition to get a minimum of between 40-60 responses from each local authority area.
- ➔ We saw a lower volume of responses from people outside of urban centers in the region.
- ➔ Unsurprisingly we saw more responses from Sheffield, reflecting the larger number of creatives operating in the city and the importance of Sheffield as the only city in the region, demonstrating strong cultural leadership in CAH.
- ➔ We saw a large number of respondents working regionally (51%).
- ➔ We saw a large number of respondents working in specific communities and at neighbourhood level (51.9%).

## At which of the below levels do you or your organisation currently work?

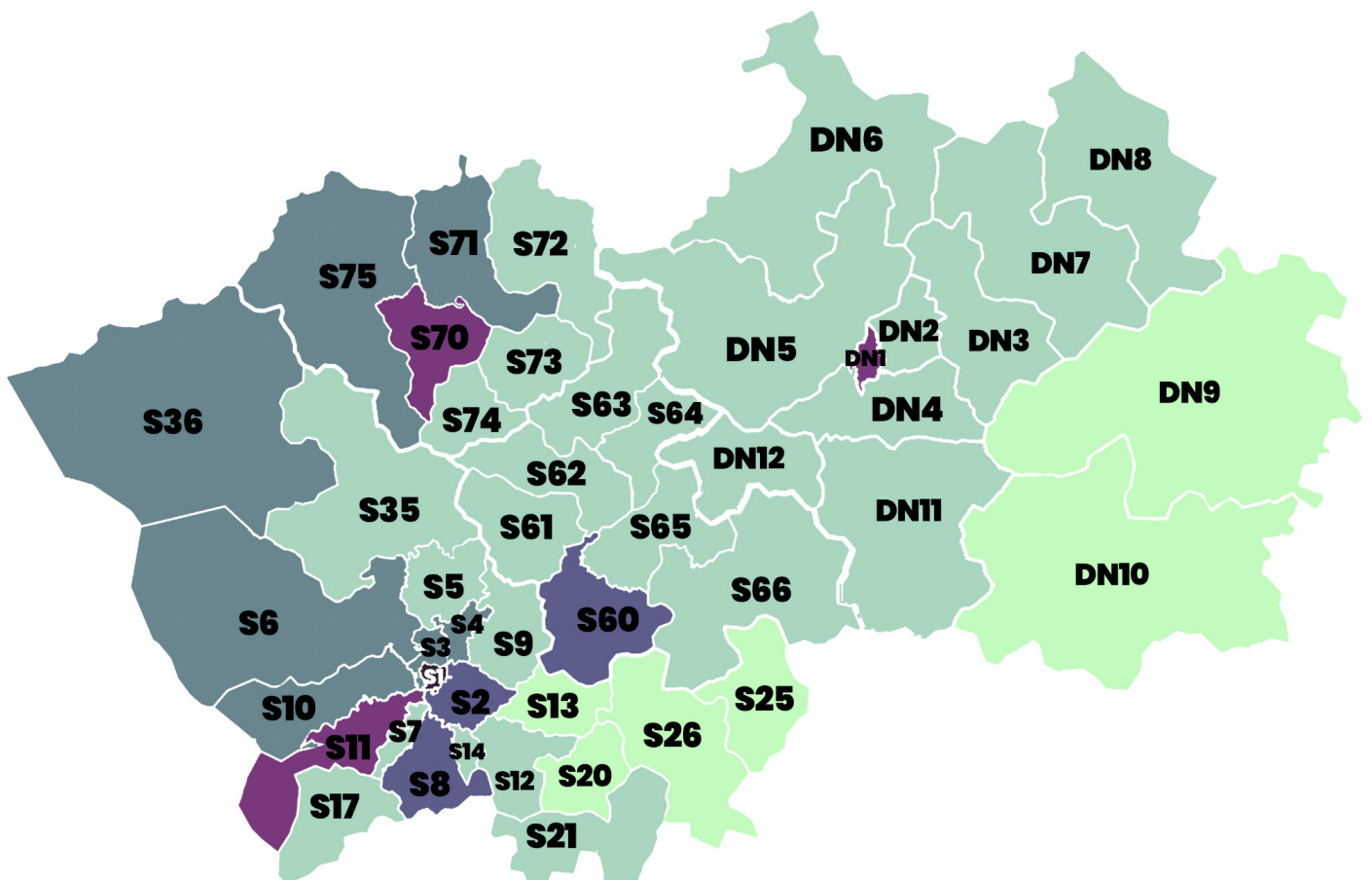


## Which local authority do you operate in?

- Barnsley (20.7%)
- Rotherham (18.2%)
- Doncaster (17.9%)
- Sheffield (43.2%)



## In which postcode area are you/your organisation based?



### Number of responses



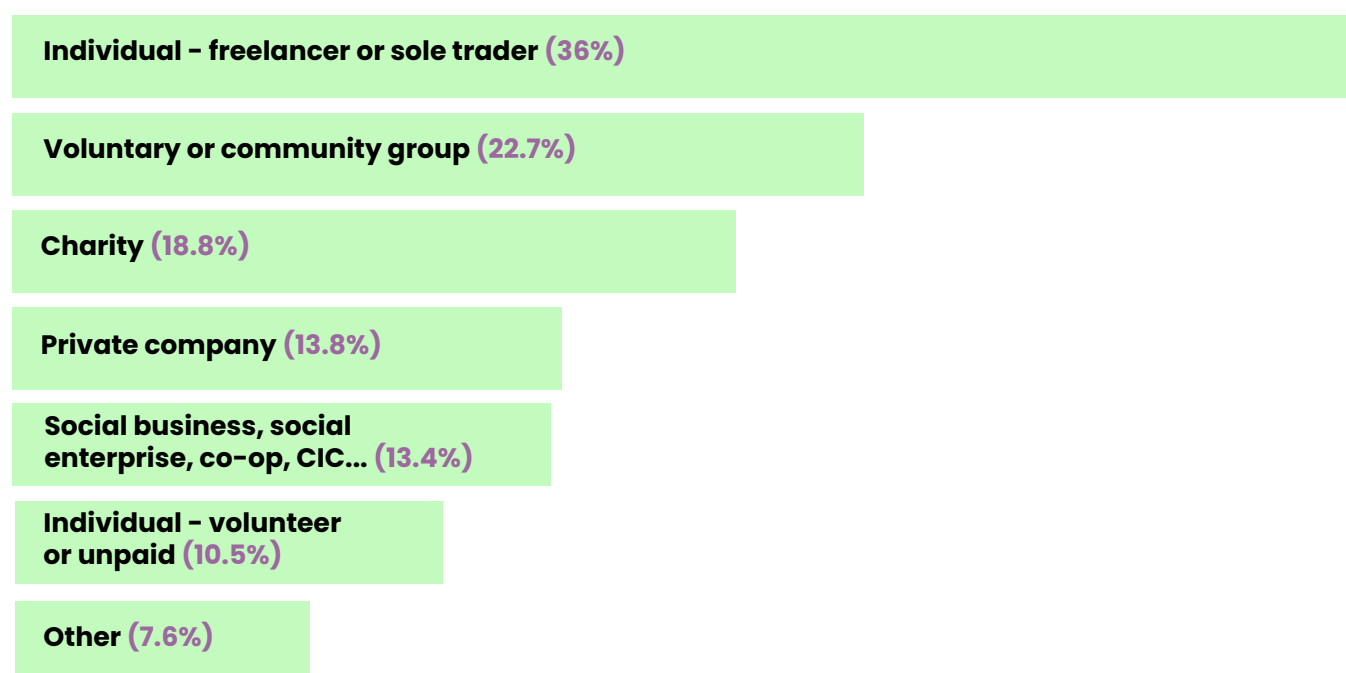
# Sector & turnover

## Summary

Respondents were largely micro-organisations or sole traders/freelancers, operating across a range of activity types within CAH. A majority of respondents had been working in CAH for over six years.

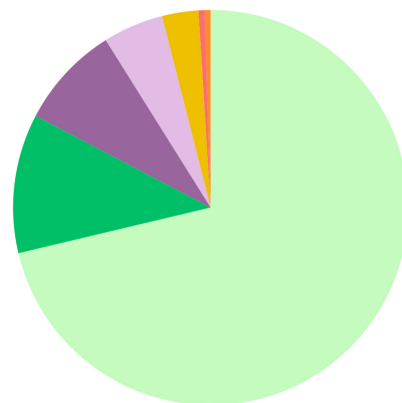
- ➔ The majority of respondents had turnovers of less than 50k per year.
- ➔ Most respondents employed less than ten people.
- ➔ A large number of respondents identified themselves as sole traders or freelancers.
- ➔ Respondents operated through a variety of structures including social enterprise.
- ➔ Respondents were spread over a wide range of sectors within the broader CAH sector.
- ➔ **43.5%** of respondents identified as working within community and participatory art.
- ➔ **15.5%** of respondents started work over the course of the last two years.

## Are you a...?



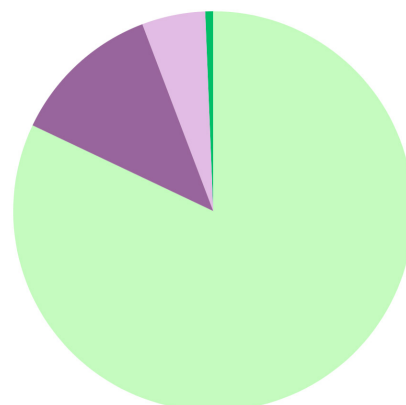
## What is your annual turnover?

- Less than £50k (71.3%)
- Less than £200k (11.4%)
- Less than £500k (8.4%)
- Less than £2m (5%)
- Less than £10m (3%)
- Less than £50m (0.5%)
- £50m+ (0.5%)



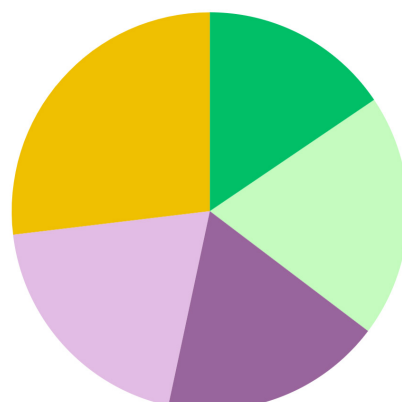
## How many paid staff members do you have?

- Less than 10 employees (82.1%)
- Less than 50 employees (12.2%)
- Less than 250 employees (5.1%)
- 250+ employees (0.6%)



## How long have you or your organisation been working in Culture, Arts and Heritage in South Yorkshire?

- 0-2 years (15.5%)
- 3-5 years (19.7%)
- 6-10 years (18.1%)
- 11-20 years (19.7%)
- More than 20 years (26.9%)



## Which Culture, Arts & Heritage sectors do you work in? Top five responses:

**Community and participatory art (43.5%)**

**Visual and physical art (37.7%)**

**Cultural education (27.2%)**

**Museums and heritage institutions (24.7%)**

**Music – live, installations and festivals (24.7%)**



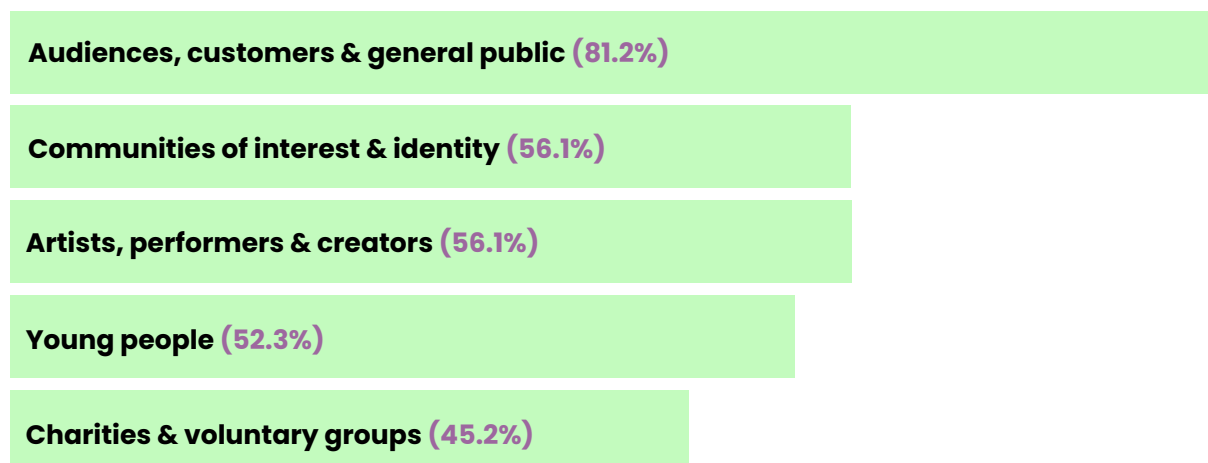
# Who do you serve & why?

## Summary

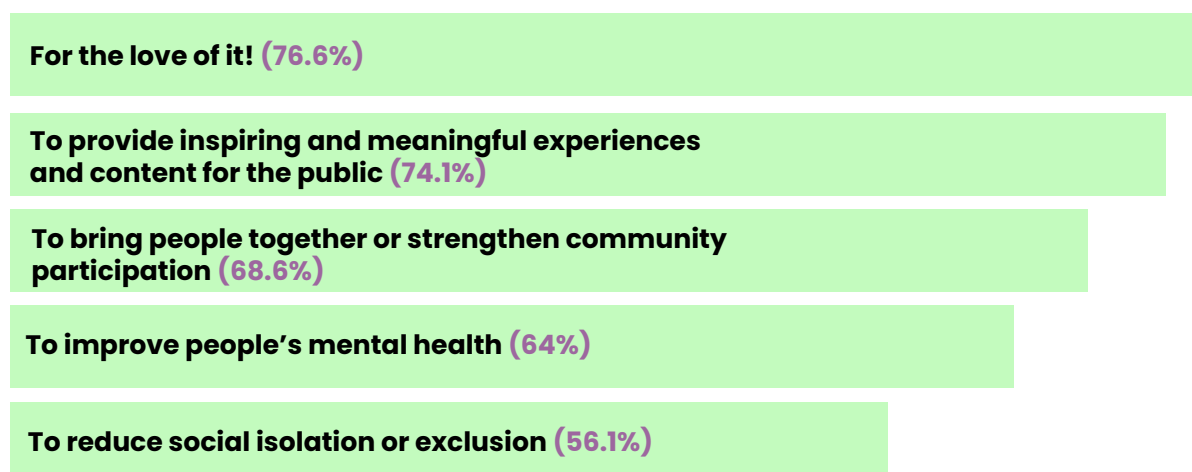
The majority of respondents to the survey were motivated by being in service to improved social outcomes and communities.

- ➔ A majority of respondents identified as serving audiences, customers and the general public.
- ➔ 56.1% of respondents identified as serving communities of interest and identity.
- ➔ 68.6% of respondents said they work in CAH to strengthen community participation.
- ➔ A majority of respondents identified their reason for working in CAH as led by social innovations or impact.

## Who do you serve? Top five responses:



## Why do you work in Culture, Arts & Heritage? Top five responses:



# What do you do well and what holds you back?

Respondents identified inspiring delivery as a significant strength. Alongside this they also indicated working collaboratively and empowering communities as another strength. Holding them back was a lack of grant funding and investment from local authorities.

- ➔ A majority of respondents identified high-quality and inspiring experiences and content as what they do best.
- ➔ 56.5% of respondents identified impact and reach within communities, with 48.5% naming co-creation and collaboration with communities as something they do well.
- ➔ A lack of grant funding was the top response to what is holding you back, closely followed by a lack of investment from their council.
- ➔ Only 30.5% of respondents identified a lack of private sector investment as holding them back.

## What do you do well?

### Top five responses:

High-quality, inspiring experiences and content (73.2%)

Networking and connecting with others (61.5%)

Reach and impact within communities and audiences (56.5%)

Empowering and enabling people to get involved (53.6%)

Collaboration and co-creation with communities (48.5%)

## What is holding you back?

### Top five responses:

Lack of grant funding (61.1%)

Lack of investment from your council into CAH (39.7%)

Not enough joined-up thinking with others in the sector (34.7%)

Lack of support from your council (31.8%)

Lack of investment from private sector into CAH (30.5%)

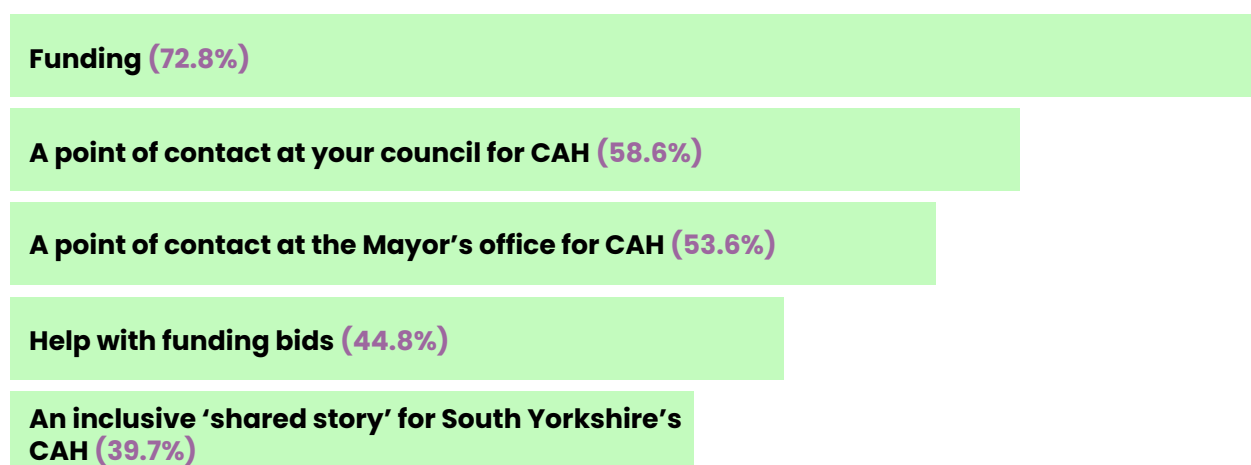
# What would help you?

Respondents identified a lack of funding and funding support as critical to the success of the sector. They called for a clear CAH narrative for the region and emphasized the importance of good communication and a point of contact at SYMCA and also within local authorities.

- ➔ 72.8% of respondents identified funding and help with funding bids (44.8%) as critical in helping them.
- ➔ A majority of respondents also identified a point of contact at local authorities and at SYMCA as being key to helping.
- ➔ A shared story for CAH South Yorkshire also received prominent support from respondents.

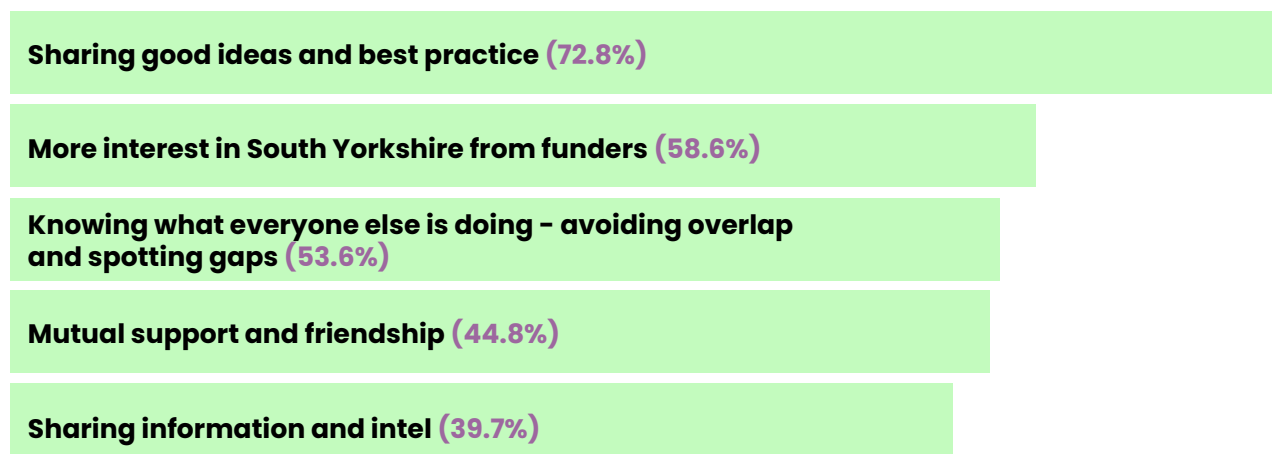
## Which of these would help you?

### Top five responses:



## If Culture, Arts and Heritage sectors in South Yorkshire were more joined-up and connected, what would the benefits be to you or your organisation?

### Top five responses:



# Who do you work with?

## Summary

Respondents identified themselves as part of a range of different sectors, industries, professions, places and communities. This reflects the pluralistic nature of CAH and the sector. Respondents illustrated their motivation to work cross-sectorally, particularly with actors who contribute to improved quality of life outcomes.

- A majority of respondents identified themselves as part of a community (70.9%).
- A majority of respondents identified themselves as part of an industry or a sector.
- 39.7% of respondents identified themselves as a part of a 'place'.
- The majority of respondents said it was important for them to work with other CAH organisations and freelancers, as well as people in a community and community groups, educational and health and social care institutions.
- A majority also again emphasized the importance of working with their council.
- Collaborating with MPs and faith organisations appeared to generate the least interest from respondents.

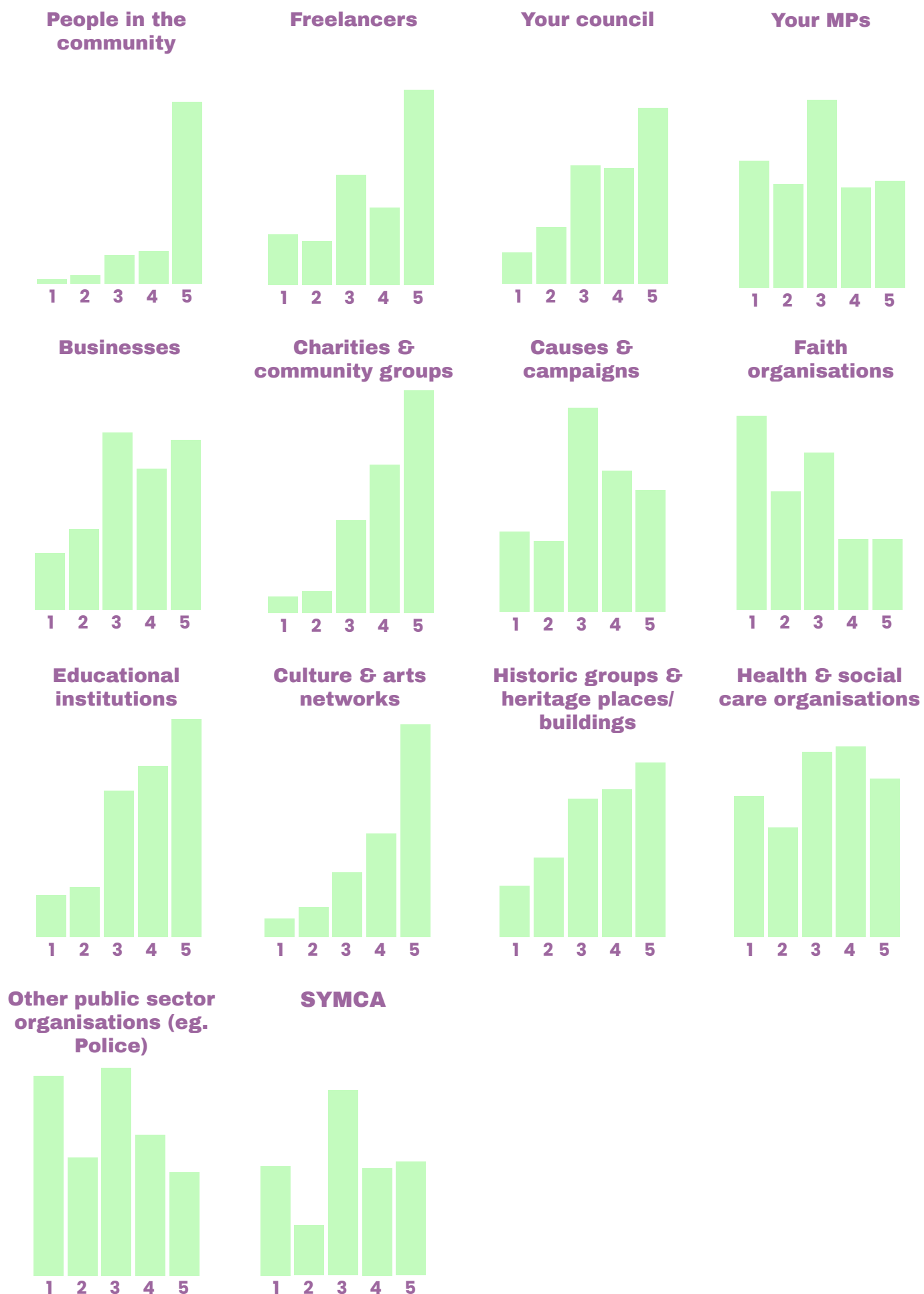
## Thinking about what you do and who you work with, do you or your organisation consider yourself part of...?

### Top five responses:





## How important is it for you or your organisation to work with...? (1 = Not at all important, 5 = Very important)



# Innovation

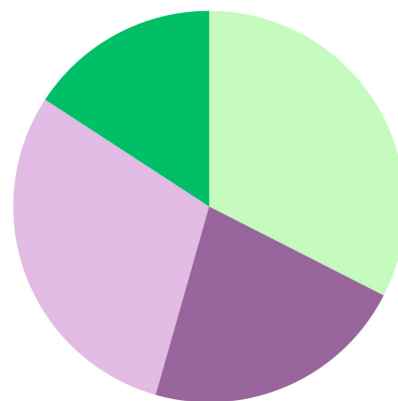
## Summary

Respondents reflected a roughly equal split in a desire to scale-up and gain investment. Respondents were able to name a variety of opportunities for collaboration and innovation within CAH. They said this innovation was hampered by a lack of funding, access to institutions and poor cultural leadership.

- ➔ 32.5% of respondents identified scaling up and drawing down investment as very important.
- ➔ 15.6% identified scaling up and investment as unimportant.
- ➔ Respondents identified a range of innovation within CAH, from collaborating with advanced technology companies through to working in communities and improving social outcomes.
- ➔ Access to funding which was long-term and not project-based was identified as a key factor in further innovation.
- ➔ Improved cultural leadership on behalf of the sector was identified as key to improving the innovation and impact of CAH.
- ➔ A collective vision for CAH was identified as important in cohering innovation within CAH and in 'place'.

## How important is it for you to scale-up, draw down investment and grow your business in the next 5 years?

- Very important - we want to scale-up significantly and are seeking investment for this (32.5%)
- Important - we're looking seriously at how we scale-up our organisation (21.9%)
- Quite important - we want to scale-up but it's not a priority (29.8%)
- Not important - we're happy with our current size and impact (15.8%)



**“The most innovative work is happening at a grassroots level so including those freelancers and smaller organisations in key decision making feels key.”**

**The Mayor's office wants to build an economy that works for everyone. Part of this is about innovation, and how new ideas and approaches grow and scale-up. In your opinion, how are Culture, Arts and Heritage sectors in South Yorkshire innovating, and how could this be better supported?**

Many responses to this question featured not just a sense of where and in what CAH was innovating, but respondents also put forward ideas as to how this could be enabled or supported more. With that in mind we have divided the top level themes to this question into two parts.

## **Innovation in CAH:**

- ➔ Innovation through festivals and events which span South Yorkshire.
- ➔ Innovation through working with technology.
- ➔ Innovation from being embedded in communities.
- ➔ Innovation through solving problems of collective concern.
- ➔ Innovation in the platforming and amplification of voices, identities and place.
- ➔ Experimentation and therefore innovation is baked into CAH practice.
- ➔ Cross-application of CAH across other sectors creates conditions for innovation.
- ➔ Innovative use of spaces in ways other sectors could not.
- ➔ CAH social innovations, in health and wellbeing, cohesion, and in holding power to account.
- ➔ Innovations in being economical and doing 'a lot with a little'.
- ➔ Pioneering innovations in community-based degrowth and ecosystem proliferation.
- ➔ Innovating from the grassroots and from artists themselves, not institutions.
- ➔ Innovations in shifting the perception of what is 'value' and what is valuable.

## **Innovation would be better supported by:**

- ➔ Access to funding.
- ➔ Co-production of strategies and cultivating collaboration not competition across CAH.
- ➔ Supporting the grassroots, where innovation comes from.
- ➔ Funding greater diversity and diverse voices.
- ➔ Investing in the strengths of each local authority area.
- ➔ Investing in training – e.g. working with technologies.
- ➔ Strong cultural leadership that incentivises co-production.
- ➔ A cross-sector offer from CAH that leads to collaboration with the education sector.
- ➔ Recognising the value of social innovations.
- ➔ Investing directly in the ecology of freelancers, grassroots organisations and artists.
- ➔ Investing in local authority cultural leads where there are none.
- ➔ Local authorities recognise the value of CAH at all levels of the ecology, not just large institutions.
- ➔ A collective vision.
- ➔ Integrating CAH into the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP).
- ➔ A clearer identity, remit and role for the MCA in CAH.
- ➔ Institutions and funders being less risk averse and more experimental.
- ➔ Better engagement with media across the region.
- ➔ Better regional knowledge sharing and regular communications and promotions.
- ➔ Long-term, not project-based funding and investment into CAH.



# Place

'Place' was clearly important for CAH organisations and practitioners to define who and what they were in service to. It grounded CAH in the lived experience of communities and people. It provided a way of understanding what social impacts CAH could make on people's lives. A pride in place was identified as a unique outcome of work in CAH.

## How does where you work, and/or your sense of place, affect or inform the work you do?

Cross-cutting themes which emerged from this open response question are illustrated below.

- ➔ Place means serving communities and solving problems.
- ➔ Place as not just a physical location but a community (LGBTQ).
- ➔ Place as dependent on transport links and the role of transport as a catalyst for CAH.
- ➔ Place as an inspiration for pride and how frustration in place leads to a DIY ethic.
- ➔ Place as where projects happen and make impact for local communities.
- ➔ Place as something which 'grounds' voice and identities and work.
- ➔ Place as where you're from, but also where you're going and what you're working towards.

**“A very clear sense that things could be better here is the motivation to keep going.”**

**What key words or phrases best describe Culture, Arts and Heritage in your area right now?**



**What key words or phrases best describe what good, joined-up Culture, Arts and Heritage would look like in the South Yorkshire region?**



# Is there anything else you want to tell us?

There were a large number of responses to this question, many of which spanned the themes throughout this engagement process. Below we have outlined the cross-cutting themes and some direct quotes which felt significant and/or were reflective of a consensus.

- ➔ The importance of retaining talent and the sustainability of careers in CAH.
- ➔ Public transport as a catalyst and an enabler for CAH.
- ➔ Failure of politicians to value CAH impacts on health and wellbeing.
- ➔ The importance of thinking multigenerationally and long-term.
- ➔ Inequity of provision prevents collaboration across the sector.
- ➔ The need to connect CAH activity with education and health.
- ➔ The MCA should make links with 'the North' not just South Yorkshire.
- ➔ Currently no vehicle for good communications and regional promotion.
- ➔ Value the expertise that is in communities and grassroots organisations.
- ➔ We need closer connections between funders and institutions with creatives on the ground.
- ➔ More inclusivity in CAH provision for those with disabilities, younger people, people from working class backgrounds and diverse ethnicities.
- ➔ The need to address difficulties in working with local authorities.
- ➔ The Importance of not duplicating.
- ➔ A sense that CAH serves the middle classes.
- ➔ Institutions have a tendency to offer commissions out to the same old artists.
- ➔ Targeted work to engage people and remove the stigma and otherness from CAH.
- ➔ Importance of small-scale meaningful collaborations between artists to serve the public good 'not the usual suspects'.
- ➔ Recognise the burn-out in this sector.

**“Don’t take what we have for granted.”**

**“I feel that we need to build an ecology of support for this work, especially for practice that is socially engaged.”**

**“Don’t simply do stuff because other cities are doing it.”**

**“We need to be realistic about building capacity and resilience at a time when a lot of us are already struggling.”**

“

**Let's get the basics  
right - access through  
integrated transport,  
environmentally  
sustainable, real  
commitment...  
a bold authentic vision.**

”



## What we found:

# One-To-One Stakeholder Interviews

**Aim:** Focused engagement – chance for stakeholders to voice more sensitive and individual concerns.

**Who:** Cross-section of stakeholders covering all LAs, with a focus on individuals and small and medium-sized organisations.

**How many:** 32-40 interviews (8-10 per LA).

**Format:** Conversation via video conference.

**Time commitment:** 40-60 minutes.

**Participant payment:** £60.

by our area representatives. We sought to identify participants who had experience of under-served experiences, practice or communities in the sector. The interviews were a chance for respondents to expand on concerns and sensitivities in more depth than the survey and roundtables had provided for.

Invitees ranged from freelancers and venues, to community groups and organisations, and they had the option to contribute anonymously or by name, as well as an opportunity to decide what specific quotes they preferred not being attributed to their organisation or practice.

Each of the area representatives from Barnsley (Jemma Conway and Hayley Youell), Doncaster (Olivia Jones), Rotherham (Vicky Hilton) and Sheffield (Opus) led on selecting participants and arranging for the interviews to be recorded online.

We invited a range of CAH stakeholders and practitioners from each local authority to participate in individual, enhanced one-to-one interviews discussing their experiences of the sector in their respective disciplines.

Priority was given to survey respondents who wanted to follow up in more depth and particular people or organisations identified

A total of 31 people undertook the interviews. From these interviews and working with area representatives we identified cross-cutting themes across each local authority and supporting quotes from respondents which are illustrated below.

## Cross-cutting themes

- ➔ Lack of spaces for artists.
- ➔ Access to funding is always a barrier.
- ➔ More joined-up, regional approach needed.
- ➔ Transport - infrastructure is failing and is prohibitively expensive.
- ➔ A focus on what's lacking rather than seeing what's there - greater visibility needed.
- ➔ Lack of value placed on CAH.
- ➔ Lack of recognition of the impact of CAH on mental health & wellbeing.
- ➔ CAH policy language can feel exclusive.

“

**We tend to look at the arts from the perspective of ‘spectator’ rather than ‘participant’, which is where engagement can really benefit people’s health and wellbeing.**

John Ledger

”

# What People Said

"Barnsley is full of talent, but is lacking in grassroots arts community spaces for the nurture and development of artists."

John Ledger

"From having a space, you would forge an identity - somewhere people would gather around."

Dr. Lee Pollard

"The country is being run by volunteers: so many of these community projects are done out of love, which is great but also unsustainable."

Julie Turner

**"Arts and culture should be accessible to everyone, but without proper funding they become 'not economically viable'."**

Julie Turner

"What recently cost £5 for five people to get into town and back is now £15. It's killing it."

Dr. Lee Pollard

"There is a tendency to assume that because things aren't visible in the same way that they are in a city, that they're not happening."

Joanna Sutcliffe

"Goldthorpe only ever hits the headlines for the wrong reasons, but we have a wealth of positive and creative things to showcase across the region."

Julie Turner

## Cross-cutting themes

- ➔ Inclusion of underrepresented communities is crucial.
- ➔ Sustainable funding and less complex application processes.
- ➔ Prioritisation of the unique CAH needs of Doncaster.
- ➔ Bridging the gap between CAH and education and learning institutions.
- ➔ Incoherent awareness of regional CAH landscape and narrative.
- ➔ Holistic business support systems are needed.
- ➔ Limited transport network a barrier to realising connected regional CAH.
- ➔ Precarity of finances for freelancers needs acknowledgement.

“

**If they don't see it, they don't know about it... when they do know about it they don't feel welcome there... there are all of these amazing artists from all of these cultures with their own styles and traditions but they're not being able to show it.**

”

Akeela Mohammed



# What People Said

"It's the community that decides what art they want to see"...  
"Dictating to them what is art and what they should see as important within that, I don't think that's the right approach."

**Michele Beck**

"When you are doing something in culture or the arts then it's important that you go to the communities and you go find out where they are, they're not hard to reach... "

**Akeela Mohammed**

"I feel like we forget the young teenagers"... "See which community groups we need to help the most and I think the group of teenagers is what we're missing."

**David Sanchez**

**"More education resources for young people... a few years ago all the funding for creative courses were being cut for GCSEs in schools and it was devastating."**

**Natasha Clarke**

"Create a structured opportunity so people can get into the artistic space because I work with so many kids that are really passionate about music, or are really passionate about art."

**Lewis Russell**

"That's another missing link I think in Doncaster... bridging us with the next generation of creatives and having that throughline through the schools and the college."

**Rajnish Madaan**

## Cross-cutting themes

- ➔ Lack of space for creatives.
- ➔ A lack of funding.
- ➔ Expand culture and heritage to include new communities.
- ➔ A regional approach has benefits for Rotherham and the other areas.
- ➔ The older generation of the heritage sector is forgotten.
- ➔ Transportation challenges for regional connectivity.

“

**We are failing young and aspiring artists. There are no spaces for young people to dance, practice music, art, acting... There are no spaces designed for young people to learn what we know unless they go to universities. I'm talking about artists that have 20/30 years of experience - how do I share that?**

”

Tongesayi Gumbo

# What People Said

"Communities are interested in learning more about African culture, music, life and the arts. The problem for that delivery is space. When we call in experts in the field – they need to be paid but we don't have funding."

**Tongesayi Gumbo**

"Within Rotherham, the younger families that join us are mostly asylum seekers but we lose them once they get their status as they have to leave for areas where they can access opportunities."

**Jo Mailer**

"It's important to get the people involved because the face of South Yorkshire has changed drastically. Now is the time to seize its diversity rather than its industry, for example. We can celebrate its culture."

**Joshua Daniels**

**"There are no more in-person WEA classes in South Yorkshire. Face-to-face classes for older people are important... people feel forgotten."**

**Eileen Hyland**

"We have refugees and asylum seekers who have been here for over 20 years but they have no place to use for experiencing their culture and art or delivering it."

**Tongesayi Gumbo**

"What can he [Mayor] do for the Chinese community? Since the start of the pandemic, the Chinese community has been marginalised and targeted. Lots of hate crime and abuse which put the Chinese people's backs up, especially asylum seekers. They already had challenges with language. We do an annual Chinese New Year celebration."

**Jo Mailer**

## Cross-cutting themes

- ➔ Complex funding and investment processes and priorities.
- ➔ Value of the sector to the economy and environment is underplayed.
- ➔ A northern (identity) region approach to collaboration.
- ➔ A crisis of regional leadership.
- ➔ CAH should be broader and integrated.
- ➔ Artists and the community as equal partners in institutions.
- ➔ A focus on diversity, inclusion and underrepresented groups.
- ➔ CAH should be linked to academic research and education.
- ➔ CAH are key to health and wellbeing.
- ➔ Integrate public transport into CAH strategy.

“

**...we need the arts organisations that we have to be more directly involved with schools, to make individuals more invested in the arts.**

”

John Rwoth-Omack

# What People Said

"Larger venues in Sheffield represent structural inequalities and they are trying to make a career on the back of artists. There's institutional racism and bullying going on."

**Anonymous**

"Consider research that happens outside of universities as needing support. Acknowledge that it exists and connect people up who are doing it. This will give access to new funding streams outside of ACE."

**Alex McLean**

"We (Sheffield) lose artists to Manchester and other cities through disproportionately low funding."

**John Rwoth-Omack**

**"The heritage sector has an environmental dimension and conserving physical heritage is a way of tackling problems such as climate change because you are reducing material and energy use."**

**Robin Hughes**

"We are a CIC Arts venue. We were not eligible for the Covid-19 recovery funding. There was a failure to recognise us as the organisation that was distributing 20% of all the food in the region through the pandemic."

**Anonymous**

"NPO bids and the politics of it need a lot of consideration. If your application is taking longer than a week, how are you supposed to run a business?"

**Finn Warman**



“

**CAH reaches the parts  
that others can't reach...  
the young people who  
can't access education,  
the teachers squashed by  
the national curriculum,  
the communities coming  
back together after two  
years of lockdowns... it is  
innovative within the  
current social context.**

”

# Conclusions & Recommendations

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# Conclusions

## Introduction

Over the course of this engagement process, we have listened to nearly 400 people and organisations across South Yorkshire. We have done this using different methods and in a variety of contexts to ensure the best possible conditions for hearing what barriers individuals and organisations are experiencing, as well as what interventions they believe might improve the impact of Culture, Arts and Heritage (CAH) in the region and in their work. We also aligned our engagement process with themes in the region's **Strategic Economic Plan**, and placed it in the evolving context of devolution and 'levelling up'. This allows us to offer recommendations as to what the MCA's role and remit might be as a thought leader and active agent of transformational change.

At its root, the multigenerational and upstream 'prize' for CAH is an adaptive set of visible, regionally-applicable, collaboration-focused, equitable and well-resourced interventions. These would recognise the entangled impact of economic and social innovations which organisations and practitioners working across this sector contribute to in a unique way.

We must think about the sum contributions of the CAH sector as a 'glue' which narrates, inspires and directly informs the health and innovative capability of our region's social, environmental, political and economic fabric. We must then strategically invest in sustaining the sum of the interactions. At the same time we must also recognise the direct value of investing in the granularity of CAH as a sector (of many sectors) of often directly parallel, porous and complementary

industries and communities – communities which would benefit from regionally-focused interventions which 'join up' infrastructure, capital assets, people and programmes across South Yorkshire.

After engaging with CAH organisations, public institutions and local government, we have categorised value frames into broad terms. These articulate the contribution of the CAH sector, allowing us to look at it holistically and systemically while identifying the nuances of regional strengths and deficits.

- ➔ **CAH for its own sake** – e.g. the inherent, personal and collective inspirational value of its output.
- ➔ **CAH for public good** – e.g. as a tool for addressing collective problems – like isolation, climate breakdown, public transport, community cohesion, education and public health challenges – by applying new thinking and creativity.
- ➔ **CAH for economic growth** – e.g. tourism, visitor economy, business, employment, skills pipelines and GVA.

From our engagement work, it's clear that many of the actors in this complex and porous ecosystem appreciate these three value frames. But individual local authorities, practitioners and institutions are rarely able to demonstrate the span of that recognition in their approach to supporting CAH. More acutely, they struggle to strategically value and thus intervene in ways that recognise the sum entanglement of those interacting value frames as being the primary strategic objective of achieving a thriving CAH sector. This reflects a significant gap in cultural leadership in the region. It shows a systemic



failing in how we ‘value’ the work of CAH, and is indicative of where we could make improvements.

Furthermore, it is the pluralist, porous and pervasive nature of CAH which adds (in order of magnitude) value to other sectors. It contributes to industries’ capability to innovate, solve problems of collective concern, retain talent and broaden customer bases. It allows businesses to evolve employment, education and skills pathways to meet the needs of people, communities, businesses and institutions.

Symptomatic of the systemic failure of the region to value CAH holistically are the problems identified by many respondents of equity, inclusion and authenticity in how public institutions, organisations and practitioners engage with each other across the sector. This is not a ‘top down’ challenge of mapping or making the invisible

grassroots visible to decision-makers in ivory towers. It is a deeper challenge to create an equitable, inclusive and authentic ‘gateway’ through which self-identified creatives and organisations may enter, and in so entering have agency, access and recognition for their work and its important contribution to the fabric of South Yorkshire.

One person told us:

***“Attention and resource is still weighted to known, larger CAH organisations which do not have the same levels of expertise and collaborative, rooted networks to benefit the public good.”***

The sections below illustrate the significant challenges and barriers identified through our engagement process. They have been subdivided into themes for clarity. It is the sum of these conclusions that informs the recommendations in the final section of this report.

## **The problems that brought us here**

Before diving in, it’s worth acknowledging the problems that brought us here. At the outset of this work, the MCA (alongside other institutions and researchers) identified several problems which warranted further engagement with those most affected – CAH organisations in the region.

- ➔ **The effects of the pandemic, particularly on small to medium-sized organisations and freelancers.**
- ➔ **The fact that the region receives significantly less investment from public funders per head in comparison to other regions of comparable status.**
- ➔ **The two main concerns public funders identified to us:**
  - ➔ a lack of investment in CAH by local authorities.
  - ➔ overlapping bids and rivalry within the sector and across the region.

# A lack of funding and investment

A lack of funding and investment in CAH was an important theme across all of our engagement activities. In our survey a “lack of grant funding” was identified as the single most important factor holding organisations back. This was closely followed by a “lack of investment from local authorities”, “not enough joined-up thinking with others in the sector” and a “lack of support from our council”.

It is notable (and in some ways reassuring) that this feedback from the sector corresponds so closely with the problems identified at the start of this engagement work. It’s also worth noting in this context the convergence in the desired outcomes of activity delivered by the sector with those of public funders in heritage and public funders in arts and culture. This convergence is characterised by the importance of ‘place’, and the importance of ‘community’, ‘identity’, ‘health and wellbeing’ and ‘social participation’ outcomes. As such, an opportunity for bringing together a plurality of funders, organisations and practitioners to co-create any future MCA cultural framework is worth exploring.

Our engagement offered further nuance on the difficulties of obtaining grant funding and working with local authorities on CAH. Respondents voiced a visceral concern that local authorities across the region did not value (or did not know how to value) the work of small and medium-sized CAH organisations and practitioners, or understand the breadth of their impact. They told us that getting access to decision-makers (at public funders, local authorities and the combined authority) was opaque, “bureaucratic, inaccessible” and obtrusive.

Another said:

*“We are a CIC Arts venue. We were not eligible for the Covid-19 recovery funding. There was a failure to recognise us as the organisation that was distributing 20% of all the food in the region through the pandemic.”*

Many respondents also noted a perceived ‘Sheffield-centric’ view of available funding and resources. This will hopefully be mitigated through [Arts Council England ‘priority place’ status for Barnsley and Rotherham](#) and the likelihood of further levelling-up funds for Doncaster. But it also speaks to the potential for the MCA to act as a neutral broker and advocate for the region as a whole.

Put together, these two experiences (lack of access to institutional decision-makers and the lack of access to funding) gave many people working in CAH the view of grant funding being nepotistic, focused exclusively on large organisations and capital assets (often distant from communities and communities of practice) and fundamentally out-of-reach – or alternatively so small-scale and short-term as to make no significant difference.

Many respondents to our survey noted the short-term nature of available funding as a cause of organisational precarity, and one which hampered the critical need for multigenerational and long-term investment in diverse and often under-served communities. They noted that this precarity has impacts further downstream in the communities they serve, as popular and successful initiatives were withdrawn. Freelance practitioners, who often underpin this kind of work, were unable to continue working with communities, instilling further precarity into the ecosystem.

With these views in mind, there is an overall sense that both institutions and funders need to develop credible pathways through which the voices of individuals and small to medium-sized organisations can be



heard, and have agency and impact. These pathways need to be underpinned by access to training, support with bid writing and a joined-up process for sharing information to avoid overlap, duplication and rivalry.

In parallel to this, we concluded that horizontal pathways across the region's public institutions, cross-sectoral strategic stakeholders and local authorities needed to be more open-hearted and focused on problem-solving. This is with a view to creating the necessary conditions for good decision-making, antifragility, co-creation and authentic involvement of the wider sector, as well as to avoid duplication and rivalry at a strategic regional level. The barriers which prevented the sector joining

up vertically (from small to large actors) were symptomatic of, and compounded by, the silos in which local authorities (and the departments within those local authorities) were categorising their work in the sector. This means that local authority actors, through no fault of their own are unable to holistically recognise and capitalise on the entangled benefit of all three of the value frames that CAH contributes to. For example, heritage in Sheffield is located separately from the rest of Culture, Arts and Heritage in the planning department. Also in Sheffield, culture and arts are held in a portfolio with an economic growth remit, while in Rotherham, CAH is housed within a social inclusion portfolio. This creates barriers to regional cross-pollination and shared learning.



**“At the moment, we are fighting each other for funding, position and influence in the sector...”**

# A failure of leadership in CAH

The perceived failure of cultural leadership in the region was palpable from many respondents. They often articulated this as the lack of a “bold vision” for the sector. While many noted positively the implications of Kate Brindley’s placement as Director of CAH at the MCA, there was a clear sense of this being insufficient in joining up a much-needed, non-rivalrous regional approach to CAH.

A majority of our respondents listed “a point of contact at your council for CAH” and “a point of contact at the Mayor’s office” as the second and third highest priorities for what would help them. This is indicative of the lack of visibility of institutional representatives for CAH organisations and practitioners of a certain size and disposition, both at a regional and local authority level.

Furthermore a clear view from respondents across the region was that there was a deficit in local authority cultural leadership and their ability to value and advocate for the sector. Many respondents pointed to the need to educate and upskill local authority representatives (both elected councillors and officers) so that they were better equipped to advocate for the sector and recognise where interventions would be most effective and valued.

Respondents also voiced concerns around representation in leadership within the sector. They said there needed to be more leaders from diverse backgrounds and experiences, including (but not limited to) those of different ethnicities, ages, classes, genders and abilities. Many felt that representation for the sector was claimed by ‘the usual suspects’ of large organisations (predominantly white, cisgendered, middle-aged and middle class), and that grassroots

organisations, freelancers and communities rarely got the opportunity to contribute to leadership or strategy. This results in that leadership, funding and strategy disproportionately benefiting those same ‘usual suspects’.

One person said:

*“Communities are interested in learning more about African culture, music, life and the arts. The problem for that delivery is space. When we call in experts in the field – they need to be paid but we don’t have funding.”*

Compounding this data from respondents to the regional survey and the roundtables was a very real sense from discussions with some local authorities and public funders that the relationships between both council officers and elected representatives with public funders was often misconceived, misconstrued and misappropriated.

One funder described an “abdication of leadership” by a local authority, while that same local authority described a strong, regular working relationship. Taken as a whole, this points to a foundational lack of strategic leadership and a basic failure of communication between public funders and local authorities. This is to the detriment of the sector as a whole, and most importantly, to the people and communities of South Yorkshire.

# What and who is the MCA?

Many of our respondents pointed to a genuine confusion as to the role and remit of the Mayor's office, as well as the combined authority. They were largely unaware not just of the remit and the structure, but also what capacity and capabilities it had to make interventions in CAH. This was mirrored in discussions with local authority representatives, who beyond its potential role as a broker of collaboration, regional promotion, and cross-sector investment, were largely unable to articulate the details of where the Mayor's office could make interventions. It is one of the conclusions of this report, in line with the aspirations outlined by the MCA to be a thought leader and agent of transformational change, that above its role of 'broker' sits a critical positionality and opportunity for the MCA to establish itself as an advocate for the reorienting of 'how' the sector is valued and 'how' the sector adds value. This, of course, is a more active positionality than 'why' the sector should be valued, which we believe is broadly understood (if not acted upon). Achieving this will require a bold and renewed visibility for the MCA. This must be coupled with a

strategic clarity of 'voice' when making interventions, both in terms of its relationship with the sector and with its local authority partners and wider stakeholders (including central government).

There is of course mutual benefit for all stakeholders in resolving the visibility, identity and remit of the MCA. This is both in terms of the critical need for the combined authority to establish its own identity as a thought leader and agent of transformational change in the region and a valued intermediary with central government, and also the wider requirement (identified as a priority for CAH respondents) of a regional narrative and story which actors across the sector might cohere and collaborate around. In creating the conditions for this narrative coherence (both internally for the MCA, externally for the sector and nationally), the MCA is uniquely placed to act as a broker for deeper, systemic and cross-sectoral investment in CAH.

One person said:

*"We'd like to better understand the role of the Mayor's office and how this interacts with other layers of local government – who should or could we be talking to and what do they do? How do we keep culture on the table as a priority when the Mayor changes?"*




Supporting this view, respondents pointed to the opportunity for the MCA to be a neutral broker for CAH between local authorities and across the sector, and to co-create the conditions for collaboration between the plurality of those actors. This was often expressed as cultivating a ‘warts and all’ approach that might lead to more open-hearted exchanges between local authorities, organisations and practitioners. This should not only be about the shared problems they face (both inside and outside the sector), but also what strengths could be amplified between the region’s local authorities, and how they can learn from mistakes and experiments shared for the benefit of the region and the people and organisations working in it.

A concern raised by some respondents is that for the MCA to achieve a role of regional broker and convener it must overcome the historic difficulties of collaboration between local authorities that were so overt in its formation. In doing so it must enable its own moral, intellectual and institutional authority and voice as a thought leader of transformational system change. This will allow it to act effectively as a convener for both officers and elected representatives.

While acknowledging that many elected representatives were in the midst of preparing for upcoming elections, it is worth noting the difficulty the authors of this report (operating with a mandate from the MCA)

found making contact with some elected representatives in the region responsible for CAH.

While this implies that the quality of the relationship between the MCA and local authorities should be improved, it also speaks to the capacity issues which both elected representatives and council officers face. Indeed, the role of the MCA in developing interventions which in some way begin to address resource and capacity constraints upstream and systemically within local authorities and across the region is critical. It is in fact likely that it is only the MCA, with its regional role that can hold this remit. And while there is an appropriate balance to be found, in essence the MCA must not shy away from systemic problems relating to strategy, capacity and resource that it might be tempted to view as the sole purview of individual local authorities.



**“Involvement in any art form  
develops creativity and creativity  
brings new solutions to  
old problems.”**



# A plurality of innovation

As referenced earlier in this report, the Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) puts an emphasis on innovation as a driver for economic renewal. It acknowledges the importance of the economy and the MCA's own remit within it, but critically it links economic success to improvements in people's quality of life in the region. The SEP also references the importance of scaling up innovations and ensuring that the region is able to secure the appropriate pipelines for investment to meet market opportunities competitively.

In approaching respondents on this theme it was apparent that this is a sector which has many of the core elements that we might consider a prerequisite for innovation. It is a sector:

- ➔ which regularly experiments with different methodologies and approaches.
- ➔ that is foundationally informed by acts of creativity and innovation which themselves often act as catalysts for further creative and innovative output across other sectors.

- ➔ that actively seeks to address problems of collective concern through the lens of creative, community-based action.
- ➔ which actively collaborates with and permeates into other sectors and disciplines, including (but not limited to) material science, education, health, engineering and exponential technologies.
- ➔ whose output is consistently drawn on by creative digital content industries working in games, software, marketing and education.

It should be noted that many respondents called for the provision of training resources and access to those named industries to innovate and collaborate further – particularly those working in new and advanced digital technologies.

In speaking to respondents about 'innovation', we once again encountered the unique plurality of the people and organisations that work across CAH. Their combined activities and aspirations both lead to improved quality of life outcomes for people in the region, while also having the ambition to scale their organisations vertically through traditional investment routes.





We have attempted to characterise this plurality by demarcating a difference between organisations and people who contribute 'social innovations' (for example, how CAH is deployed to improve health outcomes, social cohesion, educational attainment and pride in place among other social indicators) and those organisations and people who aspire to 'economic innovation' in terms of entrepreneurship or company growth. It is of course worth noting that this conceptual binary is in reality better understood as a dialectical flow, with organisations and people often spanning across these two categorisations of innovation through the changing lifecycle of organisations and in their response to opportunities and risks. The risk in not delineating them however, is that we lose visibility of one or the other, which in this case would do a greater disservice to the sector as it is the sum of its interactions across these different forms of innovation and value that characterise its unique contribution.

This plurality in innovation was illustrated to some extent in the survey data. This showed that 54.4% of those surveyed identified scaling up as important, with 32.5% of those saying they were actively seeking investment. But 45.6% of respondents indicated that scaling up was not a current priority for them, and 15.8% of those suggested they were happy with their current size and impact. It's important to note that a lack of aspiration to 'scale-up' does not mean that those organisations would not benefit from interventions and support – financial or otherwise.

Of course, what is positive about this in terms of the SEP is that it appears that organisations within the broad CAH sector are aligned with not only the social innovations identified as leading to economic growth, but also the act of scaling up vertically to increase economic impact. We would also go a step further and state that it is the relational and dependent aspects – no matter the degrees of separation between actors, or the difference in approaches to innovation, scale and proliferation – that inform the success of the sector both vertically and horizontally.

These factors define the sector's porous and permeable nature and impact across the region.

This range of 'purposes' or desired outcomes in the work done by CAH organisations is captured in the data relating to what respondents identified themselves as being part of. 35.2% said they were part of an 'industry' (35.2%) – an identification more closely aligned to economic innovation. 72.1% said they were part of a 'community' (71.2%) – an identification that seems more closely aligned with social innovations that improve quality of life. The fact that it is the sum of these two innovations which leads to an 'inclusive economy' is something that is implicit (if not explicit) in the SEP. This speaks to the need for the value and contribution of the CAH sector to be taken more seriously, holistically and strategically in the interventions that the MCA makes in the region.

The above indicates the need for a more nuanced understanding of both the conditions for innovation as well as what innovation actually is when structuring investment into this sector (or any other). We believe that investment in 'social innovations' should be considered less in the context of 'vertical' scaling of organisations towards greater centralisation across larger geographies, and more in the context of ecosystem proliferation that is multitudinous, multigenerational, long-term, small-scale, and grounded in and led by communities. Achieving this is about investing in the conditions in 'place' that CAH organisations need in order to proliferate effectively from, through and by communities of interest and of geography. This brings with it an assessment of the importance of investing long-term and 'upstream' in the conditions for experimentation, collaborative learning, authenticity and equity of voice, when using creative practice to address and innovate on issues of collective concern. These include community participation, social isolation, mental health and pride in place – all of which directly contribute to the inclusive growth outcomes identified in the SEP. In the context of 'economic innovations',

the survey data also speaks to a genuine desire from some respondents to scale the economic footprint of particular organisations and industries in the region. This itself speaks to the broad nature of CAH organisations and its inclusion of creative industries such as film and digital content. This is supported by the work of colleagues at [The Fifth Sector](#), whose data indicates the cross-regional significance of creating mechanisms which support the filming industry (for example a regional film office which handles location permissions among other services, as established by Liverpool's MCA). Colleagues at The Fifth Sector have also pointed to the importance of commissioning services or mechanisms which actively pair CAH with digital creative companies.

Our engagement data also points to specific place-based strengths, such as festivals and theatre in Sheffield, heritage and museums in Barnsley, heritage, poetry and children's education in Rotherham, and creative interventions in public health in Doncaster. It suggests that investment in those strengths, with a cross-pollinating lens of regional collaboration with small to medium-sized CAH organisations, brokered

perhaps by a resourced MCA, has the potential to create further innovation and opportunities for cross-sectoral and inclusive growth. It should be said that the above in no way characterises the extent of the CAH strengths in each local authority area. It does however pose a different problem – that of 'how' to join up those strengths in a way that is non-rivalrous and enables each 'place' to be celebrated as a distinct part of a greater whole. The ontology of this is called mereology, and is worthy of further consideration in this context. In our exploration phase of engagement it felt that a clear opportunity for the region and the sector to collaborate could emerge around Rotherham's status as the world's first [Children's Capital of Culture](#) in 2025.

**“Innovation will come if organisations have opportunities to experiment and try new approaches. Support (financial and otherwise) to test new activity will help to develop new ideas.”**

# Value of place and communities

The perceived value of interventions through the lens of 'place' by central, regional and local governments is apparent in the government's '[Levelling Up](#)' paper. It places emphasis on 'pride in place' and in the place-based plans emerging from local authorities across the region, by which the MCA hopes to understand and align its own investment priorities. 'Place' is of course also of vital importance for public funders who seem to be in alignment on the use of this lens to identify priorities for investment. We have seen this in the case of Arts Council England's investment in Rotherham and Barnsley as 'priority places'.

'Place' offers a holistic lens for a better understanding of the social and economic interventions associated with regeneration and renewal in specific areas of South Yorkshire. But it is also a critical lens through which we might better understand the nature of communities of geography and of interest, alongside our own individual identities and the complex interplay between those things. The causal link between the perceived identities and narrative of people and communities in a place, and the capacity for economic and social regeneration of that place, is now widely understood.

Place is also a vitally important factor for individuals and organisations working in CAH. Many respondents said how important 'place' was in informing the nature of their work in terms of a specific output (e.g. an event, a painting, or a film production). But they also indicated how important 'place' was in terms of reflecting the identities and history of communities back on themselves, and in doing so forming and reforming coherence in those identities and a sense of shared pride, agency and belonging. This is an intervention that is in many ways unique

to CAH organisations and practitioners, and is intrinsically linked to the importance of 'going to communities' rather than requiring them to 'come to you.' It could be conceived of as common sense to conclude that if 'place' and 'identity' are considered critical frames for regeneration by public institutions, those same institutions investing in CAH organisations who create the unique conditions for those constructs to emerge would be a worthwhile intervention. In this context, the MCA could influence the place-based plans emerging from local authorities and advocate more strategically and systemically for the social innovations of CAH within them.

Returning to our survey data on what CAH organisations saw themselves as being a part of, it's interesting to note in the context of 'place' that while 71.2% of respondents identified themselves as part of a community, 39.8% of respondents also identified themselves as part of a 'place'. Combining this observation with the top five responses to the question 'Who do you serve?' (number two of which was 'Communities of interest and identity'), and also the top five responses to the question 'Why do you work in CAH?' ("For the love of it!", "To provide inspiring and meaningful experiences and content for the public", "To bring people together or strengthen community participation", "To improve people's mental health" and "To reduce social isolation or exclusion"), we see a clear convergence of the purposes and beneficiaries of work done by CAH organisations and practitioners and an alignment with the aspirations of public institutions and funders to generate inclusive economic growth and pride in places.

These observations, put together with written responses to the direct question about the role of place in the work of CAH organisations, depict a strong sense that for CAH organisations across the region 'place' meant being 'in service'. In service to communities and in so being, responsive to problems that those communities faced – be it those of social cohesion and the need to bring people together, or more nuanced interventions in mental health, environmental

sustainability or educational pathways. Considering this in the context of the remit and the role of the MCA points to the need for 'servant leadership' as a framing device for approaching cultural leadership in the region.

Respondents to our survey question on place also identified the importance of talking about 'places' within 'place'. A cross-cutting theme both from survey responses, one-to-one interviews and the roundtables in each local authority was a sense that people felt obstructed by local authorities when it came to using disused spaces for CAH work. Compounding this (and a factor which is supported by The Fifth Sector data) was a need for more studio space across the region. This clearly has implications for 'pride in place', community cohesion and participation in place-making. Respondents noted equivalent schemes in other regions that enabled artists and creative organisations to make better use of empty buildings with a minimum of red tape. These observations from respondents were also aligned with the need to re-energise town centres as places where arts and culture can be experienced. There was a sense from

respondents that this should be aligned with local authority ambitions to turn around the high street and regenerate town and city centres, but that cooperation was often not forthcoming and that policies around disused spaces were often "incoherent" and "disconnected".

Some responses (particularly from the roundtables) also indicated the need for 'dry' spaces where alcohol is not served, particularly for specific age groups and communities such as the LGBTQ+ community. This speaks to the nuance required in understanding the sector and its communities of identity and age, and the vital importance of any interventions being led by the voices of those organisations and practitioners working in that place and alongside those communities.

One individual told us:

*"I feel like we forget the young teenagers" ... "see which community groups we need to help the most and I think the group of teenagers is what we're missing"*



Photo credit: Brodsworth Hall by Tricky



Many responses to our question on 'place' mentioned the importance of regional transport links. Respondents felt that transport links between Doncaster, Barnsley, Sheffield and Rotherham were poor quality, infrequent and overpriced, restricting the flow of connections between cultural actors and activities in the region.

They also felt that the times at which people could catch a train or bus between towns and cities were prohibitive to experiencing cultural activities, many of which of course take place in the evening. Respondents also noted how this negatively impacts on audience crossover and on a regional perspective on CAH, further siloing the sector and preventing cross-pollination of all kinds. On a similar theme, respondents noted the importance of work done by CAH organisations on environmental sustainability and 'place', and how the sector had a lot to offer in terms of social innovations relating to climate breakdown and its effects on communities. *'Art of the Dearne: Of The River'*, created by Andy Seward, Hayley Youell and James Lockey, and commissioned by Barnsley Museums, is indicative of good

practice in this area. Heritage organisations were also keen to amplify the importance of reducing energy consumption and material use through conserving the region's physical heritage.

Finally on the theme of 'place', respondents often talked about the "strengths of places" and also their weaknesses. Within this, they talked about how CAH had an innovative and 'antifragile' role to play in converting perceived weaknesses to strengths. This came out most overtly in the role that CAH can have in reimagining the reputations of places – both to external stakeholders (visitors, national institutions and businesses) and to internal stakeholders (communities and people in the region). Examples of this given by respondents ranged from Rotherham's role as Children's Capital of Culture in 2025, through to CAH as an attractor in the visitor economy and in retaining talent in the region. In terms of the visibility and reputation of the MCA, it's worth considering how it might deploy its own interventions in CAH to crystallise its own public image as an organisation invested in thought leadership and transformational change in the region and the sector.

**“[Place..] makes me want to actually stand up and start making things happen out of frustration but also from seeing how people are really struggling currently. It makes me really consider ways in which I could deliver projects that have some kind of positive impact on the place and community I grew up in.”**



# Authentic collaboration, shared narratives, and a bold vision for South Yorkshire

It was clear from our engagement with CAH organisations across the region that in no local authority was there a sense of authentic engagement with small and medium-sized organisations and practitioners working in the sector. This is not intended to detract from the genuine aspiration that many people we spoke to in local authorities had to achieve just that. But the data does illustrate that current approaches are not working.

This is perhaps most aptly characterised in the cross-regional responses to the question “What key words or phrases best describe CAH in your area right now? (3–5 words or short phrases)” We have listed a sample of the type of answers received below:

## What key words or phrases best describe CAH in your area right now?

- ➔ “Fractured, isolated, underfunded, elitist”
- ➔ “Opaque and under-connected”
- ➔ “Disconnected, discouraged, muddled, hesitant”
- ➔ “Centralised underground splintered”
- ➔ “Dynamic but fragmented”
- ➔ “Fractured, dog-eat-dog, nepotistic, toxic positivity”
- ➔ “Enthusiastic, challenged, undervalued, untapped, misunderstood”
- ➔ “Undervalued, hidden gems, potential”
- ➔ “Disconnected, unimportant, unradical, unsupported”
- ➔ “Vibrant but exclusive, fragmented and neglected”
- ➔ “Undervalued, under-resourced, not sufficiently diverse”
- ➔ “Disjointed, no strategic leadership, abundant, hard to know what’s happening”
- ➔ “Permanently precarious for perennially underpaid, underfunded freelancers”
- ➔ “Under-resourced, undervalued and stigmatised as middle class”
- ➔ “Lacking, underfunded, unrepresented”

Throughout our engagement with CAH organisations, the desire for a shared, co-created, regional vision or story for the sector was frequently articulated. This would be a page all could sing from – one that was inclusive, equitable and proactive, and that enabled organisations and practitioners (large and small) to collaborate effectively and authentically. An “inclusive shared story for South Yorkshire CAH” was named as one of the top five things “that would help”

organisations prosper. In the roundtable events across all four local authority areas, a desire to be more ‘joined-up’ with other organisations and sectors across the region (and internally within the local authorities) was a common theme. When asked in the survey “What key words or phrases best describe what good, joined-up CAH would look like in South Yorkshire?”, the following statements were indicative of the views of the majority of respondents.

## **What key words or phrases best describe what good, joined-up CAH would look like in South Yorkshire?**

- ➔ **“United, inspiring, formidable”**
- ➔ **“Inclusive, democratic, non-elitist”**
- ➔ **“Collaborative, cohesive cultural offer”**
- ➔ **“Collaborative, communal, vibrant/seen”**
- ➔ **“Inspiring, vibrant, diverse, welcoming”**
- ➔ **“One vision to celebrate all histories and cultures”**
- ➔ **“Connected, buzzing, progressive, inclusive”**
- ➔ **“Shared, community focus, outward thinking”**
- ➔ **“Joined-up - no cross-boundary issues”**
- ➔ **“Open, accessible, joined-up, well communicated, less self interest”**
- ➔ **“Inter-sector and inter-discipline collaborations”**
- ➔ **“Vibrant, fertile, kaleidoscopic, many varied tastes”**
- ➔ **“Open, accessible, diverse, representative, community focused”**
- ➔ **“Relevant, current, radical, making sense of now and the future”**
- ➔ **“Respected, widely recognised, valued, wealth-generating”**
- ➔ **“Connected, well-led, strategic, impactful, transformative”**
- ➔ **“Coordinated, no duplication, collaborative and resourced”**
- ➔ **“Vibrant, honest, grass roots, collaborative not competitive, down to earth”**
- ➔ **“Democratic, accessible, affordable, inclusive”**
- ➔ **“Recognising the importance of generations past for generations present and generations yet to come”**
- ➔ **“Community led, network of creative businesses and individuals working together”**
- ➔ **“Bold, daring, experiential, community”**

They offer a useful, aspirational, and even inspiring lens for considering the components of a bold regional narrative and vision. Returning to the provocation that began this process – and one which was supported by respondent data – one of the problems identified by public funders in the region was overlapping bids and a lack of a cohesive strategy for CAH. This illustrates a breakdown of communication between organisations and actors across the region working in the sector.

Many respondents to the engagement processes called for a more coherent and joined-up approach that would avoid duplication and catalyse learning and collaboration – both within the sector and between different sectors. They also spoke about the importance of shared, peer-to-peer and co-created methods of mentorship, promoting events, cultural happenings and training across the region. They advocated for shared access to regional marketing and communications and a coherent approach to engaging local and national media on behalf of the sector. A common theme was the ‘patchiness’ of the local authorities’ approach to this, and the failure of local media outlets to value and report on CAH.

This of course has implications for the role of cultural leadership in creating mechanisms for regional promotion, which has historically proved challenging. It speaks to the need to galvanise media platforms and their coverage of the sector across the region. It should be acknowledged that media organisations are often left out when we map the culture sector, which may (in part) explain the disconnect. Unpicking this will require investment in understanding public interest ‘news deserts’ across South Yorkshire as a precondition of effective information sharing on behalf of the sector. Respondents often voiced a feeling of fatigue with consultation processes and a sense that nothing tangible ever comes from them. Many also said that the roundtable events facilitated as part of this engagement process in each local authority were, for many, the first time they had experienced speaking to ‘likeminded’ people from the

sector. This speaks to a sense of isolation that many organisations and practitioners feel from institutions, but also to the need to share knowledge between sectoral actors and to create inclusive spaces for people to come together, share ideas and benefit from peer-to-peer support.

Respondents also spoke about the need for greater diversity of ethnicity, age, gender, class and ability in cultural leadership. They spoke about the importance of meaningfully including different perspectives and lived experiences in the co-creation of CAH strategies and narratives for the region, as well as within each local authority.

One person said:

*“If they don’t see it then they don’t know about it... when they do know about it they don’t feel welcome there” ... “there are all of these amazing artists that are from all of these cultures with their own styles and traditions but they’re not being able to show it”*

This was particularly prevalent in the one-to-one interviews with regards to the failure to include young people in CAH. We picked up on a very real sense that regionally there is a perceived failure of provision and infrastructure to serve young people and make CAH meaningful for them. As the quote below demonstrates, this has the knock-on effect of creating a legacy gap between generations and learning in the sector.

*“We are failing young and aspiring artists. There are no spaces for young people to dance, practice music, art, acting... There are no spaces designed for young people to learn what we know unless they go to universities. I’m talking about artists that have 20/30 years of experience – how do I share that?”*

There was a clear sense of the sector having been hit hard by the pandemic – of people and organisations feeling ‘burnt out’ – but that the effects of this were disproportionate and unequal. This view was illustrated by the distribution of funding (both by local

authorities as well as public funders) during the pandemic, which respondents felt was often overly complex, and perhaps as a result, unfairly distributed and didn't recognise the breadth of the sector adequately and inclusively.

Respondents said that while advocacy for CAH in the region was slowly improving, more had to be done (and faster). They said it still often felt like one rule for larger institutions and another for small organisations, freelancers and communities. Respondents explained that in each place there was a largely informal ecosystem of grassroots organisations which was self-initiated and largely unrecognised and unsupported by councils, larger cultural organisations and the media. The existence of these networks illustrates the importance of investing in the conditions of proliferation and connectivity. It also speaks to the potential for further opportunities which are likely to come from joining up less visible communities, collectives and informal networks with larger institutions, organisations and wider stakeholder groups.

Taken together these responses show that our existing creative networks, often led by large organisations with particular interests, lack an authenticity of voice. They don't have knowledge of and connections to small and medium-scale actors in the sector, many of which reflect the under-served communities that are so integral to regeneration, environmental sustainability, equity, innovation and meaningful inclusive growth. Respondents spoke clearly to the need for greater inclusion and that more must be done to democratise both access to networks, large organisations themselves and institutions.

Critically, the responses from the engagement processes speak to a sense of 'not being seen', which carries with it the associated risk of the sector missing opportunities for innovation, celebration and reputational gain. This lack of visibility of large portions of the sector actively reduces our capacity as a region to solve problems and adapt when faced with external shocks. The temptation to pose the rhetorical question, 'How would the sector have responded to Covid-19 had it been more joined-up, equitable and able to orient itself around innovation (from wherever it came)?' is a useful, if somewhat despairing thought experiment.

From the perspective of the MCA, the responses from the engagement process on this theme speak to a need to address not only where CAH 'sits' within the structure of the Mayor's office and the Local Enterprise Partnership, but also the degree to which this positioning is accessible and visible to the sector, and by what means the MCA is equipped to actively listen to, convene and amplify voices that have traditionally been under-served (to the sector's detriment).

In doing this the MCA must avoid a standardised approach, so as to adequately recognise the plurality of voices, communities and experiences in the sector. To do this boldly, and in a way which will galvanise stakeholders around it, the MCA must visibly champion the impact (and the sum of the parts) of CAH's social and economic innovations while advocating and evidencing the contribution cross-sectorally of 'value added' by CAH.

"if you can't see it, you can't be it"

76 Diverse → representing - Awareness of evolving



“

**“Artists of colour are forging our own paths right now - beyond the institutions, which can often be sites of structural violence and oppression. This work could be mapped, better supported and used to amplify new narratives about the city or region - narratives that have historically been omitted.”**

”



# Recommendations

The recommendations of this report are indicative of the responses from people and organisations from within the sector. Those responses indicate endemic problems around cultural leadership, funding, equity and authentic collaboration, as well as our understanding of 'place' and 'innovation' with respect to CAH. Alongside this the conclusions speak to opportunities for the MCA to make systemic interventions on 'how' the region convenes around the sector's entangled economic and social contributions, with a view to an investment strategy. We also explore how the MCA can act strategically to benefit from the sum of those interactions, while maintaining alignment with its strategic economic plan and its desire to be recognised as an effective thought leader and agent of transformational change.

Interventions should be considered through the following lens:

- ➔ How does the MCA centre under-served people, age groups, communities and organisations in its interventions?
- ➔ How do we invest in creating the conditions where CAH can thrive?
- ➔ How do we invest in the MCA itself to develop its role as a thought leader and agent of transformational change in CAH?
- ➔ How does that thought leadership in CAH position the MCA to draw in additional resource and investment to the sector?
- ➔ How are interventions 'regional', capitalising on the unique position of the MCA?
- ➔ How are interventions enabling CAH to innovate in wider policy areas and issues of collective concern?

- ➔ How does the MCA authentically become an inclusive and equitable broker and convener for the region, with respect to the plurality of actors and value frames operating within the sector?

Recommendations have in some cases been listed in multiple categories below to illustrate the cross-cutting and entangled nature of how those interventions might serve the sector.

## Recommendation Categories:

### 'Frames' for SYMCA investment into CAH

- ➔ Investing in the conditions for thriving CAH
- ➔ Deploying financial interventions
- ➔ Cultural leadership

### New structures

- ➔ New investment vehicle
- ➔ Public transport reform needs to be seen through a CAH 'lens'
- ➔ Environment and climate crisis action through a CAH 'lens'
- ➔ Education and skills aspiration and participation through a CAH 'lens'

### Cultural strategy & shared messaging

- ➔ Broad public engagement is required for any successful cultural strategy for South Yorkshire
- ➔ South Yorkshire's Culture, Arts and Heritage need narrative coherence

Below this section we have listed some suggestions for practical next steps which address the dependencies associated with the MCA moving forward in support of CAH.



# Recommendations

## **‘Frames’ for SYMCA investment into Culture, Arts and Heritage (CAH)**

### **Investing in the conditions for thriving CAH**

- SYMCA should be a broker of funding and investment into the region. In so doing, it should ensure the parameters for that funding enable it to be distributed more broadly and inclusively and in ways which reflect the value of both social and economic innovations in the sector.
- This could, in some cases, mean match funding and de-risking investment from arm’s length bodies such as Arts Council England and Historic England.
- SYMCA should invest in and/or broker bespoke training and mentorship, led by CAH for CAH organisations and practitioners. This should reflect both the social and economic categorisations of innovation named in this report’s conclusions.
- SYMCA should ensure that any training and mentorship offer is adaptive to the needs of communities and people, with a focus on under-served voices and young people.
- As well as organisational development and commercial aspects such as income generation, organisational messaging and comms, training should include grant writing, facilitation, asset-based community development, cross-sectoral access to networks, use of volunteers, and the role of CAH in addressing problems of collective concern.
- Where possible this training should avoid generic business consultants and be resourced from within the sector through paid peer-to-peer support – effectively ‘doubling’

## Investing in the conditions for thriving CAH (cont.)

the net impact of its investment and fermenting cross-regional collaborations.

- ➔ SYMCA should resource, co-create and deploy a CAH narrative for the region. This will create coherence for the sector and also benefit other sectors. It should include a diverse range of actors, including small to medium-sized organisations, freelancers, public funders and local authority stakeholders.
- ➔ SYMCA, in using this coherence, should actively cultivate collaborations cross-sectorally with CAH organisations and practitioners and provide a mechanism by which private sector, third sector and public sector organisations can be actively skilled-up and engaged with the value and value-added of CAH organisations and practitioners.
- ➔ SYMCA should advocate for and broker a closer relationship between local media platforms and CAH. This should help local media understand the impact and importance of CAH, and where possible broker a supportive environment for the creation of new platforms which serve that purpose.
- ➔ SYMCA should consider how best to broker and invest in regional platforms for sharing information. This could include access to shared newsletters and platforms for promoting the plurality of the CAH offer across the region.
- ➔ SYMCA should reduce and de-risk the barriers for small-scale arts organisations and practitioners accessing disused spaces. It should advocate for them playing a greater role in animating town and city centres through the place-based investment plans.
- ➔ SYMCA should advocate for the creation of more affordable studio spaces across the region, and use its remit over transport to

## Investing in the conditions for thriving CAH (cont.)

encourage artists to use spaces across the region.

- ➔ SYMCA should visibly set an example to public funders and local authorities through its own placement of culture within its structures. This should, over time, aim to influence the placement (and allocation of value of CAH) in local authority structures, so that the region is best able to recognise and capitalise on the cross-pollinating social and economic innovations of the sector.
- ➔ SYMCA should advocate, resource and de-risk (culturally and financially) bold experimentation in CAH. It should lead on the open-access and inclusive dissemination of learning from experimentation (especially when it doesn't work as planned). It should ensure all stakeholders and communities in the sector, large and small, have the opportunity to benefit from learning.
- ➔ SYMCA should advocate for communities, local authorities, practitioners and organisations to develop the digital tools and new methodologies required for a diverse range of voices from the sector to be heard, amplified, shared and acted upon.
- ➔ SYMCA should approach this with the aim of creating a 'gateway' for self-identified creatives and creative organisations to enter and have agency – not as a never-ending opportunity to map and remap the sector.
- ➔ To achieve the aim above, SYMCA should consider innovations in participatory and deliberative democracy tools and software (see Appendix A).
- ➔ SYMCA should visibly support and champion work which is cross-regional and collaborative between diverse actors and communities across South Yorkshire.

## Deploying financial interventions

- ➔ While we acknowledge that SYMCA is not and will never be a 'funder' in the traditional sense, it should consider making targeted investments in cultural assets and programmes which serve its wider strategic objectives across the region (including, but not limited to, its own voice and identity).
- ➔ Further to this it should consider how it can use its convening power to broker investment from public funders, local authorities, the private sector and central government.
- ➔ Thinking ambitiously, SYMCA could consider how it might use the mayoral precept to support CAH.
- ➔ SYMCA should – at a minimum – match if not surpass the level of investment of other MCAs (including WYCA at £11m for culture, and Liverpool at 1% of their overall budget for culture). This would give confidence to public funders, investment opportunities and local authorities.
- ➔ SYMCA's wider strategic objectives and investment priorities should acknowledge the social and economic innovations vital to the inclusive growth agenda. Interventions should focus on the proliferation of the ecosystem, and supporting the conditions for CAH to thrive.
- ➔ Within this, SYMCA should encourage and enable organisations across the CAH ecosystem to co-create work and deliver collaboratively. This will ensure the sum of the potential social and economic innovations is realised.
- ➔ Cross-regional investments should also be deployed with a view to 'joining up' places and communities within the region – both culturally and infrastructurally (for example, interventions that facilitate links or collaborations between actors in several local authority areas rather than just one).
- ➔ The above might include coherent 'cultural

## Deploying financial interventions (cont.)

or heritage trails', and brokering investment to allow young people in education across the region to access its CAH experiences.

- ➔ SYMCA should consider strategic interventions and investment in emerging growth areas of the CAH sector, such as digital and film (for example, a regional film office, or services which connect CAH and creative digital industries).
- ➔ It should do this while considering how it can strategically capitalise on the entangled social as well as economic benefits of doing so. This speaks to the need to include, train and employ a greater diversity of voices in those sectors, and to make sure that communities themselves are able to benefit from any windfalls.
- ➔ SYMCA should consider an independent investment vehicle for this work, and should make sure a diverse range of actors both from within and outside the sector have agency in decisions made. This would demonstrate good cultural leadership.

## Cultural Leadership

- ➔ SYMCA should make a bold and visible statement about the importance of all aspects of CAH and its renewed investment in the sector.
- ➔ SYMCA should structurally embed CAH across both the Mayor's office and the LEP, demonstrating its commitment to the sector.
- ➔ This could take the form of a new culture board at SYMCA, alongside a representative from the CAH sector on the LEP board.
- ➔ SYMCA should convene local authorities and public funders and develop collaborative relationships between them. It should ensure the disconnects named in this report are resolved.
- ➔ SYMCA should be bold in its role of resourcing



## Cultural Leadership (cont.)

and convening regional collaborations between local authority actors and CAH. It should adopt a 'warts and all' approach – de-risking, offering training and adding relational value to the collaborations between local authorities and the sector.

- ➔ SYMCA must be visible and accessible to CAH organisations of all sizes. It should consider by what means it commissions and involves CAH organisations to help it define its own regional identity as a thought leader seeking to make systemic interventions in CAH.
- ➔ SYMCA should put the weight of its resources and leadership into advocating for how CAH can improve educational and public health outcomes in communities. Critically, it should articulate how this adds value to other sectors by creating the conditions for innovation and inclusive growth.
- ➔ The ambition of this should be that the MCA creates the conditions for cross-sectoral interventions by CAH organisations and practitioners. This would allow creativity and creative approaches to be embedded across all policy areas.
- ➔ SYMCA should visibly advocate and resource bold experimentation in CAH, and the inclusive dissemination of learning that comes from it, with all stakeholders and communities (large and small) in the sector. As part of this, it must acknowledge that sometimes experiments fail and that that's OK.
- ➔ SYMCA should create leadership roles internally, and seek to proactively empower a more diverse set of often under-served actors to work in support of CAH.
- ➔ This should include a dedicated CAH team within SYMCA, which can work closely with funders, local authorities, other MCAs and cultural stakeholders. This would demonstrate good practice and highlight the importance of the CAH contribution to economic and social outcomes.

## Cultural Leadership (cont.)

- ➔ SYMCA should commission the co-creation of a cultural framework which embeds a 'CAH lens' in all decision-making at SYMCA.
- ➔ This would outline how CAH makes cross-cutting contributions to achieving targets in almost every important policy area. It would also explore what 'great' looks like, as well as opportunities and potential interventions (draft example from the West Yorkshire MCA).
- ➔ The cultural framework should reflect the aspirations and strengths of culture in each local authority area, while focusing on the potential for learning and cross-pollination between local authorities and CAH actors of all sizes as an outcome.
- ➔ SYMCA should convene and initiate regional relational networks and events which bring CAH practitioners and organisations together open-heartedly, enabling cross-pollination and peer-to-peer support.
- ➔ SYMCA should be 'thinking northern' – linking with other MCAs to make sure approaches are complementary and messaging is aligned. It should ensure it has a place at the table in a northern MCA network.

**“We use art as a social tool and a collective process to explore local issues and their wider global resonances.”**

## New Structures

### New 'investment vehicle'

- ➔ SYMCA should develop a new structure to broker and distribute funding and investment, with a new approach that removes barriers for grassroots organisations and freelancers and which increases the diversity of engaged voices.
- ➔ It should support people at different stages of their development with a recognition of the different kinds of social and economic innovation delivered by the sector.
- ➔ In recognition of the MCA's stated desire to increase the number of employee-owned businesses, it should consider how the CAH sector has ownership and agency over this new vehicle.
- ➔ It is critically important that this new investment vehicle is democratic, participatory, transparent and accountable to the sector.
- ➔ Pathways for consideration within this vehicle:
- ➔ Social innovations and 'ecosystem proliferation' – grounded in service to problems of collective concern, as well as communities of interest and of geography.
- ➔ Economic innovation – supporting excellence in organisations and practitioners, facilitating scaling up, and interventions which support industry-specific infrastructure needs.
- ➔ Regional collaborations and cross-sectoral benefits which link 'place' to 'place', and enable ongoing, multigenerational, long-term equity and inclusion across the sector.
- ➔ Work that generates case studies which evidence the entangled value of CAH across the innovation frames, and which shows the diverse benefits of cross-sectoral collaboration.

### **New 'investment vehicle' (cont.)**

- ➔ Work that enables CAH organisations to access strategic decision-makers, either in local authorities, at the MCA or with public funders.
- ➔ Work that equips under-served communities, freelancers and small to medium-sized CAH organisations with the training, expertise, resources and capacity to write successful funding bids.

### **Public transport reform needs to be seen through a CAH 'lens'**

- ➔ SYMCA should work with CAH organisations and practitioners to adopt a creative lens to innovation in public transport.
- ➔ A priority should be reducing silos between 'places' in the region, and cultivating a regional identity.
- ➔ SYMCA should facilitate out-of-town areas which are often isolated from the majority of CAH activity in the region, and enable better links between towns and cities at night, which are often poor or in some cases non-existent.
- ➔ These interventions can't just be about cheaper tickets or more night-time routes. They require something personalised and bespoke to CAH, which will likely only be forthcoming through meaningful engagement with CAH organisations and practitioners who are directly affected by accessibility and infrastructure issues.

### **Environment and climate crisis action through a CAH 'lens'**

- ➔ CAH organisations and practitioners should be more directly involved in problem-solving issues of environmental sustainability, climate and biosphere breakdown.

### **Environment and climate crisis action through a CAH 'lens'**

- ➔ CAH organisations are often grounded in the communities who are most affected by these issues, and are therefore more likely to be able to make useful interventions.
- ➔ SYMCA should consult with heritage organisations about their role in conserving physical heritage as a response to issues around conservation and climate breakdown.
- ➔ Because so many of the issues surrounding the environment and the climate crisis are relational and value-based (i.e. our relationship as communities and individuals with the environmental assets around us), CAH organisations are ideally placed to address these issues.
- ➔ The MCA should consider the potential role of CAH organisations in equipping environmental assets in the region – such as the rivers which run through the region – with legal personhood. This has been trialled successfully in New Zealand in 2017 (more information on this below).

### **Education and skills aspiration and participation through a CAH 'lens'**

- ➔ SYMCA should show leadership on the impact of CAH and improved educational attainment.
- ➔ SYMCA should convene regional collaborations between CAH organisations and schools. This will ensure talent and aspiration for working in CAH is retained and invigorated.
- ➔ SYMCA should advocate for mentoring programmes. This will enable young people across the region to meet CAH practitioners and organisations, and help develop networks and aspiration.
- ➔ SYMCA should collaborate with schools and CAH organisations. This could involve resourcing regular 'experiences' and school trips across the region, and encouraging schools to visit different CAH organisations across South Yorkshire.



## Cultural Strategy & Shared Messaging

**Broad public engagement is required for any successful cultural strategy for South Yorkshire**

- ➔ We recommend that efforts to create a cultural strategy or framework for the region seek to engage upfront with members of the public across communities in Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham and Sheffield. This process should have a clear focus on diversity, inclusion and amplifying unheard voices.
- ➔ There is a danger that without meaningful co-creation and community buy-in, a cultural strategy could end up being filed on the shelf.
- ➔ A cultural strategy or framework for SYMCA should also interact and ideally synergise with local authority place-based plans, as well as specific cultural strategies emerging in Doncaster, Rotherham and Barnsley at the time of writing.
- ➔ Public funders should be actively included in the co-production of any SYMCA cultural framework or strategy. This should avoid duplication and misappropriation, and create clear lines of communication between institutional stakeholders.
- ➔ SYMCA should consider advocating for an intervention through CAH and wider stakeholders that addresses the impact and nervousness caused by the pandemic on older audiences attending CAH events.
- ➔ SYMCA should think about its interventions in this area as using CAH to change the public perception of places across the region and also of the MCA itself.
- ➔ SYMCA should convene annual creative summits, taking place in a different local authority each year. These events would bring CAH together and address the visibility and connection of the sector.

**South Yorkshire's  
Culture, Arts and  
Heritage need  
narrative coherence**

- The narrative coherence of a SYMCA cultural framework will be dependent on the clarity of voice, remit and role of SYMCA as a thought leader and transformational agent of change. This is a dependency that the MCA must meaningfully address.
- Narrative coherence in CAH regionally should be less about finding the perfect 'slogan' and more about a process of collecting and celebrating shared stories, value frames and aspirations, which all stakeholders (including the public) can buy into.
- This process should go hand-in-hand with the principles of multigenerational, long-term, inclusive, equitable and diverse participation as a prerequisite for success.
- Narrative coherence will be underpinned by the strategy's capacity for adaptation, inclusion and antifragility (turning shocks into opportunities).
- The USPs and unique strengths of CAH in each local authority area need to be recognised and cross-pollinated effectively.
- This could include SYMCA brokering collaboration cross-regionally on large-scale ambitions which are in service to specific place-based reputational issues (for example, Rotherham as Children's Capital of Culture).
- Narrative coherence relies on honesty between stakeholders, the openness of talking about problems, and de-risking experimentation and innovation. This is foundationally 'relational', so work must be done by SYMCA to develop good relationships between actors.
- Consideration as to how a new narrative sits within the north of England as a whole is critical and worthy of exploration with regional and national stakeholders, as well as equivalent and neighbouring MCAs.

**South Yorkshire's  
Culture, Arts and  
Heritage need  
narrative coherence  
(cont.)**

- ➔ Within this the MCA should consider its role and remit in response to the questions 'How is South Yorkshire adding to northern identity and narrative?' and 'How does this cohere with aspirations around further devolution and the role and identity of SYMCA to public and sectoral stakeholders?'

## **Five things SYMCA could start tomorrow:**

Here are five practical things that the MCA could start work on tomorrow to create the conditions for further evolution and innovation in CAH.

- ➔ Make a bold and clear commitment about the value that all aspects of CAH have to the MCA, as well as the level of long-term investment the MCA will provide to catalyse innovation in the sector. This statement should show how the MCA will be prioritising CAH in both the structures of the combined authority and the LEP.
- ➔ Convene leaders of local authorities and public funders for a series of relational meetings centred around the social and economic innovations and opportunities of CAH, sharing problems 'warts and all' and addressing regional collaboration and shared investment strategies.
- ➔ In collaboration with local authorities, plan a large-scale public engagement exercise on a regional narrative for CAH which centres on the important contributions of the sector.
- ➔ Bring a diverse range of people in CAH together to begin co-designing a cultural framework for the region. This should include a regional narrative, an investment vehicle, a regional promotion strategy, and digital democracy tools to enable the whole sector to participate, network and convene effectively on a regional basis.
- ➔ Develop a programme of investment to support peer-to-peer training between CAH organisations that prioritises regional collaboration, grant funding, decision-maker access, cross-sector networking and the skills for delivering social and economic innovation.

“

**“We need to move from project to programme and think about supporting people and organisations so that they can have the time and resources to build their vision, embed in communities, strengthen relationships and make lasting change.”**

”

# About the writers of this report



**Opus is a 'think and do tank' based in Sheffield, established in 2008.**

Opus works to contribute upstream solutions to complex system problems. We do this through strategic partnerships, engaging arts and culture, research, identifying leverage points, and co-creation. We incubate and deploy services, projects, platforms, decentralised networks and movements proportionate to the challenges ahead.

Opus is multidisciplinary, cross-sector and adaptive, working across hyper-local, regional, national and international contexts. We work with citizens, communities, neighbourhoods, business, voluntary groups, cities, campaigns, research institutions, infrastructure organisations and governments to address the entangled ecological, social, economic, political and cultural crises we collectively face.



**Ben  
Jackson**



**Tchiyiwe  
Chihana**



**James  
Lock**



**Joe  
Kriss**



**Sam  
Walby**



**Flick  
Jackson**



**Jake  
Barrett**



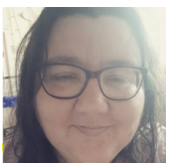
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# Further Thoughts

## Widening our frames of reference: innovative tools, concepts and methodologies

The porous and collaborative nature of people and organisations working in CAH lends itself to the appropriation and cross-application of multidisciplinary innovations from other sectors.

With this in mind, we've listed below a series of interesting tools, concepts and methodologies which we have encountered over the last few years which could offer insight. There are many other alternatives that we could expand upon if required. The profiles below cover a range of aspects mentioned in the report such as: issues of community-based engagement and decision-making, effective problem-solving, machine learning and consensus forming, digital sensor tools and creative ideas for how environmental assets could be protected and identified with.

The application of these ideas should be considered with a view to solving problems within the CAH sector itself, or deploying these concepts, tools and methodologies creatively through CAH organisations and practitioners to solve other problems. Like the sector itself, the opportunities here are endless.

### ➔ Kindred

Kindred is a community interest company (CIC), owned locally and collectively, that reinvests money, space and learning in Liverpool City Region's socially-trading economy. Socially-trading organisations (STOs) are businesses which both deliver social benefits and trade commercially – for-profit businesses with a social mission.

Collectively these organisations help Liverpool City Region find new purposes for redundant buildings, new roles for unemployed people, reinvigorate high streets and harness the inherent social entrepreneurialism that is integral to the region's heritage to deliver a kinder and more inclusive economy.

## ➔ Polis

Polis is an open-source platform for a conversation in which participants submit short text statements, or comments. These statements are sent out semi-randomly to other participants to vote on by clicking agree, disagree or pass. As statements and evaluations build up, AI sorts participants into likeminded clusters. AI also identifies 'consensus statements' through 'consensus mining' techniques, finding areas where diverse clusters agree. Participants can view a graphic (opinion landscape) of the prospective ecosystem developing in real time and respond if needed.

Over time statements tend to become more specific and practical. Polis provides automatic realtime, web-based reports, or your own data scientists can produce manual analysis of data trends. Polis has been used with populations ranging from 40 to 40,000 people, and is good for discovering unrealised possibilities in complex, conflicted situations involving diverse perspectives.

## ➔ SenseMaker

SenseMaker is a citizen sensor network tool created by Cynfin Institute. A citizen sensor network is a network of engaged people who are collecting and sharing observations on an ongoing basis. Rather than just capturing a snapshot in time, SenseMaker enables continuous story collection over longer periods of time – much like a virtual journal.

A citizen sensor network can be used to capture a continuous account of what a large proportion of the target community or population is observing and experiencing, and what that means to them. SenseMaker provides people with a framework through which they can reflect on their day-to-day experiences and interpret their own data. This engages citizens in making sense of the system which they are a part of.

SenseMaker provides real-time feedback which is essential to managing complexity, and can be used to help identify potential solutions to be explored, tested and monitored. Using SenseMaker, a citizen sensor network can be established within a variety of different organisations such as companies, schools, universities and colleges, community centres, sports clubs, neighbourhoods, regions, countries or just about any other kind of community you can think of.

## ➔ Citizens' Assembly

A citizens' assembly is a group of people who are brought together to discuss an issue or several issues and reach a conclusion about what they think should happen. The people who take part are chosen to reflect the wider population – both in terms of demographics (e.g. age, gender, ethnicity, social class) and sometimes relevant attitudes (e.g. preferences for a small or large state).

Citizens' assemblies give members of the public the time and opportunity to learn about and discuss a topic before reaching conclusions. Assembly participants are asked to make trade-offs and arrive at workable recommendations. Citizens' assemblies often adopt a three-step process of learning, deliberation and decision-making. This is supported by a team of impartial facilitators who guide participants through the process, ensuring that everyone is heard and comfortable participating.

Citizens' assemblies are often overseen by an independent advisory group. They support the preparations for the citizens' assembly, including topic selection, process design, and the materials that will be used during the meetings. An important responsibility of this group is to ensure that assembly participants are presented with factually accurate, comprehensive, balanced and unbiased information.

Citizens' assemblies usually tend to be quite high-profile events. The relevant decision-makers will often be present at the assembly allowing citizens to present their findings directly.

## ➔ Citizens' Jury

A Citizens' Jury is a method of deliberation developed by the Jefferson Centre where a small group of people (between 12 and 24), representative of the demographics of a given area, come together to deliberate on an issue (generally one clearly framed question) over a period of two to seven days.

Citizens' Juries can be used on different policy issues and are particularly effective on value-laden and controversial questions, where knowledge is contested and where there might be important ethical and social repercussions. Normally citizens deliberate over a clearly framed question or questions. They will reach a decision following deliberation on the issue, either by consensus or voting. To date Citizens' Juries have been used for issues including cuts in public service spending, balancing work and family life, care provision, the wellbeing of young people, mental health service provision, policy-making and emergent technologies.

## ➔ Antifragility

Antifragility is a property of systems in which their capability to thrive is increased as a result of stressors, shocks, volatility, noise, mistakes, faults, attacks or failures. The concept was developed by [Nassim Nicholas Taleb](#) in his book, [Antifragile](#).

When considering the broader ambition of SYMCA, and indeed local authorities and public funders, to contribute thought leadership and transformational change to this space, the concept of antifragility is of value. The barriers and challenges outlined below from our engagement data offer the foundational elements of an antifragile response. While they may speak to endemic difficulties within the sector, they also speak to opportunities for renewal and building a thriving sector that is greater than the sum of those challenges.

We must look holistically at the entanglement between the challenges and how an antifragile and whole systems view could be taken to turn those challenges into opportunities. This includes opportunities which not only capitalise on the intrinsic value of isolated interventions into CAH but also on the value and problem-solving capacity the sector adds to solutions and innovation cross-sectorally.

## ➔ Creative Coalitions Handbook for Change

This is a handbook for how you can apply the model of impactful organising trialled and tested by Crisis Action in your own work. There are a number of components to this model, and the model only works when all the components are in place: the value of each one relies upon the others. You can put all the components in place – a strategic convenor, not seeking public profile, building clever coalitions with creative tactics – and the idea is that the model will help your network have greater impact.

## ➔ Shift Design – Making Collective Progress Framework

This is a new framework from Shift Design, an organisation working in collective social innovation. The framework aims to provide organisations, individuals or groups with a methodology for realising shared or interdependent goals. Funded by the National Lottery, it offers insight into how infrastructure, network or anchor organisations who are seeking to build more collective potential among their stakeholders can create the conditions for shared investment strategies and foster supportive ways of catalysing collaboration between a plurality of actors.

## ➔ Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD)

Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) is a new model of development that challenges the top-down approach of the old needs-based development, where outside organisations step in on 'behalf' of the community. The ABCD approach offers a sustainable model of development, one that prioritises a grassroots, bottom-up approach of empowering, inclusive and transformative change to communities. ABCD is, by contrast, a capacity-focused model that forges the "development of policies and activities based on capacities, skills and assets of lower income people and their neighbourhoods".

The ABCD approach seeks to identify the already existing skills, services, and assets that exist at the local level, and mobilise them to better serve the community as a whole. This involves taking inventory and physically mapping out these assets and opportunities, before interviewing the main stakeholders to identify individuals and organisations that are already doing work to serve and mobilise the community. Not only does this model stimulate the local economy, it also empowers marginalised community members because it transforms the client or recipient into a contributor.

ABCD emphasises relationship building, which is the key to increasing social capital within the community, and generating links between the micro and the macro (ABCD Toolkit).



## ➔ Legal Personhood of Natural Entities

In the wake of increased climate and environmental precarity, new social theories have emerged as to how to protect our natural resources. A relatively new legal theory is environmental personhood, which is being considered as a new way to conserve significant natural entities such as rivers and parks.

Many people may be familiar with the concept of granting legal personhood to a non-human from the controversial case *Citizens United*, in which the US Supreme Court granted legal personhood to corporations. Legal personhood extending to non-humans allows these entities to bring cases as people through representatives, and establishes human rights and liabilities no different from actual humans.

This concept has become a reality in four countries: Ecuador, Bolivia, New Zealand, and India. New Zealand granted legal personhood first to their national park Te Urewera in 2014, and later to one of their major rivers, the Whanganui, in 2017 under the Te Awa Tupua Act. This latter legal designation was due almost entirely to the Maori tribe Whanganui Iwi, who view the river not only as an ancestor but as a part of a larger whole that includes themselves and their natural landscapes. This legal designation marks a shift from anthropocentric to ecocentric legislation, similar to those that were ingrained in many indigenous cultures centuries before our legal structure contradicted them.

**“It creates the ambience, the vision, the people, the opportunity and the joy.”**