

Research Report for Herefordshire Children & Young People's Arts and Cultural Network

*Supported by Arts Connect West Midlands and
the Elmley Foundation*

October 2015



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1. INTRODUCTION

This report was commissioned on 23 May 2015 in response to a research brief entitled 'Arts and Cultural Sector Research and Information Gathering' circulated by Arts Connect West Midlands. It was commissioned to help inform the development of the Children and Young People's Arts and Cultural Network which had recently been formed in Herefordshire.

Two meetings were held, on 25 March and 13 May, through which a shared vision and priorities for arts and culture for young people in Herefordshire had begun to emerge. Those involved included many of the leading independent arts/cultural organisations and services active in the area, some schools and colleges, the Elmley Foundation and Arts Connect West Midlands.

The research aimed to provide an analysis of current cultural activity for children and young people in the county, and an understanding of the local context, specifically:

- to map the range of arts and cultural provision for young people, and its reach
- to identify strengths in current provision, and gaps or shortcomings
- to identify areas which could potentially be developed through future collaborations
- to discuss the research findings with the stakeholders
- to present the findings, conclusions and recommendations in a report for the Network.

The process involved discussions with all of the organisations involved in the network so far, supplemented by desk research, an approach seen as yielding greater insights into the strengths and weaknesses of the local situation compared with using a questionnaire-based approach. At this stage the focus was on organisations involved in the network meetings to date, but as noted later, this was not a comprehensive audit so there are other providers not yet included. The work was carried out with some urgency in order to present interim results for discussion before the summer holidays, at a meeting of the network on 17 July, with a presentation of completed research on 7 October 2015.

This report presents key findings from the research, including:

1. Strengths, weaknesses and limitations of cultural opportunities for young people in Herefordshire.
2. Some case studies as examples of best practice.
3. The specific challenges in the local context of Herefordshire.
4. A review of current or imminent threats and risks, and possible future opportunities.
5. Issues for consideration relating to future collaborative working.

A list of those consulted in preparing this report is attached. We are grateful to all who contributed to the research.

Background papers setting out more detail are included in a separate Appendix. These are:

1. Summary of activity delivered for children and young people by cultural organisations involved in the network
2. Summary of the external relationships of cultural organisations involved in the network
3. Summary of some of the key relationships between schools and cultural organisations involved in the network
4. A brief overview of provision for young people by 25 independent museums and heritage sites in the county.

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Stafford, October 2015
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2. STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES AND LIMITATIONS

Amongst the **strengths** of cultural opportunities for young people in Herefordshire are:

- The cultural sector in Herefordshire is passionate, energetic, imaginative, strong at creating and developing ideas, and good at looking for new opportunities and making new working alliances. Organisations are resourceful, resilient and determined, and have got better at responding to the needs of stakeholders and customers.
- There are some strong and resilient arts and cultural organisations based in, or working in, the area. Many have successfully adapted to the changing environment and surviving, despite reduced funding for many; some have a substantial history¹. Considering some of the challenges of the past few years the sector is impressively varied and robust. Some – but by no means all – are in quite a strong position financially with a cushion of reserves and/or trading surpluses.
- There is a small core group of independent organisations receiving Arts Council support as part of the national funding portfolio². The sector has been adept at securing project grants from a range of funding streams, and Herefordshire benefits from the active interest especially of the Elmley Foundation. However, core funding and the capacity for fund-raising is limited, and it is always difficult to get funding especially for innovative projects. Several organisations commented on the difficulties of securing business sponsorship for cultural activities locally.
- Some cultural organisations are very successful in maintaining a relationship with the majority of Herefordshire’s schools (such as The Courtyard, with links with 87% of schools, the Music Service with 80%, the Library Service with 70%). Some organisations, such as the Music Pool, contribute to opportunities for young people in special schools and PRUs as well as mainstream schools.
- Some schools and colleges are very committed to working with practitioners and professional organisations³ but it appears that about one third of schools have very little engagement with cultural organisations beyond the school. Although this review has not included a survey of school and college based provision, it should be noted that some education providers have a very strong offering in the arts⁴.
- The Case Studies in Section 3 provide examples of some excellent practice in engaging children and young people in cultural activities and participatory projects. There are also some good examples of active collaborations between arts and heritage organisations, such as links

¹ Such as Pentabus which began in 1974, and the Music Pool which emerged from Hereford Arts in Action which began in 1988; but these are young compared with the Three Choirs Festival which dates its origins to 1715 and is 300 years old this year.

² The Courtyard, Ledbury Poetry Festival and 2 Faced Dance currently receive £457,927 p.a. between them. Four organisations based in adjacent counties but working in Herefordshire (Arts Alive, Dancefest, Meadow Arts and Pentabus) together currently receive £492,324 p.a. The Music Hub receives £225,724 funding from DfE via the Arts Council as part of a £75m fund to support music education.

³ Schools with the most engagement include: Broadlands, Holmer, Lord Scudamore, Madley, Marlbrook, Much Birch, Riverside and Sutton primary schools; the Pupil Referral units; and Aylestone, Bishop of Hereford Bluecoat School, John Masefield and St Mary’s secondary schools.

⁴ For example, Hereford College of Arts (offering various diplomas, foundation, bachelors’ and masters’ degrees) is one of only a small number nationally of independent art colleges. The Royal National College is a specialist provider of education to people with visual impairment. Herefordshire & Ludlow College offers BTEC and HNC diplomas. The Sixth Form College has a strong commitment to the arts and offers an impressive range of extra-curricular opportunities and external links with the arts.

between Croft Castle, Meadow Arts and Orleton Primary School, and between different services, such as Herefordshire's role in leading the *Early Hurlly Burlly* cross-artform early years project across the West Midlands.

- In encouraging opportunities for further progression, some organisations have been able to generate opportunities for young people to gain experience in the creative industries through training and progression. Some examples are included in the Case Studies in Section 3.

Amongst the **weaknesses** in cultural provision are:

- Inevitably with changes in public funding and in the role of local authorities there has been a significant loss of capacity and a reduction in support. Examples include:
 - the loss of an in-house local authority arts service, local authority financial support for the arts and an arts commissioning budget which supported eleven organisations working with children and young people, the former Arts Forum (which brought the arts sector together) and the Herefordshire Network for Creative Learning (which brought together 60 creative practitioners, cultural organisations, teachers and educationalists)
 - the fragmentation of youth services, and the loss of other local authority services and posts, including Visit Herefordshire and the Council-hosted tourism officer
 - a 50% reduction of staffing supporting learning in museums, so that initiatives such as the *Take One* project which ran for four years have faltered due to limited staffing and funding, and the ending of the Arts Council-funded museums development officer post which supported the large number of independent museums in Herefordshire.
- There is a lack of strategic leadership of the cultural sector, other than that provided by individual services and organisations. This needs to change to be able to bid in 2017 to be UK City of Culture in 2021⁵. There is no high level champion or advocate at the political and strategic level, and the profile of the arts and cultural sector is lower than it deserves to be. At present it is not clear that Herefordshire has the capacity to have an effective cultural policy⁶.
- There is no overall leadership for arts and cultural education. With fragmentation of structures and the reduced role and capacity of the local authority, it is difficult to form a strategic overview of arts and cultural opportunities in schools. This research has not set out to review provision by the education sector, although some schools and colleges which had shown an active interest in the network were consulted, but it appears from information provided by cultural organisations that many schools – although certainly not all – have a low (and possibly reducing) level of engagement with the arts and with the external cultural sector⁷.

⁵ Other potential bidders are understood to include Worcester, Coventry (which has allocated at least £250,000 to develop proposals), Plymouth, Milton Keynes, Southend, Aberdeen (again), Paisley, and Cardiff.

⁶ It might be salutary to note that when Aberdeen failed to make the shortlist in the previous bidding round (in 2014), the judges' published assessment was that the bid lacked a '*coherent vision*' and a '*wow factor*', and showed '*limited cultural and artistic expertise*'. It is also interesting to note that in 2015 Helen Connify, Co-ordinator for Sunderland Cultural Partnership reported that "*Sunderland has seen a real step change in its ambitions to place arts and culture at the heart of the city's regeneration plans. We believe this bid will harness the creative energy and cultural heritage of the city and change perceptions of Sunderland.*"

⁷ 25% of schools had no cultural relationship reported to this study, 49% had just one, and 26% had some regular relationships (excluding services such as libraries and music service to which most schools subscribe). There appeared to be 21 primary, 2 secondary and 5 independent schools with no other reported engagement with cultural organisations, and a further 40 primary, 6 secondary and 2 independent schools with only one reported relationship.

- Similarly, in the absence of a policy-led approach and overview it is difficult to judge the range and scope of arts and cultural opportunities in the informal sector of youth clubs, youth centres and the voluntary sector.
- At this stage some areas of provision are noted but have not been comprehensively researched; these are possible areas for further investigation in future. As well as provision for young people in informal settings such as youth centres, community centres and voluntary sector organisations, these include independent museums, the heritage sector and historic sites and properties, and private sector providers of individual and group tuition.

The **limitations** of cultural opportunities for young people in Herefordshire include:

- Young people are amongst those in the community who are most disadvantaged, socially and culturally, by the dispersed population and rural nature of the county⁸, the limitations of public transport, rural poverty and the comparative lack of cultural diversity.
- Distance from major cities such as Birmingham and Cardiff means that young people have few or no opportunities to travel to larger events in regional centres, and there is relatively little reach into the county by arts and cultural organisations based in the cities or elsewhere.
- Within Herefordshire, young people living in the villages and smaller towns are isolated from activities in Hereford, and appear to have few cultural opportunities beyond what the formal education sector provides unless their families make efforts to help them access opportunities.
- Although not fully researched for this report, we are aware of some strong examples of the informal youth sector helping provide access to cultural activities for young people at risk of social exclusion, such as at Close House and the Aspire Day Centre, but the overall picture is far from clear. Consultation with young people currently being led by 'Participation People', contributing to a *Voice of the Child* multi-agency service co-ordination across Herefordshire, may shed more light on what young people feel about their cultural opportunities.
- Demographic changes, including inward migration by older people, skew the available opportunities and the character of much of the cultural provision. With limited higher education provision in Herefordshire⁹, there is a net outflow of young people in the over 18 age group, with 3,000 students living away from home during term-time. While there is some evidence of an upturn in numbers of young adults returning to or settling in the area, including entrepreneurs and cultural business start-ups, as in many rural and marginal areas of the UK (such as Lincolnshire, the Isle of Wight, or the Scottish Borders) it can feel to young people like a rather staid place which offers less stimulation than the bright lights, greater range of opportunities and cultural diversity of urban areas¹⁰.

⁸ "Herefordshire is a predominantly rural county, with the fourth lowest population density in England... Almost all its land area falls within the 25 per cent most deprived in England in terms of geographical barriers to services." *Understanding Herefordshire 2014: An Integrated Needs Assessment*. Herefordshire Council, May 2014, page 6.

⁹ Although the roles of Hereford College of Arts, the Royal National College and the Herefordshire & Ludlow College are acknowledged.

¹⁰ "Recent qualitative research confirms the assumption that young people leave the county for education and alternative employment opportunities to the relatively low-paid and low-skilled jobs available locally, but also because of a perceived lack of wider social and cultural activities." *Integrated Needs Assessment*, page 8.

3. CASE STUDIES AS EXAMPLES OF BEST PRACTICE

The following brief case studies illustrate best practice in the variety, the range of partnerships, the impact and value of cultural activities with young people in Herefordshire.

Case Study 1: 2Faced Dance: *The Trench* project

The Trench was devised by 2Faced Dance Company with St Mary's RC High School in Lugwardine, as part of the commemorations of the First World War, with support from the Heritage Lottery Fund, exploring the lives and memories of WW1 servicemen and their families through dance, film, music and physical theatre.

2Faced Dance 'produces innovative, accomplished and aspirational artistic performance and participation programmes alongside a captivating community dance programme that truly reflects the landscape in which we are based'.

Taking the 27 names inscribed on the village war memorial as its starting point, the lives of the servicemen and their families were researched. St Mary's students then worked with 2Faced Dance to bring the memories, stories and legacies of these men to life through arts workshops culminating in a multimedia physical theatre performance directed by the dance company and performed by St Mary's students with the professional dancers.

A real life trench was built in the school grounds to help everyone understand more about the experience of the western front. A website with information about each of the 27 men and a map locating their homes was developed by students as part of the project (www.thetrench.co.uk).

2Faced Dance Company worked with primary and secondary schools to create dance performances on the WW1 theme during in-school workshops with professional dancers, which were then performed in an evening showcase at the school for family and friends. Secondary schools hosted *Trench Days*, each day involving a variety of arts workshops for primary and secondary students.

The Trench production featured students from St Mary's RC High School and professional dancers from 2Faced Dance. It was first performed at St Mary's in March 2015, and subsequently invited to be presented before a wider audience in the Shire Hall for Armed Forces Day on 27 June. In July it toured to four other schools, at each of which some of the feeder primary schools worked with their secondary schools. Five high schools and ten primary schools were directly involved.

Features of good practice in this project included:

- a persuasive example of cross-curricular work involving film, original music and art work, supported by historical research using primary sources, with textiles, poetry, IT skills and video-making as well as dance
- opportunities for schools to get involved with the national programme of WW1 Centenary Commemorations
- bringing history to life through a great learning experience
- intergenerational work, through community input and oral history
- strengthening links between secondary schools and their feeder primary schools, with primary school students visiting their prospective secondary schools on a practical project
- a new relationship between the leading host secondary school and the dance company
- involving boys, including the Year 9 Rugby Team from St Mary's, in dance
- the project was described as a model dance project at a national conference of Dance UK.

Case Study 2: Brightstripe – Cultural Health CIC: *y.Art + y.Sport: Be all you can Be*

Regular sports and creative sessions led by professional practitioners were combined in one project to add value to the work of youth clubs and other settings by providing new experiences for young people. The project received funding from the Police & Crime Commissioner for West Mercia, with additional support from Arts Connect Partnership Investment and the Arts Award Access Fund.

The project set out to help divert young people away from anti-social and negative behaviour through taking part in creative and sports based sessions that would build confidence and raise aspirations. The focus was on behaviour change rather than arts or sports outcomes as such. The project aimed to give young people a voice, show them that they have skills and provide them with an opportunity to do something new of a high quality working with professionals they would not usually have had the chance to work with.

162 young people were involved in a total of 88 creative sessions and 48 sports based sessions in eight targeted youth work venues across the county, and at The Larches School, Leominster (school for excluded children and those with specialist educational needs, now the Cambian Group).

Creative activities included ceramics/pottery, film and animation, photography, textiles and batik, drawing, painting and collage, music and DJ'ing, drama and writing. Sports activities included fencing, bootcamp, insanity aerobics, dodgeball and martial arts.

Amongst reported outcomes were that young people felt more positive and therefore less inclined to take part in negative or anti-social behaviour. During the period of the project there were fewer police call-outs and fewer incidents of anti-social behaviour in the target areas. Statistics compiled by the Herefordshire Research Team confirmed that reported anti-social behaviour incidents were:

- reduced from 12 to below 7 per month in Ross
- reduced from an average of 8.7 per month to below 6 in Leominster
- reduced from 55 for the period December/January/February 2013-14 to 24 for the same period 2014-15 in South Wye.

Following the successful evaluation Brightstripe has been awarded further funding for the project from the West Mercia Police & Crime Commissioner to work with more venues and to produce a short film which aims to promote what the young people can achieve through this project.

As an example of best practice *y.Art + y.Sport: Be all you can Be* demonstrates:

- increased motivation, confidence, physicality and creativity as a result of taking part, confirmed through evaluation by young people, practitioners, youth workers and teachers, as well as partners
- objective evidence of reduced anti-social behaviour in localities where vulnerable young people had better opportunities to take part in creative and sports activities, a much more cost effective strategy compared with high cost interventions by the justice system
- the importance of positive partnerships in reaching a wider range of young people, especially the most vulnerable and others who would not otherwise benefit from being involved in arts and sports activities
- the impact of partnership working in supporting HVOSS to develop the sustainability and capacity of their youth centres and to capitalise on the professionalism of the staff working at a special school.

Case Study 3: Ledbury Poetry Festival, Close House and mediaSHYPP: ‘The Story of Mary and Joe’

‘The Story of Mary and Joe’ was a collaboration between Ledbury Poetry Festival, Close House and mediaSHYPP, creating a modern re-telling of the Nativity using poetry, film, song and soundscape.

Close House is a youth centre in Hereford working with young people aged 11-24 including those who are vulnerable, disadvantaged or socially excluded. mediaSHYPP is part of Herefordshire’s supported housing for young people project (SHYPP) and uses creative projects to raise young people’s aspirations. Ledbury Poetry Festival, described by Andrew Motion as *“the best poetry festival in the country”*, organises community projects, family events and a schools programme, as well as live readings, performances, workshops, music, exhibitions and films and an extensive list of writers, poets and speakers.

‘The Story of Mary and Joe’ was created by young people at Close House through a collaboration led by creative arts practitioner Toni Cook, poet Sara-Jane Arbury and film-makers from mediaSHYPP. Young people wrote their own poetry and made a series of nine short films about the story of Mary and Joseph’s relationship: falling in love, an unexpected pregnancy, coping with public scorn and how to cope with the future. Directed by Toni Cook, the films were presented at Close House in December 2014 with live music performed by the young people. The films were then shown again at the Hereford River Carnival in May 2015.

In a new collaboration, with support from the E F Bulmer Benevolent Fund, the films were shown at the 2015 Ledbury Poetry Festival, with young people reading their poetry and live music performances by 17 young musicians and singers from Close House.

The audience found this a moving experience, drawing attention to contemporary issues facing young people. A powerful performance was warmly received and rewarded with a standing ovation. Feedback heard afterwards was that it was a stunning performance, a highlight of the Festival and standing equally alongside the national and international performers appearing at the Festival.

This was a life-changing project for the young people involved, who included some of the most marginalised young people in Herefordshire (one was homeless during part of the project, and one had to withdraw due to serving a custodial sentence).

The partners are determined to raise the funds to be able to do further collaborations in future, and the Festival is keen to continue such collaborations.

As an example of good practice this project illustrates:

- the importance of collaborations between organisations working in different fields to achieve what each cannot do alone
- the role of artists and practitioners in being able to conceive and deliver innovative projects which touch people’s lives
- the potential for life-changing creative achievements by young people who have hitherto been poorly served in their life chances
- the high standards of which young people are capable, including the most disadvantaged, when trust has been built up between practitioners and those taking part, high expectations are set and leadership is imaginative.

Case Study 4: The Rural Media Company: *ReFocus*

ReFocus is a resource of six films made by The Rural Media Company through a two-year partnership with West Mercia Women's Aid (WMWA).

The project worked with young people in Herefordshire and Worcestershire, aged 11-16 for a six to eight month period in regular workshops. These included drama, film, animation, visual arts, creative writing and photography.

Several films were produced during the two years of the project, plus accompanying documentaries. The films explore the impact that domestic abuse has had on young people, particularly those living in rural areas, and were made with young people who have lived through domestic abuse but are now living in safety.

Over the two years of the project different stories and experiences were explored which helped shape the final material. For many of the participants the *ReFocus* project was the first time they had met other young people affected by domestic abuse, and also the first time they had discussed the issue of abuse publicly.

There were many positive benefits. Jan Frances of West Mercia Women's Aid said: "*Young people are often referred to as the 'hidden victims' in abusive households, so it is fantastic that they have been given a voice by this creative and inspirational project*".

One of the young people involved said: "*The group got on really well together, we all made friends. I think it's helped us, because we all now know that there's stuff there to help us, we don't have to be alone*".

At the premiere of the *ReFocus* films at the Courtyard, attended by educators, service providers, politicians and crucially parents, guardians, and siblings, the project participants were each presented with a video camera. Some of the young people are continuing to make their own films.

The films have already had a significant impact. Rural Media went on to support the young participants in *ReFocus* to screen their work to key service providers and decision takers including Herefordshire Council's Children & Young People's Safeguarding Panel, and to the Deputy Children's Commissioner for England. Having shared their experiences together and produced a piece of creative work together, the project participants felt better able to discuss their experiences with professionals. Young people concluded these meetings by asking service providers what they would now do differently in each of their practice areas.

As an example of best practice *ReFocus* demonstrates:

- the role of cultural activities in helping disadvantaged young people both with social and communication skills through working together creatively, and in learning technical skills, in this case film-making
- the potential for cultural organisations to work in partnership with bodies in other sectors such as welfare charities
- the potential for young people to create something which has a wider influence, and which helps understanding of young people's issues by the wider community.

Case Study 5: The Courtyard: Learning Programme for Schools

As part of its wide-ranging remit, The Courtyard provides opportunities to enrich curriculum delivery in schools. The Courtyard is committed to promoting creativity as an important part of the lives of the whole community. The expanding education and outreach programme uses the arts to engage young people, schools and adults, both at The Courtyard and at schools and community venues around Herefordshire and beyond.

During the spring and summer term each school year The Courtyard works with several primary schools throughout the county on the *Herefordshire Shakespeare Project*. In a series of five two-hour workshops during the spring (and occasionally into the summer) term a range of drama exercises are offered to make Shakespeare accessible to Key Stage 2 classes.

The project culminates with the children creating their own abridged version which is then performed at The Courtyard for family and friends in the summer term. This has been a great way to engage parents with the project and celebrate the work of their child.

Information is sent to schools during the autumn term ready to kick-start the project in January. Starting with an INSET induction day teachers are also tooled with drama activities and exercises to continue outside of the project. Many of these can be adapted within other areas of the curriculum.

The Courtyard is firmly committed to the relevance of the arts as a tool to help teaching across much of the curriculum. It runs training sessions designed to give teachers practical tools that can be put into practice in the classroom immediately following the training. These can be individual and tailor-made to the specific requirements of a school as well as ad-hoc training sessions that are promoted to all schools throughout the county and beyond.

Another example of The Courtyard's learning programme for schools is the *Roald Dahl Literacy Project*. During the autumn and spring term each school year The Courtyard works with several primary schools throughout the county on this project. Delivering five two-hour workshops during the autumn, the drama sessions provide stimulus for different writing exercises to enable young people to develop their writing skills. Children then perform their own devised performances at The Courtyard for family and friends. Evaluation demonstrates the positive impact the project has on the progression and development of the pupils. The response of SEN children in particular has been noted by many teachers.

Information is sent to schools during the summer term so that plans can be made to start in September. It begins with an INSET induction day at which teachers are also tooled with drama activities and exercises to continue outside of the project. Many of these can be adapted within other areas of the curriculum.

These programmes illustrate:

- the role that arts and cultural organisations can have in making a direct contribution to delivery of the school curriculum
- the value for teachers and schools of having a specialist resource in the county
- the enrichment provided to pupils by working with professional practitioners and coming into a venue like The Courtyard
- the way in which arts and cultural organisations can help schools tackle critical issues such as literacy.

Case Study 6: Training and progression

Many cultural organisations see it as part of their role to provide training to help position young people for work in the creative industries, both for younger students still within education and for emerging professionals. This case study provides some brief examples, not a comprehensive survey.

Work experience: Pentabus regularly has students from Wigmore High School for work experience. The Courtyard offers 14 places each year as work placement opportunities for 14-18 year olds but demand is far higher. Arts Alive, the Library Service and the Museums Service are amongst other organisations able to offer placements.

Skills: Brightstripe is a delivery partner for the National Youth Agency Employability Support Programme for 14-25 year olds who are not in education, employment or training. The Rural Media Company offers skills development for young people as trainees in community projects, runs a BFI Film Academy for 16-19 year olds interested in the film/TV and creative industries, and works with the Courtyard and Hereford College of Arts to provide entry points to the creative industries.

Qualifications: Higher level training opportunities include diploma, degree and postgraduate courses at Hereford College of Arts, the only college in the Midlands dedicated to the arts. Rural Media Company is working with the College to run a Foundation Degree in Film & Photography (starting in September) and the Music Pool is helping deliver a new BTEC music course. 2Faced Dance is working with Worcester University on a new dance course.

Emerging artists: Brightstripe supports opportunities for students and recent graduates at the Hereford Arts Market (in partnership with the College of Arts), h Art (Herefordshire Art Week) and the Hereford Contemporary Craft Fair. Rural Media Company offers in-house training for college students and graduates. DanceFest and 2Faced Dance provide support and performance opportunities for young dancers and choreographers. Meadow Arts offers an annual prize to a student graduating from the Hereford College of Arts Fine Arts BA course.

Pentabus offers internships and shadowing opportunities, and helps young writers gain experience through a year's placement leading to writing of a new stage work which is then performed by the company. Spending a year with Pentabus helped Simon Longman from Ledbury go on to win a commission from the Royal Court Theatre. His play *Milked*, performed by Pentabus and premiered in his home town, was inspired by his own experience returning to Ledbury from Manchester: *"Basically, it's about two guys in their early 20s, one who's been to university, and one who hasn't. It's definitely not my story, but it is informed by my experience of returning from Manchester and thinking 'what do I do now?'"* (interview in Hereford Times, 5 October 2013).

Post qualification: Brightstripe and the Music Pool support practitioners by maintaining directories, and the Music Service runs an Accredited Teachers scheme, which assist local practitioners in obtaining freelance work.

Important issues include:

- providing opportunities for young people to enter a sector of the economy which is on a growth curve
- encouraging young people to be aware of the possibilities of employment in the arts and media
- helping retain talented young people within the county.

4. CHALLENGES IN THE HEREFORDSHIRE CONTEXT

Challenges which affect **the wider community** of Herefordshire include:

- Ensuring fair access to provision despite the difficulties and higher cost of providing services to a sparse and scattered population, lack of connectivity between different rural areas and the social and cultural isolation for many people caused by the limitations of public transport.
- Retaining young people in a rural area, including changing the perception of lack of social and cultural opportunities for under 25s and grasping the potential of employment in the creative sector which is a flourishing area of the economy nationally¹¹.

Challenges for **the education sector** include:

- Herefordshire is historically amongst the lowest funded education authorities in England on a per capita basis, and is a member of the f40 Campaign for Fairer Funding in Education.
- There is the challenge of tackling under-achievement by some young people¹², including:
 - children entitled to free school meals
 - those with English as an additional language
 - below average achievements in maths, reading and writing at Key Stage 2 (age 11)
 - Herefordshire has the second highest proportion of NEET young people in the Marches sub-region.

However most schools are rated 'good' or 'outstanding' by Ofsted¹³ and there is an upward trend in achievements in Herefordshire at the end of Key Stage 5 (19 year olds).

- It is increasingly difficult for schools to gain the benefits of working with arts organisations and practitioners when the curriculum is (arguably) narrowing as creative subjects are perceived to be lower priority in education policy for England¹⁴, and there is growing concern that the education sector is being pushed increasingly into becoming a marking and grading system which puts students under pressure¹⁵.

¹¹ Consider three recent reports:

1. *The Creative Economy and the Future of Employment* (Nesta, April 2015), believes the number of creative jobs in the UK could increase from 1.8m to 2.8m, a growth rate of 2.6% pa, in the next 15 years.
2. *Enriching Britain: Culture, Creativity and Growth* (the Warwick Commission, February 2015) argued that the creative and cultural industries should be considered a single "ecosystem", worth £76.9 billion of the gross 'value added' in 2013, 5% of the UK economy, and that the creative economy is growing at three times the rate of the national economy.
3. Jobs in the arts are growing at a higher rate than any other area of the creative industries. Employment in music, performing and visual arts across the UK increased by 33% between 2011 and 2014, more than double the rate of the creative industries as a whole, according to figures from the DCMS (July 2015).

¹² *Education Performance for Herefordshire: Overview*, February 2015. Herefordshire Council website.

¹³ 84% of primary schools and 89% of secondary schools were rated as good or outstanding, as at April 2014. *Understanding Herefordshire*, p.17.

¹⁴ *Enriching Britain: Culture, Creativity and Growth* argued that creativity and the arts are being squeezed out of schools, with culture pushed into silos.

¹⁵ *Exam Factories? The Impact of Accountability Measures on Children and Young People* by Prof Merryn Hutchings (London Metropolitan University, July 2015) argued that pupils' emotional health and wellbeing is suffering because of "high-stakes testing", with pupils developing stress-related conditions linked to testing which has narrowed what children are learning. Lucie Russell, director of campaigns at mental health charity Young Minds, which backed the report, said: "Both pupils and teachers are under a lot of pressure to achieve results in a pressure cooker, exam factory environment".

- Many schools report that budgets are under pressure and there is a lack of flexible funding to help pay for the involvement of external organisations¹⁶. Meanwhile, schools are having to manage the additional pressures caused by structural fragmentation of the sector¹⁷, by the fluctuating size of the school population which historically is tending to reduce (3,000 fewer school-aged children in mid-2012 than in 2001, a fall of 12%) and by the extra pressures of so many schools in Herefordshire – both primary and secondary – being smaller than average for their sectors.

Challenges for **the cultural sector** in Herefordshire in relating to education include:

- How to be objective and evidence-based in demonstrating the benefits that arts and culture can play in raising the educational aspirations of young people both in schools and subsequently, and the role of culture in delivering long-term benefits and improving children’s learning. Culture has a part to play in tackling under-performance and below average achievements.
- How to be both more effective and more efficient in making the schools sector aware of the educational support available from arts and cultural organisations, including supporting cross-curricular work and links across the transition stages as well as supporting the arts curriculum.
- Cultural organisations generally find it harder to maintain relationships with secondary schools than with primaries. They need a better understanding of the factors which drive schools’ decisions to work with practitioners and arts/cultural organisations, or not, including timetable pressures, limited budget flexibility, and the need for proposals to be specific and customised.
- The cultural sector needs to find better communication channels – some organisations have developed excellent contacts and networks, and have longstanding relationships, while others find schools to be an impenetrable market and their schools communications fail to draw any positive interest or response.
- How to be persuasive about the contribution of arts and culture to the quality of life for the whole community, and the current and potential contribution of the creative industries to the local economy and employment. The cultural sector needs a more effective voice in the Local Economic Partnership, which does not so far acknowledge the creative industries as a priority, although ‘realising the potential of young people’ is seen as a priority¹⁸. The Courtyard, the Cathedral and the Mappa Mundi are mentioned for their contribution to the ‘visitor economy’, but the role of the cultural sector in promoting access, skills and social inclusion, or business and economic opportunities is not specifically acknowledged.

¹⁶ By contrast, in Wales the Welsh Government and the Arts Council of Wales have agreed a five-year action plan for creative learning in the arts following research showing that pupil motivation, behaviour and educational attainment are improved when the arts are embedded across the curriculum. A new Arts and Education Programme will offer schools greater access to professional artists and arts organisations, to enhance and complement their teaching and to increase and improve arts experiences and opportunities for children and young people.

¹⁷ With voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools, community schools, academies, academy chains, federations, free schools and independent schools.

¹⁸ The Marches Local Enterprise Partnership *Strategic Economic Plan*, March 2014. The LEP covers Shropshire and Telford as well as Herefordshire. Priority sectors advocated in the Plan are: Auto Manufacturing, Advanced Manufacturing, Food and Drink, Agri-Technology and Visitor Economy. There is no explicit recognition of the role of the creative industries, although Sub Priorities include “*Enhancing cultural heritage and tourism infrastructure*” and “*Realising the potential of young people*”.

- For Arts Council England and Arts Connect, initiatives such as Arts Award and Artsmark have gained little penetration within the county.
 - There is low awareness of or interest in Arts Award. Its status as an accredited award for young people is not widely known¹⁹. Whether fairly or not, many teachers are discouraged by a perception that it may add more demands to an already onerous workload.
 - Fewer schools in Herefordshire held the Artsmark at the end of the 2014-15 school year²⁰ than the regional and England average. Changes in requirements for the 'EBacc' may make it harder for secondary schools to deliver the commitments to the arts required by Artsmark.

Investment and support will be needed if efforts are to be made to promote the Artsmark, re-launched in September 2015, as a way of encouraging and validating good practice in schools, and to promote Arts Award as a way of encouraging and recognising individual commitment and achievement by young people. This should be a shared challenge not simply one demanded of Arts Council funded organisations as a funding requirement if the current low levels of interest and awareness are to be changed.

5. RISKS, THREATS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Some of the **risks and threats to cultural provision for young people**, current or imminent, include:

- The risk of further shrinkage in the cultural sector. Some of the arts and cultural organisations have already been so stripped back that they lack the capacity to grow or to improve.
- The risk for cultural organisations of missing out on opportunities to be commissioned to deliver community services, because the sector has not traditionally been organised for this compared with the bigger charities and some other organisations in the voluntary sector.
- Further possible reductions in the already reduced role of the local authority, such as uncertainties over the future of the Museums Service, and a move towards 'zero budgets' for as many services as possible.
- Uncertainty and risks arising from national policy, including continuing public sector austerity, likely further cuts²¹, changes which may arise from a promised Government White Paper, expected at the end of 2015 or early 2016, to set out a vision for the future of the arts, culture and heritage sector, and possible structural changes in arts funding.
- Continuing financial pressures on schools, and reduced budgets for working with external organisations and practitioners. Increasingly projects need to be funded from other sources.

¹⁹ Between April 2013-Oct. 2015, organisations presenting young people for Arts Award were: four high schools, one special school, the Royal National College, two funded arts organisations and three voluntary sector projects. Number of awards in this period were: Discover 43, Explore 23, Bronze 176, Silver 63, Gold 0.

²⁰ Two secondary schools (of 15) and six primary schools (of 78) held Artsmark Gold at the end of the 2014-15 school year, i.e. 8% of publicly funded schools (compared with a regional and England average of 11%).

²¹ In the Summer Budget July 2015, no specific detail was given about the DCMS settlement, but the Chancellor George Osborne said "no year will see cuts as deep as those required in 2011-12 and 2012-13". Arts Council England said: "It is too early to predict what this means for DCMS and the Arts Council's settlement".

- The risk of creativity and the arts being increasingly marginalised by prescriptive top-down approaches to the secondary school curriculum and examination system²², and what many see as a narrowing of vision at a time when the need for creativity in its widest sense, as well as artistic creativity, are acknowledged by a range of opinion²³.

A realistic assessment of **opportunities** is that:

1. Prospects for future opportunities must be cautious in the current and expected political and financial climate, with little prospect in the short or even medium term of any easing.
2. The arts and cultural sector has proved itself to be extremely resilient. It is to be expected that people will create and grasp new opportunities as the possibilities present themselves.
3. By aligning cultural projects with wider agendas and the outcomes required by funding streams which have primary objectives other than cultural (for example, with educational achievement, skills for employability, health and well-being, and addressing social problems), there will be better prospects for collaboration and for securing funding.
4. The sector will be able to continue to gain advantage through collaboration and shared efforts, both within the sector and more widely with other sectors, to gain economies of scale and effort and to explore bigger ideas.

²² Schools Minister Nick Gibb announced in June 2015 that the English Baccalaureate (EBacc), a list of subjects that must be included in secondary schools' GCSE curriculum if they are to attain an 'outstanding' status through Ofsted, will be compulsory and will not contain arts subjects. Music and art/design are statutory subjects to age 14 but not dance or drama.

²³ A report by the Creative Industries Federation and the Institute of Civil Engineers (May 2015) urges the government to give higher status to arts subjects as well as science, and argues that creative subjects are as important as science, maths, engineering and technology. "*A narrow focus on science, technology and maths will not deliver the innovation and creative thinking we need.*" The Creative Education Agenda calls for a national plan for cultural and creative education to be drawn up for England – the only country in the UK that does not currently have one – and recommends that no school be judged 'outstanding' by Ofsted without a quality cultural and creative offer.

6. SCOPE FOR COLLABORATIVE WORKING

This section attempts to sketch some of the ways in which collaborative working might be developed. Discussions in two network meetings in March and May had focussed on:

- being a forum for **planning** and delivering **action**
- developing a plan for '**improving opportunities for young people to engage with arts and culture, in and out of school**', and
- looking at '**specific opportunities for collaboration**'.

The priorities agreed for action included:

- developing improved quality assurance frameworks
- addressing questions of structure and governance, with a view to establishing the network on a more formally constituted basis
- providing a framework for collaborative projects
- improving communications
- aligning to major developments especially the proposed City of Culture bid and plans for a capital development at The Courtyard.

The present report was commissioned as an early outcome of these meetings. Interim findings were presented at a meeting in July which raised the following questions about how joint working might be developed and what it might seek to achieve:

- Question 1: ***What is the network for?***

There is a consensus that the network should not become an objective in itself, but as a **means of pursuing shared objectives**.

If the mission is "***to promote better opportunities for young people to engage with arts and culture, both in and out of school***", then the principal purposes of a network are:

- to exercise a leadership, co-ordination and profile-raising role that fills a capacity gap since the local authority can no longer fulfil this role
- to gain the benefits of collaboration and joint working
- to provide leadership for shared action
- to provide a focal point for expertise.

- Question 2: ***What the network is not?***

One network cannot be all things to all people, although it may have some elements of different models such as:

- a cultural partnership, acting as a broad umbrella for the whole range of cultural interests, akin to those which flourished over a decade ago when DCMS had encouraged partnerships to be formed to develop local cultural strategies
- wider networking for the whole cultural sector, to include voluntary and community groups, individual practitioners and creative industries
- an arts education forum, bringing together schools and colleges with arts and heritage groups and practitioners
- a support group, helping reduce the organisational isolation of sole practitioners and people working in small organisations with few opportunities to meet their peers
- a policy forum and think tank.

It is suggested a network should focus on being a **forum for planning and delivering action**.

➤ Question 3: ***What difference will a partnership approach make?***

A partnership should make a difference by:

- providing a forum for deliberation, but also for planning joint initiatives and collaborations – making things happen, not just discussing
- adding capacity which individual organisations are too hard-pressed to provide, including the possibility of some paid co-ordination time
- enabling shared efforts, bringing organisations together to achieve economies of effort and scale, and to explore bigger ideas
- providing a voice for culture, able to be seen as having greater authority and credibility than individual organisations acting alone, and advocating the benefits of cultural engagement for children and young people
- providing a structure which could if desired develop as a constituted entity and therefore become eligible to be an accountable body and apply for and hold funds.

➤ Question 4: ***What can be done better together rather than separately?***

It is argued that the cultural sector will gain advantage through collaboration and shared efforts, specifically by:

- providing a **co-ordination forum** to look at commissioning opportunities, as more services are out-sourced by public authorities
- **research**, for instance by developing and promoting the rationale and evidence base for:
 - the benefits of creativity in education, and as an approach to raising aspirations in both the educational and informal sectors
 - the benefits of the interaction between young people and the outside world through collaborations with cultural organisations
 - creative participation as a means of enhancing community links
 - creativity as an approach to changing behaviour and increasing well-being
 - the potential of the creative sector to contribute to employment and economic development
- **advocacy**, to raise the profile of the cultural sector and have influence on other debates and strategies, identifying common objectives and values with other agencies and services
- the possibility of further **cross-border collaborations** to gain economies of scale and effort; for example, an early priority might be to work with arts interests in Shropshire and Telford to influence the Marches LEP²⁴
- **improving communications** and providing easier **access to information** about cultural activities. There are two different strands here:
 - the first, and perhaps the easier, is to improve communications with teachers and schools, including through cluster meetings and academy chains, about how arts and cultural organisations can work with schools to enrich their offer, and to improve liaison between cultural organisations and schools
 - more difficult, in an era when young people increasingly use social media as their primary source of information, is to help young people to know what choices are available in their locality. This may be too big a problem to be on a list of ‘early wins’, but it is noted that the Rural Media Company is starting a new ‘digital magazine’ for young people.

²⁴ In the adjacent counties of Shropshire, Worcestershire and Gloucestershire new networks for joint action are emerging and there could be dialogue with these places to learn from nearby experience and to identify areas for joint working. Collaborations across Herefordshire’s border into Wales are less straightforward, given the different national policies and funding structures, but many of the challenges faced in Powys are similar.

➤ Question 5: ***What other research information is needed?***

The present report was completed within a limited timescale and focused on understanding the opportunities provided by a core group of cultural organisations and services. To have a wider understanding of cultural opportunities and participation by young people several other areas need to be researched:

- **consultation directly with young people** about what opportunities they would like and what they see as the barriers, so that young people can have a stronger and more direct influence on driving the agenda rather than just responding; this might be through action research using creative processes, and would need different approaches for different age groups
- more research into how **voluntary sector youth work** including youth centres could deliver their objectives while also providing channels for engaging young people in culture
- what are the needs of **primary schools** and of **secondary schools** in working with cultural practitioners and organisations to contribute to their learning programmes, and how to overcome the perceived barriers. (For example, the Music Hub is currently carrying out a needs analysis with schools.)

➤ Question 6: ***What needs to happen to support more effective collaboration?***

To facilitate greater collaboration and joint working, **efficient working** is necessary. Some suggestions are:

- **Chair:** Someone with acknowledged credentials, wide perspective and authority might be asked to act as chair of the network, able to think strategically about the role of the network and seen as having the best interests of the whole sector at heart rather than being at risk of being seen as having a partisan interest.
- **Size:** The network should not become too large, which would risk it becoming cumbersome rather than nimble, and a talking shop rather than a focus for action. At the same time, it must encompass a range of views and not be a self-selecting and self-serving inner circle.
- **Functional tiers:** Without becoming over-formalised and creating an executive committee and a wider membership group, the network might have two functional tiers:
 - a smaller **Core Group** should have primary responsibility for developing detailed proposals, to be further refined and agreed in a larger group. To keep the Core Group small, some organisations – such as those with few staff resources and those based outside Herefordshire – might be involved on a ‘need to know’ basis rather than as core members, and it might be possible for someone to represent local authority services (libraries, museums and archives) and to cascade information internally, but with wider participation in the larger meetings.
 - the **full Network** would involve a wider range of organisations, and have full access to information but without people necessarily being expected to attend meetings other than when there is something in which they especially wish to be involved.
- **Representation:** There should be careful consideration of which other significant providers of cultural and educational opportunities might be invited, which could include, for instance:
 - the **Cathedral**, as a major cultural organisation in the county
 - a representative of the **independent museums** sector with a significant educational offer, as noted in Appendix 4 (although it is not clear if any is in a position to speak on behalf of the others)

- a representative (perhaps through HVOSS) of those organising informal learning and recreation through **youth centres** and **youth organisations**.
- **Education sector:** A potential stumbling block is how to involve the formal education sector. One solution could be:
 - **post 16** institutions with major arts education programmes (such as Hereford College of Arts and the Sixth Form College) should be directly involved
 - **high schools** might be involved through a representative reporting through the mechanism of HASH (the secondary school leaders' group)
 - **primary schools** might be involved through one or two school leaders with a particular commitment to cultural education representing the sector.
- **Young people:** A mechanism should be developed to test the views of young people directly, through focus groups for different age groups or through creative projects such as film-making (these could be the subject of funding bids to pay for facilitation by practitioners). One quite specific area to link with other agendas, for example, would be to research what cultural and social provision the 18+ age group thinks desirable if Herefordshire is to improve its cultural offer as a factor in making the case for the proposed new university.
- **Avoid duplication:** Some mechanisms already exist which bring organisations together for joint working, such as a group co-ordinated by The Courtyard to progress the City of Culture proposal, a group co-ordinated by the Rural Media Company to look at a possible ESF bid, and the Music Hub which brings stakeholders together.
- **Wider network:** Meanwhile a wider network might be developed for the purpose of information exchange, to include some of the more significant festivals, independent museums, and voluntary sector arts organisations. This would probably function as a virtual network, unless there were thought to be value in having events such as an occasional conference.
- **Paid time for facilitation and co-ordination:** The biggest obstacle to efficient collaboration and joint working is the lack of spare capacity to provide leadership. Meetings so far have depended on Arts Connect West Midlands to provide leadership and facilitation. Local ownership and leadership is needed for collaboration to become embedded, and there is a case to be made for a paid Facilitator/Co-ordinator, probably part-time and engaged on a freelance basis or seconded from one of the local cultural organisations. It is understood that there may be the possibility of some support from Arts Connect and the Elmley Foundation.

➤ Question 7: ***What would a Facilitator/Co-ordinator do?***

The principal duties if funding could be identified to pay for some paid facilitation and co-ordination would include:

1. To act as facilitator for meetings of the group, under the guidance of an independent (i.e. non-aligned) Chair.
2. To ensure everyone is kept informed, through circulating calling notices and minutes and by social media and a website or Facebook page.
3. To represent the network in discussions with other bodies, such as Arts Connect, Arts Council England, Herefordshire Council and the Marches LEP, or ensure that there is other representation as appropriate.
4. To ensure the implementation of actions agreed at network meetings.
5. To draft funding bids, where appropriate, in consultation with the Chair and the Core Group.

7. OUTLINE PROGRAMME FOR COLLABORATIVE WORKING

Following discussion of these questions within the network, this final section makes some proposals for an initial programme of collaboration and how success might be measured.

Suggested **initial priorities** and **tasks** for a first year or two of collaboration include:

1. Develop a lightweight but functioning organisational structure for the Network. It may be possible for a project to be hosted within an existing charitable structure to avoid the need to set up a new legal vehicle at the outset.
2. Focus on some quick wins to maintain momentum. Research and submit funding bids for specific proposals identified as priorities.
3. Improved communications, between the education and cultural sectors, and with young people.
4. Further research, including consultation directly with young people, research into voluntary sector youth work and the needs of schools.
5. Explore scope for links with similar initiatives in Shropshire, Worcestershire and Gloucestershire and with other sectors. Explore scope for a cultural voice within the LEP (in partnership with arts networks in Shropshire and Telford), and explore opportunities through the ACE Creative Growth Fund.
6. Work with the City of Culture group to help encourage a more strategic approach to culture, higher levels of political awareness and commitment, and an increased sense of ambition; and help to build a group of patrons and champions.
7. Co-ordinate local efforts to increase the take-up of Artsmark and Arts Award.

Given the network's agreed mission "to promote better opportunities for young people to engage with arts and culture, both in and out of school", and bearing in mind what is realistic, achievable and fundable, then **outcomes** could include:

In schools and colleges:

1. Increased number of schools being awarded Artsmark.
2. More inter-school events, including some of the things that were formerly organised by arts advisers, to add value, to raise the profile, to celebrate and to give opportunities beyond what individual schools can provide. An example might be a young people's arts festival that would be unifying and collaborative.
3. Improved communications with schools by the cultural sector, resulting in more work in schools by practitioners and cultural organisations.
4. Increased take-up of arts subjects as examination subjects at GCSE level and beyond.

5. Funding secured for new initiatives which use arts to address curriculum priorities in schools, such as young people working with visiting writers and poets in schools resulting in improved literacy.
6. Higher public profile for creative work produced by young people, with more opportunities for general public display of media, visual arts and craft work, and more public performances of performing arts. The network could actively link with other events that can involve young people and give their cultural activity a higher public profile, such as the Hereford River Carnival and the Ledbury Poetry Festival.
7. Projects which address typical gender imbalances, such as more boys taking part in dance and singing, and more girls taking part in jazz and rock music.

Out of school:

8. Young people having a more effective voice in shaping opportunities; better communications with young people; and more accessible information for young people on what is available.
9. Young people directly involved through creative consultation in:
 - planning what cultural opportunities they would like and how the barriers could be reduced, especially for the 15-18 age group
 - contributing to planning the City of Culture bid
 - developing ideas for improvements needed in cultural and social provision for the 18-25 age group in order to strengthen proposals for a University and make the area more attractive for inward relocation by that age group.
10. More young people taking part regularly, not just on a one-off or short-term project basis, in activities organised by cultural organisations.
11. Increased funding secured, such as project grants and commissioning, to support more opportunities for out-of-school cultural projects and activities.
12. An improved cultural offer in the informal sector of youth work, especially in supporting cultural engagement by disadvantaged young people.
13. Success by cultural organisations in winning commissions and contracts for services, including collaborations with other sectors such as the youth justice system, to address social exclusion by disadvantaged young people.
14. Increased recognition and validation for young people's achievements, such as an increased number of young people gaining the Arts Award.

It is proposed that a small group of volunteers come together to discuss these suggestions and prepare a draft work plan that can then be considered by the network.

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October 2015

APPENDIX: List of consultations

The following organisations and individuals were consulted, in meetings or by phone, as part of the work for this report:

2 Faced Dance	Tamsin Fitzgerald
Arts Alive	Sian Kerry
Arts Connect West Midlands	Rob Elkington, Leslie Hampson
Borderlines Film Festival	Naomi Vera-Sanso
Brightstripe	Annie Millen, Debbie Allison
The Courtyard Centre for the Arts	Ian Archer
Dancefest	Rose Beeson, Janene Wyatt
The Elmley Foundation	John de la Cour
Herefordshire Archives Service	Rhys Griffith
Herefordshire Library Service	Jon Chedgzoy, Sarah Chedgzoy, Jan Nesaratnam, Louise Gerrish
Herefordshire Museums	Julia Radburn, Siriol Collins
Herefordshire Music Service / Music Education Hub	Cliff Woollard
Ledbury Poetry Festival	Phillippa Slinger, Chloe Garner
Meadow Arts	Manda Graham
The Music Pool	Rob Strawson
Pentabus	Francesca Spickernell
Rural Media Company	Nic Millington
Freelance practitioner	Toni Cook
Aylestone Business & Enterprise College	Emma Bridger
Eardisley CE Primary School	Bridget Knight
Hereford Sixth Form College	Jonathan Godfrey
Madley Primary School	Lee Batstone