

**SUNDERLAND
CULTURE**

**ANNUAL REVIEW
2020-21**



CHAIR'S WELCOME

Welcome to the review of Sunderland Culture's activities during 2020-21.

When we produced our previous review we already knew that life was never going to be the same again, as the organisation grappled with the impact of the pandemic. It is a huge tribute to our staff, our partners; and our artists and communities that cultural life in Sunderland has thrived during these difficult times.

The whole team showed huge imagination and creativity in developing new ways of engaging with the people of Sunderland. The report has heart-warming stories about the impact of our online activities and our activity packs for young people, families and communities in need, and we took every opportunity to provide face-to-face activities when the government restrictions allowed us to do so. We continued to work hard with our artistic community, to make sure they were supported in this hugely challenging period. I hope that you will feel the same amount of pride in the collective resilience and ingenuity of everyone involved.

During the year we were sorry to say goodbye to Keith Merrin as our Chief Executive. His appointment as Director of Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums is a huge achievement for him and we wish him well in his new role. But, following a national recruitment exercise, we were delighted to appoint Rebecca Ball as our new Chief Executive, an appointment which builds on her long-term commitment to the city and its communities.

None of our work would be possible without the support of our partners – Sunderland City Council, the University of Sunderland, and the Sunderland MAC Trust, together with the financial support from Arts Council England and other major donors. I'm grateful to all of them, and to all my Board colleagues for their commitment and hard work on behalf of Sunderland and its amazing people.

Jane Earl
Chair



DELIVERING STEP CHANGE THROUGH CULTURE

Sunderland Culture brings together some of Wearside's most cherished cultural assets and activities and works to realise the ambition of a city brimming with creative potential. We deliver the creative programme in National Glass Centre, Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art, Sunderland Museum and Winter Gardens, Arts Centre Washington and The Fire Station, as well as with communities across the city.

Sunderland Culture brings together the investment of the three main funders of arts provision in the city, Sunderland City Council, University of Sunderland and Sunderland Music, Arts and Culture (MAC) Trust into a single, independent, and resilient delivery model. We are a registered charity and an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation.

Our mission is to improve life for everyone in Sunderland through culture. To do so, we are driving five step changes: improved profile and reputation of the city; a more vibrant creative economy; raised outlook and aspiration of young people; improved health and wellbeing; and a more socially cohesive city.

Sunderland City Council

Covid has limited many people to staying at home, some working and some isolating for either themselves or their family members. It has been hard, particularly for those who have been alone and unable to get out to regular groups or meetings.

We have found that creativity can happen anywhere, and this has been key for some people in keeping their interests going. There have been many Teams and Zoom sessions where residents could join for a chat, like a virtual coffee morning, only no sharing of cake! There have been cooking displays, craft sessions and a whole range of events have gone online. The Air Show and

other events couldn't take place so clips were shared online as well as interviews with residents about their thoughts.

Some residents have needed either training and/or equipment and colleagues within Sunderland Culture and Sunderland City Council have provided that. It's been great to see the number of people who have become more adept at working in this way.

The Voluntary and Community Sector have provided our craft packs to some residents, with instructions added to enable them to complete the project. This has enabled residents to enjoy a new task as well as keep their minds busy. I'm sure many people have continued to keep their minds active in this way. The sector also provided food parcels, Christmas hampers and Afternoon Tea to some isolated residents.

Sunderland Museum and Winter Gardens and Arts Centre Washington have delivered projects such as Taking Art Everywhere and Paint the Town in Sound. Exciting projects which enabled many more residents to participate than usual.

We now have so many opportunities for the future for people to take part in activities in different ways, and maybe someone unable to attend a session can now join in on Teams or Zoom. No need to miss out.



Councillor Linda Williams,
Sunderland City Council's Cabinet
Member for Vibrant City

University of Sunderland

The past 12 months have been very demanding for the University, as they have been for individuals and organisations across the world. With very little notice in March 2020, we had to invent new ways of learning, teaching and supporting students

during lockdown. In addition, we shut National Glass Centre and Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art in line with HM Government instructions.

Despite the restrictions, we worked with our Sunderland Culture partners on innovative ways to reach audiences – whether it was online degree shows or virtual tours of our galleries. We welcomed staff, students and visitors back in the spring of 2021, and it has been wonderful to see National Glass Centre and the University's St Peter's campus busy and bustling with activity again.

There have been many highlights, but here are two of mine. First, we welcomed 24,000 visitors throughout August to our National Glass Centre to enjoy glass-blowing demonstrations, the café, shop and the extraordinary Field of the British Isles installation by Sir Antony Gormley. And second, it has been thrilling to see our students working alongside our master glassmakers – and Turner Prize nominated artists – creating four new works as part of the Glass Exchange project funded by Arts Council England. Seeing that work over the coming months in Sunderland and Durham will undoubtedly be one of next year's high points.

In the past year, we have become much more aware of the impact science has on our lives. But equally important are the arts and the creative disciplines. Through them, we can see expressed the full range of human emotions and all that it means to be alive, even in the age of COVID. For that reason, the work of Sunderland Culture has never been more important and the University of Sunderland remains very proud to be a part of it.



Sir David Bell KCB DL,
Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive
University of Sunderland

Sunderland Music, Arts and Culture (MAC) Trust

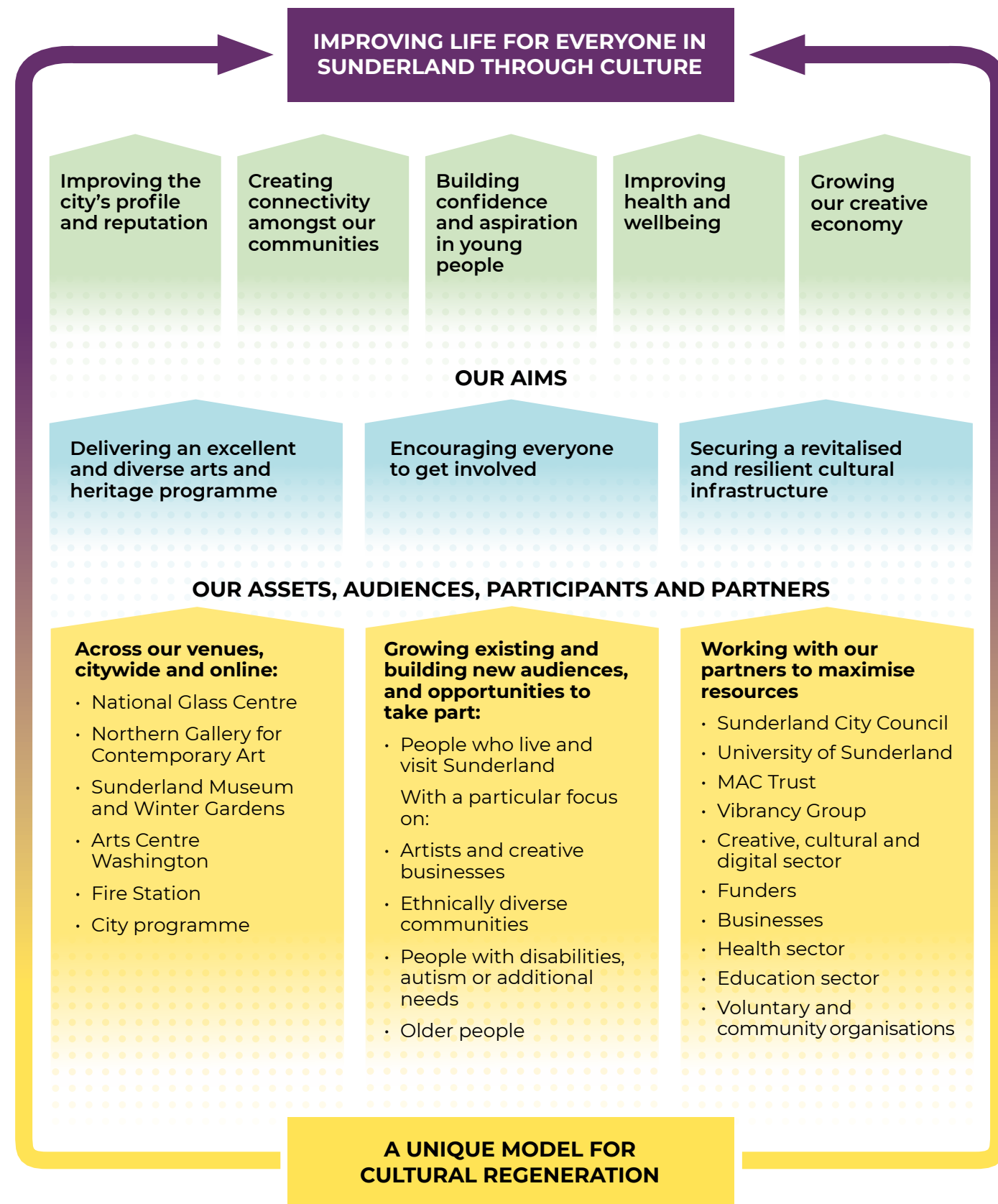
At the start of April 2020, little did we imagine that it would be over a year before the city's cultural venues would be allowed to reopen. Yet despite the challenges that the Covid pandemic posed, Sunderland Culture has responded magnificently by moving its activity online and playing the leading role in maintaining the city's growing cultural and creative momentum. Faced with understandable delays, the MAC Trust continued with the build of the new Fire Station Auditorium and our team of construction professionals kept everything on track with completion of this magnificent new cultural asset for the city scheduled for late autumn 2021.

We were also delighted when Sunderland Culture appointed Tamsin Austin as The Fire Station's Venue Director in February 2021. She has assembled a skilled and experienced team and the opening programme, 'Firestarters', is exciting both in the quality and the range of performers that it will bring to the city. Towards the end of the year, we said goodbye to Keith Merrin, who was Sunderland Culture's superlative first Chief Executive and we wish him great success in his new role with Tyne and Wear Museums and Archives. With Rebecca Ball stepping into the role, I'm certain that an exciting and ambitious future lies ahead for Sunderland Culture.

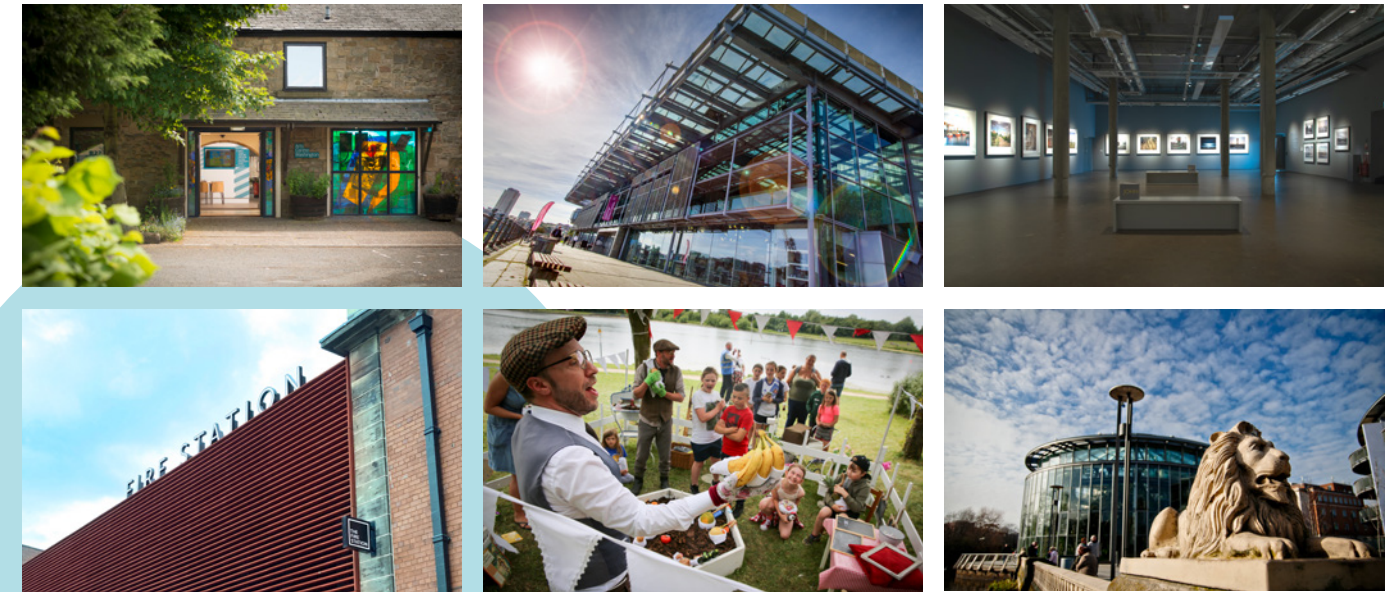


Paul Callaghan, CBE, DL, FRSA,
Chair of Sunderland Music, Arts and
Culture (MAC) Trust

ACHIEVING OUR MISSION



THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON OUR VENUES AND PROGRAMME, AND OUR RESPONSE



Early in 2020 we were readying ourselves for a busy and exciting year ahead. Received Wisdom – the first exhibition as part of our prestigious partnership with Arts Council Collection's National Partners Programme – had just opened at Sunderland Museum and Winter Gardens; a stunning new exhibition No Strings: Beads in a Modern Context was set to open at National Glass Centre, featuring the work of seven international artists working with glass beads in unconventional ways; Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art presented Chad McCail's Toy - a monumental three-dimensional cityscape; a packed spring/summer performance programme was planned at Arts Centre Washington; the culmination of our Great Place project working with communities and partners around the city; as well as the fantastic hands on creative experiences that we deliver along the way – for communities, groups, schools and visitors to Sunderland to take part in and enjoy. And work was well underway constructing The Fire Station's new Auditorium – a spectacular state of the art new performance venue set to present music, theatre, dance and comedy from local, national and international artists in the heart of Sunderland.

“When the pandemic hit, like others, we rallied our efforts into repurposing what we could into a completely different way of working at speed.”

None of us understood the extent to which Covid-19 would impact on all this activity.

When the pandemic hit, like others, we rallied our efforts into repurposing what we could into a completely different way of working at speed. We held urgent discussions with partners and stakeholders and agreed 5 key priorities:

- Ask our audience was they would like from us at this difficult time
- Ensure our communities could continue access creative content by providing different ways to engage
- Continue our support for artists, creative freelancers and fellow cultural organisations
- Prepare and support our team for new ways of working

- Plan for our resilience in light of venue closures and loss of vital income essential for the delivery of our programme

This initial 12-week plan inevitably underpinned our approach for the next twelve months as the Covid-19 pandemic swept through communities in Sunderland, as it did globally.

OUR YEAR IN FIGURES

PARTICIPATION

20 Online resources

401 Total participation sessions

28,249 Total participants

86 Online only participation sessions

22,793 Online only participants

CREATIVE PROGRAMME

11 In venue exhibitions

Online exhibitions

14 Online performances

36 Online films produced

ONLINE AUDIENCES

277,246 Web visitors

351,599 Web sessions

4837 Art Crush app visits

78,694 Followers on social media

87,518 Engagements with digital resources

SUPPORTING THE CREATIVE ECONOMY

61 Online workshops

82 1-2-1 support sessions

£300,000 raised by artists and creative businesses with our support

12 Creative Development Fellowships awarded

SUPPORTING THE PEOPLE OF SUNDERLAND



Above: Young artists with their exhibit as part of Bright Lights Youth Arts Exhibition at Galleries Shopping Centre in Washington



Left: For their hard work, resilience and all-round brilliance, the Celebrate Different Collective were awarded the Sunderland Award and Sunderland District Award at the annual Tyne & Wear High Sheriff Awards in March 2021.

Below: Charlotte Burnham - St. Anthony's Girls' Catholic Academy - Psychedelic Figures - Bright Light: Youth Arts Exhibition



Right: A Creative Challenge as Part of National Glass Centre's online Easter programme

Supporting Families, Children and Young People

As families in Sunderland grappled with the challenges presented by lockdown, Sunderland Culture rallied resources to launch an online offer to help lift spirits and keep families engaged through those difficult times.

We shared craft videos recorded in our team's makeshift bedroom offices; downloadable activity packs; treasure hunts; creative challenges and more. This new way of delivering meant our Learning and Participation Team learned quickly how to film and edit video content at home and how to work with groups over Zoom – with lots of help from our networks of artists and freelancers.

Our team delivered a packed Easter programme for families to enjoy over the holidays. We trailed a free online Family Arts Award Discover, posting regular videos of creative makes, as well as a Young People's Arts Award Explore, where we posted out materials and held Zoom sessions with an artist facilitator.

Sunderland Culture's regular young people's group, Celebrate Different Collective, began meeting online weekly during lockdown. The Collective used tools like Jamboard to help plan and come up with new ideas while listening to music together over Zoom calls.

Celebrate Different Collective curated Art Centre Washington's annual Youth Arts Exhibition 'Bright Lights' - a platform for young people aged 11 – 19 from across Wearside to show their talent. The exhibition was inspired by 'Paint the Town in Sound' online exhibition at Sunderland Museum. While the arts centre was closed, the young people's art works were displayed online in a virtual recreation of the gallery as well as in the Galleries Shopping Centre, Washington. Incredibly, the Celebrate Different Collective are now working towards designing and curating an Arts Council Collection exhibition which will open in January 2022 at Sunderland Museum and Winter Gardens as part of Sunderland Culture's partnership with the National Partners Programme.

Also inspired by 'Paint the Town in Sound', Arts Centre Washington began Poems of Town – a project for budding musicians, writers and performers aged 13-19 years with no prior experience, working with Sunderland's Mercury Award nominated band Field Music and poet Paul Summers to develop their own music and lyrics for a performance at the centre when it reopened.

"Thanks to the generosity of Sunderland Culture, we were able to send out new Creative Mindfulness Packs to all of our Primary learners... We're very grateful for the resources, and to those who designed the activities. They're just something different with lots of creative things for our young people to do – lots of stimuli for the imagination. The feedback we've had from pupils and parents has been phenomenal."

The Link School Headteacher, Donna Walker.



Above: Packs being distributed by Museum Learning team to Washington Community Food Project



Left: Roaming River by Woven Nest Theatre was developed in partnership with Columbia Grange School to be used as part of a creative, multi-sensory workshop, inviting children into River's world, as he takes us on a tour of both the woods that he plays in and his wild imagination. Image Danielle Giddins



Left: Field Music's Peter and David Brewis worked with young people in Arts Centre Washington's Poems of Town which began online during spring 2021

Supporting Vulnerable Children

With many households without access to digital technologies, we worked in partnership with Sunderland City Council to develop Health and Wellbeing creative packs which were distributed to over 400 pupils through the Link School (an alternative learning provision working with young learners and their families) - providing important creative learning opportunities for children from some of Sunderland's most vulnerable families, including children at risk of exclusion and pupils eligible for free school meals.

In January 2021, we commissioned Woven Nest Theatre to produce a specialist pilot film for schools to use as part of multi-sensory workshops for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities, and their families. The film explores narrative through the senses, with a focus on texture and sensation, inviting children to explore touch, taste and smell through props that accompany a story.

Supporting Communities in Need

At a time when some of the most vulnerable residents in the city became even more isolated from their communities, we recognised the need for support and social connection was critical.

Over the summer holidays in 2020, Sunderland Museum's Learning Team distributed printed activity packs complete

with art materials directly to Washington Community Food Project, Hetton New Dawn and Sunderland Soup Kitchen. Activity packs were themed to help families make the most of our local outdoor spaces, with a Plants and Gardens pack that identified wild plants and worksheets for how to create a 'zine' at home out of a simple piece of A4 paper. We produced a pack about our region's coastal landscapes –with tips on rock-pooling and ideas for seaside activities at home. Our 'Taking Art Everywhere' pack used artworks from the Arts Council Collection and artist-designed activities to explore, and to lead conversations around some of the challenging feelings that families were reporting as a result of lockdown.

We worked with community partners, schools and local foodbanks to reach some of the most vulnerable homes across the city - distributing 'Making Art from Everyday Objects' art packs, a Christmas 'Create a Snowstorm' activity, and a 'Paint the Town in Sound' pack during February Half Term with music and art themed activities linked to our online exhibition.

As part of Sunderland Culture's Kindness Week, we distributed forty craft packs to Sunderland Royal Hospital staff rooms to help calm and relieve stress of frontline staff who were feeling the full impact of the pandemic.

"This has been invaluable to us at this difficult time."

Hilary Avent, Hetton New Dawn Manager.

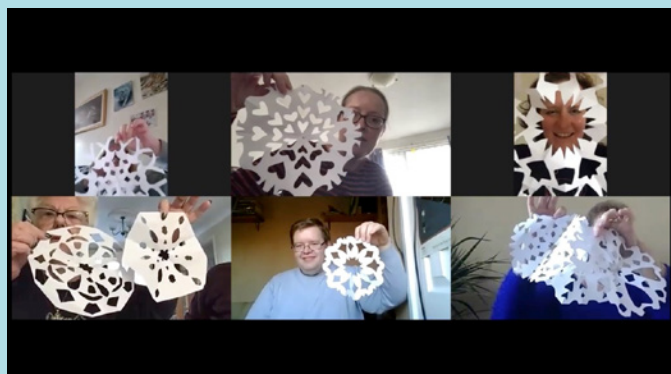
"I've found painting reduces my levels of stress and the packs have been so welcome across the hospital."

Jo Nelson, NHS Schedule Coordinator

SUPPORTING THE PEOPLE OF SUNDERLAND



Above: Brenda making her Diwali lantern at home – November 2020



Left: Creative Age participants making paper snowflakes with artist Bethan Laker – December 2020



Left: My Home is My Castle Celebration Event on Zoom – October 2020

Supporting Older People

Sunderland Culture's Creative Age programme has become established as a series of safe and enjoyable sessions taking place at Arts Centre Washington and Sunderland Museum and Winter Gardens for adults living with dementia and their carers, and people with long term health needs. During the first lockdown when in-person sessions were unable to take place participants were supported through weekly phone-calls with staff and postal art-packs. Sunderland Culture also supported Equal Arts to provide additional Art at Home monthly packs for the groups.

Creative Age participants expressed how much they missed the social interaction of the group sessions and from autumn 2020 began meeting for weekly artist-led sessions on Zoom instead. One to one Zoom training was provided by staff for those lacking digital skills or confidence to engage online. As part of the 'Castles: Paintings from the National Gallery' exhibition learning programme, the groups worked together to create a collective textile artwork with artist Louise Underwood called 'My Home is My Castle', responding to the question 'what helped you through lockdown?'

Collecting Covid and Where We Are Now

In summer 2020, Sunderland Museum launched a public collecting project to chronicle this extraordinary period in our history. We asked Sunderland residents to submit photographs which represented their experience of lockdown for a new contemporary collecting project, 'Collecting Covid'. The people of Sunderland of all ages submitted 390 images.

The photographs became the inspiration for a new exhibition at the Museum, 'Where We Are Now', which opened in August 2021. This exhibition draws on the themes that emerged from 'Collecting Covid' including the renewed importance of nature and gardens; community, family and friends; isolation and empty streets; care for ourselves and others; and grief, illness and loss. In this new exhibition, artworks loaned from the Arts Council Collection as part of the National Partners Programme sit alongside pieces created by Sunderland communities to tell the story of the Covid-19 pandemic from the perspective of Sunderland residents.

'I have managed to cope with Covid Lockdown through support from my family, friends and doing our projects weekly. It was all I had to look forward to each week and without it I'm not sure where I would be. It has been a lifesaver for my mental health and my medical conditions too. Doing the projects helped me to focus more and I have made new friends along the way too.'

Creative Age participant



Above: Over lockdown, Alan Parkinson took his daily walks early in the morning while it was quiet. On this morning at the coast, Alan photographed this lone dog walker and a message of hope written in the sand. Photo credit: Alan Parkinson



Above: A masked man walks with his head down in front of a shuttered shop front. Photo credit: Alan Brown

Left: Personal Protective Equipment: a woman covers her face with a disposable mask and a clear visor. Photo Credit: Debra Clark

Far left: Luca Kemp and Brett Aaron dancing and cheering at the arrival of their Granny and Grandpops. Photo credit: Alexandra Lamb

Improving Health and Wellbeing

Throughout June 2020, we hosted a Health and Wellbeing month focussed on the themes of art, wellbeing, kindness and mental health. The programme included artist blogs, online workshops, partner information and resources to support mental health, videos, artists' showcases, talks and activities to try during lockdown. Each week we covered individual themes; from children and young people's mental health, the health and wellbeing of artists and 'how to be kind to your mind.' We worked with partners from across the region including Washington Mind, We Make Culture, New Writing North and Sunderland Music Hub, to deliver the activity. Artists contributing to our programme included writer and performer Kirsten Luckins, graffiti artist Frank Styles, singer Lucy Garnett and New York-based artist and designer Emilie Baltz. Activity included online creative sessions, printable worksheets and learning packs; The Big Sing with Sunderland Music Hub; a photographic gallery of kindness; support surgeries for artists and organisations; artist showcases and videos busting the mental health myth of Van Gogh.

As part of our Great Place, Unleash programme, we commissioned a socially distanced arts project for residents in

the Coalfields area entitled 'Looking Out, Looking In', which captured and reflected on the experiences of people during lockdown through artworks exhibited throughout the local area. Artists Sally Southern and Nicola Lynch worked with schools, residential homes and the wider community to record snapshots of daily life and the impact of the pandemic – conveying messages of hopes, fears, personal challenges and the unexpected. A Facebook community was set up where the artists set creative challenges and members of the public shared their responses. An outdoor, socially distanced exhibition was held at Hetton Lyons Primary School and Hetton Primary School where hundreds of pupils and their families attended.

A virtual tour of the exhibition was made available on our website and Art Centre Washington opened to the public at the beginning of September with the exhibition 'Looking Out, Looking In' to reflect lockdown experiences of the Coalfields communities.

'This project came at just the right time for us. Our children were becoming disengaged with home learning and this gave them the opportunity to do something they've never done before, keeping them active and healthy whilst being at home with their families and the results speak for themselves.'

Jo Woodhall – Deputy Headteacher, Hetton Primary School

'This has supported my mam tremendously over the year as she has been able to stay in touch with the Creative Age group.'

Creative Age carer participant

SUPPORT FOR ARTISTS AND THE CULTURAL SECTOR



Lacina "Lass" Diabate, Maya Dhananjay and Stephen Elms were the first recipients of Sunderland Culture's New Encounters bursaries, launched early in 2021 as a way to help performing artists from the city's ethnically diverse communities.

Our Unlock programme enabled us to quickly pivot our work supporting artists and the creative industries to adapt to new challenging conditions. At the beginning of the pandemic, we surveyed the sector to ensure the work of Unlock delivered maximum impact, and we continued to adapt our approach as circumstances changed across the year.

Prioritising supporting artists and organisations to access new emergency funding to secure livelihoods and businesses was our initial emergency response. We held information-sharing and peer support sessions for artists, 1-2-1s to support application writing and re-planning, curated online resources and sent out regular newsletters with useful updates. We also prioritised artists' mental health and commissioned coaching sessions to help creatives adapt to new circumstances.

Across Sunderland Culture, we ensured that artists and freelancers commissioned pre-pandemic had contracts honoured

and commissioned more artists to produce digital content.

Responding to our second survey of creatives, the focus of Unlock shifted to supporting artists and creative businesses to adapt their work and practice online, working with partners Sunderland Software City and freelance experts to support the development of online selling, social media, building websites, safeguarding online and readying artists and organisations for a return to in-person delivery. We also continued to work with individuals, organisations and businesses to support fundraising via the Culture Recovery Fund.

In a climate of continuing uncertainty, Unlock shifted again to supporting freelancers and the sector to access training in LGBTQI+ Awareness and Disability Equality. We hosted sharing and networking events, and a Citywide Cultural Conversation for the sector with a focus on resilience and plans for the future which was attended by 80 practitioners in the city.

'I have worked closely and successfully on many projects and mini-projects initiated and/or supported by Sunderland Culture. In every case, we have achieved a brilliant outcome. The Sunderland Culture team have saved and nurtured the growth of arts in our city.' Artist feedback, September 2020

THEATRE AND PERFORMANCE



Left: 'Sunderland Stories' featured monologues from six emerging Sunderland writers recorded by professional actors and broadcast online

Below: Online reading with the community cast of 'Pursuers of the Future'

Right: 'Writehouse' was performed live and streamed online during the brief period of venue opening during summer 2020



Whilst Arts Centre Washington's theatre programme remained on hold for the year, performance activity focused on artist development, specifically in relation to the Sunderland Stages Writers Project. Pivoting towards digital platforms presented a new opportunity for the emerging writers on this programme who provided the raw material for the series of monologues entitled 'Sunderland Stories'. Launched on Sunderland Culture's YouTube channel, the five separate monologues ranged from a man's despairing love for his football team to Covid illness, online dating to dementia diagnoses, rounding off with a tale of unwitting cannibalism! Performed and filmed by actors in their own homes, this project was as much about supporting professionals as emerging playwrights.

Early in the summer following a round of Sunderland community conversations, playwright Scott Young completed a first draft of a new community play for Sunderland 'entitled' 'Pursuers of the Future'. Members of the community then took part in online Zoom workshops to

further develop the text. From there Scott completed a second and in November an online reading was staged on Zoom with the cast of community performers.

Later in the year, further developmental opportunities for writers were presented at 'Writehouse', a night of new writing by 6 local writers, directed and performed by professionals, followed by a live Q & A session with the writers. The new, short plays were performed simultaneously to a socially distanced live audience whilst being streamed to many more.

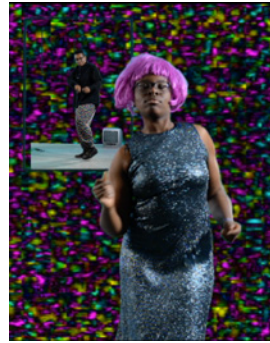
'The support Sunderland Culture have given Independent has been invaluable. We have been able to access public funding for the first time and it has helped to secure the business in the longer-term.'

Ben Wall, Independent

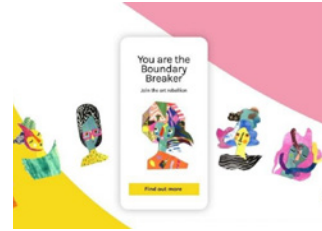
'Thank you to you and Sunderland Culture from me for this fantastic opportunity and for all your support over the past 18 months! Feeling well prepared for my next adventure.'

Artist feedback, February 2021

EXHIBITIONS



Above: Film still from 'The Gender Song', 2014, by Evan Ifekoya, part of Paint the Town in Sound.



Left: 'Prairie Pioneer', 2012, Felieke van der Leest. Photographer Eddo Hartmann, part of No Strings exhibition



Above: 'Growth Collection (Object 3)', 2017, Helen Pailing, was kindly donated to National Glass Centre's collection by the artist

The Covid-19 pandemic presented new challenges and opportunities for dynamic change to what was considered Sunderland Culture's conventional exhibition programme. A number of exhibitions managed to open, and even extend their run for visitors across Sunderland including 'Received Wisdom' at Sunderland Museum and Winter Gardens, 'Chad McCall: Toy' at Northern Gallery of Contemporary Art and 'No Strings' at National Glass Centre.

However, the overwhelming focus for the programme shifted online as lockdowns and restrictions left our audiences creatively searching from home. The exhibition 'Paint the Town in Sound' guest curated with Mercury Prize nominated Sunderland based band Field Music changed into an extensive online exhibition, VR experience and series of podcasts - a first for Sunderland Culture. This exhibition, along with numerous others including 'Castles' (Sunderland Museum and Winter Gardens), 'No Strings', 'Toy', 'Andrew Tift: One Day You'll be Older Too' and 'Sunderland Photographic Association' (both at Art Centre Washington) also adopted digital outputs including curator tour videos, artist audio guides, virtual reality and advanced image galleries to reach existing and importantly new local, national and international audiences who were unable to access the venues. This digital offer became and will continue to be an important part of Sunderland Culture's programme moving forwards as we aim to retain and build on these audiences.

In autumn 2020 Sunderland Culture collaborated with Arts Council Collection to create 'Art Crush' - a free, fun and accessible app aimed at young people, to discover and enjoy the Collection. The app allows users to swipe left and right on thousands of artworks from the Arts Council Collection to form their own digital art collections, discover and share their art personality and delve deeper into the stories behind the artworks. The app can be downloaded from the App Store or Google Play.

Elsewhere in the programme Sunderland Museum produced its first dedicated online exhibition 'Heritage

at Heart' which explored the links between Sunderland's industrial past and contemporary artworks from the Arts Council Collection.

Whilst extending our offer on new platforms we continued to provide opportunities for local artists and creatives to display their work within the programme. The programme partnership with University of Sunderland's Fine Art department saw students present their work through social media takeovers, in venue as part of the 'Received Wisdom' exhibition and within the VR exhibition for 'Paint the Town in Sound'. We also opened two Arts Council Collection print displays in venue and online produced with local community groups the Art Champions (a diverse group of Sunderland residents) and We Make Culture's Young Musicians Project.

New acquisitions

Whilst our exhibition programme was quieter than planned, National Glass Centre did acquire some fantastic new works into its collection. A large work by the highly established artist, Peter Bremers, made in collaboration with Neil Wilkin, a hot glass artist based in Wales, was gifted from Mr and Mrs Hans and Nicola Eggerstedt with Art Fund support. Neither of these artists were formerly represented in the collection.

Lady Vaizey CBE also gifted two pieces to National Glass Centre's collection, one piece by Liz Lowe and one by Pauline Solven, two artists who made a major contribution to the development of studio glass and more generally to contemporary craft in the 1990s.

While working on the exhibition 'Re-purpose' we worked with the Victoria & Albert Museum facilitating their acquisition of four works by Helen Pailing who undertook her PhD at University of Sunderland. Helen very kindly donated three pieces to National Glass Centre's collection allowing us to hold a permanent record of her ground-breaking practice.

RESILIENCE, LEGACY, LOOKING FORWARD



It goes without saying that the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic resulted in exceptional challenges for everyone during 2020/21. Right across the cultural sector venues closed, events were cancelled, projects halted, income dried up - and for Sunderland Culture, it was no different.

Vital investment from DCMS, through the Culture Recovery Fund, Arts Council England, Art Fund, Garfield Weston Culture Fund and Sunderland City Council has enabled us to keep going during this most challenging of years. We are immensely grateful for this funding, and also for the incredible care, support and solidarity we received from our civic, cultural and community partners.

As restrictions ease, we are hugely thankful to the visitors, who have returned to the venues in record numbers over the summer, for their support and confidence in us.

Looking back over the past year, one of the most striking achievements is the immense creativity, resilience and resolve shown by colleagues right across Sunderland Culture. Despite all the uncertainties, the team managed to launch a new online shop to generate vital earned income, develop new digital exhibitions and performances so our audiences could still access our incredible programme, design creative activity packs to support health and wellbeing and creative learning for children and adults across the city, deliver artist support and training sessions and secure funding for new artists commissions and creative projects - all whilst juggling the personal challenges which Covid threw at us all. The result of this means that, whilst impact of the last year on all aspects of life in the city has been immense, we have seen more than ever the critical role that arts and culture plays in difficult times.

As we look forward, we are determined to deliver a cultural programme for Sunderland that contributes to recovery and meets the needs of our city at this time. We will ensure we provide space for people from across the city to tell their stories, provide a wide range creative activities to support health and wellbeing, deliver inspiring exhibitions, performances and events to attract visitors back to the city and support the resurgence of the city's creative economy.

There is much to look forward to over the next year; from Sunderland's first international Glass Prize to be held at National Glass Centre; to the return of Grayson Perry's tapestries "The Vanity of Small Differences" to Sunderland Museum and Winter Gardens, and a new social prescribing arts and health partnership for the city.

And towards the end of this year, thanks to the hard work and determination of our partner the Sunderland MAC Trust, we will see a thrilling new addition to the city, with the opening of The Fire Station, a new, state-of-the-art performance venue for Sunderland, designed by award-winning architects Flanagan Lawrence, which will bring a fantastic programme of music, theatre, comedy and dance to the heart of the city. We look forward to welcoming you there very soon.

Best wishes,
Rebecca

Rebecca Ball
Chief Executive, Sunderland Culture



THANK YOU TO OUR FOUNDING PARTNERS FOR THEIR VISION AND SUPPORT IN ESTABLISHING SUNDERLAND CULTURE



**University of
Sunderland**



We are hugely grateful to our funders, partners and everyone who has supported our work during 2020-21. Thank you for your support during this challenging year, it enabled us to offer people opportunities to enjoy and participate in arts, heritage and creative activities, when they needed them more than ever, and safeguarded Sunderland Culture for the future.

We wish to particularly thank Arts Council England and DCMS for support through the Culture Recovery Fund, National Lottery Heritage Fund for extending our Great Place programme grant, Art Fund for its Respond and Reimagine grant to support National Glass Centre and Garfield Weston Foundation for helping us rebuild our cultural programme with a Weston Culture Fund grant.



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Armed Forces Covenant Fund
Art Fund
Arts Council England
Arts Council Collection
Community Foundation for Tyne & Wear and Northumberland
– Tyne & Wear High Sheriff Awards, North East Fund for the
Arts and Culture Bridge Fund
European Regional Development Fund
Future Arts Centres – The Albany and ARC Stockton
Garfield Weston Foundation
Groundwork NE & Cumbria – Three Together Big Local
Henry Moore Foundation
Imperial War Museum – 14-18NOW
Jerwood Arts – Weston Jerwood Creative Bursary
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government -
Coastal Communities Fund
Museums Association – Esmée Fairbairn Collections Fund
National Lottery Community Fund
National Lottery Heritage Fund

Newcastle Gateshead Initiative – GX Grant Programme
Newcastle University
Sir James Knott Trust
Sunderland City Council – Washington Area Committee,
Washington Can Do Fund, Millfield Area Committee, Covid 19
Winter Activities and Business Support.
The National Gallery
Tesco Bags of Help
Victoria and Albert Museum

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and Helen Pailing for their gifts to the National Glass Centre
collection.

There are lots of ways you can help more people experience
great art and culture, by making a donation, leaving a legacy,
sponsoring an activity or volunteering your time.

For more information on how to make an incredible difference,
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