

Creative Networks progress report

The Creative Networks events for Year 1 (2008-09) were jointly funded by the Digital, ICT and Print and Culture, Media, Sports and the Arts; Leisure, Hospitality and Tourism Sector Groups of the WYLLN, Leeds College of Art & Design and the Elsie Whiteley Innovation Centre.

Creative Networks was proposed early in the WYLLN lifecycle as a way to engage the creative digital industries and facilitate networking opportunities for course leaders.

Funding

WYLLN provided £12k (£6k from each Sector Group) which covered 'visible costs' including marketing flyers and food.

Elsie Whiteley provided two staff for this, equating to approx. £18k contribution.

Leeds College of Art & Design contributed an estimated £54k in terms of hosting, equipment, speaker costs etc.

Employer Engagement

There are now approximately 1,500 people on the mailing list for these events, who receive an e-newsletter each month. This is also distributed through other networks such as the Arts Council who send to all their members.

The WYLLN logo is included on all marketing, providing maximum exposure.

Between 90-200 people attended each event (average of 104 per event) this includes representatives from at least 10 WYLLN institutions and other HEIs outside West Yorkshire.

Details of all attendees for Creative Networks events between April 2008 and March 2009 are provided in Annex 10a. This includes name and organisation details only due to data protection (i.e. most have agreed only to receive information in regard to Creative Networks at this stage, and are not yet engaged with other WYLLN Sector Group activities unless stated).

Further data analysis is currently being undertaken to fill in some of the gaps in data and to assess the qualitative feedback received over the last 12 months.

The employer engagement section of the Workplan clearly lists those who are involved in other projects e.g. Curriculum Developments over and above their Creative Networks involvement.

There has been a great deal of feedback and an immensely positive response to the Creative Networks events from employers, including strategic and professional bodies such as the Arts Council, e-Skills UK, Skillset, Business Link and others. Sample feedback from Yr 1 is included overleaf.

This is a summary of some of the feedback received from strategic partners and attendees of Creative Networks across the Yorkshire & Humber region. Full qualitative data for the last 12 months, including all feedback forms, is currently being collated and will be available soon.

Azlina Bulmer – Craven District Council

“Thank you for inviting [us] yesterday evening. We thoroughly enjoyed it. We both feel that there is potential of working with Creative Network in Craven & Harrogate. Wondering if we could set up a meeting to discuss this?”

Anthony Sherlock – e-skills UK

“I would be pleased to offer support for the continuation of the Creative Networks initiative as this is a fine example of strategic and sectoral networking within the region.

In my experience the Creative Networks initiative connects many employers, students and intermediaries on a regular basis and helps the Digital and Creative industry to benefit, by ensuring information about future funding and business opportunities is cascaded to all interested parties.

Talking of networking, I must also say thank you for connecting me with Ruth Badger, I have spoken to her on the phone again this morning and am hopeful we can agree a date for her to support our IT Apprenticeship event in Manchester”

Helen Harrop – Digital 2020

“I started attending Creative Networks about 9 months ago and I try to attend every month if I can. The event is professional and well organised, with a good balance between the time spent listening to speakers and the time available to network. I never know who I'm going to end up talking to when I go but I always come away having met 5 or 6 interesting people who I would probably not have had the opportunity to meet in any other forum. Each event seems to attract a great mix of people from all areas of the creative industries - and I always find it a worthwhile way to spend an evening, both personally as an artist but also professionally as a consultant within the education sector.

The fact that it's a free event is great because I travel over from York so it would make it quite an expensive evening if I had to pay for a ticket to the event as well. It also makes it easier to recommend it to colleagues and acquaintances who I think might be interested in going along. Most of the people I know who have tried it out have ended up being regular attendees and each month I recognise more people there so it's turned into a 'must attend' event for me.”

Malcolm Warrington – Arts Council

“Best wishes to you all and well done for setting up Creative Networks, the region is better for it.”

Karen Watson – East Street Arts

“As chair of Leeds Arts Partnership I believe that Creative Networks is a welcome event to Leeds in that it opens up access to ways of thinking and ways of approaching creativity, business and learning. It has brought together an active audience over the last 12 months that needs to be built on and developed further.”

Dinah Clark – The Leeds Initiative

“My experience of Creative Networks is that it is a truly open network which seeks to bring together all practitioners in the creative industries sector based in the Yorkshire region. No other creative network is as broad-based nor has as barrier-free a point of entry as this one. This is possible because it is well managed and well resourced through the leadership and management of staff at Leeds College of Art and Design and partner organisations such as the Elsie Whiteley Innovation Centre, with sufficient funding, notably through West Yorkshire LLN. The formula of the Creative Networks events is fast paced and lively and seeks to generate new business partnerships within and for the organisations, businesses and practitioners working in the sector. Finally and importantly, Creative Networks creates additional routes for students emerging from the region’s college and university courses to employers in the region. It is well attended by CI intermediaries and the RDA and is fulfilling an ambassadorial role for the whole sector. Taking place as it does in Leeds, it can nourish and draw support from the city’s existing and diverse CI sector base.”

Jamie Petrie – Skillfast-UK

“The work that Leeds College of Art and Design has led on through the Creative Networks has given employers within the West Yorkshire region a focus point to network effectively, build informal and formal links and provided support for SME’s and Sole Traders in a sector that sometimes can be neglected.

Skillfast-UK would support any further bids for an initiative such as this and indeed would wish to see it rolled out across other regions.”

Sophie Michelena – Artsmix

“Artsmix have strongly benefited from the Creative Networks events held at Leeds College of Art & Design. We have been given a platform to pitch our organisation in front of a creative audience, hold an exhibition stand, network, develop skills and contacts, use the Facebook interface to invite members to our events. The opportunity is great, and the potential fantastic!”

Ed Ryder – Biskit

“Great event last night with Ruth Badger, excellent networking afterwards. Got a real buzz from the evening, great to see so many people there across different skills - met video guys, freelance creative etc. Excellent”

Leia Bassett – nti / WYLLN

“Creative Networks is a fantastic networking opportunity for anyone working across the creative and digital industries in the region. I have seen benefits for both nti in terms of additional signposting opportunities for events and courses, generating additional sales income; for WYLLN in terms of employer engagements for curriculum development and marketing projects; and personally in terms of broadening my knowledge of the creative and digital industries in Yorkshire, and allowing me to have fun while both learning and working! Personal friends of mine have even started to attend the events and have also discovered new business opportunities through the extensive networking opportunities provided. I wholeheartedly support the continuation of these events, and continue to champion Creative Networks both within WYLLN, nti, and beyond”