



Local Voices Creative Choices

Skills & Talent Development Programme



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**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



2026 Skills & Talent Development Dashboard Contents

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Recap: Key Step Changes

‘A city that **attracts more students to take up creative courses**, retains arts graduates and develops a talent pipeline for employment in the creative industries.’

‘A city where the **Heart of Worcestershire College** and **University of Worcester** are embedded in its broad cultural offer and creative community’

Key observations

180 students and emerging creatives engaged:
through Skills and Talent Programme

Over 95% gained skills:
including creative, professional, co-creation and networking skills

60% felt more connected to Worcester:
Worcester's creative and cultural life and/or more supported to stay and work creatively in the city.

Strong Progress:
against programme measures

Organic connections building:
between students/emerging creatives and Worcester creative scene





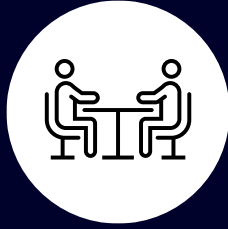
Strengths & Successes

- A relevant and engaging programme that has strongly developed creative and professional skills for participants.
- Starting to build stronger pathways through creative sector in Worcester for students and emerging creatives
- Momentum building between the programme, students, emerging creatives and creative professionals in Worcester
- Talent Programme has been allowed to develop organically, alongside Festival of Play
- Confidence sighted as a key benefit to students and emerging creatives engaging with the programme

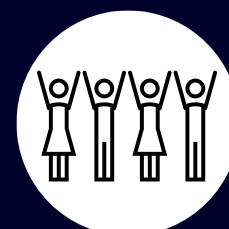
Key Programme Measures | Skills & Talent 2026



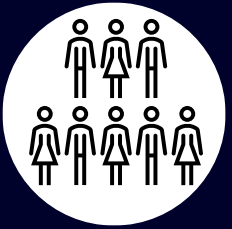
49 students across
2 Live Brief Projects



95 students across 4
networking events



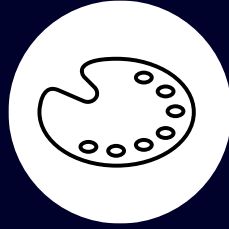
4 employed emerging
creatives as part of LVCC



10 additional paid
emerging creatives as
part of Festival of Play



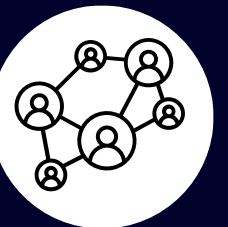
15+ students
volunteering across
festivals



36 students as part of
Festival Co-Creation
Projects



95% felt they gained skills
being involved in the
programme

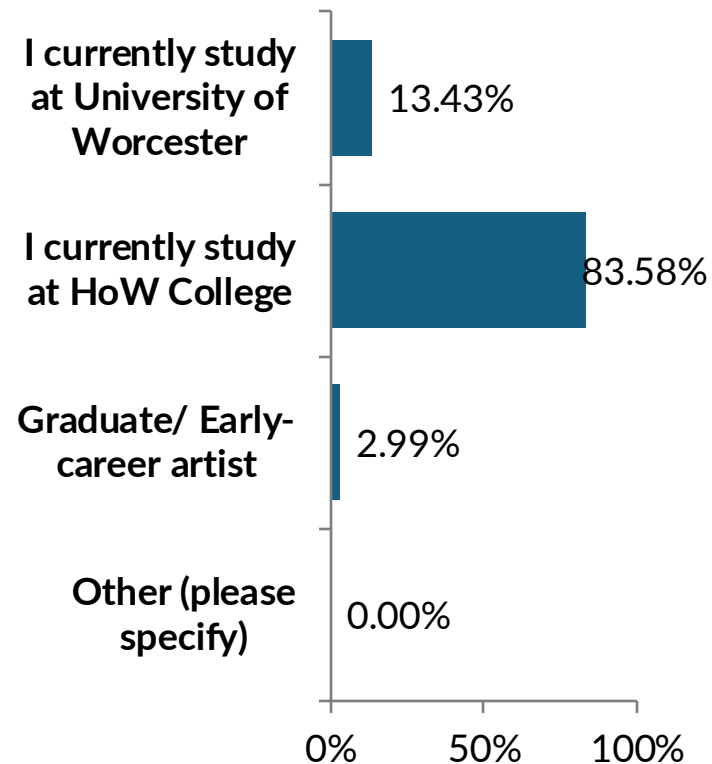


60% felt more
connected to
Worcester

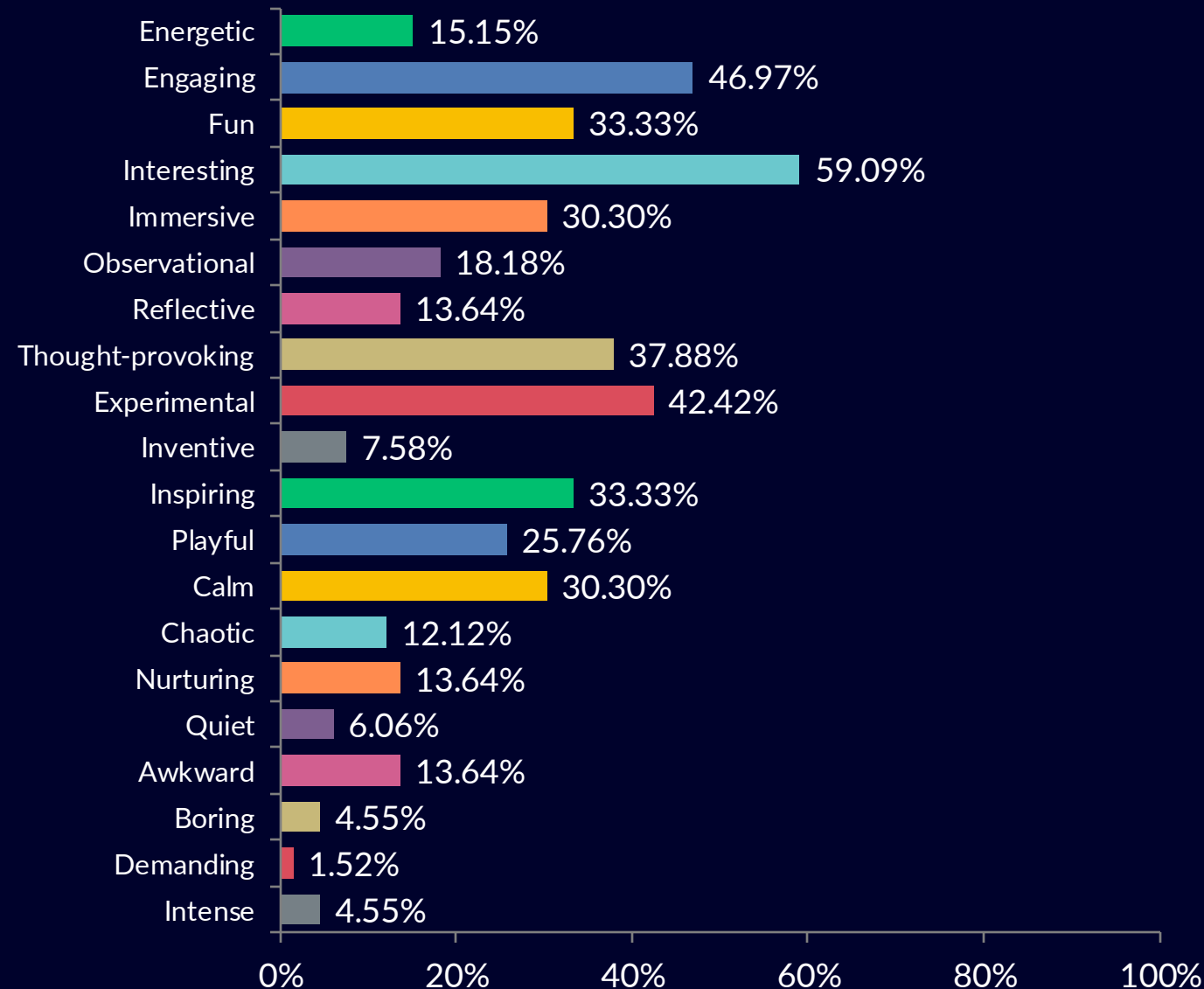


67 survey responses

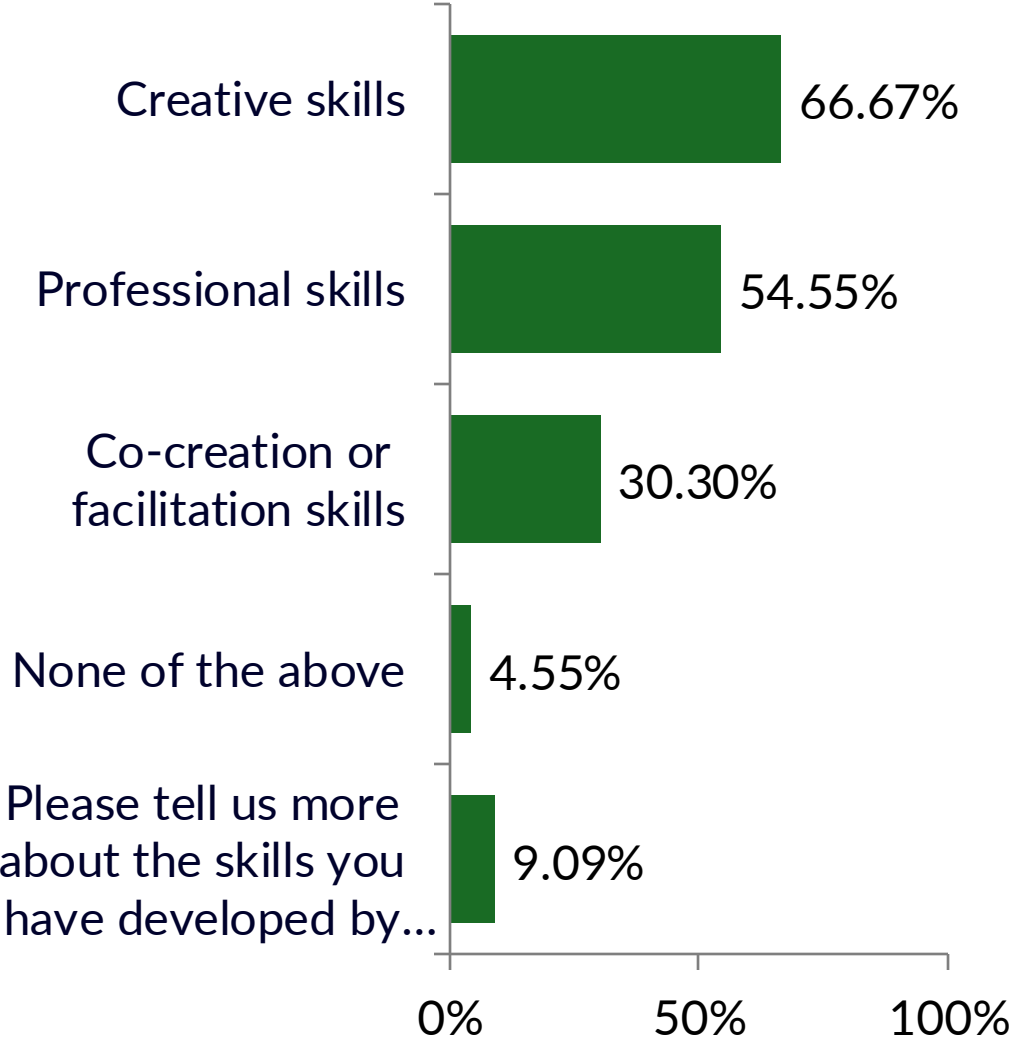
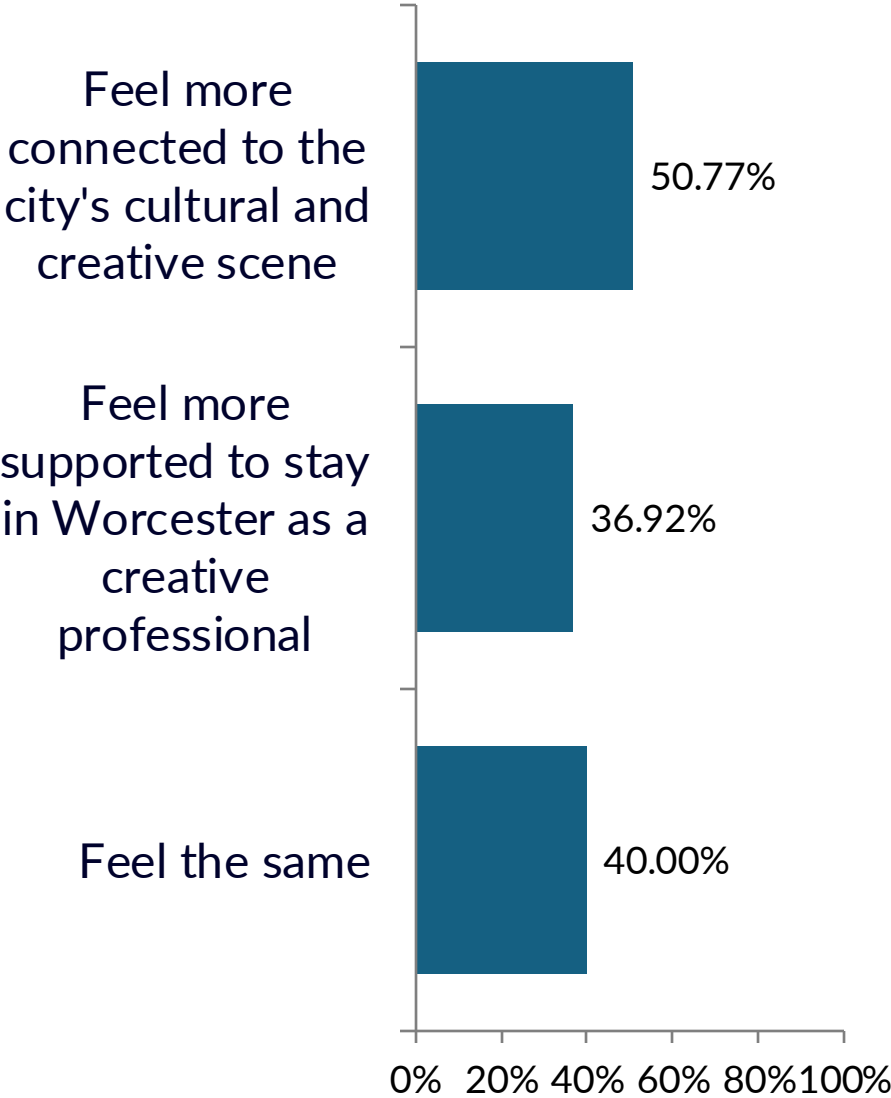
Survey Headlines



Participants & Feedback



Survey Headlines | Step Change Measures



Recommendations for Year 2

1. Providing Live Briefs that give relevant skills & experience

Increase Student Engagement through targeted communication

- Embed LVCC activity within the University calendar to improve visibility and attendance
- Work with student reps to widen the reach of communications about projects
- Work more closely with Head of Departments to embed LVCC opportunities
- Clarify sign-up processes and monitoring

Strengthen the 'skills' offer of Live Brief projects, by:

- Providing more opportunity for self-directed creativity
- Develop a model that features a stronger mentorship element
- Reduce time-pressure by offering projects that fit around academic commitments
- Consider how to group higher education and further education students so that content is tailored to appropriate skill level

2. Providing accessible opportunities to Worcester's Creative Students

Recommendations for Year 2

3. Increasing value of networking opportunities for students

Connect live briefs to Worcester festivals, cultural organisations and local businesses

- Provide real-world project experience and industry exposure
- Showcase outcomes away from educational institutions to develop identity as emerging creatives (rather than students)
- Develop Worcester's perceived value and awareness of how to work with creatives

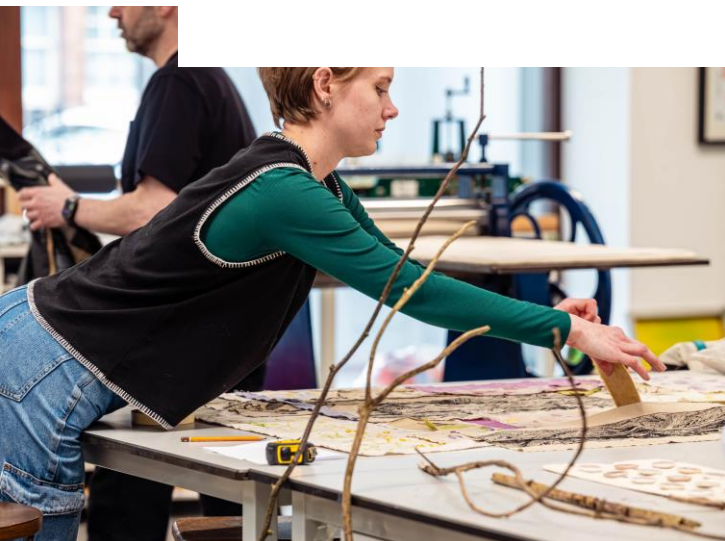
Strengthen student networking events, by:

- Linking in with existing events to streamline student pathways and build stronger connections within Worcester
- Keep strong focus on developing creative freelance and portfolio careers
- Change from the concept of 'student' networking to 'emerging creatives' networking
- Make workshop sessions longer and more interactive
- Promote events more widely and encourage sign-up
- Continue to include signposting to further advice and support in Worcester

4. Strengthening Worcester's Creative Economy



2 LIVE BRIEF PROJECTS | 49 STUDENTS
EXPLORING THEMES OF WORCESTER, CREATIVE IDENTITY & BEING AN EMERGING CREATIVE





‘Creative Choices’ Live Brief

A live brief project exploring the theme of ‘place’, led by artist Rob Draper

34 students took part

17 survey responses

94% said they developed creative skills

47% felt more connected to Worcester’s creative scene

50-85% Used words ‘experimental’, ‘playful’, ‘fun’ and ‘engaging’ to describe the project

Students also commented on pushing themselves out of their comfort zone, and speaking to locals about the project



'What We're Made Of' Live Brief

An exploration of creative digital identity,
led by local creative and film-maker James
Silvanus

15 students took part

13 survey responses

100% said they developed skills, with:

- 62% citing creative skills, and
- 77% citing professional skills

31% felt more supported to stay in Worcester as creative
professionals

*NOTE: surveys completed before exhibition and networking event, so this number
would likely be higher if we had completed surveys later in the process*

40 – 50% Used words 'experimental', 'interesting', 'thought-
provoking' and 'calm' to describe the project

Students reacted extremely positively to seeing their work
displayed at a local coffee shop Gaumont, commenting on
feeling more ready to put their work out there, seeing
themselves as emerging creatives rather than students, and
finding their creative 'spark'



Mela Chef Student Project

Students from HoW college participated in a culinary competition exploring South Asian Cooking, culminating in awards and cooking demonstrations as part of Threads of Unity Festival.

18 students took part
Awaiting survey data





4 EVENTS | 95+ STUDENTS
CONNECTING STUDENTS WITH
WORCESTER'S CREATIVE NETWORK





Student Networking Event

A kick-off event for students to explore the importance of industry networking, authenticity, creativity and doing taxes. Facilitated by fashion designer Taylor Bea-Gordon (T-LABEL), Business Consultant Peter Daniel (Rock Solid Consulting), Anna Best (The Artery Studio) and Rachel Smith, Programme Producer (Local Voices Creative Choices)

25 students attended

24 survey responses

95% said they developed skills, with:

- 78% citing professional skills, and
- 48% citing creative skills

72% Felt more connected to Worcester, with

- 55% saying they felt more connected to the city's cultural and creative scene
- 55% saying they felt more supported to stay in Worcester as a creative professional

45 – 70% Used words 'interesting' and 'thought-provoking' to describe the event

Several students commented on a desire for better marketing to University students, and longer sessions with more opportunity for interactive engagement.





Co-Creation Workshop

Co-creation workshop for emerging creatives from the Talent Programme, alongside students on the Skills Programme. Led by performing artist Lorna Rees, Gobbledogook Theatre.

25 students and emerging creatives took part

12 survey responses

91% said they developed skills, with:

- 67% citing creative skills,
- 50% citing co-creation skills, and
- 77% citing professional skills

75% felt more connected to the city's cultural and creative sector, and 33% felt more supported to stay in Worcester as creative professionals

40 – 50% Used words 'engaging', 'fun', 'interesting', 'experimental' and 'inspiring' to describe the workshop.

Additional comments said it was 'wonderfully weird!', 'unique', 'dramatic' and 'beautiful'. One commented that they felt uncomfortable singing in public. Several comments mentioned the workshop developed creative confidence.

Student Networking as part of Live Brief Projects

10 Students attended networking event connecting the Creative Choices exhibition with Worcester creative professionals from the Local Voices Creative Choices partnership



35 Students attended networking event and exhibition launch connecting the What We're Made Of project to Worcester local business Gaumont Coffee, linking in with other student event Pitch-Up at Arch 27, expanding the reach and impact of both projects in Worcester



- 2 Emerging Producers on the Talent Development Programme
- 10 Emerging Creatives paid ad hoc to support Festival of Play
- 1 Emerging Access Producer Role
- 1 Graduate Intership



TALENT DEVELOPMENT

We employed 2 producers, Anya Mullet and Libby Sadler-Wells on contracts as producers of *Festival of Play*.

However, we ended up employing a further 10 producers on day rates for the festival and other pop-up and co-creation events since. They all want to continue working and training with us.

The emerging artists have had training sessions with Richard Hayhow / Open Theatre (non-verbal practice), Judy Owen / International Producer, Lorna Rees Outdoor Activist / Maker and Producer and Co-chair for Outdoor Arts, Hannah Phillips Director / Producer, Jacqui Findlay Production Manager and Worcester Play.

Observations & Recommendations

Key observations

- Emerging artists want ongoing opportunities, training, mentoring and networking. They want to be part of a Collective and attached to festivals / organisations in Worcester to support their creative identity whilst wanting to develop their individual and collective practice. They need paid work wherever possible. They are most interested in producing and developing their own work.
- Artists were either from Worcester and had come home post University and wanted to stay and work here or were graduates from UoW and wanted to stay in the city or both.
- Most artists are visual artists but many working in interdisciplinary practice.
- The emerging artists led on the festival décor co-creation workshop emerged through the process and will become a bigger feature for the following year with HoW students, UoW students, Worcester's Craftivists and schools.



Observations & Recommendations



Recommendations for Year 2

1. Festival décor co-creation

Develop the festival décor co-creation workshop as a stronger feature in Year 2. The workshop was shaped by the emerging artists during this year's process and should be expanded to involve HoW students, UoW students, Worcester's Craftivists and local schools.

2. Talent Development Programme

Continue to work with a larger collective. Scala will develop a structured talent development programme co-designed with the Collective and continue to offer paid opportunities.

3. Talent Development Survey

Create a Talent Development Survey to support Significant Change evaluations.

“To me this project has been all about hope, from the start listening to the way that Hannah spoke about inclusion and the importance of giving the opportunity for everyone to experience creativity. I have felt deeply moved by the whole project. Access to art is so important for our community and there has been a gap in Worcester for many years since the closing of the Worcester Arts Workshop, and Scala’s message of access and inclusion is bridging that gap. I knew this experience of producing would be incredible, but I didn’t know how many like minded people I would meet who share the same views of the importance of access. The heart of project was about breaking down barriers and while doing this I fell back in love with my artistic practice. I’ve found meaning and motivation to continue on being an artist in a world where art is not considered essential to most. The joy, connection and passion the Festival of Play had, has given me motivation and hope for the future of my art practice, Worcester and inclusive arts.”

Anya Mullett, Emerging Producer

“When I applied, I was so excited to do this job, I didn't expect to come across such a wonderful creative experience working in Worcester! I learnt more about being in Worcester's vibrant art scene and developed my skillset through this work. I especially enjoyed networking with the variety of people involved in making exciting things happen in our city, particularly while running the clay workshop at Dines Green's Easter event. On the day of the festival I had an absolute blast, though it definitely tested my ability to be everywhere at once while setting up the Hive in the morning! I loved getting to see everything come to fruition and how delighted the visitors were by all we had set up, as well as chatting with and helping as many people as I could; it made me feel really involved. Prior to this job working in the arts felt like something of a pipe dream to me, and I'm really glad to have had this experience to guide me to creative pursuits in the future. It helped me even just this week, as I don't think I would have had the confidence to have had an art piece in Speak Volumes' gallery if I hadn't had the joy of working on the Festival of Play!”

Libby Sadler-Bury, Emerging Producer

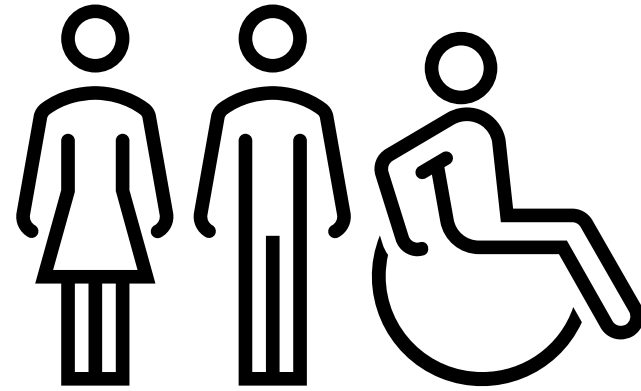
“I had a wonderful time at the Festival of Play and helping with the decoration making as well. Thank you very much for including me in Scala’s first event. I hope to work more with you in the future!”

Jesca Franke, Emerging Artist / Producer

“It truly was such a lovely day... thank you so much for making it happen and for allowing me to get involved. I really enjoyed being part of it and would love to be involved in more projects in the future. I am Worcestershire based so if you ever need a helping hand with anything at all, please do let me know.”

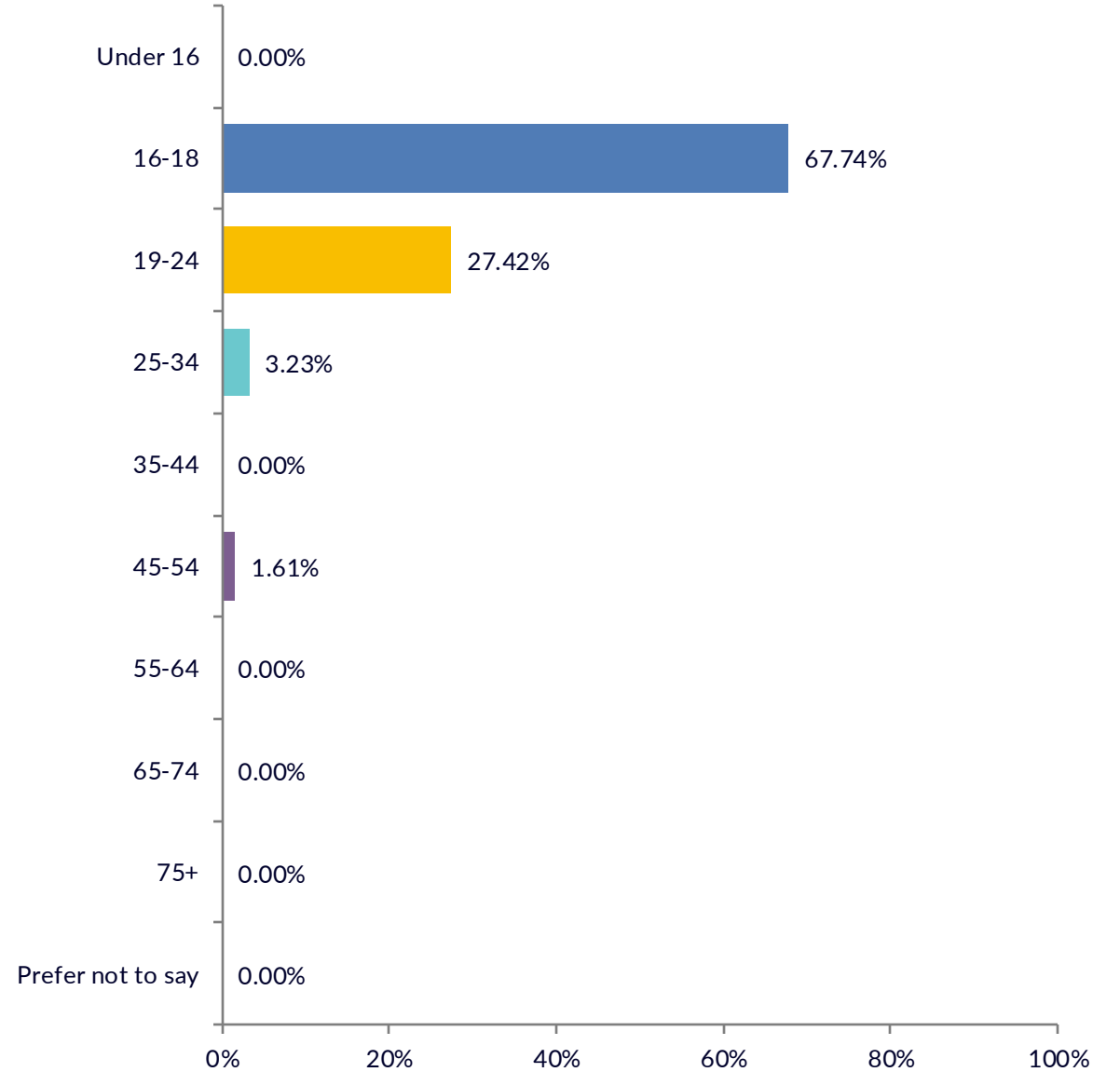
Charlotte Hasnip, Emerging Artist / Producer

Survey Demographics



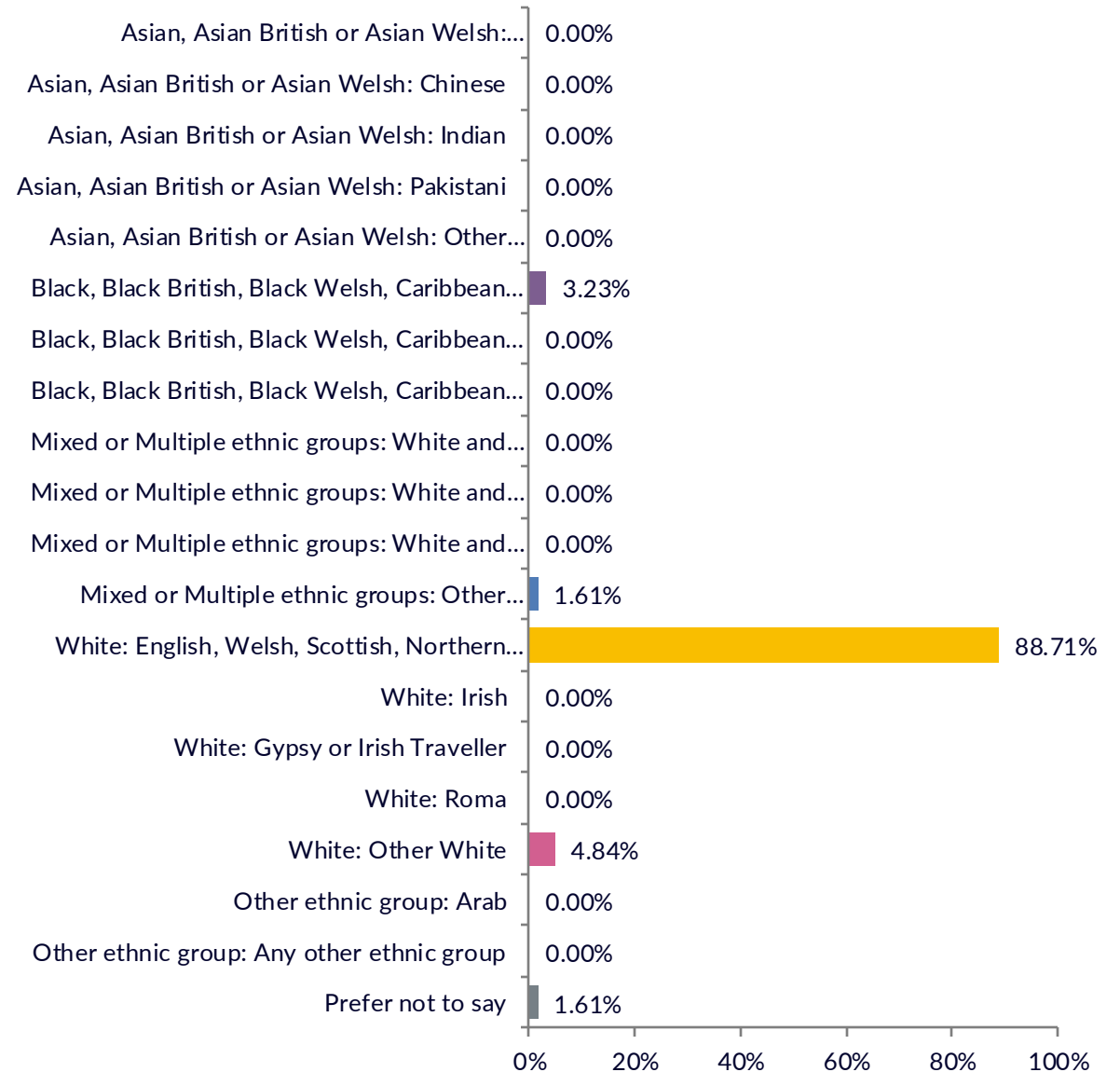
What is your age?

Answered: 62 Skipped: 5



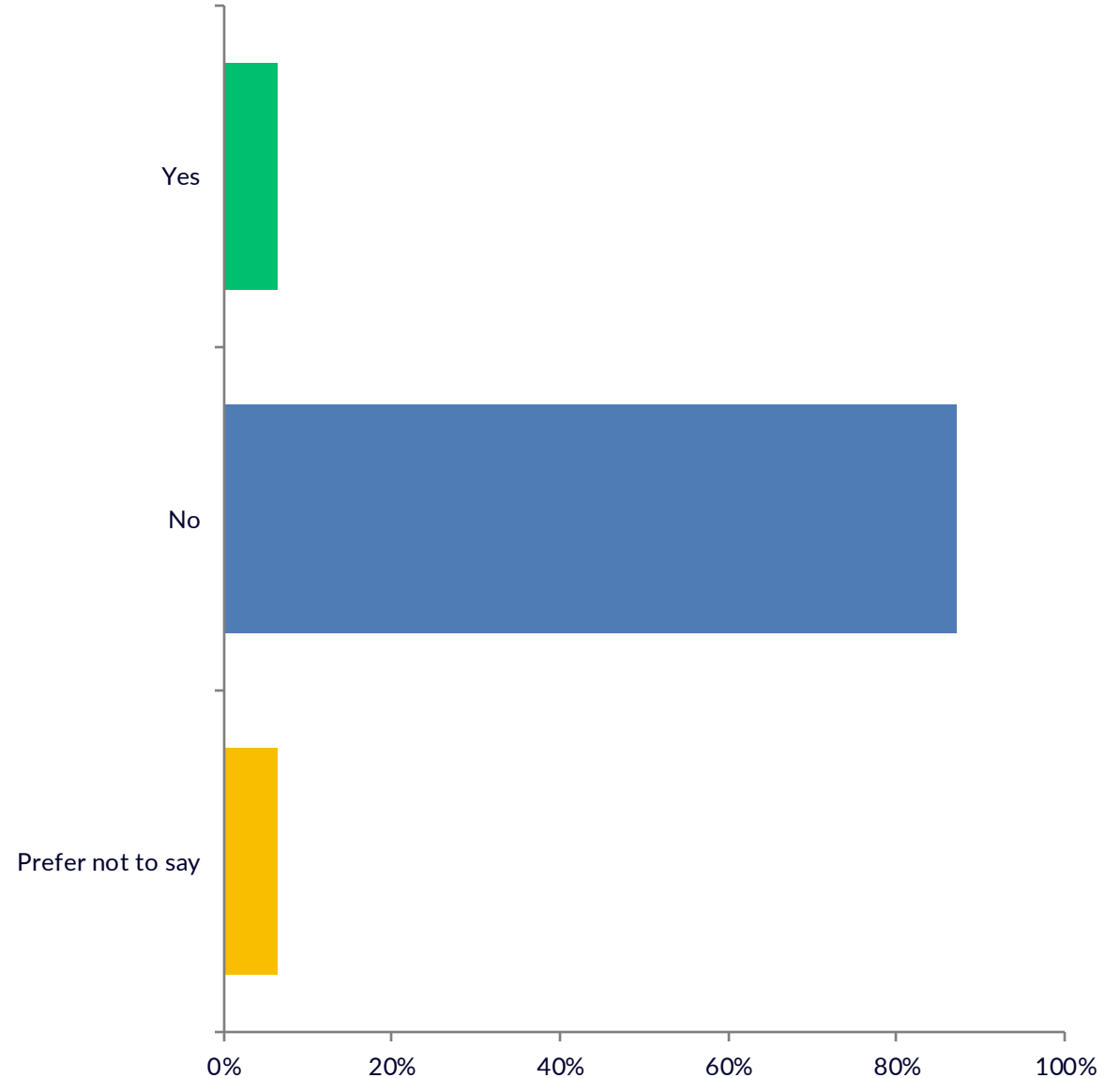
With which ethnicity do you identify?

Answered: 62 Skipped: 5



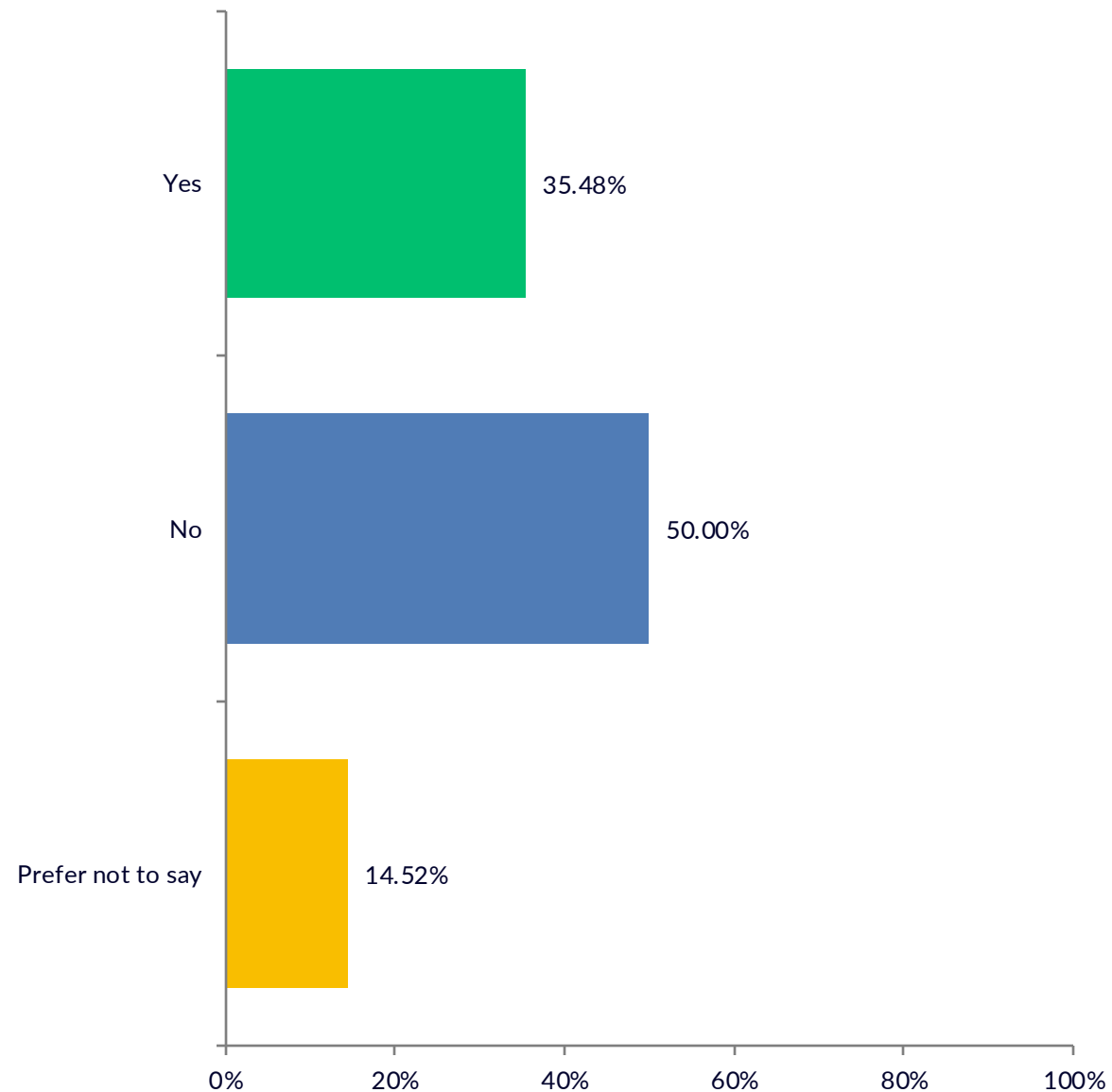
**Do you identify
as D/deaf,
disabled or have
a long term
health condition?**

Answered: 62 Skipped: 5



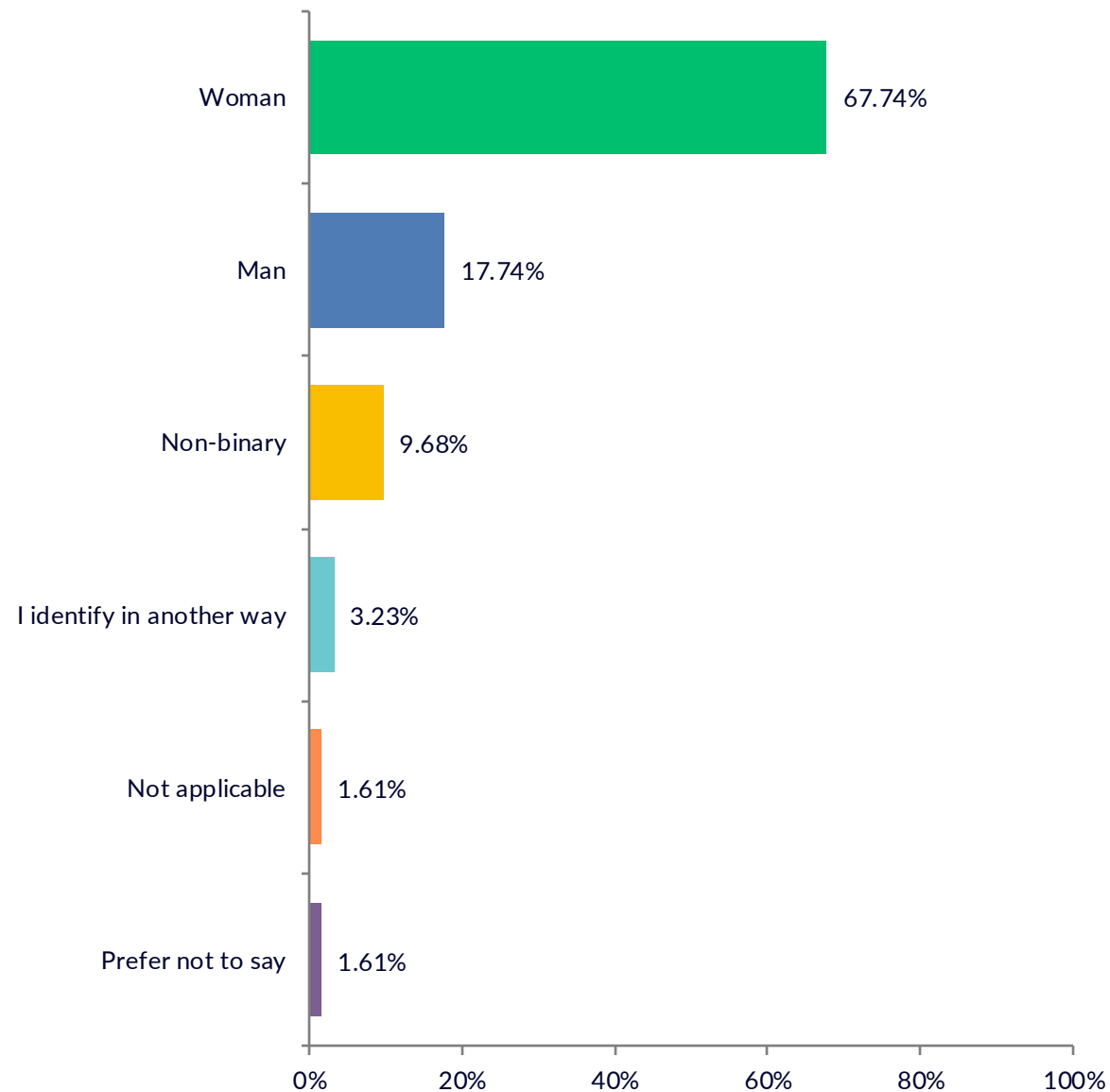
Do you identify as neurodivergent?

Answered: 62 Skipped: 5



What is your gender identity?

Answered: 62 Skipped: 5



Incubator Research Project

Progress in Year 1:

Visited 2 contrasting incubator spaces:

- BetaDen Tech Incubator, Malvern
- Jolt Creative Incubator, Gloucester

Research Team consists of:

- 7 professionals from the LVCC partnership
- 3 students feeding into development



Key findings:

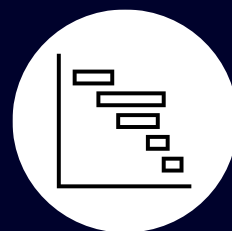
- A physical space is valuable for initiating peer-to-peer connections and industry support
- Mentoring is one of the most valuable parts of an incubator programme
- 24/7 access enables portfolio career freelancers to balance other commitments with developing their creative careers
- Being selective is important as some candidates are more committed to progress
- A talent pipeline spanning early-career to more established professionals creates greater opportunities for shared learning, networking, and progression within the sector
- A dedicated connector can play a crucial role in cultivating connections, sparking collaboration, and shaping the character and energy of a place



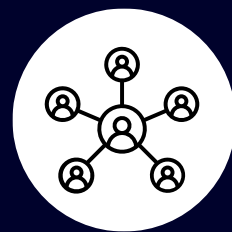
Recommendations for Year 2:



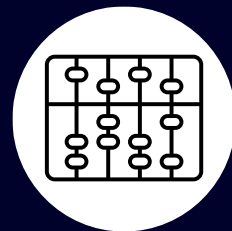
Conduct scoping exercise and gap analysis to find out what spaces and support already exist in Worcester



Develop a phased model and budget



Strengthen partnerships to link in with future project



Explore funding and launch potential

Progress update on measures against Step Change 4:

‘A city where the **Heart of Worcestershire College** and **University of Worcester** are embedded in its broad cultural offer and creative community’

By 2027, participation in live projects is embedded into HE and FE arts courses

- At Heart of Worcestershire College (HOW), all creative courses included a live brief or project during the 2025/26 academic year. These opportunities were delivered through LVCC and a range of cultural partners, strengthening links between students and Worcester's creative sector. Students benefited from developing real-world skills through collaboration with professional artists and opportunities to present and discuss their creative practice.
- At the University of Worcester (UoW), students have engaged with formal Live Briefs and networking opportunities linked to Place Partnerships. While participation levels were initially lower than anticipated due to promotional challenges, lessons learned have informed a shift towards embedding activities within the curriculum. Future opportunities are being designed to ensure relevance across a wider range of disciplines, including Performing Arts. Academic colleagues have also embedded festivals within their curriculum; for example, Media and Film Studies students have worked closely with Mela, gaining hands-on experience of festival production.

By 2027, all creative FE students report awareness of HE creative courses

- Collaborative workshops delivered through LVCC have helped increase awareness of HE creative opportunities among FE students. All Level 3 Year 1 creative students at HOW have participated in HE awareness and creative practice sessions at the University of Worcester and other higher education providers. There is recognition that further work is needed to ensure awareness reaches all creative FE students, rather than only those actively considering progression routes. Stronger mechanisms are also required to capture and monitor awareness across departments. Greater collaboration between FE and HE students through shared projects could further strengthen awareness and progression pathways.

Progress update on measures against Step Change 4:

‘A city where the **Heart of Worcestershire College** and **University of Worcester** are embedded in its broad cultural offer and creative community’

Cultural Compact partners report increased collaboration with the FE and HE sector, with FE and HE feeling more embedded

Both HOW and UoW report feeling more connected to Worcester's cultural and creative sector through Place Partnerships and wider Cultural Compact activity. For HOW, partnerships with organisations including Mela, Worcester Porcelain Museum, Plinth, Worcester Cathedral and the Battle of Worcester Society have created valuable opportunities for students and raised the profile of the college across the city.

For UoW, Place Partnerships has strengthened relationships with cultural organisations and created a range of engagement opportunities for students and graduates.

Examples include:

- Student volunteering at Bridges of Light.
- Young producer roles at Festival of Play.
- Media and Film Studies students gaining practical festival production experience through Mela.
- The successful Place Partnership internship programme.
- Graduate involvement in the Skills workstream.
- Collaboration with Worcester Film Festival.
- Wellbeing workshops delivered through Artist Clubhouse.

While many positive relationships have been established, engagement across the wider Cultural Compact membership remains uneven. The Joint Cultural Needs Analysis and the emerging Strategy for Culture for Worcester provide an opportunity to deepen collaboration further, strengthen pathways for students and graduates, and support more creative graduates to remain and work within the city.

A city that attracts more students to take up creative courses, retaining arts graduates and developing a talent pipeline for employment in the creative industries		Year 1 Total	Aim	Progress
12 graduates on development programme (4 Y1 and 8 Y2) 200 students / emerging artists at networking events 36 students shadowing on co-creation projects 214 students on live briefs - Incubator facility feasibility report by 2027	Year 1 update			
	2 emerging producers employed 1 graduate intern 1 emerging access producer role (actually delivered by 3 individuals) 15 student volunteering			100%
	95			95%
	4 BOL	10 FOP (paid)	18 Mela Chef	178%
80% participating students & graduates say they gained skills;	49 - issues with promotion / communication at UoW			46%
80% feel more connected to the city's cultural and creative scene	Research team developed, site visits conducted and progress update for year 1			On track
80% feel more supported to stay in Worcester as a creative professional	95% gained skills - of those: Creative 66.7% Professional 55% Co-creation or facilitation skills 30%			119%
	Year 1 Skills & Talent survey: 51%			64%
	Year 1 Skills & Talent survey: 37%			46%
A city where the Heart of Worcestershire College and University of Worcester are embedded in its broad cultural offer and creative community				
By 2027, participation in live projects embedded into HE & FE arts courses		Year 1 update from HOW and UoW		
By 2027, all creative FE students report awareness of HE creative courses		HoW all creative courses included a live brief or project during the 2025/26 academic year UoW lower uptake than planned but lessons learned around communication and curriculum.		
Cultural Compact partners report increased collaboration with FE & HE Sector. FE & HE report feeling more embedded.		All Level 3 Year 1 creative students at HOW have participated in HE awareness and creative practice sessions at the University of Worcester and other higher education		
		Both HOW and UoW report feeling more connected to Worcester's cultural and creative sector through Place Partnerships and wider Cultural Compact activity.		