1. Society & Wellbeing
   1. Introduction

Society & Wellbeing is one of the key themes of Hull 2017, made up of two aims and their accompanying objectives:

* **Aim 7: Improve wellbeing through engagement and participation**
  + **Objective 13:** Engage volunteers from Hull and beyond through the Volunteering Programme.
  + **Objective 14:** Increase levels of happiness and enjoyment as a result of engaging with the arts and culture.
  + **Objective 15:** Increase levels of confidence and community cohesion among local audiences and participants.
* **Aim 8: Increase aspirations, abilities and knowledge of residents** 
  + **Objective 17:** Delivery of training and development opportunities to local residents through arts and culture initiatives.

‘Back to Ours’ will be evaluated in reference to these aims and objectives, as well as identifying additional outcome areas not covered in the above, but linked to the aims and objectives specific to the project (see Chapter 1).

* 1. Value Statements About ‘Back to Ours’

Audiences were asked to rate ‘Back to Ours’ against a variety of value statements, some that linked to society & wellbeing (see Table 8).

‘Back to Ours’ appears to have been particularly successful in creating opportunities for communities to come together to try something new.

* 95% of audience members felt that ‘Back to Ours’ gave everyone the chance to celebrate together;
* 97% of audience members felt that ‘Back to Ours’ was an enjoyable experience.

Table 8: Value Statements – Strongly Agree or Agree

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Back to Ours…** | **%**  **(n=77)** |
| …gave everyone the chance to share and celebrate together | 95% |
| …was an enjoyable experience | 97% |
| ...made me feel more connected with Hull and its people | 60% |
| ...made me feel more connected to the local community here | 57% |
| …gave me the opportunity to interact with other people who I wouldn’t have normally interacted with | 60% |
| …showed me that there is more to Hull than I had expected | 56% |
| …has made me think that getting involved in a project as a volunteer looks like fun | 61% |

* + 1. Community Cohesion

One of the objectives of the ‘Back to Ours’ project was to create opportunities for different generations to connect with one another. Research so far suggests that ‘Back to Ours’ has successfully attracted a family audience, with more than one third of groups having a child under the age of 16 with them (34%). Anecdotally, many respondents in the ‘Chat with Nan’ research mentioned that they were attending with family. In particular, at the children’s show ‘The Story of Mr B’, several grandparents accompanied their grandchildren to the performance.

The project also aimed to give people with disabilities better access to participate in activities in their own community. As such, a number of the Back to Ours performances had enhanced access, with relaxed children’s performances and BSL interpretation.

As mentioned in Chapter 2.8 of this report, it was suggested by audience members that hosting performances in community venues helps to make arts and culture more accessible to those with disabilities. One audience member spoke of a family friend with a disabled child who felt unable to see the Made in Hull projections because of the large crowds. She went on to say that visiting something within the local community is something that would be much easier for the family.

Additionally, one Venue Partner received positive feedback from a parent of an autistic child who had attended a relaxed performance and had managed to stay for the full show – a new achievement for the family.

*“When a parent left she said that she’s got an autistic child and it was the first time that he’s gone to anything like that and sat through. And she was so pleased and thrilled about it, so that was a really nice bit of feedback.” (Venue Partner)*

The subject matter of ‘Meet Fred’ also encouraged discussion around disability and the benefits system, with those who attended reflecting on the issues raised in the performance in the ‘Chat with Nan’ conversations.

In terms of community cohesion, the CCT felt that the venue in which this was demonstrated most strongly was the William Gemmel Club at the ‘Ceri Dupree and Gogglebox’ performance. The team felt that they achieved a diverse audience made up of club regulars along with Hull 2017 staff and visitors, which created a really positive atmosphere. Indeed, one audience member admitted that that the venue wasn’t somewhere she would normally go, but she was surprised and delighted with the welcome she received from the regulars.

*“We walked in and from the minute we walked in there, we were made welcome by the people that were in there. And it was absolutely lovely. “ (Chat with Nan: Audience member)*

*“They got us a couple of chairs and a table, the people around it, were all people that belonged to the club. And they were lovely people, and they really wanted us to enjoy it. You know it was lovely.” (Chat with Nan: Audience member)*

One member of the CCT referred to the audience diversity at the William Gemmel club as one of the key achievements of ‘Back to Ours’ so far, considering this to be a key measure of success for the project.

*“Having that kind of mish-mash of people from all different backgrounds.” (CCT member)*

* + 1. Emotional Response

The emoji paddle research findings reflect a sense of how the audience felt immediately after watching a ‘Back to Ours’ performance. The most common emotions across all shows were Happy (33%) and Love (36%).

‘The Red Shed’ was the show that generated the most mixed emotions, with audience members selecting every choice apart from ‘Bored’. ‘The Red Shed’ was also the only show where audience members reporting feeling ‘Angry’, with 9% of respondents selecting this emotion. Audience research suggests that this reflected the themes and subjects covered in the performance, rather than a negative experience.

Positive emotions represented more than negative emotions for each show and overall (87% compared to 13%), supporting the feedback that ‘Back to Ours’ was an enjoyable event. Positive emotions included: Happy, Love, Amused, and negative emotions included: Confused, Scared, Bored, Sad, Angry.

Audience research following the performances gave some context to these findings. One child who had attended ‘The Story of Mr B’ described how the show had affected their emotions:

*“I thought it was really sad at the beginning when Mr Bumblegrum was unhappy, but I cheered up when all the clouds went away.” (Chat with Nan: Audience Member)*

Those who attended ‘Meet Fred’ were surprised at how strongly they felt towards the main character, which was essentially a puppet without any facial features.

*“You kind of felt a connection to the puppet…” (Chat with Nan: Audience Member)*

*“I just think the character, on such a plain puppet, it was just full of character. It was real.” (Chat with Nan: Audience Member)*

Audience members at ‘Joan and Hekima’ described feeling completely ‘mesmerised’ by the actress, and reflected on her ability to hold the attention of the audience and affect their emotions.

*“I was feeling quite emotional at times. I think I was upset when she was upset.” (Chat with Nan: Audience Member)*

* 1. Success of the concept

Although there are still two ‘Back to Ours’ festivals to go, initial evidence suggests that the project has made some fundamental steps to remove the barriers to accessing arts and cultural events in the more deprived areas of the city.

Venue Partners have already begun making steps towards creating opportunities for local residents to access arts and culture events once the project has finished. This will have the effect of breaking down geographical barriers for those unable or unwilling to travel into the city centre to attend performance spaces such as Hull New Theatre or Hull Truck.

*“We’ve just had a show on the back of Back to Ours, which was Daredevil Ride to Drama.” (Venue Partner)*

*“I think it’s a really good project and hopefully we can put things in place to continue it beyond.” (Venue Partner)*

*“I’ve already started to kind of look at different kind of events, myself, now, that can attract different people.” (Venue Partner)*

Given that one of the main attitudinal barriers to accessing the arts is the perception that ‘it’s not for me’, the CCT and Venue Partners felt that it was crucial that the ‘Back to Ours’ project was accepted and well known in the community. Word of mouth recommendation was seen as an important tool to overcome this barrier and the team recognised that this is something that would grow naturally over time.

95% of survey respondents gave a score of 8 or above when asked on a scale of 0-10 how likely they would be to recommend a similar event to friends and family. This gives an indication of how the project could benefit from potential word of mouth advertising for future festivals.

* + 1. Audience Legacy

Although evidence suggests that many of those who attended ‘Back to Ours’ were already engaged, there was an indication that prior to Hull being awarded City of Culture status, these people were not so open to taking part in arts and cultural events.

*“We very rarely go to any of this sort of stuff, it’s because of the City of Culture that we’re out and about seeing this sort of thing.” (Chat with Nan: Audience Member)*

*“What we decided to do this year was to try everything and anything. And if we can get tickets for it, we’ll do it.” (Chat with Nan: Audience Member)*

This implies that the ‘Back to Ours’ project in combination with the other things going on in the city, has helped to encourage people to access the arts and try something new.

When audience members were asked whether they felt inspired to do anything else as a result of attending ‘Back to Ours’, many mentioned that they would look forward to attending more Hull 2017 events throughout the year. Furthermore, 98% of audience members said that they would be interested in attending something similar in the future, demonstrating a clear appetite for this kind of event.

*“I think I’ll look out for more productions this year. But even after that, I’ll try and go to Hull Truck a bit more. And you know, try more things.” (Chat with Nan: Audience Member)*

The project also had a similar effect on one of the Venue Partners, who said that being involved in the festival has made her want to personally experience a wider range of arts and cultural events.

*“It kind of made me want to go and try something myself.” (Venue Partner)*

* 1. Key Learnings – Society & Wellbeing
* More than one third of groups contained children (34%), indicating that ‘Back to Ours’ attracted a family audience. Anecdotal evidence also demonstrates instances of generations enjoying events together, as several grandparents accompanied their grandchildren to ‘The Story of Mr B’.
* The CCT felt that the strongest example of community cohesion was demonstrated in the William Gemmel club at the ‘Ceri Dupree’ performance. The team felt that a real diversity of audience was achieved in this venue and considered this to be one of the main successes of the project.
* Emotional responses to the performances tended to be positive. Qualitative feedback provided context to any negative emotional response, suggesting that this was reflective of the performance subject matter rather than an indication that the events were not enjoyable.
* The initial evidence indicates that geographical barriers to accessing the arts are being broken down for the future, as Venue Partners have expressed an interest in hosting similar events in the future.
* 98% of audience members said that they would be ‘interested or ‘very interested’ in attending a similar event in the future, and many spoke of other Hull 2017 events that they were looking forward to.