

Cultural Education Partnerships: planning for roles, responsibilities and decision-making structures

Introduction

Cultural Education Partnerships (CEPs) bring together organisations and individuals working in a local area to support young people in the context of creativity and culture. Supporting Arts Council England's Cultural Education Challenge, CEPs are convened with the ambition of ensuring all young people have the chance to develop their creative practice and play an active part in the culture of their area. Together, partner organisations identify opportunities and new joint-work towards this goal.

Given the different contexts across the country, CEP activity, and therefore the structure through which they decide to oversee their work, differs from place to place and is locally driven. Two Critical Success factors identified in NFER's evaluation of three Cultural Education Partnership pilot areas speak to ideas of governance:

- Firstly, that 'CEPs need to have a defined structure and process for decision-making which enables partners to make meaningful contributions' (p.34).

A strong decision-making structure can enable all partners to contribute, and a lack of structure can impede progress. The report cites Carolyn Black's suggestion that the need for a structure and management is a 'distinguishing feature between collaboration and partnerships' (p.34).

The report goes on to suggest a decision-making structure should allow partners to engage in different ways – 'contributions to the partnership may not necessarily be equal'. And that partnerships should 'consider how different elements of the partnership will link together and link with existing infrastructure' (p.34).

- Secondly that 'CEPs must not be just a talking shop: they must take collaborative action to achieve a shared purpose' (p.34).

This second point signifies a governance structure that is focussed in achieving the outcomes and vision of the partnership, and that enables the group's common purpose to be the central focus.

Reference: Jennie Harland and Caroline Sharpe, NFER, [*Cultural Education Partnerships pilot study*](#)

How are CEPs structuring their partnerships?

Who's involved?

Most CEPs exist in a space between local authority, schools and/or the youth sector, and cultural partners working in a local area. As such most partnership groups will seek representation from teachers, local cultural and heritage organisations and/or individual

artists, local authority representatives (possibly across a number of teams), and the youth sector. Some partnerships will also involve representatives from local employers, commercial creative industries organisations, higher education institutions and organisations with specialisms including health and planning where there might be an overlap in aims with those of CEP groups.

Chair and convenor roles

Most partnerships will have a Chair who will guide meetings of a central steering or working group. This may or may not be the same person/organisation as the 'convenor' or facilitator, who coordinates/manages the meetings, oversees the shaping of agendas and other group activities and who might be the central point of contact for enquiries about the partnership's work.

Connecting beyond the steering group

There are many ways CEP steering groups might plan to connect beyond steering group membership. For example:

- The partnership might establish formal links with other infrastructure locally, for example agreed representation in a sister group focussed around culture, education or another local priority
- Planning and hosting regular informal or more formal meetings with wider advisors or strategic stakeholders
- There might be a wider membership structure through which organisations involved with delivering activity locally and interested to contribute can support and connect with the CEP
- Conference, symposium, networking or discussion events locally might form part of an annual plan of activity to enable ongoing consultation and engagement with wider partners

Task and finish groups

Many CEPs have created 'task and finish' groups focussed on delivering specific priorities. For some these are sub-groups from a steering group's existing membership who take a lead on aspects of the partnerships running, for example, communications, finance or resourcing working groups (as in the example of Learn Sheffield below).

In other situations, 'task and finish' groups might be smaller collections of organisations focussed around planning and delivering actions against a particular subject or topic priority, and may include organisations who aren't members of the CEP steering group. Usually 'task and finish' groups would be formed on a time-bound arrangement in order to deliver the specified priority and report back to the wider steering group (see also Islington CEP's terms of reference below).

Meetings

Most CEP steering groups will have quarterly meetings. In many cases these are an opportunity to check in on planned activity, share group updates that might impact the CEP's work, review priorities and reflect together on activity undertaken, successes and challenges.

A note on resourcing

As highlighted in the NFER's study (referenced above), some resource is needed by CEPs in order to coordinate the meetings and undertake collaborative activity (p.35). Nationally CEPs have explored a number of avenues for resourcing their work and currently this often includes a portfolio approach with small investments and in-kind contributions coming together.

Often the coordination involved in managing and convening the CEP meetings and activity is taken on by a local organisation, and embedded within an existing role - sometimes with seed investment from their local Arts Council England Bridge Organisation or another investor.

There are examples nationally, including Camden Spark (linked to below), that have registered as charities and applied for investment from local, regional or national trusts and foundations for their work. Some others have fundraised through a member organisation in order to deliver activity around their priorities, for example, through Arts Council England's Grants for the Arts, now National Lottery Project Grants. As CEP work is embedded nationally we hope we will learn more about different models and options for resourcing CEP work, and to be able to share more on this within this resource library.

Examples

[1: Liverpool Cultural Education Partnership and the Liverpool Learning Partnership](#)

Liverpool's Cultural Education Partnership's steering group includes representatives from Liverpool Learning Partnership, School Improvement Liverpool, National Museums Liverpool, Liverpool John Moores University and Liverpool's Music Hub.

A Cultural Education Coordinator has been appointed and works from within the Liverpool Learning Partnership — a partnership structure bringing together Liverpool schools. This embedded connection has enabled strong joint-practice with education across the city. A number of 'task and finish' teams progress activity against priority areas.

[2: Sheffield Cultural Education Partnership](#)

This document from Sheffield Cultural Education partnership tracks their first six months. In it, you can find information about how activity of a number of task and finish groups, focussing on different aspects of the group's development, aligned to support the partnership's 'set-up' phase.

[3: Camden Spark](#)

Camden Spark's website shares the partnership's Board Structure and wider membership. Camden Spark have opted to register as a charity.

[4: East London Cultural Education Partnership](#)

The following resource shares a case study and learning from the East London Cultural Education Partnership's work between 2014 and 2017. It includes interesting documentation of the role of the broker, and key learning around partnership development.

5. Example Terms of Reference and documentation advice:

- [Reading CEP](#)
- [Islington CEP](#)
- [A New Direction's teacher toolkit](#) contains advice on developing a partnership agreement