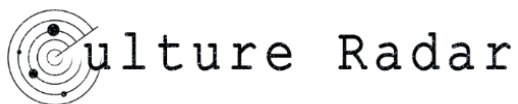




Artists' Support Programme

An evaluation for Luminate



AUGUST 2024

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1. Introduction

Background

Findings from Luminate’s pilot Artist Support Programme in 2022 showed that, while creative ageing practice is hugely rewarding for practitioners, it can also be challenging work. Alongside the precarity associated with freelance creative practice, artists working with Luminate also experience health and wellbeing impacts from working in care settings, face challenges in balancing the different requirements of cultural and health sector employers, and often find themselves working in isolation or in pressured care settings. In addition, artists in the 2022 pilot reported difficulty in being able to dedicate time for their own professional development and their personal wellbeing.

What the 2022 pilot evidenced however, was that peer support positively improved their health and wellbeing, and confidence in their creative practice. Overall, the project showed that through paid training and artist bursaries, Luminate could give artists time and permission to invest in their wellbeing, professional networks and in their personal development.

Aims for the Artists’ Support Programme 2024

This 2024 Artist Support Programme is the next iteration in Luminate’s exploration of how to support artists working on its projects, and in creative ageing projects led by other organisations. The aims and anticipated outcomes of the 2024 Programme were:

Aims	Anticipated outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support the wellbeing and professional development of artists working in the creative ageing sector.• Invest in and support the development of artists’ facilitation skills to support delivery of future Luminate initiatives.• Offer the opportunity to connect with other artists through peer groups as a tool for development support.• Offer one-to-one coaching to give artists the opportunity and time for personal reflection and development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improved confidence in the artist facilitators in leading creative sessions• Improvements in the wellbeing of the artists participating in the programme• Increased confidence in participating artists’ creative practice• New local connections and networks created for the participating artists• Improved understanding of the support that artists require from Luminate• Enhanced evidence and planning for Luminate to establish a core peer group programme.

Evaluation methodology

Evaluation activity took place between March and August 2024 and comprised:

- Assessment of Programme documentation.
- An online interview with artist facilitators in April 2024.
- Observation and consultation of a participant reflection session in August 2024.
- Collation of report outcomes for the one-to-one coaching strand delivered by Coaching for Creatives.

This report

This report reflects learning from the experiences of 21 creative people engaged across the Programme over the course of five months who were taking part in different activities. Hard measures have been assessed where possible in the report, and where it makes sense to do so. The focus however, has been on collating and reflecting on key themes which have emerged as important for the participants in both the Peer Groups and One-to-One Coaching, reaching overall conclusions to inform and aid Luminare's next steps.

"All quotes within the evaluation report are from interviews or reflection sessions attended by the evaluator and have been anonymised to protect participant privacy."

Programme partners

Luminare

Luminare is Scotland's creative ageing organisation. It works across Scotland to ensure that older people's creativity can flourish whatever their circumstances, experience, interests and ambitions. It supports the development of creative ageing work in a wide range of contexts where its projects are designed to explore and test new ways of working and/or to engage new communities, and it shares its learning with others to support the development of creative practice. Luminare works with wide-ranging collaborators including artists and cultural organisations, community groups and social care providers.

Nicola Naismith

[Nicola Naismith](#) is a visual artist, researcher, coach, mentor, and a lecturer at the University of the Highlands and Islands. She has over 25 years' experience of working in arts and culture. Over the last six years she has developed the *Practising Well* body of research and practice which explores the support needs of creative practitioners working in arts and health, participatory and social art practice. Using a research informed approach she works with organisations to design and deliver professional training and support programmes related to social practice and participatory arts.

2. The programme in brief

The 2024 Artists' Support Programme implemented improvements recommended from the 2022 pilot, and further tested the Programme's effectiveness. It ran from March to August 2024 and was fully funded by Luminare through funding from Creative Scotland. The programme was run by Luminare in collaboration with consultant Nicola Naismith who had designed and facilitated the Artists' Support Programme pilot in 2022.

Programme design

The Programme was designed around three core strands:

- 1 A Creative Facilitators' Development Workshop** was delivered by Nicola Naismith on 7 March 2024. The purpose of the workshop was to engage artists with experience of creative ageing practice who wanted to further their professional skills in facilitation through peer learning, and to help increase the pool of artist facilitators available to lead Luminare's artist development work nationally. The session included group discussion on the importance of peer support, boundary setting, roles within peer led spaces and peer group guidelines were discussed and shared as a resource. A fee of £400 was paid to participants, with some preparation and reflection activity required of each participant attending the workshop.
- 2 Peer Support Groups** - two regional peer groups were established for creatives in Angus and Edinburgh creating an opportunity to connect and benefit from facilitated peer support. The first session was led and supported by two artists who had participated in the Facilitation Skills Development Workshop in March. Facilitation of the remaining four sessions was undertaken in rotation by group members. All participants attended a final online session on 20 August to reflect on their experiences. A bursary of £500 (£100 per session) was paid to each artist taking part, with Luminare supporting co-ordination of network dates and meeting room hire.
- 3 One-to-one Coaching** was offered to creatives between April and July 2024. The offer included a mandatory online introduction to coaching session led by Nicola Naismith, followed by 3 one-to-one coaching sessions with an accredited coach. A final online group session was hosted for participants to reflect on their coaching experience. A bursary of £105 was paid to each artist taking part (£35 per hour-long coaching session), and with Luminare covering the fees of the professional coaches.

Key outputs

Related to the objectives identified for the Programme, key outputs include:



Application forms to all programme strands designed to be light touch, with applicants asked to provide a brief description of their artistic practice and

experience of working in creative ageing settings, and their reasons for wanting to take part in the strand they applied for.



Application information for all three strands set out Luminate's commitment to increasing the diversity of artists working in the sector, stating it welcomed applications from those who "identify as having characteristics currently under-represented."



Sufficient applications were received to all three strands of the Programme to enable all activities to take place.



Luminate's budget was sufficient to cover the costs of delivering all three Programme strands, and ensured freelance participants had no barriers to participation as their time was remunerated.



An online Facilitation Skills Development Workshop was delivered on 6 March (online) providing professional development for six freelance creatives.



A bespoke facilitation guidance resource was developed by Nicola Naismith for use by the regional peer groups and facilitators working in the creative sector more broadly.



Two completely new peer groups were established in both Angus and Edinburgh, including five creatives in each group, with each group meeting in-person five times.



A full coaching programme was successfully delivered in partnership with Coaching for Creatives providing professional self-directed coaching support for ten creatives across Scotland.

3. Facilitation skills development

This section of the report draws on supplied documentation and an interview which took place in April 2024 with two freelance artists who had both attended the Creative Facilitator's Development Day, who were then invited to participate in the Edinburgh and Angus peer groups and to lead facilitation of each group's first session. They were interviewed following the Workshop and in advance of the peer groups taking place.

Facilitation training

An online Creative Facilitators' Development Workshop took place on 7 March 2024, led by Nicola Naismith. The workshop attracted six participants.

The online Workshop included a mixture of presentations, whole group and breakout

discussions which enabled different levels of knowledge sharing, and both broad and in-depth conversations, amongst participants.

Presentation content drew on Nicola Naismith's research and knowledge of support structures for creative practitioners working in arts and health, participatory and social art practice. Whole and break out group discussions at the Workshop focused on exploring peer groups and the facilitator role within them.

A new peer group resource

Following the Workshop Nicola Naismith drafted a *Peer Group Guidelines* resource including information, tools and suggestions for structuring peer group sessions, and invited input from the Workshop's participants to its development.

A revised and final version of the resource was shared with Luminate, and with the Edinburgh and Angus peer groups in advance of their initial session to aid understanding of the conditions and activities which support productive working as a peer group. It was made available to the groups in Word format, encouraging the groups and individuals to edit and arrange it to suit their access needs and preferred way of working.

Reflections from participants

On the workshop

The artists interviewed perceived different levels of experience across those attending the Workshop, both in facilitation skills and in working in creative ageing settings. Reflections overall included that the session had provided new learning and insight around 'reflective practice' which had been interesting and generated good discussion across the group.

On the facilitation 'ask'

Both of the artists invited to lead the first peer group sessions were experienced workshop facilitators, but noted they did feel extra responsibility in leading the first peer group session - *"It's different when it's your peers - that's maybe a bit intimidating."*

Both said they wanted to share information with their groups in advance of the first session, but also didn't want to burden them and were a little concerned that the *Peer Group Guidelines* might be a lot to digest.

Both artists, however, were also keen to note that they were *"curious to see the direction it takes"* and expressed *"confidence in the process"* noting that: *"You have to trust that people will come with what they need and will be able to ask for help."*

On payment

Each of the two facilitators were given an initial fee of £250 followed by £100 for each of the four remaining sessions. While both were very appreciative of the payments, they felt that the initial fee (which covered a longer, separate online session with Nicola Naismith, taking part in an evaluation interview, preparation time for the first peer group meeting and facilitation of the first peer group meeting) had been *"stretched quite far."*

4. Peer groups

This section begins with a short summary of learning emerging from the application process to the peer group opportunity, followed by a narrative of the different facilitation approaches adopted by the Angus and Edinburgh peer groups, and a summary of learning and outcomes identified by the participants.

Motivation for joining a peer group

Anonymised application content was supplied for the evaluation which illustrates a range of motivations for applicants to the programme. Recurring phrases and statements in these application forms are summarised below as:

Collaborative support

Many of the applicants to this programme were looking for peer support as a means of sharing and exploring professional problem solving and skill sharing. Applications demonstrate an understanding of the importance of building a local network for support, and for networking across different disciplines as a means of generating opportunities.

Professional development

Applicants express an aim to enhance their professional practice, develop new skills, and learn from others. Some also express a desire to continue to develop their own creative practice despite expressed challenges (such as a lack of confidence, or health issues).

Personal growth and wellbeing

Applicants hope the programme will be an opportunity to boost confidence, combat work isolation and navigate work challenges. A number note the emotional toll of working in creative ageing and social care settings (with references to grief and loss) and that the opportunity will help them build strategies to manage these emotions.

Inclusivity and diversity

Many of the applicants state they want to develop the inclusivity of their practice, with several mentioning networks they are already connected to or work with who will benefit from this. Many of the applicants also express eagerness to share their own networks, skills, and experiences, and highlight their involvement in other professional associations and networks (see Fig. 1 below).



Figure 1: Map of some of the creative organisations associated with the Edinburgh and Angus peer group members.

Different approaches to peer group facilitation

Edinburgh group approach

About the group

The Edinburgh group comprised artists of different ages and artforms, including three visual artists, a storyteller and a poet. None of the group knew each other in advance of the Programme. The first session was hosted in a venue organised by Luminate in the south of the city, with the following four sessions taking place at the Heart of Newhaven in the north which was easier for some group members to get to. The group was intergenerational, with its diversity of aspirations, interests and disciplines valued by the group which felt it resulted in a “*camaraderie and generosity of spirit.*”

Facilitation approach

First session

At the first session, everyone shared something of their practice of working with older

people and talked about how they'd like to use the following group sessions. They agreed roles, and a simple structure for each session: they would start each session with a playful starter activity led by one of the group, then spend time discussing a theme which they would agree in advance, and one member of the group would minute the session and its outcomes.

The creative starter activities used across the sessions included using Brusho watercolour paints, acrylic inks with handmade papers, creating monotypes using oil pastel, storytelling, poetry, origami and collective story making.

Topics explored over the following sessions

The interests shared by the group included: using play in workshop sessions; evaluation; self-care and resilience; online workshop delivery; project longevity; and "*values and using our senses*" within creative practice. A summary of some of the topics discussed follows.

Evaluation

This was considered by the group with a focus emerging around four key questions in evaluating a session or project, which were: Who is changing? What is changing? What has changed? How has it changed? In addition, the group agreed on the importance of intention setting for effective evaluation i.e., What are we intending to do? and How was that realised?

Self-care

The group discussed the emotional challenges of their work, including trying to define their emotions, and thinking about how they articulated their values to help with decision-making ("*what to do, and what not to do*") in their practice, as well as possible training and development goals (both short and long term). This session surfaced shared frustrations arising from running short term projects where the benefits for participants are cut short when funding comes to an end.

Values and boundaries

The group talked about "*seeking commonalities*" in boundary setting with participants, and the importance of taking a positive, inclusive and affirmative approach with the phrase "*follow the joy*" being used as a positive guide to this approach. The group discussed intervention versus interaction, along with simple techniques to help with this including creating a six-picture story, book making and developing activity toolkits and card sets.

Group learning about facilitation

Collectively, the group welcomed being able to share learning in a safe space. While they all work in the field of creative ageing, they were approaching the work through different art forms meaning that they were able to learn new techniques, practices and approaches from each other whilst sharing an understanding of the common challenges of the work (in particular, insecurity of the work and sourcing funding).

Looking ahead

The group were keen to stay in touch, to share news and will continue to try to do some shared activities together, depending on time and opportunity.

Angus group approach

About the group

The Angus Group comprised artists from a range of artforms including a writer and artists working with clay and mixed media. Luminare organised the first meeting in Arbroath Library, with the group meeting in spaces around Angus for the remaining sessions. As a large rural area this peripatetic approach allowed members of the group to gain different perspectives and to share travel. Neutral spaces were favoured by the group rather than using group members' own homes. This group's members were closer in age, and though some were known to each other and others not, they felt it "gelled" in the first session around shared experience as "older artists" working in a rural area.

Facilitation approach

First session

The first session began with each of the group invited to write down how they were feeling on a Post It note, which was put to one side until the end of the session. The group was then invited to take part in a six-minute exercise where they were encouraged to write freely about their individual practices, and to consider current challenges and successes. The group members were then asked to circle the words in their scripts which seemed most important and impactful for them. From sharing and discussing those words, a list of topics of mutual interest was identified which became a reference point for the following four group sessions.

The key topics and themes emerging from this exercise, which were returned to and underpinned subsequent sessions, related to shared common concerns as practising older artists including:

- **Anxieties around health**, with some noting that the nature of their work and practice had an inherent physicality including travelling to workplaces and moving, lifting and carrying equipment and materials which, as older artists, could be a concern and was not felt to always be understood or appreciated by employers.
- **Feelings of being misunderstood or unappreciated** by employers or members of the public, particularly in relation to the work itself, or the level of skill involved to deliver it well. Some noted feeling the work was often "*viewed as a hobby, or life choice*" rather than a career or practice of value.
- **The ongoing anxiety and anticipation of sourcing and securing work into older age**, including managing financial precarity and securing "*appropriate levels of payment*" that reflected their skills and experience.
- **The lack of development support for older artists** resulting in feeling "*invisible to others*", reduced confidence and "*imposter syndrome*", or simply frustration at "*not having the creative headspace*" or time to make work.
- **Urgency, a sense of "time running out"** but still having a lot to achieve in their own practice, and to "*pass on*" in terms of experience to new practitioners coming through.

The group also undertook a shared values exercise in this first session which summarised the group's particular values as:

- **Loyalty and trust** – in working relationships.
- **Joy** – in practice and in connection with other artists.
- **Collaboration and generosity** – connecting with other people around a common goal.
- **Integrity and quality** – in the approach to the work, and the work produced.
- **Value** – encouraging self-value, and how the work is valued by others.
- **Adventurousness** – being open to “*newness and a freshness of approach.*”
- **Wellness** – prioritising healthy practice and championing it in the sector.
- **Grace and professionalism** – when working with others.

In returning to the Post It notes set aside at the beginning of the session, the group felt many of the earlier feelings had transmuted as a result of discussion together, e.g., initial feelings of nervousness were converted to feeling energised; from feeling excited and confused, to simply feeling more positive; and feelings of uncertainty turned to feelings of possibility.

Feeling “*grateful*” arose at both the start and the end of the session – this was in relation to the opportunity of working together as a peer group, and in relation to being paid, which was felt as a “*mark of respect*”.

Topics explored over the following sessions

The topics and values identified in the first session were revisited in subsequent sessions, with the group choosing a topic based on what felt most important “*on that day*”, and sometimes relating to current issues facing members of the group. This resulted in what the group felt were “*fluid discussions about topical concerns*” against which the group could reflect on their shared values for clarity of thinking, options and “*hopes about the future.*”

Final session

In the final session together, the Angus group summarised previous discussions, identifying key reflections for them, including:

- The value and benefit they felt they had gained from the experience of working together and finding “*common ground.*”
- A shared pleasure from meeting in person as a welcome contrast to the isolation often felt when practising as an artist.
- The importance of having a chance to speak aloud about issues affecting them individually, and the liberation of finding that many of these concerns were shared by members of the group.
- Acknowledgement that freelancers experience a distorted work/life balance, and that being able to “*take a step back and discuss it with someone who understands*” had been valuable.

Looking ahead

The group was keen to build on the friendship and mutual support they had developed and to consider how they could better support the artistic community in Angus.

Shared learning and insight from the Peer Groups

A reflection session was held online for members of both peer groups to attend, facilitated by Nicola Naismith, to share their individual peer-group experiences. Key learning and insights from this reflection session are summarised below.

Wellbeing

There was a shared understanding and belief that coming together as a group to share professional experience, explore skills and support each other around common concerns and issues had had a positive impact on wellbeing:

“The power of the group helped me take my frustrations and turn them into positive energy and excitement for what lies ahead. It was phenomenal. I hadn’t realised how much I needed that help and encouragement.”

“I really like working on my own – but it’s so important to meet other people. It was so valuable to have a morning away from the studio and to talk to people.”

“It gave me time, weekly, to reflect on my emotions and my challenges, and to think things through more deeply.”

Local connections and collaboration

The participants found that in making a peer group they gained new connections and opportunities at a local level - from finding out about organisations and opportunities they hadn’t been aware of before, to hearing about new opportunities for collaboration:

“It was great to learn more about different arts organisations and the disciplines of other practitioners, all working in the same field locally.”

“What’s happening on my doorstep. I’m so involved in my own projects it was good to hear from other artists – it’s definitely brought opportunities and widened my network.”

“It helped me realise that it’s healthy for me to come out of my loft and collaborate with others – and that as a writer, I can collaborate with those working in different artforms.”

Shared understanding

While the groups included practitioners from different artforms, the sessions surfaced shared understanding both around freelance working, and working in creative ageing settings. This “*shorthand*” of understanding meant participants felt their conversations could “*get straight to the issue*” and be more productive:

“There’s something about freelancer loneliness, and the responsibility for organising and delivering a session – it’s both exhilarating and exhausting. It’s good to share that with people who understand it. As a professional, one thing you can’t be when you’re leading a workshop is vulnerable – it was so good to have an opportunity to share and be vulnerable in this group.”

“As a freelancer, you’re doing a job that’s not easy to explain to other people. Being with people you don’t have to explain yourself to, you don’t have to work through a raft of questions first – you can just go straight to the help and support.”

“I’m quite often the initiator and the teacher – there was something liberating about being the participant, letting someone else lead.”

New skills, techniques and perspectives

The participants all felt they had been able to learn or adopt new skills and techniques from each other as a result of working together and had valued the inspiration of learning from those from different artforms, backgrounds or ages:

“Being in the group also showed me there’s loads of different approaches to this kind of work – we’re all working in same area, but it widened out how I could approach it.”

“Definitely skill sharing. From activities to resource sharing – evaluation, methods like reflective practice. I’ve blatantly taken starter activities and used them in my groups!”

“Being able to brainstorm about how to bring collaboration into work sessions and across artforms was really useful.”

“Seeds were planted from different artforms – I really valued having new inspiration.”

Importance of being paid

A recurring comment across the session was the positive impact being paid had on participants. Impacts included increased confidence and everyone feeling valued and respected as a professional. They also felt being paid had increased their motivation to prioritise the “self-work”, and that they had put more thought and preparation into the sessions, and were more willing to prioritise time around them. Payment was also felt to be crucial for accessibility to professional development in the sector, and to maintain the momentum of meetings:

“Being paid completely altered the dynamic. It changes the approach to how you meet up, and gives a different intention.”

“Being paid gave me permission to think “this is important to me”. It allowed me to do self-care.”

“Being paid meant I did more prep and work around the group. I planned the creative activity, didn’t mind taking the notes. If it had been more casual, I don’t think people would have been as willing.”

“We met once a fortnight – that momentum, the regular commitment, was really important – it gets better results. Going forward, it’s hard to think we could keep that level of meeting together

going without financial support.”

“If you volunteer, you’re not getting paid for attending or for the work you could be doing elsewhere. If professional development is only open to people who can afford to take the time, that’s not good for the sector.”

Facilitation insights

Through reflections on their experience of planning and facilitating sessions the groups shared practical advice and learning around:

The importance of convening trusted spaces

Identifying a welcoming, and warm space to meet in (ideally with access to a sink and kettle for tea-making) was encouraged. Importantly ensuring the space was also private and “*neutral*” meant both these groups felt able to build trust quickly with their peers, which then allowed them to speak plainly and confidentially, to be “*vulnerable*” in the group but to also “*feel safe*.”

These groups felt lucky to have gelled quickly but were conscious that had the dynamic not been as cohesive as it was, they would want to be able to “*de-escalate friction*” in a group quickly and assertively. Some of the first session activities (e.g., shared values) to develop shared understanding and expectations for working together seem to have worked well. The Peer Group Guidelines also contains advice around safeguarding.

Sharing responsibility and expectations

Both groups felt it had been important to have freedom and flexibility to shape their peer group around their shared values and issues, but also that each session followed some structure and for everyone to contribute and participate equally:

- Agreeing at the start a rough session structure and approach and some shared roles, responsibilities and expectations. The group felt this had resulted in a balance of contributions from different group members, and ensured that sessions stayed on track - “*I’m very surprised at how on topic we stayed.*”
- Starting with a creative activity was particularly helpful for easing into the sessions, as well as learning useful new techniques and skills.
- Note taking and reflecting at the end of each session on what had been discussed meant the sessions felt more “*productive*” and “*by the end of session we could see we’d made progress.*”
- Establishing simple boundaries and keeping to them (e.g., not starting late and finishing on time; coming back to ‘the topic’ if conversation strays too far into “*chat or therapy*”).

In addition, participants recommended anyone thinking about setting up a peer group should try to visit an established group to see how it works.

Where and when to meet

The setting and timing of sessions were important factors for both groups, for different and similar reasons:

- In Angus, the rural location and need for travel meant that this group prioritised daytime meetings. This was partly to make a “*professional commitment*” during working hours, but also as evening travel in a rural location was less accessible.
- In Edinburgh, the group met in the early evenings which felt like a better time for “*reflective activity*” and could fit in with some of the participants daytime work commitments. Having a set time in the evenings enabled scheduling, but was more difficult for some of the group with caring or childcare responsibilities.

Overall, participants felt there were pros and cons for both daytime and evening, rural and urban dynamics, with advice to explore and agree the particular group’s needs up front.

Reflections on Peer Group programming for Luminare

All of the participants wanted to extend their gratitude to Luminare for the opportunity to take part in the Programme, and for the patient and responsive administrative support given to them in assisting with venues and administration.

There were some minor suggestions for the team for consideration in relation to any future version of the programme, which included greater clarity around:

- How the peer group and coaching opportunities were communicated (“*both things went up, I applied for both, but I wasn’t sure what I’d got a place on*”).
- Who the opportunities were for, specifically if they were for “*older artists*” or “*artists working with older people.*”

In addition, some participants felt that some access support could be more explicitly built in to the application process (making application information available in large print).

The group was also keen to emphasise the importance of ongoing funded support for Luminare to keep offering these programmes to new cohorts, but also to maintain and build on the good work started in these groups in Edinburgh and Angus:

“We would like to stay in touch, invite each other to events and possibly collaborate on projects. We have a WhatsApp and can try to keep sharing resources via email. All of our group would really like to continue, but in reality, most of us can’t do this with the same regularity or discipline without funding.”

“Funding would support us to support your next cohort too - we have made a lot of records of our sessions and could put this into one shareable document for future cohorts to benefit from.”

Peer group outcomes as defined by the participants



Peer learning expands both practice and professional knowledge. The groups were able to draw on each other’s experience, skills, facilitation and delivery techniques in practical ways. In particular, participants enjoyed being able to draw on the knowledge and approaches of artists from different artforms and backgrounds.



Sharing and discussing in a group instilled confidence, validation and encouragement. Having a group of peers in which to voice frustrations and to discuss and explore professional practice resulted in increased confidence and determination to “*go on applying for grants and making work.*”



The importance of having a supportive and neutral space to be ‘vulnerable’ and articulate emotion. Both groups emphasised the importance of a safe space in which to witness each other’s experience and emotions, name challenges, question assumptions and share successes. This was felt to be a powerful tool for self-care, mental health and wellbeing, and for self-development.



Expanded professional and local networks. Both groups noted an immediate expansion in their professional network (irrespective of whether they were in an urban or rural group) and were introduced to further networks, organisations, projects and opportunities through those connections.

“I now know four other people in Edinburgh that work in the same sphere. And can hopefully keep in touch and collaborate. A network of people doing similar work which is really valuable to me.”



Funded professional development for freelance artists is essential for equal opportunity in the sector. Both groups emphasised how important remuneration for their time to participate had been. Not only did it make participation financially possible for all (including those with access needs), it also positively impacted confidence from feeling “professionally valued”.

5. One-to-one coaching

Introduction

Ten coachees received support from [Coaching for Creatives](#) (an independent social enterprise providing access to a network of accredited coaches for individuals and employers). Participants in the One-to-One Coaching offer were able to select a coach of their choice from the company, and to independently schedule their coaching sessions from April until July 2024.

Coachees were invited to reflect on their levels of wellbeing, goals, confidence to take next steps and motivation to do so at the start of their coaching journey. At the end, they were invited to feedback on their progress as a result of their coaching support. Key findings are summarised below, drawn from evaluation undertaken by Coaching for Creatives.

Overall findings

Coachees were invited to reflect on their coaching journey as well as how they might like to use coaching in the future. Some had been uncertain about what to expect from coaching but had enjoyed the process, comparing it favourably to other development support they had received. Some were keen to continue with coaching, and others stated an interest in training as a coach. For some the financial barrier to coaching would have prevented them from accessing this support outside of a funded programme.

Measurement relating to:	Start	End	Change
Wellbeing	3.2	4.3	1.1 +
Goals	2.6	4.3	1.7 +
Confidence	2.2	4.1	1.9 +
Motivation	2.9	4.6	1.7 +

Being able to select a coach from the range of coaches available through the company was seen as a positive benefit for the coachees. Some selected their coach based on geography while others selected based on the coach's professional expertise.

All coachees stated a desire to continue coaching in the future (finance dependent), and to have annual or twice-a-year sessions to check in and keep their mindsets positive. All were grateful to Luminare for funding the coaching support.

Key reflections from the coachees

Coachees were asked to reflect and feedback on their coaching experience. Coachee reflections are summarised below:

Coachees saw benefits to setting aside time to talk through ideas, for self-reflection, and of allowing time between sessions for **incremental and developmental thinking** to happen. One also noted they felt coaching was well suited for those favouring visual thinking:

"[Coaching] was unlike any other support I have previously experienced... [it] allowed me to gain more clarity about myself, my skill sets, my value, which has instilled a new confidence... The exercises that [coach] took me through were laid out in such a way that, as a visual thinker, really helped me see and process my thoughts more clearly. I really valued the experience, and I have already approached situations in my personal life with some of the tools I learned in my sessions."

Outcomes included **practical change**, such as improving decision-making, scheduling and planning, and setting boundaries for work-life balance, with one coachee feeling that proactive, regular coaching ("seasonal coaching would be ideal, four times a year") would be a positive support to their practice.

"[Coaching] has been extremely beneficial to my practice in helping clarify my professional values and boundaries as an artist. I like to think of coaching as engaging in a "workout" or going to the gym... It's so worth the investment of time and you gain rather than lose time as it helps you prioritise and map out where you want to go next."

Some coachees were able to use their sessions to develop **clarity around professional creative practice**, including identifying barriers to practice development:

"After just three sessions I feel so much hope and optimism on moving forward with my artistic practice. While I think finding ways to change the patterns that inhibit my artist practice and putting new practices into place will take time, I feel that coaching really helped me to focus on the barriers (both external and internal) that stop me from having the artistic practice I would like to have and provided me with insight and tools to overcome these barriers. I am blown-away by how much has changed for me mentally after just three sessions... it's not something that I knew about before or that would have been financially feasible without this programme."

Some coachees noted positive benefits in relation to **personal and emotional wellbeing**:

"It has been helpful to my wellbeing to speak out loud, express and address my emotions."

One coachee and full-time artist described a range of benefits arising from their coaching experience, including being able to increase their *"mental bandwidth"* to identify and meet their practice needs; to be able to reflect on and **affirm skills** they already had to shift from *"a scarcity to an abundance mindset"*; to develop strategies for working with other artists and **setting boundaries**; as well as identifying *"building blocks"* for project planning.

Coaching outcomes as expressed by coachees



Overall, participants found coaching a very positive experience, with most evidencing **an increase in wellbeing, clarity of goals, confidence and motivation**.



Coachees were able to identify a range of benefits from their coaching experience, ranging from **improvements to personal wellbeing, to greater clarity in relation to creative practice**, and ways to improve professional working practices with other artists.



Several coachees reflected that **regular coaching intervention could be beneficial as "proactive" self-care** and professional development.



Coachees benefitted from having a **safe space to voice and address emotional stress** of working in creative ageing settings.



Funded places removed the barrier to accessing coaching that most of the artists would otherwise have experienced.

6. Summary conclusions

Reflecting on the original aims and anticipated outcomes for the 2024 Programme, and the motivations of the participants to take part, this evaluation concludes that the programme has been successful overall.

In particular:

- There is demonstrable evidence that the **participants recognised improvements in both personal wellbeing and professional development** from their participation in the Programme, as well as increased confidence in their practice.
- Luminare's investment, and in particular its ability to remunerate the artists for their participation, has resulted in both **developmental learning** in the sector in terms of creative facilitation skills and creative ageing practice, and resulted in **increased feelings of professional value**.
- Participation in the **Peer Groups directly connected participants with professionals working in the same field, and across artforms, increasing connections, opportunities and skills**. By being in the unique position of both participating and facilitating sessions they were able to learn from each other, and develop techniques in leading creative sessions. In addition, comparison of the outcomes identified by the participants in the Peer Groups with their motivations to apply into the Programme show that the anticipated benefits of participation were met.
- Coachees were able to identify a range of benefits from their coaching experience, including **improved wellbeing, clarity in their working practices, confidence, motivation and feelings of professional optimism**.
- Reflecting together and individually on their experience of participating in the Programme, there was a high level of understanding shared around **a need for safe, neutral spaces** in which the artists can **discuss professional issues, and share and explore emotions which come with working in creative ageing settings**.
- All of the participants in the Programme are grateful to Luminare for the opportunity to participate and benefit, with very few improvements suggested in terms of content or how the Programme is delivered.
- It is clear that there is **a strong demand for the work and benefits generated through the Programme**. Participants express a desire for the work to be supported and expanded into the future and note **the importance of funded opportunities for professional development and self-care for creative freelancers**. Participants are also clear that ongoing funded support, and the convening and specialist expertise of Luminare, are necessary for maintaining momentum and rooting the developmental benefits realised through the Programme.