

**Evaluation of the  
Liverpool Thrive Programme**

**Final Report  
April 2011**

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*Commercial in Confidence*

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

1.1 In August 2008, ERS was commissioned to undertake an evaluation of the Liverpool Thrive Programme for Liverpool Arts Regeneration Consortium (LARC). The evaluation framework was developed at the earliest stage of the process and was informed by a document review (including Business Case and Action Plan, consultancy briefs, Arts Council England briefings, and Impacts 08 research), interviews with Programme team and consultation with the Chief Executive Officers (or equivalent) of LARC partner organisations.

1.2 This report marks a synthesis of the evaluation to March 2011. It draws together an overall picture of the extent to which the objectives of the Thrive Programme have been addressed. The methodology for the evaluation has comprised the following:

- Telephone and face to face interviews with strategic stakeholders, for example, City Council representatives, elected members, representatives from the regional development agency and local strategic partnership;
- Online survey to representatives of LARC organisations and those who have worked with the Thrive Programme;
- Telephone interviews with representatives of the learning and participation teams across LARC organisations;
- Telephone interviews with other organisations participating in Thrive activity;
- Group and individual consultation with members of the Cultural Organisations of Liverpool (COoL);
- Group and individual consultation with LARC Chief Executive Officers and senior management colleagues;
- Group consultations with the Heads of Marketing group;
- Review of meeting minutes and papers;
- Review of other evaluation material as provided;
- Review of material on the LARC website, including forum discussions;
- Review of monthly reports from and individual consultations with the Thrive Programme team.

1.3 Since the evaluation began in the summer of 2008, the Study Team has required input from a wide range of consultees on multiple occasions. We are grateful to all those who have participated in the evaluation process.

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- 1.4 Throughout the report, quotations from evaluation participants are used. In order to protect anonymity, but provide context for the quotes, 'Evaluation Participant- External' is used to describe comments made by consultees who have not been directly part of the Thrive Programme; i.e. they are not a representative of a LARC organisation, a member of the Thrive Programme delivery team, or a direct participant in Thrive Programme activity. 'Evaluation Participant- Internal' is used to describe those consultees who have been directly part of the Thrive Programme.
- 1.5 These terms are also used to identify the type of consultee that has provided evidence to support particular findings.

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## 2.0 CONTEXT

*“Culture and Liverpool are completely interchangeable; it is a uniquely creative city”*

**Evaluation Participant- External**

*“It is not about culture for culture’s sake, but about the contribution of culture to other agendas”*

**Evaluation Participant- External**

### Liverpool Arts Regeneration Consortium

- 2.1 Liverpool Arts Regeneration Consortium (LARC) was established in 2007 to foster a new approach to arts in the city. It began as an alliance of eight leading cultural institutions in Liverpool: Bluecoat, FACT, Liverpool Biennial, Liverpool Everyman and Playhouse, National Museums Liverpool, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, Tate Liverpool and the Unity Theatre.
- 2.2 LARC led the programming of the European Capital of Culture 2008 and also during this year, LARC was awarded funding from Arts Council England through the national Grants for the Arts Thrive Programme to extend its thinking and practice on how collaborative work could benefit Liverpool and serve as a national model.

### Grants for the Arts Thrive Programme

- 2.3 The overall mission of Arts Council England’s Thrive programme is *“A systematic approach to developing organisational performance in order to build capacity to respond to and influence a rapidly changing environment”*. Within this mission statement there are five programme aims which are being pursued as follows:
- 1. To support the development of arts organisations which are flexible, adaptable and fit for purpose;*
  - 2. To provide arts organisations with a unique opportunity to develop and change;*
  - 3. To improve decision making and leadership within the sector;*
  - 4. To enable the arts infrastructure to continuously improve; and*
  - 5. To strengthen the arts sector<sup>1</sup>.*

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<sup>1</sup> PriceWaterhouseCoopers (2008) [Evaluation of the Grants for the Arts, OD Thrive! Programme- Interim Report Executive Summary](#)

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- 2.4 Through the Thrive Programme, Arts Council England is supporting a number of organisations across England with Liverpool Thrive being awarded £1.34 million (the largest award in the scheme).

### **Liverpool Thrive Programme**

- 2.5 LARC developed the Business Case for activity to be delivered, testing out a new model for embedding the arts and cultural sectors in the processes of social and economic renewal. In Liverpool, Thrive was seen as a major opportunity to, *“strengthen the capacity of the cultural sector in Liverpool with a particular emphasis on social and economic impact.”*<sup>2</sup>
- 2.6 The Thrive Programme in Liverpool intended to: *“Provide a systematic approach to developing organisational performance in order to build capacity to respond to and influence a rapidly changing environment”*<sup>3</sup>.
- 2.7 Three aims were to be addressed through the Thrive Programme, identified in the original Business Case as follows.
- Aim 1- To develop the role of the cultural sector in civic leadership.  
Aim 2- To create a more audience and people friendly city centre.  
Aim 3- To research and develop new models of delivery in arts-led regeneration, with a focus on North Liverpool.
- 2.8 The Business Case was reviewed and revised in 2009, when key high-level outcomes were identified under each aim.

- i) *To develop the role of the cultural sector in civic leadership*
- Increased willingness to take a joint approach to enhance organisational effectiveness and reduce costs
  - Cultural organisations are better equipped to employ people who are younger, have fewer educational qualifications, come from less affluent socio economic backgrounds etc
  - Philosophy and practice of collective working across LARC embedded for the future
  - Cultural sector has a stronger understanding of its own impact and is better placed to secure investment from other sectors

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<sup>2</sup> LARC Business Case for Arts Council England Thrive! Programme (2008) Executive Summary

<sup>3</sup> LARC Business Case for Arts Council England Thrive! Programme (2008) Executive Summary

- Senior and emerging leaders in the cultural sector are more highly skilled in terms of understanding the benefits of collaboration both within and outside the cultural sector
  - Increase in influence of people from cultural sector within key regional/ sub regional agencies
  - Culture is seen as an important element within overall planning processes for the city-region
- ii) *To create a more audience and people friendly city centre*
- Cultural sector on Merseyside is able to plan collaboratively for audience development
  - Cultural sector is able to influence city centre management functions so these work more effectively for the needs of the cultural venues and their audiences
- iii) *To research and develop new models of delivery in arts-led regeneration, with a focus on North Liverpool*
- Stronger partnership working between LARC partners and other cultural organisations in working with the community sector
  - Community organisations have enhanced understanding of value of cultural programming and increased ability to deliver themselves
  - LARC partners and other participating cultural organisations have increased skills in planning and evaluating cultural interventions

### Liverpool Thrive Projects and Activities

2.9 Key projects and activities funded through the Thrive Programme in Liverpool are as follows<sup>4</sup>.

Thrive Project/Activity	Brief Description
Seminar series	Advocacy and knowledge exchange seminars with speakers including Ken Robinson and Alan Brown. In addition, seminars for cultural sector practitioners and LARC/key partners have been delivered on topics including, for example, climate change and public relations/communications.
Economic Impact Study	Study to assess the economic impact of the work of LARC organisations.
Intrinsic Impact Study	Study to investigate the audience and visitor experience and how audiences and visitors respond to different types of arts and culture.

<sup>4</sup> Summary collated from Thrive revised financial plan July 2009 and project information featured on <http://www.larc.uk.com/thrive>

Thrive Project/Activity	Brief Description
Creative Apprenticeships	Project management and capacity building funded to support the implementation of this project to diversify the range of people who enter employment in the cultural sector by offering opportunities to young people who have not had access to degree level education.
Mentoring Scheme	Business in the Arts North West has been contracted to deliver a mentoring programme for the cultural sector in Liverpool. The programme will deliver 40 mentoring relations through to the end of the Liverpool Thrive programme.
Culture Campus	A new form of partnership between cultural organisations and higher education institutions, including the exploration of an online portal for universities and cultural organisations in Liverpool to display their continuing professional development opportunities and activities.
Development training for emerging leaders	Programmes developed and delivered by Common Purpose for the development of leadership skills and knowledge of emerging leaders in the sector.
Shared Services	Consultancy support to explore, review and reveal opportunities for LARC organisations to share operational services.
Family Friendly	Communication with family audiences including a listings website for family friendly cultural activities, monthly e-newsletters, and stalls at family focused events.
Open City	A new audiences project which supports groups who do not normally attend the arts to become confident in accessing and engaging with the arts, developing the programme of arts experiences in response to the group's needs and interests, challenging perceived barriers, and growing a relationship between the groups and the arts organisations.
Long Night/Light Night	A series of events that provide an alternative to the pubs and bars for enjoyment of the city centre at night amongst people who might otherwise be put off coming into the city centre at that time.
Golden Opportunity	A series of arts interventions to address issues that have a negative impact on people's experience of attending city centre cultural venues.
Partnerships and Development Coordination	A role established to support and deliver activity within Aim 3, including mapping research on cultural activity in North Liverpool, making links with strategic regeneration organisations, facilitating access to information and programme development events.
Evaluation Skills Development	A programme to support community and cultural organisations working in North Liverpool to help them develop their evaluation capacity, learning new techniques for gathering data and documenting results in a way that demonstrates the contribution that cultural projects can make to achieving local (and national) regeneration priorities.
Capacity Building	To develop ways in which organisations could provide arts and cultural projects in collaboration with each other and apply for funding to deliver the projects.

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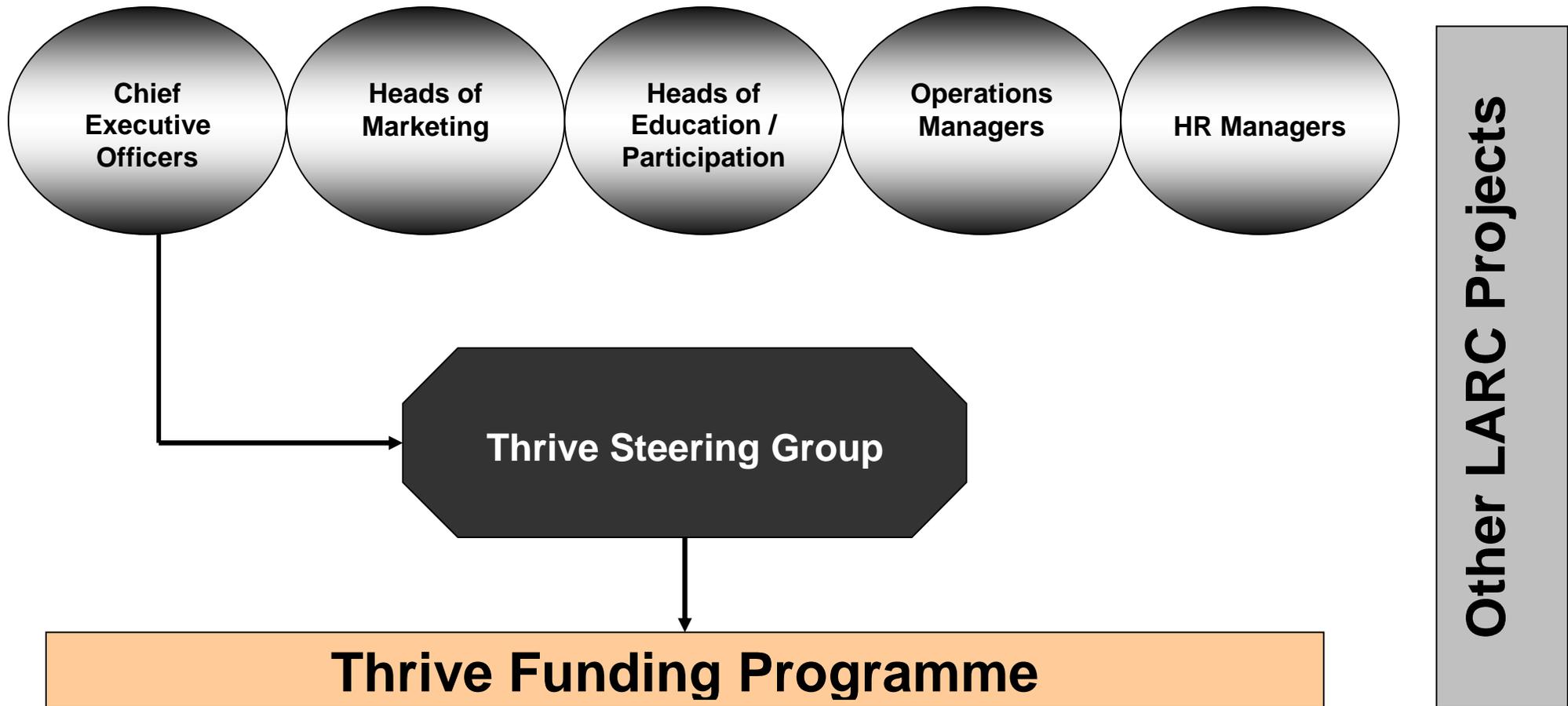
## 3.0 THRIVE PROGRAMME PROCESSES AND MANAGEMENT

### Management and Administration

- 3.1 As previously described, LARC developed the Business Case for the Thrive Programme. LARC has led as a mechanism for collaborative or co-operative working, and Thrive has operated as a grant programme alongside. LARC is also responsible for other projects in addition to those funded through the Thrive Programme. Evaluation participants (including both those closest to the Programme and broader stakeholders) have commented on the extent to which Thrive has therefore not operated in isolation. It was commented by internal evaluation participants that the process of creating the Thrive business case gave LARC a sense of objectives, structure and purpose.
- 3.2 The Thrive Programme has been supported by a Programme Director and administrative functions. It has also benefited from the presence of a Thrive Facilitator and a Steering Group specifically convened for ongoing reflection and strategic dialogue (including representation from Chief Executive Officers).
- 3.3 Collaborative decision making regarding Thrive Programme activity has also been enabled through LARC subgroups, largely composed of individuals with common job role. The most active subgroup has been that comprising Chief Executive Officers (CEOs)/senior officers, which has met fortnightly throughout the Programme lifetime. The high frequency of these meetings has ensured that actions are followed up promptly and momentum has been sustained. The subgroup comprising Heads of Marketing has also been particularly active, meeting monthly. Other subgroups have included Learning and Participation, Operations and Human Resources (HR).
- 3.4 The evaluation has found that there has been a layered approach to collective working to deliver the Thrive Programme, with LARC as an overarching collective of organisations and smaller collectives of common function within LARC. This has offered different ways of organisations relating to one another; largely as strategic organisations and as colleagues with common purpose (horizontal linkages).

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- 3.5 The original Thrive Action Plan described an action to convene a further subgroup comprising Chairs of Boards. Internal evaluation participants reported that there was enthusiasm for this from the Chairs, however, the meetings have been much less frequent than originally envisaged. There has been reluctance on the part of certain CEOs about facilitating these meetings through the Thrive Programme and where meetings have taken place, CEOs have often been also in attendance. In the latter stages of the Programme, however, the purpose of these meetings has been reviewed and it is likely that they will be convened as the Programme closes and beyond. The evaluation has found that more input from these individuals throughout the Thrive Programme could have been beneficial, as the breadth and depth of expertise (sometimes from outside of the cultural sector) could have been utilised to deliver further advocacy.
- 3.6 The diagram overpage summarises the position of the Thrive Programme in relation to LARC, its subgroups and other projects.

# LARC



*“Working as a collective is a good thing – you can achieve a scale of events, plan things in co-operation. It’s important to think strategically about common threads across all, create a bit of publicity.”*

**Evaluation Participant- External**

- 3.7 The original intention for the Thrive Programme, as shown in the original Action Plan (2008) was that each Aim would have a lead person, a ‘champion’, from one of the LARC organisations. The role was intended to have oversight of projects funded within the Aim as well as offering strategic guidance as to the form and content of projects funded.
- 3.8 Internal evaluation participants have commented that this has not been as strong a role as was originally intended, linked to the security of having a central coordination function through the Programme Director. Throughout the course of the evaluation, evaluation participants (internal and external) have consistently supported the role of the Thrive Programme Director as very important, with respondents stating the role added value particularly in terms of providing a balanced (unbiased) form of leadership and a focal point from which collaborative work would develop.
- 3.9 The role was also considered by consultees to bring significant expertise to the group including local and sector specific knowledge, communication and organisational skills as well as an individual that could be additionally representative to external organisations. The evaluation has also found that the presence of a central function undoubtedly takes administration pressure from participant organisations as well as offering a powerful strategic relationship management role, and this additionally influenced the decision to fill the post of Programme Director despite the end of the Programme being relatively close.
- 3.10 Internal evaluation participants have also reflected on a drawback of having the presence of the post, particularly in the earlier stages of the Programme, as reducing the ownership of Thrive Programme Aims by LARC organisations and their empowerment to deliver them. There is an extent to which the collaborative has not been pushed or enabled to take this on because of the central resource, additionally evident by the Thrive Action Plans showing the Programme Director holding some degree of Lead Responsibility for 53% of actions in May 2008 and 43% of actions in July 2009.

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- 3.11 Feedback from evaluation participants (largely external) gathered earlier in the Programme also raised concerns about the commissioning of external support to deliver aspects of the Thrive Programme (for example, scoping work, consultation, research and consultancy). It was perceived that some of this could have been delivered 'in house' by collaborating with practitioners locally from within the sector, so widening contribution to the Thrive Programme and maximising knowledge transfer/exchange from within the sector.
- 3.12 Despite this feedback, on balance the evaluation has found that the benefits of both the presence of the central role of Programme Director and the use of external support outweigh the drawbacks and concerns highlighted. Thrive was an ambitious programme of delivery and the additional capacity for management and delivery has enabled LARC to retain strategic focus.

### **Relationship Capital**

- 3.13 Internal evaluation participants commented that the Thrive Programme has supported the development of deeper relationships between organisations. For example, there has been largely consistent representation at each fortnightly meeting of CEOs (albeit that these discussions cover an agenda wider than Thrive), demonstrating a willingness to devote a lot of time out of busy schedules. Thrive has also funded Annual Retreats for CEOs. It was commented that such a commitment towards participation in these meetings/events would not be made if participants did not consider they were gaining value from their attendance.
- 3.14 Heads of Marketing also described a greater willingness to engage in informal dialogue (for example, picking up the telephone to one another) as well as formal (for example, through scheduled meetings). The Thrive Programme Director was also responsible for initially convening the subgroup comprising Heads of Education/Participation and feedback from participants in this subgroup, gathered as the Thrive Programme comes to a close, illustrated a commitment to continue to meet and work together as appropriate beyond the Programme end.

- 3.15 Feedback from internal evaluation participants highlighted that the extent to which Thrive has permeated throughout organisations has been less developed i.e. the communication of Thrive activity within organisations has been less evident. Specifically, consultees commented that there was little awareness of what was discussed during each others subgroup meetings and how to communicate Thrive within their individual organisations. It was commented that where the ‘*strategic will*’ for Thrive activity has not been as effectively cascaded between departments, this has influenced the extent to which colleagues with other responsibilities have been willing or able to commit time to Thrive-led activities. The evaluation has found that this type of internal communication could have been stronger.
- 3.16 The evaluation has found an aspect which has been particularly positive in terms of horizontal relationship building has been the improved levels of contact and communication with other cultural organisations within Liverpool, specifically with the Cultural Organisations of Liverpool group (COoL). At the inception of Thrive, external evaluation participants commented that there was a gap in communication throughout the cultural sector and a missed opportunity to draw together greater collective strength.
- 3.17 The relationship between LARC and other cultural organisations was considered by evaluation participants to be “*symbiotic*”, that is, mutually interdependent as a network or ecology in the city.

*“[LARC organisations] are like signposts, they are what people expect to see. Other organisations are the pathfinders between the signposts. LARC is still the most visible outward facing group, which brings more audiences that other organisations can capitalise on.”*

**Evaluation Participant- External**

- 3.18 As the Thrive Programme has been delivered, joint programming meetings between LARC and COoL and other cross-group meeting attendance has been promoted (for example, a COoL representative attending the CEOs fortnightly meetings and the Thrive Programme Director attending COoL meetings) as well as broader participation in Thrive projects beyond LARC organisations (for example, mentoring scheme and the development training for emerging leaders).

3.19 Both internal and external evaluation participants commented that there is much more openness and “relaxation” between cultural organisations and there continues to be a great deal of opportunity to share expertise, described as including:

- Supporting the development of the evidence base for the impact of arts and cultural practice within the city;
- ‘Loaning’ staff (for example, secondments/mentoring/skill sharing) between organisations, enabling greater homogeneity;
- Mechanisms of communication as dual collectives of the arts sector; and
- Connection between different working groups (LARC and COoL) that are considering the same topics.

3.20 The benefits and strengths of the development of strong relationship capital through Thrive Programme activity and facilitation were articulated by evaluation participants (internal and external) as follows:

- Sustained involvement by a consistent number of people;
- Networking and sharing best practice;
- Sharing information about programming and aspirations;
- Coming together to make sure that the strength of the cultural product is recognised;
- Governance;
- Strategic profile and voice for culture;
- A stronger voice for cultural partners and a sounding board for cultural opinion;
- Joint aspiration for the cultural direction of the city;
- Shared vision and action plan – how it is to be delivered and who plays their part.

*“You can never be sure whether the right organisations are involved, will always get people who are disenfranchised but on balance there is a good mix and the group plays a good role with different sectors, can hear how partners work and are affected by the downturn and so on”*

**Evaluation Participant- External**

3.21 Although not specifically about the Thrive Programme, there has been some fragmentation within LARC towards the end of the Thrive Programme timescale, with the withdrawal of a participating organisation. Throughout the Programme’s lifetime, internal evaluation participants have raised concerns about differences of opinion and ways of working between LARC members, affecting the extent to which Thrive activity could provide a common delivery framework through which to work across all member organisations.

3.22 The evaluation has found that there is inevitability to this, given the different sizes, structures and capacities of component organisations and given the model through which groups work and change in practice occurs<sup>5</sup>. Internal evaluation participants have reflected that Thrive has indeed provided arts organisations with a unique opportunity to develop and change but that there is an attitudinal aspect of this way of working which cannot always be affected and certainly cannot be forced; if participation is forced for the sake of it, this can be more damaging than accepting a difference of world view. Thrive has enabled the strength, durability and flexibility of relationships (for example, within LARC, between LARC organisations and other cultural sector organisations, between cultural sector organisations and non-cultural sector partners) to be established, tested and adapted through the implementation of different projects and activities and has been successful in doing so.

*"[Thrive] encouraged...new projects testing new and progressive ways of working that sometimes challenged past and current practices"*

**Evaluation Participant- Internal**

3.23 The implication of a withdrawal from the consortium marks an evolution of its collective being and a new Vision and Values for LARC has been developed in partnership with Liverpool City Council<sup>6</sup> and which will inform the LARC Business Plan for 2011-2014 post-Thrive. Particular learning points from Thrive Programme processes and management for consideration are:

- The importance of defining focused aims, vision, purpose and direction;
- Protection of true collective decision making as opposed to groupthink<sup>7</sup>;
- Clarity of process (for example, frequency and agenda of meetings) and communication between organisations and within organisations;
- Shared leadership roles and responsibilities in respect of tasks and activities; and
- Greater risk taking in terms the 'synergy model' of partnership, where resources, skills and power are combined effectively without changing the culture of the partners themselves.

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<sup>5</sup> See Tuckman's four stage model of group development and behaviour, and theorists following (e.g. Maples, 1988) who have added fifth stages including 'adjourning', 'ending', and 'dorming', and Lewin's theory of change (unfreeze, change, refreeze).

<sup>6</sup> LARC: Our Vision and Values for 2011 – 2014

<sup>7</sup> See Janis (1972), the pressures of protecting the group affect decisions made.

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## 4.0 PROGRAMME DELIVERY

### Aim 1

4.1 As previously described, the Thrive Programme has been organised under three Aims. As stated in the original Thrive Business Case, Aims 2 and 3 are seen as supporting the achievement of Aim 1.

### ***Increased willingness to take a joint approach to enhance organisational effectiveness and reduce costs***

*“Activity is more joined up and continuing to get better”*

#### **Evaluation Participant- External**

4.2 Consultation with evaluation participants (internal and external) throughout the Thrive Programme has illustrated a high level of agreement that there willingness to work jointly has increased. 58% of internal evaluation participants surveyed in 2010 considered the level of collaborative working between organisations as ‘high’, with 15% stating it was ‘very high’. This supports the response given by 13 respondents surveyed earlier in the Programme (2009) who considered the development of networks and partnership working between the arts organisations of Liverpool to be one of the key factors in the development of the sector.

4.3 Specific areas where collaboration was seen to be ‘very effective’ or ‘effective’ by the majority of 2010 survey respondents (in order of prevalence) include:

- Raising external funds;
- Building the capacity of community organisations in North Liverpool to engage with culture;
- Encouraging more co-ordination between cultural organisations working in Liverpool;
- Audience development; and
- Professional development.

4.4 Areas where collaboration was considered to be less effective by internal evaluation participants include:

- The development of shared services; and
- Volunteering.

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- 4.5 Key lessons taken from the collaborative partnership working through Thrive activity, identified by internal evaluation participants, include (in order of prevalence);
- Collaboration has enhanced organisational delivery;
  - Collaboration requires a consensus between diverse organisations/agendas/ways of working to be brought together and a shared understanding developed;
  - Developing partnerships takes a lot of time, perseverance and hard work; and
  - Operating as a collective has provided new opportunities to raise funding.
- 4.6 The evaluation has found that because of Thrive, participating organisations have been in a position where money has been available to work in a particular way, however, as this draws to a close the test will be the extent to which commitment to joint working and associated behaviours are sustained.
- 4.7 Thrive funding has been used to undertake a review to look at the potential for shared services between the LARC partners and possibly with other partners both within and beyond the cultural sector. The intention was to see whether shared approaches could increase the quality of operational services, and whether any money could be saved through a joint approach. The value of this work has reportedly been:
- The identification of the drivers and resisters for implementing shared services;
  - The identification of common areas of interest (including environmental management, training, mentoring, market research, equality and diversity and IT issues); and
  - Agreement that there is currently less requirement for shared business functions or departments.
- 4.8 It is reported by internal evaluation participants that this is an agenda that has proved challenging to progress, due in part to scepticism about the likelihood of realising the potential benefits in terms of financial savings, and also due to the challenges created by current capacity constraints within the LARC organisations which makes it difficult for organisations to dedicate the time to progressing such activities. However, specific work that has been facilitated through Thrive, includes Long Night/Light Night (involving joint planning across multiple partners) and Open City (involving different types of organisation listening and responding to each others' needs).

- 4.9 Overall, consultation with evaluation participants (internal and external) has shown that Thrive has added resource capacity and shared direction to LARC and its partners, and there is more collaboration and cooperation now within LARC due to Thrive. There is clear evidence of increased willingness to take a joint approach to enhance organisational effectiveness and reduce costs (not just financially, but also in freeing up time).

***Cultural organisations are better equipped to employ a diverse workforce***

*“We have been able to offer Mentor and Line Management training to our participating employers”*

**Evaluation Participant- Internal**

*“It has enabled me to improve personal CPD [and] allowed me to network with organisations and communities”*

**Evaluation Participant- Internal**

- 4.10 In 2009-10, supported through the Thrive Programme, LARC gave opportunities to almost 700 volunteers including activities like Long Nights and Open City, as well as working with individual organisations. 48 work placements were also offered, including apprenticeships<sup>8</sup>. There has been input to discussions regarding a proposed citywide strategy for volunteering. A Volunteers Working Group of volunteer managers from the LARC partners was established, and delivered a report on future options. The LARC Thrive Programme Director has met with the person responsible Capital of Culture 2008 volunteer scheme, who is consulting with other agencies that run volunteer schemes in the city. A connection was also enabled with the Primary Care Trust which was separately reviewing the development of a citywide strategy.
- 4.11 A mentoring scheme has also been developed with Business in the Arts North West and members of both LARC and COoL have been invited to participate. It is a cross sector mentoring programme and 40 mentoring relations will be delivered through to the end of the Thrive programme in June 2011. It is designed to support those with management responsibilities and for staff, freelancers or volunteers.

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<sup>8</sup> Ruth Melville, LARC Thrive Research Advisor *LARC Key Data Report 2009/10*

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- 4.12 External evaluation participants consulted in 2010 described the value of cultural provision to employment within Liverpool as a whole. The organisations are considered important employers and beacons of excellence for the city and being able to talk about world-class institutions including the Liverpool Philharmonic, Walker Art Gallery and Tate Liverpool is a demonstration of the stability of the city to be able to support them.
- 4.13 Thrive has also supported programmes of professional development for senior and emerging leaders, specifically Management Retreats for CEOs and leadership development courses supported by Common Purpose. These are discussed in more detail under a separate outcome (Senior and emerging leaders below).
- 4.14 The Thrive Programme has supported the Creative Apprenticeships programme led by Tate Liverpool, by funding the additional costs of building the capacity of employers engaged in the scheme. This programme has been a good example of facilitating the growth of the workforce to be more diverse. Some apprentices are still in employment beyond the programme intervention, for example, Unity Theatre. Through Thrive, line managers training has been delivered to 8 organisations, 2 youth mentoring courses have been delivered for 16 participants and 13 apprentices were in place during 2010 with 11 employers.
- 4.15 Creative Apprenticeships continues to develop in terms of employers joining the scheme. The National Apprentices Service is reported to consider the model positively and LARC has recently been approached by Liverpool City Council with regard to an apprenticeships scheme that they may establish.
- 4.16 Positive impacts as reported by employers consulted through an external evaluation<sup>9</sup> of their experiences of Creative Apprenticeships are as follows.
- Developed as a business**  
Enhanced our reputation/credibility  
Increased business, firmer commercial footing  
New business opportunities, networks  
Raised profile of business

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<sup>9</sup> Wickes, S. (2011) Creative Apprenticeships Merseyside: Evaluation Cycle 2 Small Employers Interviews & Analysis

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### **Increased capacity & capability to deliver**

Increased capacity to deliver

Useful pair of hands, produced useful output, relief cover

Improved responsiveness to demands

Helped develop new capabilities or services- things could not do before

### **Developed new organisational capabilities**

Gained experience of recruiting, managing, training

Gained experience, stepped up into employment, NI, wages, PAYE

Capabilities that may support any future apprentices

Freed up owner/manager for business development (once competent)

4.17 Despite these activities, research<sup>10</sup> demonstrates that the LARC workforce has been relatively static with regard to gender, with women representing 54% of all permanent employees. LARC has 94 disabled staff (between 5 and 9% of the workforce), which is an improvement on previous years and approximately meets the levels of disabled people compared to the general population. However, there are low proportions of staff from BME communities, at 4% for permanent staff and 6% for contract staff. Liverpool's BME population is estimated at 11.8%.

4.18 Thrive has, however, taken the discussions regarding diversity beyond workforce to include diverse programming, space and access. The Programme has promoted awareness and discussions regarding diversity on a broad scale as well as enabling a range of people to participate on a voluntary/apprenticeship basis. However, the extent to which there has been notable change in the demographics of the paid workforce is minimal and the evaluation has found that this remains something to explore further for action.

### ***Senior and emerging leaders***

4.19 The Thrive Programme has delivered activity to achieve the outcome that *senior and emerging leaders in the cultural sector are more highly skilled in terms of understanding the benefits of collaboration both within and outside the cultural sector*. The outputs delivered by Thrive in order to achieve this outcome have included Management Retreats for LARC CEOs, facilitation of the LARC subgroup meetings, and funding for leadership development courses (supported by Common Purpose).

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<sup>10</sup> Ruth Melville, LARC Thrive Research Advisor *LARC Key Data Report 2009/10*

- 4.20 Links with higher education have evidently been strengthened, partly through the research advisory relationship with Impacts 08, which has included a mapping exercise of relationships between Liverpool cultural organisations and the higher education sector and partly as a result of a closer working relationship with Culture Campus Liverpool. Specific activities have included:
- Survey of continuing professional development (CPD) needs in the cultural sector and the uptake of CPD opportunities within the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) of Liverpool;
  - Project with Culture Campus and University of Liverpool to create an online portal with all CPD opportunities available at the HEIs of Liverpool and within the cultural sector; and
  - Support for the establishment of the new Institute for Cultural Capital, building on the work of Impacts 08 and the North West Cultural Observatory.
- 4.21 As described in Section 3, there is evidence of continuing active participation in the LARC subgroups. The CEO annual Management Retreats have reportedly been beneficial in terms of offering a dedicated amount of time with one another to discuss strategic issues and direction. The outputs of these retreats have included: agreement regarding priorities for action; shared scope and purpose for LARC beyond the Thrive Programme; and the identification of joint areas of interest for further scoping and development.
- 4.22 Three courses for emerging leaders have been offered throughout the Thrive Programme and they have been attractive to participants, both from LARC organisations and from other cultural sector organisations. Example comments from participants regarding the value of their participation are as follows.

*"I'm thinking so much more laterally about projects now. I see that the strongest and most influential pieces of work might be co-owned, delivered in partnership."*

*"The opportunity to expand and develop networks outside of work and see the value of creative thinking was inspiring."*

*"The feeling of empowerment this programme has given me has been overwhelming."*

*"I have identified the need to more clearly identify my challenges in order to be able to tackle them in a more strategic way. This in turn will help me fulfil the potential that I now know I have to lead beyond my authority."*

*"The programme has enabled me to realise that leaders are present at all levels throughout organisations and that I have the ability to affect change in areas that are beyond my direct control by changing my mindset and working with partners both inside and beyond my organisation."*

- 4.23 However, there is some concern from internal evaluation participants regarding the nurturing of emerging leaders i.e. how they are supported beyond participation in these courses and that without this support, they can be lost to the sector and the city. Evaluation participants commented that when training and development budgets are pressured there needs to be creative ways found to motivate and reward, for example, in house mentoring, secondments, peer support. The evaluation has found that this could be developed jointly post-Thrive i.e. activities to nurture leadership without financial investment.
- 4.24 The seminars funded through Thrive, both for advocacy and for LARC partners/cultural organisations, have been well received with evidence of direct action being taken as a result of participation. Examples of feedback are described as follows.

#### **Seminar with Ken Robinson**

- *All our organisations should conduct the biggest ever programme of interconnectivity – get out there and talk to people and organisations in all areas and fields. Somehow we need to make a leap of faith from this year and make things continue without losing momentum.*
- *More events like this across networks – LARC, SMAC, CAN, ACME. Developing relationships between arts organisations in neighbourhoods. Touring circuit of work from neighbourhoods and around neighbourhoods. Incubating diversity and celebrating it rather than homogeneity – not just in arts but shopping, commercial district. What are Liverpool’s riches? Key: acting locally, thinking globally.*
- *More networking opportunities for all educational and smaller arts organisations to meet and work with LARC.*
- *I would like to see a way in which organisations could offer each other ‘peer mentoring’ to serve both as ‘regular weeding’ but also inspirationally as ‘compost’ for new growth. Would organisations like to sign up to a ‘mentoring pool’?*
- *One thing I think we need is a Merseyside Music Leader’s Forum for the music workers from the independent and community music sector. They are out there working and need their profile raising to network, contact and share. I am talking to musicians now and am hoping to be able to set this up.*
- *Lots of discussion about diversity, however, events like this always fail to have diverse representation. Also, no monitoring data was collected on evaluation forms. How can diversity be organic within the sector and not just tagged on?*

### Seminar with Alan Brown

- *We are going to use it as basis of next Management team awayday.*
- *I got a broader sense of the importance of audience development and the many ways in which you can interrogate audiences, staff members and board members. This seminar has also given a better understanding of how to strategically plan as an organisation via interactive tools. By analysing various data sets it is possible to really assess where an organisation has come from, where they are currently and where they are potentially headed.*
- *Practical information regarding the ways in which intrinsic value is being measured for marketing and advocacy purposes.*
- *I was enthused to go away and think about how we are currently organising our audience research. Energised!*

### DHA Communications Workshop

- *It inspired me to look at the bigger picture and keep my eyes open for stories that we could use in the media.*
- *The workshop was good and inspired me to revisit working relationships with colleagues in other departments. It also helped to crystallise existing knowledge, by making it concise and easy to remember.*

### Seminar on Sustainable Practice

- *A desire for a network or forum to be established, through which to work to create positive action and share practice; and (possibly the first action for the aforementioned network)*
- *The establishment of ways in which organisations can work together to recycle/loan materials for exhibitions and/or performances.*

### ***A stronger understanding of its own impact and better placed to secure investment from other sectors***

*“...it has allowed the aligning of research projects, data sharing and an insight into the cultural sector that we wouldn't otherwise have”*

**Evaluation Participant- Internal**

- 4.25 In 2010, a survey of internal evaluation participants asked, with regard to the development of cross-sector networks and partnership working, ‘how engaged’ the cultural sector is with wider agendas in Liverpool 79% of respondents considered the sector to be ‘very well engaged’ or ‘well engaged’. The majority (64%) of respondents thought the awareness of strategic stakeholders of the cultural sector’s programmes and activities was ‘medium’, with 36% considering it ‘high’.

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- 4.26 Examples of additional investment attracted as a result of Thrive activities are as follows.
- £187,000 from Paul Hamlyn/LSC/WNF for Creative Apprenticeships Phase 1
  - £85,000 from LSC via North West Vision for Creative Apprenticeships Phase 2;
  - £84,000 from Arts Council England North West Grants for the Arts for the audience development work;
  - £224,000 from HEFCE's JISC fund for the CPD Portal led by City of Learning and Culture Campus;
  - Primary Care Trust - £60,000 for a series of "model projects" led by LARC partners;
  - £10,000 from LARC partners' own budgets for marketing activities related to the Long Night and audience development project <sup>11</sup>.
- 4.27 Thrive funding has been used to develop an evidence base for the activity of LARC through research, evaluation and data gathering. Specific activities have included the production of: annual Key Data reports; an Intrinsic Impacts study by Alan Brown and Baker Richards; the evaluation programme on participatory work led by Francois Matarasso; the Dataculture audience mapping programme by All About Audiences; and an Economic Impact Study by Roger Tym and Partners.
- 4.28 Feedback from internal evaluation participants has confirmed that Thrive has enabled work to be done in order for organisations to demonstrate their impact in economic terms and social terms. There continues to be a desire to effectively demonstrate and articulate impact, however, the evaluation has found that there has been variable commitment towards the activity which delivers this in practice i.e. the necessary willingness and capacity to capture data in a particular way or share knowledge with those tasked with capturing data. Despite this, however, there is evidence of the way in which the research has been used, for example, discussing the findings at senior management team meetings and the implications for programming, using the findings to reflect on the practice of their organisations.

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<sup>11</sup> Source: LARC Thrive Programme Director

4.29 Aim 1 has also been particularly concerned with the development of relationships with other non-cultural strategic partners and evaluation participants (internal and external) reported that the relationships with Liverpool City Council and the Primary Care Trust, despite changing political contexts, have moved forward very positively during the Thrive Programme. In the context of recent funding announcements, there was an opinion expressed by some internal evaluation participants that they felt the cultural sector had not been hit as hard as it might have been in terms of funding reductions.

4.30 There were some evaluation participants who did not agree with this, however, there was consensus that Thrive and other LARC activity has supported a strong case being made of the value of the cultural sectors and that strategic partners see the importance of the LARC CEOs and their ability to be leaders and drivers. It was also commented that the fact that the relationship with the City Council has been strengthened, that Council representatives listen to the sector, encourages other partners to listen.

***Increase in influence of people from cultural sector within key regional/subregional agencies***

*“[members of LARC] lead this, they do think of LARC and the city rather than just their own organisation”*

**Evaluation Participant- External**

4.31 This outcome is evidenced through activity through the Thrive Programme to enable cultural leaders to become members of influential groups, agencies and forums. Specific cross-sector activity referred to by evaluation participants (internal and external) included the following:

- Health – Liverpool Year of Well Being;
- Education – Find Your Talent (also cross-local authority boundaries);
- Transport and Physical Regeneration – City Centre Management Strategy and Night Time Economy work; and
- Economic Regeneration – promoting investor confidence and visitor economy, Waterfront group.

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- 4.32 LARC members and Thrive Programme team members have also been represented on the Liverpool Culture Task Group, The Mersey Partnership, Year of Health and Well Being Steering Group, Shanghai Expo Steering Group, Cultural Collective, Ropewalks Stakeholder Group, Joint Action Group. National discussions have also been held with representatives of DCMS and Arts Council England.
- 4.33 Other evidence of a commitment towards knowledge exchange beyond the City includes:
- Cross regional contact made with Newcastle Gateshead Culture Venues to share learning and approaches;
  - Two members of the Heads of Marketing group were asked to speak at the Theatrical Management Association conference regarding the collaborative work that LARC has been doing;
  - A presentation was delivered in York by the LARC Thrive Programme Director with the FACT Commercial Director;
  - Presentation by the LARC Thrive Programme Director to the off West End Theatres Group (with Audiences London); and
  - Presentations to the national conference of the Council of Higher Education in Art and Design; and Arts Council England North West (delivered with the CEO of the Bluecoat).
- 4.34 There is some evidence of the extent to which the impact and research data has been used for advocacy and case-making purposes, for example, in a response to the DCMS Select Committee, a fringe event at the Liberal Democrat Party Conference and a document summarising the impact on Culture and Civic Responsibility in Liverpool<sup>12</sup>. The AHRC National Delivery Plan makes reference to the work in Liverpool and the Everyman Playhouse has received the single biggest capital investment by Arts Council England.

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<sup>12</sup> Produced by DHA Communications.

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***Culture is seen as an important element within overall planning processes for the city-region***

- 4.35 From consultations with both internal and external evaluation participants, there is evidence of better awareness of the value of culture amongst key partners, and a clear role for culture in key strategies (for example, Business Plan for Liverpool Vision, ONE Plan for Liverpool, Liverpool City Region Visitor Economy 3-Year Action Plan and Destination Management Plan, Liverpool City Region Visitor Economy Strategy to 2020).
- 4.36 There is evident consensus amongst external partners that there is a better understanding of culture's role and contribution across the city of Liverpool than there has been previously (albeit recognising the influence of having Capital of Culture branding and focus during 2008).

***Philosophy and practice of collective working across LARC is embedded for the future***

*"Whatever the framework, co-operation is most important."*

**Evaluation Participant- External**

- 4.37 Discussions regarding a successful 'exit' from the Thrive Programme began in May 2009, demonstrating a commitment to appropriate legacy and succession planning well in advance of the programme completion. The evaluation has found specific indicators of embedded practice as a result of Thrive as follows.

*Organisational*

- Sustained involvement by a consistent number of people;
- Networking and sharing best practice;
- Sharing information about programming and aspirations;
- Cross-organisational trust.

*Sectoral*

- A stronger voice for cultural partners and a sounding board for cultural opinion;
- Joint aspiration for the cultural direction of the city, shared vision and action plan – how it is to be delivered and who plays their part;
- Cross-sectoral leadership and respect.

4.38 In December 2010, LARC published 'Our Vision and Values 2011-2014', within which the following commitments are stated:

- We will accept our leadership responsibility. We will work collaboratively to enable and support the diverse range of arts and cultural organisations and activities that exist in the City-region as well as programming the very best in international culture.
- We will implement new models of partnership engagement to ensure both the sustainability of the sector and to grow and develop our future practitioners and audiences.
- The quality, scope and coherence of the arts, heritage and cultural offer are at the core of the LARC aspiration. We will continue to work together, and in partnership with others, to develop new ways of realising the programming, funding and delivery of an arts and cultural offer of national and international quality and reach.
- We will build on our collaboration to date and develop new mechanisms for working together in order to engage even more effectively with our communities. We will ensure that all of our audiences are engaged with and benefit from our expertise and excellence by exploring a collaborative and coherent learning and participation offer.
- Together, we will assess how we currently do business and explore how we can do things differently and more efficiently so that we can prioritise our investments by putting more resources into our arts and heritage programmes that are critical to the continued regeneration of the city of Liverpool and the city-region.

*"Whilst there may be a need for a wider partnership, the strength of LARC is that it has high level people – this is one of its key successes, and should be maintained."*

**Evaluation Participant- External**

4.39 LARC CEOs held a Management Retreat in April 2011, the process of which was to agree purpose, priorities, business model and actions post-Thrive. At the time of writing these have not been circulated publicly.

4.40 Internal evaluation participants expressed some apprehension regarding the lack of Programme Director and secretariat function beyond Thrive, in terms of the benefits as previously described in Section 3. They have also described the extent to which the Thrive Programme was densely packed with projects and activities and therefore, going forward, there ought to be greater focus on a streamlined number of projects and activities. As illustrated in Section 3, greater advocacy and communication within organisations as well as throughout and between sectors is supported by evaluation participants.

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4.41 Priority activity for post-Thrive succession was identified in 2010 by external consultees as follows.

*Activities and Projects*

- Pushing great quality, high profile destination events for a range of audiences as part of the overall destination strategy for the city;
- Making even more of the City Centre, with further engagement with businesses and expanding the 24-hour economy work, for example, boosting the culture of live music;
- Utilising the public realm (for example, city streets and parks) for more programming including street theatre, outdoor theatre, public art and live music.

*Collaboration and Partnership*

- Ensure a focus on adding value in North Liverpool, reaching out to local institutions and organisations and showing how they contribute towards community objectives;
- Reconciling artistic integrity and commerciality in times of economic pressure;
- Resource efficiency and sharing of services as a high priority, including cross-authority working;
- Articulation of the voices, roles, responsibilities and relationships within the cultural sector; LARC, COoL, Merseyside ACME, Culture Campus;
- Developing increasing prominence and profile across the City Region.

*Advocacy*

- Appropriate articulation of impacts, including economic, social, and political (for example, LARC's contribution to the city, particularly with regard to civic leadership);
- Focus on setting Liverpool apart as a city, minimising the risk of becoming 'average';
- Visioning and challenging where culture in Liverpool should be in 10 years time and how to get there.

## Aim 2

- 4.42 Aim 2 has focused on activity to support the creation of a more audience and people friendly city centre.

*“There is a mutual shared agenda between LARC and the city council on this aim.”*

**Evaluation Participant- External**

### ***Cultural sector on Merseyside is able to plan collaboratively for audience development***

- 4.43 Throughout the duration of the Thrive Programme, audience development and increased cultural participation have been priority aims for the Liverpool Culture Task Group (also referenced within the Liverpool Cultural Strategy), therefore Thrive activity has aligned strategically with citywide priorities. All evaluation participants (internal and external) consulted throughout the Thrive Programme have been in favour of activities to develop audiences.
- 4.44 The Long Night/Light Night activities have been a key output of the Thrive Programme for the development of new audiences, as well as contributing to the evening economy of Liverpool’s city centre. Feedback from internal and external evaluation participants has been consistently positive about their value and there is a clear demonstration of how the Thrive Programme has initiated events for organisations across the City that could be joined by others in future. Four events have been held to date, with two events planned for 2011. The Light Night held on 14<sup>th</sup> May 2010 was mostly funded by Liverpool City Council, Business Improvement District and Merseytravel and the final Thrive-funded event was held in November 2010.

*“Long Nights should be happening all of the time between May and September rather than one-offs”*

**Evaluation Participant- External**

- 4.45 The first event in 2008 included 30 participating venues and 68 events, the event held in November 2010 included 62 participating venues and 110 events. Other example points from the evaluations of the Long/Light Night events are as follows.

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#### Long Night of the Biennial (2008)

- Visitors attended an average of 4 venues;
- 84% said that they had attended a new venue on the Long Night;
- 49% of respondents did not usually come into the city centre at night;
- 94% agreed that the Long Night had inspired them to visit museums and/or galleries again.

#### Abandon Normal Devices Long Night (2009)

- Visitors attended an average of 3 venues;
- 43% said that they had attended a new venue on the Long Night;
- 48% of respondents did not usually come into the city centre at night;
- 94% agreed that the Long Night had inspired them to visit museums and/or galleries again.

#### Long Night 2010<sup>13</sup>

*“Gets people out and gets things happening – cultural stimulus”*

*“The variety and vitality – Liverpool at it’s best”*

*“Chance to see things; normally work 9-5 so it opens up possibilities”*

*“The art, the atmosphere, and the people you meet”*

*“Nice to have something other than clubs to go to”*

*“A chance to relax away from pubs”*

*“Experienced a new venue, enjoyable surprises”*

4.46 The majority of survey respondents (LARC organisations) in June 2009 described the engagement of the cultural sector with residents of North Liverpool, family audiences and visitors from elsewhere as ‘medium’, indicating the ongoing recognition that the engagement of particular audiences has been a continual priority as the Thrive Programme has gone forward.

4.47 Another new audiences project funded through Thrive is Open City. The review of Open City early in 2010 identified that the audience development and volunteering, multi-venue exposure is extremely valuable and further illustrates the strength of the collective as *“a healthy way of sharing our audiences”*.

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<sup>13</sup> Open Culture (2011) Late Nights Report

- 4.48 The Open City model was also presented to the commissioner of mental health services. Internal evaluation participants commented that Open City has had an impact on participants, creating regular attenders and ambassadors for the venues/activities in 'new' types of audience members (albeit not great in number).
- 4.49 As part of the project, volunteers organised forty-seven visits and introduced fifteen new community groups to LARC organisations. The final report of the project identified the following key learning<sup>14</sup>.
- Most of the community groups the project worked with found it difficult to access information about the city centre cultural offer and often had a low awareness of the range of cultural organisations in Liverpool and their programmes.
  - The internal stability of the group was a key factor in them successfully engaging with the project and going along to visits.
  - Aligning the project with the individual aims of group leaders was often important in successfully engaging community groups with the project.
  - A proactive and 'added value' approach from venues in their offer to community groups was key in engaging groups with their offer.
  - A clear venue offer and good internal communication within venues was important building successful relationships with volunteers and their ability to successfully plan a visit.
- 4.50 A consultation undertaken in 2009 for the evaluation illustrated that engagement with the residents of North Liverpool, family audiences and visitors from elsewhere was seen to be consistently positive with over 90% of stakeholders stating it was 'medium' or 'high'. 54% of respondents considered engagement with family audiences to be 'high' in comparison to visitors from elsewhere (36%) and residents of North Liverpool (28%). The Thrive-funded family friendly campaign activity has includes a website through which families can find out more about events and activities. Internal evaluation participants found it difficult to describe impacts on their audiences as a result of this activity.
- 4.51 The evaluation has found that audience development can be undertaken by different departments within organisations, specifically those responsible for marketing and those responsible for education/participation.

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<sup>14</sup> All About Audiences (2011) Open City End of Project Report

- 4.52 Throughout the Thrive Programme, this was recognised and there were joint meetings organised between the two LARC subgroups. Internal evaluation participants commented that these relationships should be promoted further with regard to future work on audience development.
- 4.53 Shortly to be published is the report examining the intrinsic impacts that audiences experience when they attend an artistic event. The LARC marketing subgroup have been particularly interested in discovering whether intrinsic impacts can be measured, to see if different performances/exhibitions would generate different impacts and whether or not an individual's 'readiness to receive' (for example attending a pre concert talk or educational experience, or reading/listening in advance to what they would experience) would influence the nature and extent of the impact.

### ***Cultural sector is able to influence city centre management functions***

*"Culture is of enormous importance to Liverpool. Cultures of the world have passed through and left a piece of them each time, it has a rich cultural history. When looking at how to market Liverpool as a place for families to live or for businesses to operate, the cultural offer is very important"*

**Evaluation Participant- External**

- 4.54 Throughout the Thrive Programme, FACT has had a role as 'City Centre Champion'. The Joint Agency Group, on which FACT sits, is a subgroup of Liverpool's Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership comprising local authority, police and other public and private sector partners and has been focused on the promotion a safer night-time economy for Liverpool City Centre. The Long Night/Light Night events have required collaboration regarding the management of events within the city centre and those held during the evening.
- 4.55 It was commented by external evaluation participants that there continue to be major opportunities in the city to attract visitors and tourists and that it is essential that the cultural offer is developed, modern and well supported, not just in terms of physical infrastructure but also in terms of content and activities. One external consultee described LARC as *"an important group of asset holders"* linked to their location position in key areas of the city and as *"the fabric of city centre co-ordination"*.

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*“There is a new visitor Economy Strategy and culture is core to this, partly due to European Capital of Culture but also partly due to the role that culture plays in Liverpool more broadly.”*

**Evaluation Participant- External**

- 4.56 Culture in general and LARC in particular is referred to throughout the recently published City Centre Management strategy. LARC also made a contribution towards the bid for Purple Flag status<sup>15</sup> which was fully included and there has been participation in the Designing Out Crime project. In this respect, the evaluation has found the working relationship with a number of partners with the focus on City Centre improvements is proving fruitful and beneficial.

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<sup>15</sup> Purple Flag is the new "gold standard" that recognises great entertainment and hospitality areas at night. Places that achieve the standard will be those that offer a positive experience to night time visitors and users. <http://www.atcm.org/purple-flag/index.php>

### Aim 3

4.57 Aim 3, to research and develop new models of delivery in arts-led regeneration with a focus on North Liverpool, has provoked most polarisation in terms of opinion. A number of consultees throughout the course of the evaluation (external evaluation participants) acknowledged that they were less knowledgeable about the work being delivered on this aim.

*“Aim 3 is really focused on community priorities”*

**Evaluation Participant- External**

*“[LARC members] all do lots in North Liverpool, but mainly at an individual level.”*

**Evaluation Participant- External**

4.58 Generally, it was felt by evaluation participants that there has been a lot of positive activity going on in North Liverpool but that another LARC project, Find Your Talent<sup>16</sup>, was considered the prominent programme of delivery by both LARC consultees and external partners. Find Your Talent has evidently demanded a lot of time from the LARC organisations, and as a result, this has taken the time of some LARC organisations away from the Thrive Programme. It is acknowledged by evaluation participants to have been given priority and that Thrive activity has been of less prominence, however, one participant commented that *“Find Your Talent would never have come to Liverpool were it not for Thrive and LARC”*.

4.59 Internal evaluation participants commented that a significant amount of learning has come out of the Thrive Programme and its operation alongside Find Your Talent, which necessarily required significant focus, input and capacity separate from the activity of the Thrive Programme. The Education/Participation LARC subgroup met monthly as the Programme Group for Find Your Talent, with a short agenda item for Thrive.

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<sup>16</sup> Find Your Talent was set up to find out what it would take to provide high quality cultural experience for all children and young people, regardless of age or ability. 10 pathfinder areas were funded across England and Liverpool was one of these areas. The work was led by National Museums Liverpool. National funding for the programme was cut during 2010.

- 4.60 However, whilst Thrive activity offered the opportunity for organisations to explore, test and reflect on how they work together, Find Your Talent reportedly required immediate delivery in this way without necessarily having time to establish trust, roles and responsibilities between participants.
- 4.61 The Heads of Education/Participation have met to discuss next steps, which are reported by evaluation participants to include the continuation of the work to demonstrate impacts and evaluation of their work, to develop themselves as world leaders and to work in targeted settings for a depth of engagement with audiences and participants. It has been commented that there will be time spent thinking and planning together around exactly what it is they want to deliver and achieve; they have learned that they do want to work together and that they get a great deal of satisfaction from working together properly. There is also a desire for close, rigorous academic evaluation to track people who participate with partner organisations and to discover how their behaviours change as a result. It is hoped that the end of Thrive will be the start of the next chapter of work.
- 4.62 On balance, the evaluation has found that there has been value added by the activity within Aim 3 of the Thrive Programme, however, with hindsight, it would have been beneficial to have had a full-scale review of the aim and its activities in the context of other LARC projects and activities already being delivered by LARC organisations in that area.

***Stronger partnership working between LARC partners and other cultural organisations in working with the community sector***

*“Thrive has helped us to connect with some organisations and partners, mainly through the information sharing workshop events”*

**Evaluation Participant- Internal**

- 4.63 The Thrive Programme has provided activities to enable community and non-cultural sector organisations/agencies to work with the cultural sector, and provided a chance to talk to each other and produce a more coordinated offer between them. This has been particularly facilitated by the work of Partnerships and Development Coordinator.

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- 4.64 The post was intended to be instrumental in facilitating a co-ordinated planning approach towards collaborative working to secure new investment and partnerships in addressing regeneration objectives. A significant amount of activity has been delivered with regard to information sharing and the building of relationship capital through Aim 3, for example, with North Liverpool Culture Committee, West Everton Community Council, Merseytravel, and participation in the planning and organisation of activity for the Year of Health and Wellbeing.
- 4.65 A mapping exercise of the community and cultural provision in North Liverpool was undertaken by the Partnerships and Development Co-ordinator, with the purpose of encouraging LARC (and other arts/cultural) organisations to align their work with the needs of the community organisations and develop strategic partnerships with the ten Community Councils to deliver sustainable activity. This has reportedly resulted in increased access to knowledge of partners and their activity in North Liverpool, potentially enabling coordinated delivery (as commented by internal and external evaluation participants).
- 4.66 The Thrive Programme has offered the opportunity for community organisations to become more open to partnership working so that they will be able to develop independent collaborations with culture and other sectors, which will enable them to draw in more funding. There is evidence of a genuine commitment to working with culture from other partners across sectors, particularly on city centre issues, health, higher education and to promote positive outcomes for children and young people.
- 4.67 Feedback from attendees at the North Liverpool Urban Context Seminar Series (2009) illustrated that 65% of respondents rated improvement in their understanding of what arts/cultural/creative organisations can offer to communities in North Liverpool as a result of the seminar series as '7' or higher (on a scale of 1 to 10). Furthermore, when analysing only the responses given by representatives from community organisations, the proportion of respondents giving a rating of '6' or higher rises to 83%, suggesting that the seminar series increased the understanding of what arts/cultural/creative organisations can offer to communities in North Liverpool for the majority of respondents, particularly representatives from community organisations.

4.68 Comments from attendees included the following.

*“All organisations (both community and cultural) have the same fundamental aims and objectives”*

*“I have developed a better understanding of the cultural offer available in North Liverpool and how to utilise it”*

*“I have developed a better understanding of the work of community organisations and the complex needs of the community”*

*“It is important for organisations to understand what is already happening in North Liverpool and build on this rather than developing anything new”*

*“It is important to involve both cultural and community organisations in dialogue”*

*“The world doesn't always work the way you think it does”*

*“There are different degrees of responsiveness from both community and cultural organisations”*

4.69 Generally, respondents commented favourably on the role of Thrive in North Liverpool and felt there had been an increase in arts activity in the North Liverpool as a result. Engagement with Thrive was in some instances limited through a lack of capacity. Respondents thought that Thrive added value to activity through the increased level and varied range of projects delivered, the amount of information available and the manner in which it was disseminated, providing the opportunity for organisations to share best practice and learn from the experience of others.

4.70 Other examples of strategic engagement through Aim 3 work in North Liverpool include the following.

- North Liverpool Culture Committee (NLCC) has been supported and encouraged to use a range of venues in the area, thus engaging a greater range of community organisations.
- As a result of the programme sharing seminars, North Liverpool Academy (a new Building Schools for the Future school opening in North Liverpool in September 2009) invited the Thrive Partnerships and Development Co-ordinator to work with the school and partners from community and cultural organisations to develop an ‘Inspiring Communities’ bid for £400,000 for a three year programme of activity to the raise the aspirations of parents, families and young people in North Liverpool, including developing a Leadership Academy.
- The Partnerships and Development Co-ordinator has been invited to join a community stakeholder group working on a project to animate open spaces in North Liverpool (Stanley Park and Everton Park). This has included meeting with Active Cities, Merseyside Fire and Rescue, a community organisation and a Community Council to secure £10,000 of funding for a fun day and a 12 week programme of sports, arts, drama, walking, and cycling.

- The Partnerships and Development Co-ordinator is working to encourage City & North neighbourhood to appoint a Community Arts Manager, inspired by the model established in the Alt Valley neighbourhood, jointly pioneered by the Bluecoat and Everyman Playhouse.
- Culture was not initially represented in the consultation for the Strategic Regeneration Framework for North Liverpool led by Liverpool Vision, however, a submission has been prepared and work is continuing to ensure culture has an input.

***Community organisations have enhanced understanding of value of cultural programming and increased ability to deliver themselves***

4.71 Running to December 2010, the Capacity Building Programme provided support to a number of community & cultural organisations in North Liverpool, helping build their cultural programming skills and working with them in securing resources for their creative ideas. 12 community organisations have participated in a series of seminars and one to one mentoring. The Lead Consultant supporting delivery of the programme has met with the North Liverpool Culture Committee and the team have met with each of the appointed community organisations, resulting in the creation of a series of development plans and activities for the community partners.

4.72 Comments from the evaluation<sup>17</sup> of this work are as follows:

*I hope it will continue in its support to Community organisations who need this vital resource.*

*It has improved my craft and ability to work in my position.*

*I understand how to be a good leader now, how to shape projects, gather feedback and work with local orgs and bigger orgs to our and their benefit.*

*Skills and knowledge*

*I have gained knowledge, and understanding. I will incorporate into my role and CPD, this is a great resource, with no jargon... Very adaptable to all projects, well-constructed time lines in each element and clear progression routes. Many thanks for this opportunity. I hope to be able to access this vital service in the future.*

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<sup>17</sup> The Hamilton Project (2011) Capacity Building Programme Final Report

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***LARC partners and other participating cultural organisations have increased skills in planning and evaluating cultural interventions***

- 4.73 The key Thrive project to deliver this outcome has been the Evaluation Skills Development support provided by Francois Matarasso and Gerri Moriarty. The process aimed to help organisations to analyse findings and provide information in a way that helps to set out the benefits of cultural engagement to potential stakeholders outside the cultural sector. It has supported the development of further engagement between cultural organisations working in the area and key stakeholders – regeneration agencies, community groups, other funders, exploring the how and why of success in projects and programmes, identifying what special contribution is made by interventions based on arts and culture and how this contribution can be maximised.
- 4.74 59% of respondents to the workshop evaluation survey rated improvement in their understanding of evaluation as a result of the initial Workshop as ‘8’ or higher, illustrating that the Workshop had, to a large extent, improved the understanding of the purpose and value of evaluation of the majority of respondents. Participants in the programme of evaluation support reported to have found it very beneficial, particularly in terms of using it to strengthen future funding applications.
- 4.75 A core group of 9 organisations have participated and reported that they valued the opportunity to work with such a thoughtful and experienced professional in Francois Matarasso. The project has experienced difficulties with action and output in terms of the capacity of participating organisations to be able to undertake rigorous evaluation activities, so the original expectation of a series of case studies was not able to be presented. As such, a separate report was commissioned<sup>18</sup> called ‘Telling Stories’, it describes how cultural activities contribute to regeneration and wellbeing in North Liverpool.

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<sup>18</sup> Matarasso, F. and Moriarty, G. (2011) Telling Stories: The arts and wellbeing in North Liverpool

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## 5.0 SUMMARY REFLECTIONS

5.1 Reflecting on the delivery of the Thrive Programme, key stakeholders have identified a number of lessons that have been learned and issues to be reflected on in considering the next steps for LARC post-Thrive. These include the following.

- Working collaboratively can be very effective especially when advocating on behalf of the sector and engaging with key stakeholders as it allows LARC to ‘speak with one voice’.
- In terms of project delivery, it is important that collaboration and working together takes place as and when it is appropriate to do so rather than just for the sake of it.
- There remain challenges around progressing joint working going forward. There can be acceptance that it is beneficial to work with a ‘coalition of the willing’ to enable quicker decisions and discussions leading to resolution (including resolving not to act), even if this means that not all members participate in all aspects of action.
- Linked to this, fewer and deeper activities will help to prevent time and resources being spread too thinly and with the risk of ineffectual levels of commitment.
- The regularity of the CEO meetings (and the commitment of the CEOs to LARC/Thrive) has been a positive supporting factor in the achievements of Thrive and the continuance of these meetings (albeit potentially on a less regular basis) will be important. Amongst other things, such meetings allow opportunities for joined up thinking and collaboration to be explored.
- Communication and advocacy about LARC/Thrive ought to be embraced, supported by the capacity of existing PR and Communications expertise within organisations.
- Ensuring that programming is afforded due time and space, balancing the artistic/cultural role and function with that of civic leadership responsibilities. There can be more discussion on the nature of required compromises (or not).

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- The most significant risk felt to be facing the future delivery of post-Thrive was a lack of resources. Respondents thought this, in combination with other factors could make partners look increasingly inward and cause the breakdown of partnership working. Political instability alongside a lack of leadership from within LARC were also considered (lesser) risks.
  
  - It is considered important to continue to capture research and evaluation data and share knowledge that demonstrates impact and enables advocacy.
  
  - Review the mechanisms to cascade information throughout LARC organisations, to other arts organisations in Liverpool and beyond. The Thrive Programme has boosted cross sector working, the expertise of non-LARC organisations connecting with communities delivering other work could be maximised and shared.