



**BATTERSEA  
ARTS CENTRE**



**AGENTS OF  
CREATIVE  
CHANGE**

A Battersea Arts Centre programme exploring the value of creativity in social change through building partnerships and fostering collaboration with organisations pivotal to change in the local area.

**King's College Pilot Report**

**Agents of Creative Change (AOCC)** began at Battersea Arts Centre (BAC) as an experiment. We wanted to create a tool to test how we use creativity to affect change in our local area, working directly with influential people who work with and make decisions for the public every day. These local leaders are at the heart of change in their area, passionate about social issues and interested in collaborating with creative people outside of their sector. We start with the idea that everyone is creative, not just artists, that everyone has the capacity to use creativity in their work and in their own lives. We believe that creativity is a key element in social change, if not an essential one. Taking a creative approach has the ability to reach people and affect change in ways that more traditional interventions do not. From this place, Agents of Creative Change started to find its feet.

In the programme, these local leaders come primarily from the public and third sector in Wandsworth and Lambeth with an issue they face in their day-to-day lives. It could be a big issue like changing negative perceptions of police in the community or something like getting staff more engaged in decisions and activities in a day centre. These issues form the starting point of the sessions where they are paired with an artist and together, they come up with a creative solution to the issue presented, facilitated by BAC. We have also recently piloted projects incorporating academics as one of the collaborators, turning the duos into trios, exploring how co-designed research can be integral to social change.

*The overall aim of the programme is to foster creative social change through developing co-created projects brought to life through cross-sector collaboration.*

This pilot builds on a long-standing relationship between King's College London and BAC.

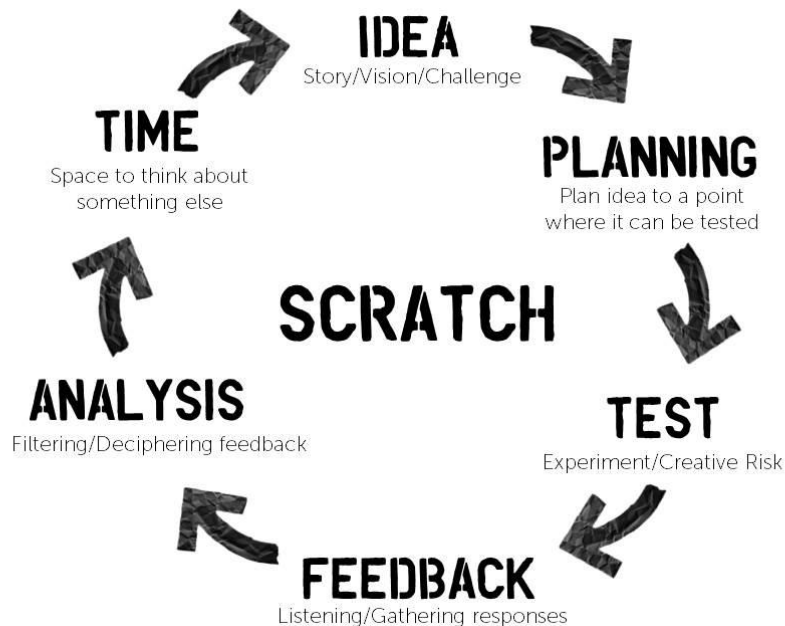


## About Agents of Creative Change

AOCC was initiated by producers at BAC in 2015 simply as an opportunity for local organisations from the public and third sector to incorporate more creativity into the way they work and as a way for artists to apply their creative approaches in different contexts. It has now been fine-tuned into a methodology for co-creation and collaboration. Underlying this collaboration are three basic values:

1. Everyone is creative.
2. Creativity is an essential yet underexplored element to social change.
3. Cross-sector, creative collaboration is the key to unlocking social innovation.

Key to fostering a creative, fun and flexible approach to social change throughout this programme is a process that began at BAC in 2000 called Scratch. Scratch is a creative methodology that encourages those who adopt it to test ideas in early stages of development, before they're finished, to give things a try on a small scale, to then get feedback which is then put back into the project. The methodology is iterative- giving a project a go on a smaller scale, testing to see if it's a good idea, before taking feedback and adapting it into future, larger-scale iterations. People who take part in AOCC have the opportunity to Scratch test their projects with a small amount of seed funding, without a lot of pressure for the project to be a finished, successful piece, before they decide if they want to scale the project to be bigger and with more impact.



Even if they decide not to move forward with their projects after the Scratch, the programme still serves as a powerful professional development tool- facilitating participants to think creatively about issues that they face in their jobs, to build their confidence in taking risks and trying new things and to network with a wide range of people across sectors. The programme has also been a valuable tool for artists to think differently about their practice and to find new outlets for their creative activity.





## THEORY

Scholars have presented different rhetorics of creativity from the traditional idea of the 'creative genius' to 'creativity as social good' (Banaji, et al., 2006), as well as models (Bilton, 2010) that suggest the existence of an outdated 'heroic' approach to creativity, which is focused on the individual development and a 'structural' and updated one, based on a collective and social creative process. The transformation of the perception of creativity has had an impact on the creative industries with the application of the idea of 'everyday creativity', a concept that from a psychological perspective, refers to a survival and universal capability used by human beings to solve problems that are not present exclusively in the art field (Richards, 2007a). Under this conception of creativity, 'everyone could be creative', as creativity is not delimited to a select group of people (Tanggaard, 2012).

Even though recent research on the cultural field has shown that the encouragement of everyday creativity could be beneficial for the development of the area (Richards, 2007b; Edensor et al., 2010; Wall, 2012), most of the public policies are still focused on the engagement of the audience with participation in formal art expressions (Chapain & Hargreaves, 2016).



*Initially the process was totally alien, and I think that for 15 minutes. I was, like, what I am actually doing here? I am a police officer. So, I was a little bit confused to start with, and I was not sure really if this program actually, even for me, would work. Which was really strange, because it ended up being very successful. I use and think about Scratch all the time now in my daily life.*

-Atti Mahmoud,  
Met Police

## HOW DOES IT WORK

AOCC is a programme that uses the creative process to promote innovative ideas that aim to generate social change.

In its four cycles, the programme has invited professionals working in the charitable and the public sectors to work with artists of different backgrounds in projects that could benefit their communities. The programme aims to break down barriers across fields through collaboration and to embed creativity in the social change process. It offers the opportunity to public and third sector professionals to harness their own creativity and offers artists the opportunity to further socially engaged practice.

The sessions start out as a big group, anywhere between 8-18 participants, where they get to know one another before being placed into pairings or in some cases, groups of three, when we are working with academics or larger teams. They then take part in facilitated sessions to help them come up with an idea for a Scratch project that they will test at the end of the programme.

The programme has four phases:

- 1. Learning, Sharing & Pairing-** team-building exercises that encourage empathy and creating new connections.
- 2. Shadowing-** visits to collaborators workplaces to gain shared understanding of challenges and opportunities.
- 3. Idea Generation Workshops-** facilitated activities to foster creative collaboration and project innovation.
- 4. Scratching a Pilot Project-** support to test their ideas for creative social change.

These programmes normally take place over 2-4 day-long sessions over a one to three-month period. They begin as short-term projects without the pressure of huge deliverables or even an idea they can take forward beyond the initial stages of the project. However, many of these short-term projects become long-term projects. The structure of the programme allows these ideas to be tested in a safe, supportive environment to see if they are good ideas that can be scaled up into longer term projects. It's ok if the projects don't work- it is still an extremely valuable professional development and networking opportunity- but if they do, BAC works with each group to help them to turn a small idea into something that has long-term potential.





## King's Pilot Overview

Through a recruitment process held in collaboration between King's and BAC, 20 academics, public and third sector organisations and artists to come together for a day and half over a month period to come up with creative ideas to solve social problems facing local organisations.

### Objectives:

#### For King's:

Researchers/King's will have an opportunity to connect directly with artists and public/third sector organisations, have opportunities for designing co-research projects and have a deeper understanding of what co-research is and how to conduct it.

#### For BAC:

BAC will be integral in exploring the role of creativity in social change and evaluate its impact over time. BAC is interested in exploring how creative process, not just creative products can make an impact in social change organisations.

#### For artists:

Artists will have an improved interest and understanding of how they can integrate social change into their practice and deepen their networks and awareness of how to make that a stronger part of their art practice.

#### For public and third sector organisations:

Public/third sector organisations will increase their understanding of the benefits of creativity in their organisations and feel more confident taking risks by integrating artists into their organisations.

The pilot involved a collaboration between people from a diverse range of professional backgrounds.

**Public and third sector organisations** included:

- Generate
- Wandsworth Offending Team
- National Trust- 575 Wandsworth Road
- Element
- Writerz and Scribez
- Safeground

**King's academics** from the following departments participated:

- Computer Science & Infomatics
- Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience
- Modern Languages- Digital Mediation
- Student Success and Social Mobility team
- Sociology
- Political Economy
- Cultural Institute

**Artists** who contributed came from the following disciplines:

- Festival producing
- Theatre makers
- Fine Art
- Sound and music
- Poetry and spoken word
- Design
- Public art installations

AOCC-King's took place over a day and a half in November-December 2018. The day was facilitated by an independent facilitator, and BAC and King's staff. The day was focused on people taking part to get to know one another, share practice and feel inspired. It was important that everyone felt heard and empowered to participate in a way that made sense for them and their practice. The end of the day was then focused upon challenges the public and third sector organisations face in their roles and how input from the group and other collaborators could impact some of these issues. At the end of this day, they were put into trios- one academic, one artists and one public and third sector professional.

The second day was a facilitated session for participants to design ideas for Scratch projects based around the needs of the public and third sector organisations. They spent the day working towards what a project idea might be feasible to pilot with the £400 stipend provided. At the end of the day, they presented their ideas to the group to get feedback. They were asked to submit a short proposal in order to release the funding which they then used to implement their project in the months following.



## The Projects

Five of the six projects that came out of the pilot were successfully piloted and are still ongoing as of September 2019. The following are overviews of the projects that were developed through the project.

### Culture buddies

*Generate (Mike Dignam), Abbas Zahedi, Dr Sam Holmes*

The aim of the AOCC pilot project is to bring together a small group of people with learning disabilities (with some artistic experience or desire), art students and KCL researchers to develop a working group exploring ways to better engage this cohort of people. The group will co-design a model that can support people to explore their interests; attend cultural 'events'; and enthuse their peers to get involved through the use of inspired communication – a mix of film, animation, images and text as determined by the group. People with learning disabilities typically experience poor access to the arts and culture. There are a number of reasons for this, including assumptions about intellectual ability, so people are not engaged. This project aims to tackle this with longer-term outcomes to create a network of voluntary or funded 'culture buddies' available to facilitate spontaneous access to the arts.

This project has now received follow on funding of £5,000 and support through a six-month residency with artist Abbas Zahedi.

### Tacit Knowledge

*Element (Maeve Slattery, Eloise Acland), Samboleap Tol, Dr Rita Borgo*

Tacit Knowledge is a pilot programme, initiated by Element and artist Samboleap Tol. With seed initiative of Battersea Arts Centre, the programme launched a series of 'workshops' where the primary focus was creating something together, with no predetermined outcome. These workshops were attended by a selection of participants with various backgrounds: two care experienced young people; one arts educator; and two artists. In the workshops, a non-hierarchical structure in the creative process was emphasized, exploring the unique things each participant holds. They all learned from each other and the non-hierarchical structure meant they were much more open to sharing their experiences, and they felt more empowered through the sessions.

Since the pilot, this Sam and Element have continued to work together on two other projects, running more workshops and hosting events together to raise funding for the organisation.

*"Being part of Agents of Creative Change at BAC gave us, at Element, so many new connections and perspectives. We feel very lucky to have taken part in the programme and met such incredible artists, particularly Samboleap Tol. Since working together on our proposal and receiving funding from BAC, Sam x Element have run a scratch project for two months and collaborated on other Element sessions. Sam's input has sparked a wealth of ideas, approaches to facilitation and opportunities."*

-Maeve Slattery, Element



## 575 Wandsworth Road

*By National Trust (Laura Hussey), Laura Guarch, Catherine Mahony*

575 Wandsworth Road is a community visioning project bringing together local residents, community groups and organisations to explore and share their personal, collective responses to The National Trust's 575 Wandsworth Road property. The aim was to begin exploring the potential role the property plays in the community and help to shape its future. A total of 36 representatives from the community (*local residents, community service providers, education institutions, local businesses*) were invited to experience the house in small groups through a series of facilitated visits with artist, Laura Guarch. The visits were designed to invite free responses and discussion that helped to imagine what the future and purpose of 575 Wandsworth Road could be. Keeping with the creative spirit of the house, responses were captured in creative ways, allowing them to share ideas to inform wider National Trust strategies and the vision for the property.

This project has had a profound impact on Laura from 575's practice, using her experience on Agents of Creative Change to transform how she works with communities.

*"It has been a transformative year for 575 Wandsworth Road, with Agents of Creative Change sparking a new way of thinking and building confidence in our ability to make a positive social impact for local people in Wandsworth and Lambeth. The two workshops, facilitated brilliantly by a practicing artist were some of the most refreshing I've attended – combining innovative problem solving activities with meaningful conversations. I also really valued the opportunity to meet others facing similar challenges, or that were working to common goals. As a result of Agents of Creative Change, not only were we able to scratch our community visioning project 'Dinner Table Conversations' giving local people opportunity to discuss the role that 575 Wandsworth Road plays in the local area, we used these rich conversations to shape our programme for next year (focusing on the relationship between creativity and wellbeing), and the collaborative partnerships now being forged through this approach are accelerating 575's visioning process to work out how we can be more relevant and make a more meaningful contribution to the lives of more diverse groups within the local area. We are so grateful to have been part of such a powerful and impactful (and fun!) programme, and would love to be involved in the future if there is ever the opportunity."*

-Laura Hussey, 575 Wandsworth Road





## SWITCH

*Writerz and Scribez (Jemilea Wisdom), Kay Rufai, Cerisse Gunasinghe, Charlotte Woodhead*

SWITCH (Spoken Word In The Community Hubs) is an innovative project focused on transferring art from conventional art spaces into well-used community spaces to reach those who feel excluded from mainstream art organisations. It involves working with the local community to place art in barbershops, hair salons and other spaces and researching the impact of this switch. Through the Agents of Creative Change project funding, Writerz and Scribez held a pilot project through workshops and an exhibition in a local barbershop in Wandsworth led by artist Kay Rufai.

Since the pilot, Writerz and Scribez received a grant for further activity with King's College London's Institute for Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience. This funded two student interns from King's to work in collaboration with the organisation throughout one academic year to gain practical skills through developing their own social change projects.

## The Talent Match

*Coney (Tassos Stevens) and KCL Civic Leadership Academy (Emily Dunne), with Wandsworth Probation Services (Barbara Cala-Lesina)*

Talent Match was a follow-on project building on an ongoing collaboration between theatre company, Coney, and Barbara Cala-Lesina from Wandsworth Probation Services through a project called A Lovely Intervention. A Lovely Intervention uses play and gift-giving to encourage positive change for clients of Wandsworth Probation Service. This pioneering new method for rehabilitation began in 2015 and currently continues to be developed. This pilot involved working with King's to explore ways students of the Civic Leadership Academy are best matched with placement organisations to suit their talents, skills and passions, developing a prototype game for helping better matching. They hope to adapt the game for the context and clients of A Lovely Intervention.

Since the pilot, Coney and Barbara continue to be in touch with the KCL Leadership Academy, working on raising funds to support their collaboration.

## Key Outcomes

This pilot was an essential tool for BAC to explore different ways that Agents of Creative Change can be implemented- testing how it could be streamlined into a shorter time frame to make it easier for people to participate and how the project could collaborate with academics. This was the first time the project had incorporated research and it added an additional layer of rigour and depth to the programme that was not present in previous pilots. This pilot proved that AOCC can be delivered in a shorter time frame and still have a profound impact on its participants. It also helped BAC to build new connections with artists, academics and public and third organisations, and evidence of impact from this pilot has helped the organisation to build upon a growing evidence base around the value of creativity in social change project.

This pilot was also helpful for artists and public and third sector organisations to build new connections with people they may not have come into contact with- those directly connected to fostering social change in the Wandsworth area. It pushed them to think of new, innovative ways to apply their creativity and develop new strategies for collaboration. Having an academic component was crucial for many of them who may not have thought critically about how research could be incorporated in their practice. Academics found that it was a fruitful way of thinking about collaboration and research impact in a new way. They all found it to be a useful professional development opportunity at the very least, but others led to longer term collaborations.







## Mapping Objectives

The following outlines how the project took shape based upon the pre-determined objectives, highlighting three key points.

For BAC:

*BAC will be integral in exploring the role of creativity in social change and evaluate its impact over time. BAC is interested in exploring how creative process, not just creative products can make an impact in social change organisations.*

Overall, AOCC helped BAC to:

1. Build new and deepen existing partnerships with local organisations.
2. Gain a better understanding of the role of research in creative social change.
3. Test how the AOCC model can be adapted to fit the needs of diverse collaborators.

For artists:

*Artists will have an improved interest and understanding of how they can integrate social change into their practice and deepen their networks and awareness of how to make that a stronger part of their art practice.*

Overall, AOCC helped artists to:

1. Develop new connections with a diverse range of professionals outside of their sector.
2. Gain a stronger understanding of problems facing the public and third sectors.
3. See first-hand how research can be more embedded in their practice.

For public and third sector organisations:

*Public/third sector organisations will increase their understanding of the benefits of creativity in their organisations and feel more confident taking risks by integrating artists into their organisations.*

Overall, AOCC helped public and third sector organisations to:

1. Gain a better understanding of the role of research in their practice.
2. Make new connections with artists and academics to co-create projects and collaborate on future projects.
3. Build their confidence in applying creative approaches in the work they do.

For King's College London:

*Researchers/King's will have an opportunity to connect directly with artists and public/third sector organisations, have opportunities for designing co-research projects and have a deeper understanding of what co-research is and how to conduct it.*

Overall, this pilot helped King's College London academics to:

1. Imagine new collaborations and pathways into research and impact.
2. Develop partnerships with organisations and practitioners who have the potential for future collaboration.
3. Foster new relationships to develop future research projects.





### Plans for the future

BAC is keen to further explore this model in collaboration with universities. We feel we have only scratched the surface of the potential of this for developing innovative social change projects but also for networking and developing new partnerships. Based on the success of this pilot, we can see this pilot strengthening its impact for future iterations.

One of the strengths of this pilot was the diverse mix of academics who took part which also adds to a growing case about the power of the arts and creative practice for activating research. The programme has the potential to not only develop long-lasting, sustainable social change projects, but also can be a professional development opportunity for academics to think of new and innovative ways to have impact with their research.

We see this programme as a model that can be adapted and implemented in a wide range of contexts and we welcome interested parties to collaborate with us to further develop this programme.

Many thanks to: King's Cultural Institute for supporting this project  
Report written by: Dr Meg Peterson

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