

THE LAMPLIGHTERS

FLOCK TOGETHER

CHURCH ROAD LANTERN PARADE



Evaluation Report 2020

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Report commissioned by

Dee Moxon for The Lamplighters

CHURCH ROAD LANTERN PARADE EVALUATION

ABOUT THE WORKSHOPS AND PARADE

Flock Together was to be the fifth Church Road Lantern Parade led by The Lamplighters. Children and adults from the local area created illuminated lanterns and puppets at workshops in schools and community venues for a night-time outdoor celebratory parade ending in St George Park. The parade, first scheduled for 29th February 2020, was postponed due to safety concerns caused by the prolonged wet weather and flooding throughout February. The rescheduled date of 28th March was cancelled due to COVID-19 and the UK lockdown restrictions. Around 1,500 children and adults were anticipated to take part in the parade by carrying lanterns they had contributed to making during the workshops, or through purchasing a lantern making kit and creating a lantern independently at home. Based on past parades, audiences of 2,500 people were expected. Although the parade was unfortunately cancelled, 38 workshops involving 767 people and 16 community groups had already taken place as part of the project.

For the 2020 Lantern Parade and workshops, The Lamplighters secured funding from National Lottery Awards for All, Quartet Community Foundation and Arts Council England. Crowdfunding and sponsorship from local businesses provided additional support.

ABOUT THE LAMPLIGHTERS

The Lamplighters are an association of professional freelance artists, Amy Peck, Dee Moxon and Kerry Russell, who work to create positive change where they live in East Bristol. Collectively they have over 40 years' experience of facilitating work in carnival, theatre and outdoor arts. Their socially engaged practice promotes individual and community wellbeing through workshop processes and enabling creativity in public spaces.

The Lamplighters established the first Church Road Lantern Parade in 2014 and have subsequently led celebratory outdoor arts events which include commissions from Fusion Arts (Oxford), Blagdon Lantern Parade and Bristol Women's Voice.

767 workshop participants

38 workshops

16 local organisations

1,500 anticipated parade participants

2,500 anticipated audience for parade



Photos in this report are from the 2020 workshops and previous Church Road Lantern Parades.

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19

The rescheduling of the parade for late March 2020 meant it was not able to take place. From mid-March, organisers of large-scale public events across the country were making decisions to cancel to minimise the transmission of COVID-19. On 23rd March, the UK government announced a "lockdown" which required people to stay in their homes. Public events and gatherings were not permitted under new legislation, the Coronavirus Act 2020.

With such uncertainty around safely resuming public events, The Lamplighters took the decision to cancel, rather than to postpone the parade to a later date, and bring the 2020 project to a close.

ABOUT THE EVALUATION

The Lamplighters commissioned an Evaluation Consultant to design and lead an evaluation process for the 2020 workshops and parade. An Evaluation Plan and Framework document was produced in January 2020. Due to the parade postponement and cancellation, the evaluation process also changed in response to the differing circumstances. Despite cancelling the parade, The Lamplighters wished to proceed with gathering evaluation data about the workshops from people who had been involved. As face-to-face meetings were not possible, the data collection methods were adapted. One adaptation was adding telephone interviews with workshop participants, teachers and group leaders. A second adaptation was that the planned online questionnaire was revised to ask participants about the workshops in 2020 and about past lantern parades if they had taken part in previous years. The rest of this document gives a “normative” account of the evaluation process. The Evaluation Report describes what evaluation activities actually took place and what data were actually gathered, rather than repeatedly drawing comparisons between what was originally planned and what took place. The purpose of the evaluation and the intended project outcomes, however, have not been revised from the original Evaluation Plan. The evaluation process sought to address four evaluation questions:

- 1) **To what extent have the project outcomes been achieved?**
- 2) **What contextual factors have influenced the achievement of aims and outcomes?**
- 3) **What is most valuable or important about the Lantern Parade to those involved: children / parents / families, adult participants, schools and teaching staff, community group leaders, the wider community?**
- 4) **What are the key points of learning or reflection which the evaluation process has captured?**

Intended project outcomes were grouped into two categories:

Outcomes for individuals, families and the wider community

Reduced (or prevented) social isolation and enhanced wellbeing through developing existing and creating new community connections and sense of belonging in the community.

Enhanced wellbeing through collective participation in enjoyable, creative inter-generational activities.

Greater confidence to take part in creative and community activities, for those who are new to arts participation and outdoor celebratory arts.

Greater confidence to utilise local public spaces after dark and a change in perceptions of the local area due to creative animation of public space.

More opportunities for cross-cultural collective activities which could lead to greater social capacity.

Artistic and organisational outcomes

Professional development for The Lamplighters artists through greater artistic ambition and increased quality of artistic process and completed work, than previous Church Road Lantern Parades.

Greater quality of experience for workshop and parade participants and audiences through more investment in artist time and a more spectacular finale than previous Church Road Lantern Parades.

Consolidation of The Lamplighters position as artists who work in their community and increased confidence to develop longer-term sustainability in their socially engaged arts practice.

Strengthening partnerships with local organisations who can support further development of the work.

The evaluation design combined two approaches to address the evaluation questions – *outcomes evaluation* and *illuminative evaluation*. In outcomes evaluation “the basic notion is that... something is supposed to change as a result of the program and outcome evaluations seek to assess whether or not this has happened” (Robson, 2017, p.49). Illuminative evaluation is an exploratory approach which seeks not to foreground intended outcomes, but rather, “an inductive analysis of open-ended, detailed, descriptive data gathered through direct interactions... with the program and its participants” (Patton, 2015, p.207). Data collection methods were designed to gather information specifically about about the intended

outcomes but also were purposely open-ended to allow for people to contribute what was important to them. Evidence and data collected for the evaluation which has been considered for this report are:

- Participant online questionnaire (44 responses)
- Phone interviews (3 teachers, 3 adult participants, 2 group leaders)
- Artists' Journal notes (from 18 of the workshops)
- Notes of reflective conversations between artists and evaluator.

To articulate an understanding of wellbeing, the Evaluation Plan identified indicators of wellbeing from two sources: *Five Ways to Wellbeing* (Aked et al, 2008) and *Outcomes map: personal and social wellbeing* (Copp & Plimmer, 2013).

Connect

Keep active

Take notice

Keep learning

Give

Five Ways to Wellbeing (Aked et al, 2008, p.3)

Feelings about self

Relationships with family and friends

Perception and connectedness to the community

Overall life satisfaction

Outcomes map: personal and social wellbeing
(Copp & Plimmer, 2013, p.7)

MORE ABOUT CHURCH ROAD

Church Road in Redfield is a main traffic route through the eastern side of Bristol. It stretches from the Lawrence Hill area, gradually rising up the hill to the eastern edge of St George Park. The Church Road area is a mix of small local businesses such as shops, cafes and

pubs; places of worship and community spaces; public services such as health centres and schools; alongside densely populated residential streets of primarily terraced houses and flats. It is a busy urban centre which serves the localities of Barton Hill, Lawrence Hill, Redfield, Whitehall and St George. It is an area of great ethnic and socio-economic diversity. Lawrence Hill electoral ward is one of the three most deprived wards in Bristol¹, with 7 out of 9 Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in the highest decile for overall deprivation nationally². Ethnic group data from the 2011 Census shows that Lawrence Hill has the highest percentage of people from Black or Minority Ethnic groups of all the wards in Bristol (LH = 59.6%, Bristol = 16%). The numbers of children with English as an additional language is much higher than for Bristol as a whole (LH = 64%, Bristol = 20.9%). Lawrence Hill has the highest level of overcrowded households of all wards in Bristol (LH = 16.5%, Bristol = 5.2%) and the lowest level of car ownership per household in Bristol¹. As Church Road extends away from more central parts of the city, the levels of deprivation and ethnic diversity reduce, although the majority of LSOAs in the area are within the highest two quartiles for overall deprivation.



WHO TOOK PART?

The Lamplighters worked in partnership with 16 community groups to offer workshops where local people could make lanterns for the parade with the guidance of artists. There were a mixture of workshops in three primary schools during the school day, free open-access workshops in community venues targeted

¹ <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/statistics-census-information/new-wards-data-profiles>

² <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/statistics-census-information/deprivation>

at specific groups of community members, and bookable workshops where people paid a small fee to take part (between £1 and £5). If people could not attend a workshop, they could purchase a lantern making kit to make a lantern for the parade at home. Groups involved were:

- Summerhill Academy
- St Patrick’s Catholic Primary School
- Redfield Educate Together
- St George Community Centre
- Barton Hill Activity Group
- Bethesda Methodist Church
- Make Lunch (a school holiday lunch club at St Luke’s Church in Barton Hill)
- PROPS (a day opportunities group supporting adults with learning disabilities)
- Somali Women’s group
- Learning Partnership West
- Space (Old Market)

The Lamplighters invested time in developmental work to involve Barton Hill Academy which unfortunately did not result in workshops in the school. In addition to the workshops hosted and supported by partner organisations, open access workshops were also organised independently by The Lamplighters.

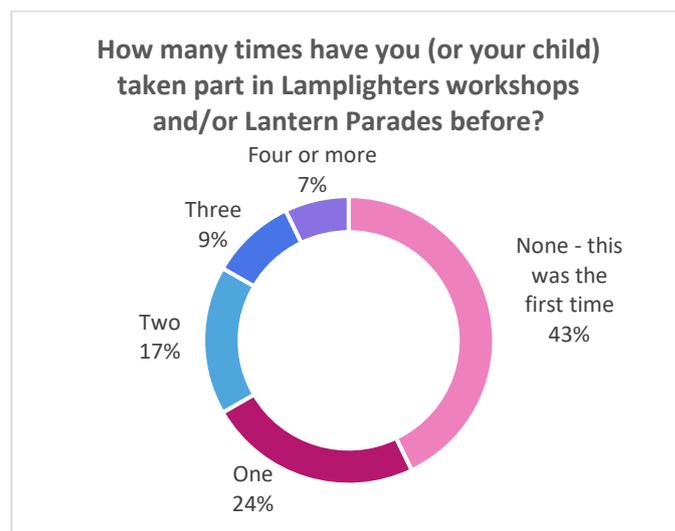
A number of local businesses supported the project in different ways. Little Treasures toy shop sold the lantern kits for people to make at home (without any commission or mark-up), Smart Move removal company offered free van hire and practical support from their staff such as stewarding. Sponsorship from Parks Estate Agents met the costs of printed publicity leaflets.

All activities took place in the Church Road area. Amongst responses to the online questionnaire, almost all lived within the immediate localities of Redfield, St George, Whitehall, Barton Hill, Greenbank, Easton and Lawrence Hill. Although some responses were from slightly further afield (Hanham, St Anne’s Park, Fishponds and Speedwell) all were from East Bristol communities.

The workshops were structured in different ways to accommodate the settings and different people who were to take part. In schools, the staff selected whole

classes or year groups to take part in the workshops. Some workshops were designed around the activities of partner organisations, for example Make Lunch, which offers families the opportunity of a free healthy lunch during school holidays. The PROPS group had non-disabled support workers to assist group members. The Barton Hill Activity Group is a community-led group which organises free activities for families. Some of the bookable workshops were aimed at families to work together to create a lantern whilst others were more technically challenging therefore intended for adults and older children. The workshops at Bethesda Methodist Church were supported by volunteers from the church congregation who also got involved in the lantern making.

The online questionnaire responses showed a balance of involving people who were participating for the first time in 2020, alongside those who had taken part in previous years.



WHAT DID PEOPLE THINK?

Qualitative data gathered from people involved came from three main sources: an online questionnaire; short verbal phone interviews with three adults who had taken part in workshops, two group leaders and three teachers; and the Artists' "journal" – structured written notes which documented each workshop. The text from these three sources was thematically analysed using open coding to identify important themes relevant to the project outcomes and illuminative evaluation approach. A "template" of thematic codes (King, 2004) was created for each. As there was considerable overlap amongst themes from the questionnaire and interviews, the two templates were combined. The combined template is shown in full below followed by a discussion of some key themes with illustrative quotes.

Online questionnaire and interviews template of themes

Community
Pride in the community
Taking part creates a connection to local community
Positive atmosphere and community spirit
Parade is an impetus to get involved in community action
Bringing people from different backgrounds and demographic groups together
Opportunity for social interaction
Meeting new people
Opportunities to meet up with existing friends
Getting to know people better and re-connecting with people
Repeat participation
Parent-child interaction, parents and children do the activity together, spending time as a family
Health and wellbeing
Fun and enjoyment
Anticipation and looking forward
Trying new things and different activities, learning in a different way
Help with specific issues around wellbeing and mental health
Positive experience
Activity outside of the home and winter-time activity (something to do)
Time and space for individuals to be on their own (enabling concentration and focus)
Time and space to be creative with others which enables conversation

Art and creativity
Opportunity for personal creativity and messiness
More creative freedom than other creative activities (eg. at school)
Learning new skills
What is it about lanterns that enables these benefits?
Visual spectacle
Not just a children's activity
Different ways to participate
Creative activity as a group
Even by just watching, you can join in in a community event
Celebratory aspect of the parade is important, celebration of creativity and creating something for a purpose
Inclusivity – everyone can participate in lantern making no matter what their capability
Structure and organisation
Workshops aimed at different groups of people appreciated
Artistic themes and structures appreciated, but with a balance between artistic direction and allowing for individual creativity
Flexibility in how workshops were structured to meet differing needs was appreciated
Partnerships
Developing partnerships through utilising existing community connections
Enhancing activities of (unfunded) community groups
Assisting community groups with their objectives (engaging with local community and trying to make people's lives better)
Bringing different people in to make use of church facilities
Learning from Lamplighters' approach of open-ended and participant-led creative activities
Quality
High regard for the artists – relationships and approach to the work (warmth and passion)
Recognition of workshop leaders' skill and experience
Flexibility and adapting structure to meet different people's needs and facilitate everyone to have a creative input
Artists' relationship with people
Call for more
Appreciation and gratitude

With such a wealth of responses, there were many different aspects to the board themes of: community, opportunity for social interaction, health and wellbeing, art and creativity, what is it about lanterns that enables these benefits, structure and organisation, partnerships and quality.

For people who took part in the workshops, community and social interaction were by far the predominant themes in their responses. People's main motivation for

getting involved was they valued taking part in activities which helped them to feel connected to their local community and to demonstrate pride in where they live.

I wanted us to do something together as a family and take part in the community. It helped us meet and get to know some people better in the community. It was particularly great that it was our neighbourhood rather than going to a different neighbourhood.

To be part of a community activity and feel more connected to my neighbours.

A great community event – beautiful art, lots of smiles, taking ownership of the roads, a sense of community togetherness and gratitude.

More people wrote about the importance of spending time as a family. Opportunities to meet new people were important in addition to reconnecting with existing acquaintances.

Fun activity for myself & 3 year old. New to Bristol, wanting to get involved in the community.

It's a great way for the community to come together... make new friends and feel part of a group.

A fun thing to do with family and see friends that we don't see often enough! Great way of involving the local community in something creative and positive.



Both the group leaders interviewed (from Barton Hill Activity Group and Bethesda Methodist Church) felt the workshops had brought together people from different backgrounds and demographic groups. The workshops

in the church were supported by volunteers from the primarily elderly congregation, whilst the workshop participants were young families and adults with learning disabilities from PROPS. Workshops for PROPS members were integrated with families who came to the after-school sessions, both working at the same tables. The group leader of BHAG spoke about how everyone was welcome in their group.

We have all sorts of people from different religions and different backgrounds, so, when an activity like that comes, you know, they do it together. The majority of the club are from Somalia and we have Arab families who are from Yemen, we have Turkish families, we have other African families.... We welcome anyone.

Aspects of wellbeing were evident in many people's contributions to the evaluation. People repeatedly wrote in the questionnaire that their reason for taking part was for fun.

The whole experience from making to being in the procession looked like it would be great fun.

Getting the community together and children having fun.

Several people wrote and spoke of anticipating the event – those who had previously taken part and also people who had only watched before.

It's become part of our yearly calendar, something to look forward to in the long dark end of winter.

The feeling of community and excitement. It is really magical and the kids talk about it all year.

This was the first year we were going to take part after seeing it the previous year. I thought it looked absolutely beautiful and you could see the pride of all the kids taking part with something they had made.

For some people, the positivity of the experience, the connecting to others in the community, and learning new things through a creative activity were how the workshops and parade contributed to their wellbeing. A small number of people identified that the workshops

helped with their own specific wellbeing needs, for example:

I do a lot of crafts and art stuff, whenever I can... and it's been really good for my mental health actually because, yes, I had a bit of postpartum anxiety.... nice to have something that I can just concentrate on and focus on.

For this mother, she appreciated that the workshop was aimed at adults and older children so she could take part without her young children. The workshop gave her time on her own to focus on a creative activity. Other people valued the workshops as they created a space for conversation with others.

Many people spoke about how they enjoyed the opportunity to be creative and to learn new creative skills. Parents valued the opportunity for their children to be messy and to have more creative freedom than they had, for example, at school. A few people commented that the parade being a night-time activity was important to them.

It's exciting for the kids, there is a great atmosphere and I love the community coming together in spaces I would avoid during dark hours.

Being in the crowd, walking along together, the energy of being in a group, the creativity that was evident in all the lanterns that were made, a great dark time evening event to be part of.

The purpose of a thematic analysis process is to summarise and identify concepts which are not evident through reading individual contributions to evaluation data. One area where the thematic analysis process was particularly valuable at drawing together disparate comments was regarding specifically *why* a lantern making workshop and parade enabled the benefits and outcomes which people were reporting. What is it about lanterns which has these effects on community connections and wellbeing? For some people, it is the visual spectacle of a lantern parade which captures their attention and creates a desire to get involved.

They're really beautiful lanterns as well, and it's something stunning to see as it goes by. The first Christmas that we moved into the area I saw the lantern parade go along the high street and I remember it being a real highlight. It was one of those moments where I thought, 'Oh, amazing – I've moved into a great area. This is really lovely'. I remember taking photos, and sharing it on social media and saying, 'How lovely is this?'

This was the first year we were going to take part after seeing it the previous year. I thought it looked absolutely beautiful and you could see the pride of all the kids taking part with something they had made.



For others, it is the opportunity for different generations to take part together. Making and processing is not just an activity which is fun for children but is valued by their parents and older adults too.

Everyone's very busy, busy lives these days... we're out working, we're doing other things at weekends, doing other stuff with family, or doing other things. It's more that us adults are missing out on that parental interaction with other people we know. We've known some of these people since my daughter went to nursery, we've known them years and years, and we don't see them every week, and so it's nice to be able to come together and do something that is not just for the kids, it's for the grown-ups as well. We can all get involved with it.

The variety of workshops and the ways which the artists adapted to the differing needs of participants meant that anyone could be included and join in however they wished, no matter what their capabilities.

It was lovely to see some of the young people from PROPS just really flourishing... For example, there was a young girl who had very patterned wheels on her wheelchair and we were talking about the patterns that she might want to incorporate into the llama lanterns and that was something she wanted to do, but she was struggling to engage, because of her physical disabilities. So, the result was, we took some photographs of her wheelchair wheel designs and had them up on the screen for her to look at so that she could then use that for her design.

What I really liked as well, was because I was a bit slower... I ended up doing a bit at home and then coming back to do another workshop to finish it off because I hadn't been that fast with it. But that was nice because I've probably got a slower process than some people because I like to really get it right. They were very kind to let me come back and give me a bit more guidance at the next stage of the making it, which was nice because you come away with something that you're really proud of rather than just rushing it.

Several people felt that the celebratory aspect of the parade was important. Making something for a purpose which enabled individual creativity to be shared and celebrated by the community was valued.

Another aspect of *why* lanterns enable these benefits was down to the different ways people can choose to participate. Even by just watching the parade, people can join in the celebration.

We have loved making and being part of the workshops in the past and holding the lanterns in the parades. It's a great way for the community to come together, and celebrate the Festival of Light, end of Winter, Spring beginnings.

It's just that joining of the community and the joy that it brings at seeing something that we're all taking part in – or even just watching – but that interaction and the enjoyment of something that we're all doing together.

The final three groups of themes are more concerned with the organisation of the events and how The Lamplighters worked in the community. Appreciation of how the workshops were structured and organised was noted in the questionnaire and amongst the different

types of interviewees (adult participants, group leaders and teachers).

It was lovely for the children that it wasn't stretched out across the term, and that they got something really tangible out of the day.

I definitely think it's good that they have some stuff for the adults and older children as well. I think that's really helpful.

It was brilliant that there were several workshops at various times and different skill levels so there was a workshop to suit everyone.

Things that I found valuable – they [the artists] were less prescriptive than perhaps we would be if we were running something, because we maybe don't feel quite so comfortable having lots of people and working with them more fluidly. They're obviously very comfortable with it and I just noticed that felt a much more creative way of working.



The workshops involved a mixture of people creating their own lanterns individually or with their family and working collectively on larger pieces for the parade. The balance of the artists providing artistic leadership, structure, materials and guidance, whilst also allowing for individual creativity, was noted.

One of the things I noticed – when we run activities they are often towards a particular end. So, for example, we might have something particular that we're encouraging people to come in and make at the workshop, it might be kids' Christmas gifts... One of the things that was different, I noticed about Dee – is much more open-ended. Although they have a particular focus in mind making things together, it was much more attendee led. So, I am an ex-

teacher, so I guess there's something around allowing learners to learn for themselves and explore and learn and have those outcomes that they're creating for themselves as well as having an outcome in mind.

Although the previous two quotes illustrate how the structure and organisation of workshops were valued, they are also relevant to the next theme of partnerships. The interviews with group leaders and teachers included discussion of how The Lamplighters worked in partnership with other organisations during the project. One aspect of the partnerships was learning from The Lamplighters open-ended and participant-led approach.

People commented on how existing community connections were utilised to involve different organisations in the workshops and parade. One example is the connection with Barton Hill Activity Group which was new for the 2020 events and was crucial to extending The Lamplighters work into communities with high levels of disadvantage and diversity. This connection was aided by one of The Lamplighters' artists having a child at the same school as the BHAG group leader and the social connection that creates. A further aspect of the partnership working is how hosting a workshop enhanced the activities unfunded groups could offer to their members. This was particularly valued by BHAG whose members experience significant economic deprivation.

We don't have facilities like that. We haven't had something like that before, so, the children enjoy having something different because, as I say, we haven't got funding. Anyone coming to do any activity with children we welcome them. The most thing that was important was that it was something different that children could do. It was an extra activity as well – the children could engage – there needed to be co-ordination and a lot of things.... They were using their brain in a different way. The last weeks they weren't doing [making] the Llamas. When it was done what they were doing was dancing with them [Llama puppets], lights on it. It was all fun but at the same time it was a new skill for them.

I think it was something really out of the ordinary for them that we wouldn't necessarily have the skills or the materials to do in school. We always have brilliant ideas for thinking of new projects but there's neither the time to, a) upskill

teachers, and b) risk assess it all and things like that. Doesn't always end up happening, so that was brilliant to give them the opportunity.

The Lamplighters helped community groups to achieve their objectives. The church group leader spoke about this at length. The church aims to improve people's lives, helping them to cope with hardships, extending into the wider community beyond their existing congregation.

The demographic of the church is predominantly over 60s, mostly white, and long-term Bristolians. The art workshops... actually attracted a very different demographic. For me, it was that engagement with the local community and getting to know people and being alongside and listening and spending time with people. For those from the church congregations, they had an opportunity to engage with people they wouldn't normally. So, they'd come alongside families, the young people with learning difficulties they wouldn't normally engage with. I think that community building was really important – just that celebration of creativity in the local area, that lifts people from the day-to-day and some of the hardness that people face. As a faith person, that's really important, because I think it gives people hope.

The lantern workshops also brought new people into the building to make use of a community space.



The final group of themes concerned indicators of quality. There was an appreciation and gratitude towards The Lamplighters artists – an indicator that

people valued the opportunities created. There was a high regard for the quality of the relationships the artists fostered with community members and partner organisations.

I think they're very personable, worked well with the children.

I honestly wouldn't change a thing, it worked really smoothly. Like I say, the things that... could be improved on the first day were improved for the second day. I just got the impression that it was all very kind of flexible and really keen to work around the school, and just a really positive experience.

I think it was really excellently done and really well thought out and it's obviously done with warmth and passion and I think that shines out.

There were several comments which acknowledged the skills of the artists, both in creating the lanterns and in the process of facilitating the workshops by adapting to the needs of each group.

I think the most valuable aspect is someone who is clearly an expert in the product that they're making, so that the children can see clearly how it's made. We had a finished product, which we could see, and the children knew what they were working towards. All of the steps, because Dee is obviously the expert in it, she knew the relevant steps and could go through and show the children.

... brilliant at taking the idea and then running with it and not... Yes, it felt very low pressure on us, but we still felt very involved, which was lovely.... with children was brilliant in terms of sharing what they had to do.... brilliant communication with the children, really good with sharing in the ways that the adults could be involved and really receptive to the advice. The first class did it... the way it was structured didn't work quite so well and there was a bit of children standing around. She adapted that for the next day, that worked really, really well. Yes, brilliant.

There were comments that people and organisations would like to be involved again – a call for more as an indicator of quality.

*Just that we'd love to do it again to be honest.
I really benefited from it, personally, as well as within my role, as a good creative space and would love to do it again.*

The only critical feedback which came through the questionnaire and interviews was a small number of people felt that the event could have been more widely publicised.

In addition to the themes on page five, there were three other groups of themes from the interviews with teachers which were only relevant to the school settings: benefits to children, benefits to the school and further indicators of quality in an educational context.

Benefits for children:
A different voice to the teacher, working with different adults
Developing qualities such as patience, resilience, teamwork, co-operation
Learning, asking questions, focus on oracy and children developing their language
Inclusive and confidence building for children who struggle with formal learning
Links to curriculum, developing DT and art skills (don't get enough opps in school)
Benefits to the school:
Brings additional skills and materials into schools, gives teachers creative ideas
Parade is an opportunity for teachers (who may not live in the area) to experience being part of a community event
Parental engagement in school / relationships with parents important
Indicators of quality:
Good communication, artists personable / good relationships, high level of satisfaction regarding how artists worked with children and in the schools, two-way partnership

The benefits for the children included the opportunity to work with guidance of a different adult than their usual teacher. Teachers spoke about different characteristics of learning which the workshops developed, both personal qualities and skills around speech and language.

...required patience and a little bit of resilience, when they were using certain resources that they may not have used before.

The creativeness of it, and the DT skills, the art skills... they do it in the pairs or threes, and the teamwork and cooperation. It's phenomenal.

During a discussion about how much time it was possible within the school curriculum to give several days to a workshop, one teacher spoke of how important it was to them to use experiences like this for children to develop their language.

It might not be the same for every school, but... with our children, because of where we are in Bristol, using a lot of oracy. We want the children to talk about what they're doing. The new language that they were getting, about the mechanisms and so on, that was really important, a really important part of it.

Although the inclusive nature of the workshops was commented on by other contributors to the evaluation, for the educators, this was particularly important in the school context and how the workshops enabled everyone to achieve.

[the most important thing] I would say the inclusivity, the fact that you can do it. It's something that looks particularly tricky at first, and you could see some of the children thinking, goodness, am I going to be able to make this in just these couple of days? It gives them, the children themselves, that little belief that, do you know what? It doesn't matter whether it takes you a bit longer than someone else, you can definitely make something like this.

Children who, in our experience might struggle with more formal reading, writing, maths, find these kinds of different activities and collaborating with different people, not just their teacher, find them really beneficial and a way to boost and build their confidence.

The benefits to the schools and teachers included bringing new skills and materials into school.

I think it was something really out of the ordinary for them that we wouldn't necessarily have the skills or the materials to do in school.

I think it gives them [other teachers] inspiration, and especially those that are involved in the lantern making process. We do have others, other staff who aren't involved at all in that, but still come to the parade to see what our children accomplished which is quite nice. And it gives them ideas just for learning and projects and have creative links between the artists and teachers who have worked with them in the past for good sources of advice.

Another benefit of the parade is that it enables school staff, many of whom do not live in the local area, to share in a community event. This was beneficial to the school as the workshops were an out-of-the-ordinary activity which provided an opportunity for parental engagement – something which is particularly important to schools. For one teacher, utilising the workshops to develop parental engagement more was something they would explore for future work.

There were additional indicators of quality relevant to the school context. All teachers commented that communication from The Lamplighters' artists was excellent. The artists fostered good relationships with staff and children and were flexible in responding to the needs and structures of the school environment. There was a high level of satisfaction regarding how the artists worked with the children.



Artists' Journals

To document the workshops from the artists' perspective, they were asked by the evaluator to keep a "journal" of brief notes about each workshop using the structure of the intended project outcomes. These notes

were thematic analysed in the same way as the interviews and questionnaire responses. There was a great deal of overlap with the themes from the interviews and questionnaires, but the journals did reveal some additional information which is useful to the evaluation process. Themes which were very similar to the interviews and questionnaire responses concerned the aspects of wellbeing, the social interaction of meeting new people or strengthening existing connections, the inclusive nature of the workshops, people's anticipation and ownership of the parade, the mutually beneficial nature of the partnerships, and reflections on how the structure and organisation of activities could be adapted to better meet people's needs.

There were three groups of themes which were additional to the interview and questionnaire responses. A consideration of *how* people participate was notable. The artists observed repeat engagement and how people who had taken part in previous years were building their skills and confidence over time. They observed people taking part by chance through the open-access workshops and benefits of offering different kinds of activities to enable different levels of participation. They noted the value of 1-2-1 interactions between artists and participants in small group workshops. The artists observed how, for some people, taking on a role of volunteer was a way into actually taking part in the creative activities, where they might not have the confidence to sign up to participate for its own sake.

There were observations about the artistic and creative aspects of the activities. They noted that the workshops at BHAG to get people performing with their creations added an element of playfulness. The performance, puppetry, mime and dance offered a different dimension than the visual art and craft skills involved in making the lanterns. One artist reflected on the potential negative aspects of increased artistic ambition when one participant was frustrated by the technical skill required to make a lantern – a perennial consideration in community arts of achieving the right balance of artistic ambition whilst also maximising participation for all.

The journals documented two areas for improving future activities. It was felt that not being able to involve the PROPS members in the parade, due to the availability of

support workers, was a challenge. The notes documented how one of the schools did not support the workshops in the way which The Lamplighters intended.

What the notes did reveal of interest to an evaluation process is a high level of reflection and criticality amongst all the artists. The journals not only documented verbatim quotes from participants which captured evidence of outcomes, but also their own direct observations of what worked well and what could be improved for subsequent workshops. This demonstrated a flexibility in their practice (again, an indicator of quality). The notes showed a depth of thinking from the artists about their own practice – the nature of community arts participation, a high degree of evaluative thinking and documenting not only evidence of outcomes, but also longer-term impact.



Notes of reflective conversations

Notes of reflective conversations between the evaluator and The Lamplighters artists documented other key points, but the notes were not systematically analysed as the other sources of qualitative data were.

These conversations were crucial to the illuminative process and to understanding the contextual factors of why the activities and experiences The Lamplighters create enable the intended outcomes. The most important point from these conversations concerns the very nature of how and why professional artists work in and with particular communities. Dee succinctly expressed this as:

I'm not an artist working in a community, I'm an artist working in my community.

This appears to be a key factor in the success of The Lamplighters' approach – that the artists are working in their own geographic and social community, therefore the relationships and connections they can draw upon for projects such as Flock Together, go beyond what people from outside the community might be able to achieve. The long-term nature of the relationships and commitment to the Church Road area were also documented in these notes. Dee spoke of “plodding” as an analogy in her development of the lantern workshops and parade – a sustained measured effort over time to build the relationships and partnerships needed to successfully achieve The Lamplighters' aims.



REVIEWING THE EVALUATION QUESTIONS

This section of the report considers the questions the evaluation process sought to answer. The quotes and discussion in the previous pages somewhat illustrate how these conclusions have been reached, although they draw on a much greater volume of data than it is possible to present in this short report.

1) To what extent have the project outcomes been achieved?

Judgements about whether the intended outcomes of the 2020 workshops and parade were achieved are based on the data and evidence already discussed. These judgements have been collaboratively made between the evaluator and The Lamplighters.

Outcomes for individuals, families and the wider community

Reduced (or prevented) social isolation and enhanced wellbeing through developing existing and creating new community connections and sense of belonging in the community.

Enhanced wellbeing through collective participation in enjoyable, creative inter-generational activities.

Greater confidence to take part in creative and community activities, for those who are new to arts participation and outdoor celebratory arts.

Greater confidence to utilise local public spaces after dark and a change in perceptions of the local area due to creative animation of public space.

More opportunities for cross-cultural collective activities which could lead to greater social capacity.

The first two of these outcomes have been strongly met. Amongst those who have contributed to the evaluation, many people reported indicators of wellbeing and of developing new and existing connections in their local community. Enhancing a sense of pride in the community through collective celebration has been a particular strength on the project. Fun and enjoyment were a major theme in the responses and many people appreciated how the events provided opportunities to spend time together as a family. There is evidence that the third outcome above has been met as 43% of questionnaire respondents reported taking part for the first time. However, this does not establish whether they were completely new to arts activities. The interviews with group leaders and teachers show that people were taking part in activities which were new to them and they were learning new skills.

Due to the parade not taking place, the fourth and fifth outcomes were not fully met. Whilst people did speak of the value of coming together in a night-time activity, this was based on participation in previous parades, rather than 2020. The workshops did achieve some cross-cultural activities, however, this could have been far greater if families from BHAG had been able to take part in the parade. It was reported by the group leader and artists that many had an intention to take part. It is likely that these outcomes would have been met more strongly if Flock Together had concluded as planned.

Artistic and organisational outcomes

Professional development for The Lamplighters artists through greater artistic ambition and increased quality of artistic process and completed work, than previous Church Road Lantern Parades.

Greater quality of experience for workshop and parade participants and audiences through more investment in artist time and a more spectacular finale than previous Church Road Lantern Parades.

Consolidation of The Lamplighters position as artists who work in their community and increased confidence to develop longer-term sustainability in their socially engaged arts practice.

Strengthening partnerships with local organisations who can support further development of the work.

Judgements about the artistic outcomes were complex. The Lamplighters' artists reflected that their increased ambition for the parade finale took a lot of planning time. This took focus away from the workshops which resulted in some lanterns created in the workshops being not as high-quality as in previous years. Although the outcomes were met somewhat, as the artists did develop their professional practice through the experience, and aims of increased quality were evident, they were not entirely satisfied with the project process and results. They felt they needed even more artist time for both the finale and workshops to achieve the quality they were aiming for. Achieving the right balance of artist time with numbers of children in year groups, whilst also reaching the desired artistic quality for the completed lanterns, was challenging. The Lamplighters clearly gave great consideration to how best achieve the right balance through detailed discussions of how to address the challenges for future work.

The position of The Lamplighters as artists in their community was firmly established and the evaluation activities and process has enabled further reflection about the value and strengths of the work. The partnerships were a strong factor in the success of the project, with group leaders and teachers wishing to be involved again. The artists felt that partnerships with schools were particularly strong in this year's project. Consideration of how working in partnership could be

developed to more effectively address the priorities of the community groups for future work was evident.

2) What contextual factors have influenced the achievement of aims and outcomes?

Where the outcomes were not strongly met, this was largely due to COVID-19 and the necessity to cancel the parade. A global pandemic is a contextual factor that has previously been beyond the risk assessments of UK-based community development and outdoor celebratory arts projects. This is the only factor identified through the evaluation process which has negatively influenced the achievement of outcomes to a significant degree. Factors which have promoted the achievement of intended outcomes are the long-term nature of The Lamplighters' work which has enabled them to develop relationships over time and to utilise existing connections in the community for the benefit of the project.

Achieving the high-quality artistic ambitions could have been met more strongly if there had been more resources for artist time. Structuring the school workshops to take place over several days with one artist was judged to be less effective than fewer days with two artists, as in previous years.

Other contextual factors which justify resourcing more artist time are that all schools have high proportions of children with English as an additional language, therefore children require a lot of support. The physical layout of some schools in old Victorian buildings proved challenging for creating large-scale collaborative artwork.

The adaptation of evaluation methods due to COVID-19 had benefits and drawbacks. The addition of interviews enabled a far greater depth of qualitative data from some contributors than might have been achieved with original plans to request feedback from teachers through online questionnaires. A drawback is that it was not possible to capture feedback from people who would have been part of the audience for the parade. Without the parade taking place and the social media activity it would have generated, the number of responses to the online questionnaire are likely fewer than could have been achieved if the parade had taken place. The online

questionnaire was primarily completed through requests on The Lamplighters' Facebook page – therefore effective at eliciting responses from existing followers but perhaps not capturing the perspective of the wider community. Older people, PROPS members and BHAG members may have more limited access to social media and online resources to contribute to the questionnaire.

3) What is most valuable or important about the Lantern Parade to those involved: children / parents / families, adult participants, schools and teaching staff, community group leaders, the wider community?

For families and adults who took part, the sense of community pride, celebration and opportunities to connect with others were most important.

For group leaders, what was most important varied due to the nature of the community groups. For BHAG, having new activities which families could do which provided learning and fun for children was most important. For the church, another mechanism to engage with the community was important whilst playing a role in bringing people together and improving their lives.

For teachers, bringing additional arts and DT resources and skills into school was important along with the opportunity for bringing people together in a community celebration.

It was not possible to capture the perspectives of the wider community as audiences due to the cancellation of the parade.

4) What are the key points of learning or reflection which the evaluation process has captured?

There is a strength in projects of this nature being developed by artists who are part of the local community and have a long-term commitment to the area.

The evaluation process has articulated *how* and *why* the activities of lantern making and a parade enables the outcomes people reported in their contributions to the evaluation.

Investment in more artist time could increase the quality of the workshop process further and also increase the quality of the lanterns produced. Whilst the balance of focus on process versus product is an enduring issue in community arts, it is clear that both process and product are important elements to the success of the Lantern Parade. Participants value the social connections and opportunities for creativity they gain from the workshops, but the sense of pride in their lanterns and the visual spectacle of the large structures are key to the celebratory nature of the event.

The evaluation process has enabled The Lamplighters' artists to reflect on how investing in more artist time could work for future projects. Two ideas discussed are to have two artists working together in school workshops and commissioning a producer to manage the finale element of the parade. Although The Lamplighters would wish to retain artistic control, commissioning another organisation to produce the finale spectacle would enable them to have a greater focus on the workshops.

Whilst all evaluations have limitations in terms of reach and resources, a major limitation of the evaluation process has been that children's voices are only represented through their parents and teachers. For future work a different evaluation approach and methods could be considered if more resources for evaluation were available.

CONCLUSION AND WHAT NEXT?

Despite the challenges and disappointment of cancelling the parade due to COVID-19, the overall conclusion of the evaluation process is that the 2020 Church Road Lantern Workshops and Parade made a significant contribution to community wellbeing through supporting social connections and facilitating pride in the community. Many of the intended project outcomes were strongly met. The artists' approach to reflective practice demonstrated an understanding of how outcomes which were not fully met could be achieved for future work.

The opportunity to pause, reflect and re-evaluate afforded by the COVID-19 lockdown has enabled The Lamplighters to plan how their work can continue to

support their local community. At the end of this evaluation process, they have plans for the future which fall into four categories:

To undertake an organisational development process, possibly establishing a Community Interest Company, to strengthen organisational and governance structures will enable The Lamplighters' artistic and community development ambitions.

To strengthen the partnership with Bethesda Methodist Church to support the Deacon and congregation to meet their objectives in the community, whilst also addressing barriers between faith-based community groups and the wider community.

To respond to the disappointment amongst community members that the celebratory parade did not happen. Online conversations with the community during the lockdown have shown that some people are finding it hard to accept that the parade is cancelled rather than postponed. The Lamplighters are exploring how it might be possible for people to share and celebrate each other's work – possibly through an outdoor socially distanced illuminated walk.

To plan for the future when large-scale mass gatherings may not be possible for some time due to COVID-19. The Lamplighters are formulating plans for a change in direction for their work for the next 18 months to 2 years which enables them to keep in touch with participants and audiences, whilst also supporting people's creative and community development needs. They are considering how to support the high number of key workers and carers in the local community and investigating how creative support groups might provide a forum for people to connect and share their experiences.



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