

 **Creative
Communities**
Community Innovation
Practitioners



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Research council invest half a million in new Creative Communities UK pilot

A project funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) at Northumbria University has secured an additional £470,000 of investment, on top of the original 1.3 million award, to develop new knowledge about community and cross-sector partnership working in research & development (R&D).

The [AHRC Creative Communities](#) programme, based at Northumbria, today announced five new Community Innovation Practitioner awards as part of a unique pilot to action the recommendations of the [By All, For All](#) report

(2023) that argued for opening up research funding to new non-academic partners.

The aim of the CIP Pilot is to capture vital new knowledge on the roles of communities and non-academic partners in collaborative R&D across arts and humanities, so that academic funders and governments can promote more inclusive models of innovation.

Each CIP will generate a case study on their project, offering insight into the partnerships, processes and policies that shape and are shaped by the local communities they are working with. They will also work with a podcast producer to create a podcast capturing the voices of the people involved in their collaborative R&D. Learning from the pilot will inform a series of policy papers on culture, communities and levelling up by the programme in 2025.

The [Community Innovation Practitioner \(CIP\) Pilot](#) supports five CIPs to work in collaboration with cross-sector partners to tackle shared challenges and opportunities faced by their local communities. The five project themes address the key pillars of the UK government levelling up agenda: education and skills, health and wellbeing, environment and climate, and civic identity and pride in place.

AHRC Creative Communities Programme Director Professor Katy Shaw details the value of the CIP Pilot: “The CIP pilot is a significant investment by AHRC that recognises the evidence provided by our report that shows how co-creation and collaboration are key to addressing the biggest challenges and opportunities facing our research ecosystem today. By building more inclusive models of innovation, and by opening the door to research for more people and in more places, we can diversify who does research, who benefits from its findings, and show how co-creation can catalyse our creative communities across the UK.”

Today’s announcement reveals that there will be a CIP in each of the four nations of the UK, and two based in Northern Ireland. This cross-union approach is designed to showcase the research strengths and opportunities of the devolved nations. The pilot also actions a recommendation for academic funders to invest in better understanding of the processes involved in cross-sector collaborative R&D and to address the need to target levelling up places to pump prime partnership capacity – another recommendation of the Creative Communities deep-dive report, [By All, For All: The Power of](#)

[Partnerships](#) which launched in May 2023.

The benefits, challenges, and future possibilities of collaborative partnership will also be explored in the first ever survey of non-academic partners who have engaged in AHRC research, launching in Autumn 2023. This will be followed by a series of Policy Labs held across the UK in Spring 2024, where cross-sector collaborators will have the opportunity to generate new solutions to key challenges in collaborative R&D.

Executive Chair of AHRC Christopher Smith said: “Everyone everywhere should benefit from and have the opportunity to engage in R&D through creativity and culture at a local level no matter their location, means or background. And arts and humanities must continue to innovate in mechanisms of funding, in methods of knowledge and exchange, and in products and services which change people’s lives.”

The five Community Innovation Practitioners (CIPs) are:

[Gaston Welisch \(University of Glasgow IAA\)](#)

‘Applying Design-led Innovation to Improve Community Co-Created R&D’

[Jim Donaghey \(Ulster University IAA\)](#)

‘Get Portrush a Skatepark! Nurturing Skateboard Culture on Northern Ireland’s North Coast’

[Áine Brady \(Queens University Belfast IAA\)](#)

‘Using the Arts to Empower Communities to Break Cycles of Silence’

[Georgina Aasgaard \(University of Liverpool IAA\)](#)

‘Fostering Wellbeing Through Music Collaboration and Co-creation in the Community’

[Alexander Langlands \(Swansea University IAA\)](#)

'Heritage at Risk: Creative Communities for Sustainable Powerful Places in De-industrialised South Wales'

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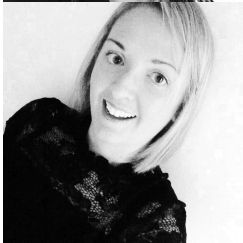


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