



Oct 07, 2024 10:07 BST

## **UK Culture and Community Cohesion: Community Innovation Practitioners reveal results of UKRI inclusive innovation pilot**

[AHRC Creative Communities](#) is a £3m major research programme based at Northumbria University. It explores how co-created culture can enhance belonging, address regional inequality, deliver devolution, and break down barriers to opportunity for communities in devolved settings across all 4 nations of the UK.

Led by Northumbria University academics, the programme's 2023-4 [Community Innovation Practitioner \(CIP\) Pilot](#) awarded £290k to five CIPs across all the four nations of the UK to work with cross sector stakeholders and communities with the aim of generating new culture to enhance community cohesion.

Over the last 12 months the 5 CIPs have worked with government, private, public and third sector partners to deliver new cultural research and development (R&D) aimed at enhancing local belonging and pride in place and opening new access to collaborative R&D.

Their new [podcast series](#), [case studies](#) and devolved [policy papers](#) provide timely evidence on the value of cross-sector partnership working to deliver cultural innovation and community cohesion in devolved contexts.

## **Devolution and R&D**

Through podcasts, case studies and policy papers the CIPs profile the voices of communities that operate at the heart of innovation. These new publications capture vital new knowledge on the power of diverse partnerships, co-creation, and its potential to shape and sustain resilient communities as well as more inclusive models of innovation and R&D.

The CIP work ranges from the use of photography, poetry and drama to empower communities and break cycles of silence around trauma and substance use ([Áine Brady, Queens University Belfast](#)); the role of heritage sites in fostering sustainable development in de-industrialised regions ([Alexander Langlands, Swansea University](#)); the power of music to unite diverse communities in Liverpool ([Georgina Aasgaard, University of Liverpool](#)); collaborative filmmaking with skateboard communities to reignite civic pride and identity in Portrush ([Jim Donaghey, Ulster University](#)); and the use of design-led tools to promote communication between arts and humanities academics and community partners ([Gaston Welisch, University of Glasgow](#)).

The research also offers practical guidance for communities, academics, third and private sector organisations, and policymakers seeking to implement co-creation strategies to tackle challenges within their own communities and devolved contexts.

## New Funding Award

It has been announced today that the UKRI Creative Communities programme has been extended by AHRC to 2027 with an additional £1.7 million funding award.

The funds will be used to scale up the Community Innovation Practitioner (CIP) award for 2025/2026, doubling the number of opportunities for new CIPs. [A call is now open](#) for up to 10 Community Innovation Practitioners with the commitment to have at least one award in each of the four nations of the UK.

To mark the launch of the CIP research, the extension funding and the brand-new CIP award call, the AHRC Creative Communities team will be hosting [a virtual CIP Showcase on Weds 23 October 2024, 11am](#) and an [Expression of Interest webinar for potential applicants to the new funding award on Weds 13 November 2024, 11am](#). Full details and registration are available on the [AHRC Creative Communities website](#).

## Quotes

### Executive Chair of AHRC Christopher Smith:

*“AHRC Creative Communities seeks to bring rigorous research and a principle of co-creation to building stronger local partnerships. The Community Innovation Practitioner award brings research and practical understanding together to make us all partners in developing the potential we have, to be better, creative and more fulfilled citizens. This scheme exemplifies AHRC’s commitment within UKRI to evidence-driven citizen science, underpinned by our strategy to Transform Tomorrow Together.”*

### AHRC Creative Communities Programme Director Prof. Katy Shaw:

*“There has never been a more important time to focus on the key role that culture plays in catalysing community cohesion and a sense of belonging and pride in places up and down the UK. Our five Community Innovation Practitioners (CIPs) prove what is possible when the powers of devolution and culture come together to radically reimagine who does research, how we share its findings and the spill over benefits of facilitating a more inclusive innovation ecosystem. R&D is a jewel*

*in the crown of the UK. Our CIPs show that cross sector communities in all 4 nations are creating cutting edge cultural research that is truly by all, for all. We look forward to the next round of awards that launch today and encourage everyone to apply.”*

**Arts Council England’s Director of Research and AHRC Creative Communities Advisory Board Member Andrew Mowlah:**

*“The Community Innovation Practitioners represent a groundbreaking step in making innovation truly inclusive by embedding creativity and community engagement at the heart of research and development. By fostering cross-sector partnerships and empowering local voices, this initiative aligns with our vision of supporting creative approaches that contribute to broader societal challenges. We are proud to support the Creative Communities programme and its commitment to shaping a future where innovation benefits everyone.”*

**Notes to editors:**

**About Creative Communities**

AHRC Creative Communities

<https://www.creativecommunities.uk/>

Creative Communities Deep Dive Report ‘By All, For All: The Power of Partnerships’

[https://www.creativecommunities.uk/research\\_articles/creative-communities-deep-dive-report/](https://www.creativecommunities.uk/research_articles/creative-communities-deep-dive-report/)

[Creative Communities](#) is funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council UK (Grant Agreement No AH/X001555/1) and delivered by Northumbria University, UK.

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## UNIVERSITY OF THE YEAR 2022 (Times Higher Education Awards)

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Two thirds of Northumbria's undergraduate students come from the North East region and go into employment in the region when they graduate, demonstrating Northumbria's significant contribution to social mobility and levelling up in the North East of England.

Find out more about us at [www.northumbria.ac.uk](http://www.northumbria.ac.uk)

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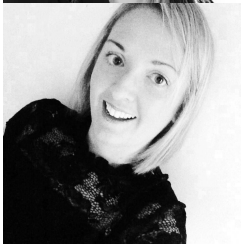


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