



# Start Thurrock: Phase 1 Evaluation

## Appendix 1: Methodology and data sources

April 2026

### Evaluation approach

We have strong beliefs about evaluation and making it work to be useful. This affects everything about how we approach evaluation design and implementation.

### Underlying principles

The principles that underpin our approach to evaluation are:

1. **Evaluation is valuable as much for learning and change as it is for understanding whether outcomes were achieved** – processes and approaches are as important as outcomes.
2. **Learning and change occur continuously throughout the life of a project** and beyond. We commit time to giving feedback informally on a regular basis and see outcome sharing as equally important as any summative report.
3. **Evaluations should always be a joint endeavour** – people are at the heart of understanding the impact of the programme and supporting change, so human-centred design methodologies are embedded in our practice.

4. **Having a participatory, co-creative approach to evaluation is essential to engage and inspire** staff, artists, advisory groups and participants. They need to understand the value of evaluation, and we need to make it meaningful to them.
5. **Embedding skills are essential to what we do** – we will seek to develop opportunities for training and skills development within any evaluation programme.
6. **The importance of making the case for a programme** – this is particularly in the need for clear, validated analysis and reports which speak to multiple audiences.

### The evaluation process

Utilising the principles set out above, we worked in partnership with the Start Thurrock CPP team in a scoping activity to develop a Story of Change (please see **Appendix 2**) and Evaluation Framework. We then carried out direct data collection (see below) and offered mentoring and support to Start Thurrock with their own data collection. We will review the Story of Change and data collection with Start Thurrock regularly as part of our ongoing evaluation. Due to rounding errors, percentages contained in the report may not always total 100%.

### Data collection approaches

**Engagement and demographic monitoring data** – collected by the Start Thurrock team at events over the phase using surveys and monitoring, totalling 1,629 responses. Includes information about events, as well as the demographics and qualitative experience of audiences and participants.



**Interviews** – 43 total 1-to-1 interviews with a range of stakeholders using the Story of Change as a framework to guide questions.

**Observations** – 29 total observations at Start Thurrock events throughout the phase by several different team members who provided written reports which captured qualitative data on the ‘feel’ of events as well as audience and participant experience.

**Reflections** – 12 team learning discussion workshops and panel reflections including written feedback, observation and a focus group. Facilitated by RMR, these discussions are designed to draw out learning.

The table below shows more detail about our data sources and sample sizes for each year in the phase, as well as the total.

| Data source                                                     | Description                                                                                                                    | 23-24                                        | 24-25                                        | 25-26                                        | Total                                        |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| Engagement and demographic monitoring data                      | Data collected by Start Thurrock team at events, demographic information of audience/ participants                             | 559 responses                                | 527 responses                                | 543 responses                                | 1,629 total responses                        |
| Indices of Multiple Deprivation and Audience Spectrum postcodes | Data analysis by RMR team (Mac Ince) and The Audience Agency of postcodes collected by Start Thurrock team at events this year | 1,817 and 2,026 valid postcodes respectively | 1,497 and 1,736 valid postcodes respectively | 1,743 and 2,468 valid postcodes respectively | 5,056 and 6,230 valid postcodes respectively |
| Interviews                                                      | 1-to-1 interviews with Start Thurrock team and Consortium members                                                              | 3 interviews                                 | 5 interviews                                 | 3 interviews                                 | 11 interviews                                |
|                                                                 | 1-to-1 interviews with partners                                                                                                | 6 interviews                                 | 11 interviews                                | 2 interviews                                 | 19 interviews                                |



|                    |                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                    |
|--------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
|                    | 1-to-1 interviews with artists or art organisations              | 3 interviews                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | 1 interview                                                                                                                                                                                          | 2 interviews                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | 6 interviews                                       |
|                    | 1-to-1 interviews with Start Thurrock panel members              | 3 interviews                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | N/A                                                                                                                                                                                                  | N/A                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | 3 interviews                                       |
|                    | 1 to 1 interviews with volunteers                                | N/A                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | 1 interview                                                                                                                                                                                          | N/A                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | 1 interview                                        |
|                    | 1 to 1 interviews with participants                              | N/A                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | 3 interviews                                                                                                                                                                                         | N/A                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | 3 interviews                                       |
| Focus groups       | Consortium focus groups                                          | N/A                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | 1 focus group                                                                                                                                                                                        | 1 focus group                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | 2 focus groups                                     |
| Event observations | Observations at Start Thurrock events by members of the RMR team | <p>14 observations by 3 people:</p> <p>3 x Taster events Summer 2023, Hyperlocal panel observation – being part of the audience and speaking to attendees, Light Up observation March 24 x 2 RMR people at one event, Green Light observations – Feb 24 (3 days attended by 2 people, 8 events attended)</p> | <p>8 observations by 3 people:</p> <p>Colourscape observation, Music of the Spheres observation, Big Lunches, Green Light observations – Feb 25 (2 days attended by 1 person, 5 events attended)</p> | <p>7 observations by 4 people:</p> <p>Big Top, The Myths of the Marshes, Kids Business/Wishlers and Green Light observations including the Clay hand building &amp; modelling workshop, Brave Bettie and A Place at the Table: Textile and Natural Dye Workshop</p> | 29 observations over the phase by RMR team members |

## Appendix 1: Methodology and data sources

Start Thurrock Phase 1 Evaluation Report - April 2026



|                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                   |             |             |                                   |
|--------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-----------------------------------|
| Team learning discussions - reflection workshops | Team learning discussions held in Thurrock with RMR to help draw out learning and challenges each year over the phase                                                                                                                                                                                                       | 4 workshops                       | 4 workshops | 4 workshops | 12 workshops                      |
| Panel reflections                                | <p>Reflective focus group, feedback forms completed by members of the Start Thurrock panels and observations at panels:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Core Panel focus group – 4 participants</li><li>• Core Panel observation</li><li>• August 23 (9 participants) &amp; March 24 (4 participants)</li></ul> | 17 participants and 1 observation | N/A         | N/A         | 17 participants and 1 observation |