

Start Thurrock: Phase 1 Evaluation

Appendix 4: Evaluation Framework

Updated April 2026

Introduction

This evaluation plan details how RMR are working with Start Thurrock CPP to evaluate its work overall. It is designed as a working and internal document and intended to support understanding and partnership between the team, the Consortium and the evaluation team. The scope model in Appendix A outlines what the evaluation's purpose is.

Start Thurrock Programme Aims

We structure our evaluation around a Story of Change which centres on stakeholders and outcomes (**who** we aim to make a difference to and **why** we do the work) but also considers our principles and approaches (**how** we will approach the work). This is considered against **what** we do – the activities – to check that the logic model holds up. Start Thurrock's Story of Change – based on workshop discussion and the Business Plan Theory of Change is below.

For this evaluation, Start Thurrock's key outcomes (the **why** of the Story of Change) are:

A Communities in the driving seat

A1 Community are empowered to **inform** and **shape** the local cultural offer

B Develop cultural demand

B1 Increased **cultural engagement**

B2 **Confidence** to engage in the arts and sense of **right to culture**

C Develop more high quality and ambitious cultural supply

C1 **More excellent, participatory place based cultural work** produced

C2 **Skills & knowledge for** participatory art

C3 **Better joint working** between all partners

C4 Arts and culture are **valued** by diverse stakeholders

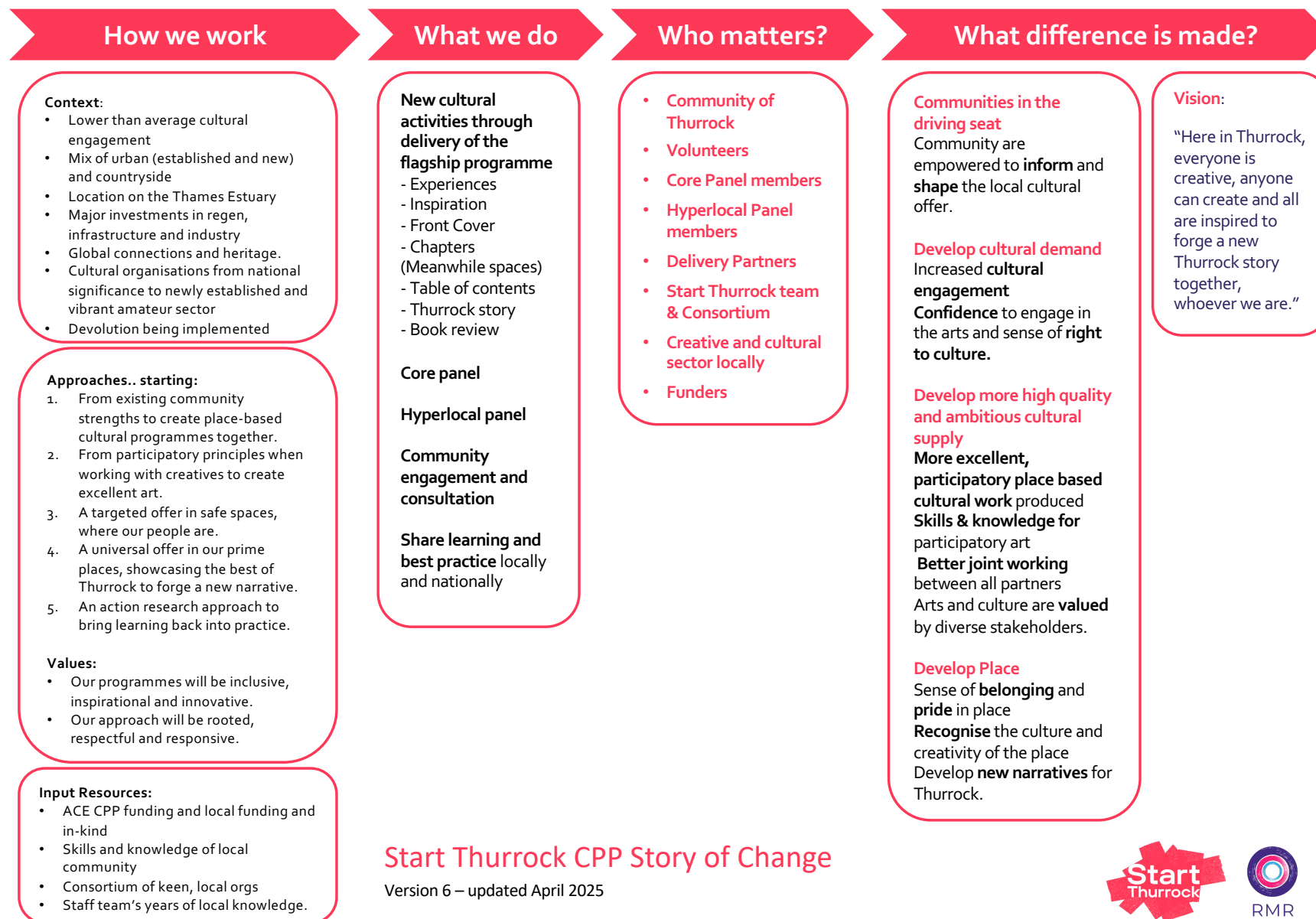
D Develop Place

D1 Sense of **belonging** and **pride** in place

D2 **Recognise** the culture and creativity of the place

D3 Develop a **new narrative** for Thurrock

Story of Change



Start Thurrock CPP Story of Change

Version 6 – updated April 2025

Evaluation Questions mapped to Story of Change and ACE Research questions

The table below sets out the evaluation questions – which arise from the Story of Change elements. The 'who' is mainly numbers, the Why and How move into qualitative questions. The next stage is mapping these to measures and data gathering.

Who?	Evaluation Questions	ACE RQ tie in	Measures (short)	Data source	Who collects?	When	Shared with RMR
Community of Thurrock	How many people does Start's work reach?	RQ1	attendances	Activity Summary	Start/ delivery partners	At Events	quarterly
all demographics	does Start's work reach across all demographics	RQ1	demographics	Audience & Participant Survey	Start/ delivery partners	At Events	quarterly
from all areas	does Start's work reach across all areas	RQ1	postcodes	Audience & Participant Survey	Start/ delivery partners	At Events	quarterly
from lower and medium engagement	does Start's work reach across lower and medium engagers (target segments)	RQ1	postcodes/ audience spectrum	TAA annual analysis/ Illuminate tbc	Start/ delivery partners	At Events	quarterly
Volunteers (inc Community Researchers)	How many and what sort of volunteers engage?	RQ1	volunteer stats	Volunteer Team/ CVS	CVS	At sign up and quarterly	annually

Core Panel members	How many members and who are - in terms of representation and reach	RQ2	numbers and demographics	Sign up stats	Start	At sign up and quarterly	annually
Hyperlocal Panel members	How many members and who are - in terms of representation and reach	RQ2	numbers and demographics	Sign up stats	Start	At sign up and quarterly	annually
Delivery partners	how many and what sort of partners do Start engage with		numbers and demographics	Partner stats/ contracts	Start	at contracting	annually
Start: Thurrock team & Consortium	Who is part of the team - roles, background, reach		numbers and demographics	Annual workforce survey & Yearly Overview of CPP staffing	Start	annually	annually
Creative and cultural sector locally	does Start's work reach across sector locally		numbers and links	Partner mapping - tbc	Start with RMR	Annually	annually
Funders	who funds Start		figures	Accounts	Start	Annually	annually

Why?	Evaluation Questions	ACE RQ tie in	Measures (short)	Data source	Who collects?	When	Shared with RMR
Communities in the driving seat							
Community are empowered to inform and shape the local cultural offer	Are Thurrock communities informing and shaping Start's offer	RQ2	data on involvement of core panel in design and decision making, feedback from team	records, interviews	Start and RMR	annually	annually
Community are empowered to inform and shape the local cultural offer - beyond Start	Are Thurrock communities informing and shaping wider Thurrock offer	RQ2	feedback from team and stakeholders	reflection logs and interviews	RMR		
Community are empowered to inform and shape the local cultural offer - sense of control	Do core group and other communities feel they inform / shape the local cultural offer	RQ2	feedback from core panel and other community groups	interviews/ focus group	RMR		
Develop cultural demand							
Increased cultural engagement	Are Start audiences more likely to engage in other arts and culture? (more and more often)	RQ1	agree scale	survey, focus groups	Start and RMR	as relevant to data collection model	Annually

	Do Start audiences know what arts and culture is on offer (awareness)	RQ1	agree scale and examples	Audience & Participant Survey, focus groups	Start and RMR	as relevant to data collection model	Annually
Confidence to engage in the arts and sense of right to culture	Do Start audiences feel confidence to engage in the arts		agree scale and narrative	Audience & Participant Survey, focus groups	Start and RMR	as relevant to data collection model	annually
	Do Start audiences feel confident to express their views on arts and culture on offer to them		narrative	focus groups	Start and RMR	quarterly/annually	annually
	Do Start audiences feel confident to express their ambitions in terms of making/producing/ promoting cultural work		open question and narrative	Audience & Participant Survey, focus groups	Start and RMR	as relevant to data collection model	annually
Develop more high quality and ambitious cultural supply							
More excellent, participatory place based cultural work produced	Is there more work produced and shown in Thurrock		narrative	interviews/ focus group/ team reflection	RMR	annually	
	is the work produced and shown in Thurrock of high quality (resonance, product)	RQ2	narrative and I&I case studies	interviews/ focus group & I&I survey questions	Start and RMR	as relevant to data collection model	

	is the work produced and shown in Thurrock of high quality (made through excellent participatory practice)	RQ2	narrative and I&I case studies	interviews/ focus group & I&I survey questions	Start and RMR	as relevant to data collection model	
Skills, knowledge for participatory art	Do creatives locally have more skills and knowledge about participatory art	RQ2	open question and narrative	artists survey and team reflection	RMR	annually	
	Do creatives locally see the value and want to work in participatory art		open question and narrative	artists survey	RMR	annually	
	Is there more information, and are there more pathways locally into participatory art		open question and narrative	artists survey and team reflection	RMR	annually	
Better joint working between all partners	do partners work together more and better		narrative	reflection logs and interviews	RMR	annually	
Arts and culture are valued by diverse stakeholders	are arts and culture valued by all Start stakeholders as a way of delivering on their core aims		narrative	reflection logs and interviews	RMR	annually	
Develop Place							
Sense of belonging and pride in place	do Start audiences express a sense of belonging to their place(s)		agree scale (& narrative?)	Audience & Participant Survey & focus groups	Start and RMR	as relevant to data collection model	
	do Start audiences feel pride in place		agree scale & narrative	Audience & Participant	Start and RMR	as relevant to data	

				Survey & focus groups		collection model	
	do Start audiences feel a shift in confidence and self-belief to express their needs for their place - precursor to empowered to inform and shape		agree scale & narrative	Audience & Participant Survey & focus groups	Start and RMR	as relevant to data collection model	
Recognise the culture and creativity of the place	do Start partners recognise the culture and creativity Thurrock has to offer		narrative	interviews	RMR	Annually	
	do Start audiences recognise the culture and creativity Thurrock has to offer		agree scale & narrative	Audience & Participant Survey & focus groups	Start and RMR	as relevant to data collection model	
Develop a new narrative for Thurrock	does Start know what the narratives of Thurrock are		narrative	reflection workshops	RMR	Annually	
	are new narratives shared within Start delivery and development		document review	Start documents	RMR	Annually	
	is a new narrative developed for Thurrock		document review/ narrative	reflection workshops	RMR	Annually	
	is this new narrative shared and embraced by stakeholders		document review/ narrative	interviews / reflection workshops	RMR	Annually	

How?	Evaluation Questions	ACE RQ tie in	Measures (short)	Data source	Who collects?	When	Shared with RMR
Approaches							
1. Starting from existing community strengths to create place-based cultural programmes together	is this reflected in Start's practice, what effect does it have on any outcomes	RQ3	narrative	reflection sessions/ observation	RMR	Quarterly	
2. Starting from participatory principles when working with creatives to create excellent art	is this reflected in Start's practice, what effect does it have on any outcomes	RQ3	narrative	reflection sessions/ observation	RMR	Quarterly	
3. Starting a targeted offer in safe spaces, where our people are	is this reflected in Start's practice, what effect does it have on any outcomes	RQ3	narrative	reflection sessions/ observation	RMR	Quarterly	
4. Starting a universal offer in our prime places, showcasing the best of Thurrock to forge a new narrative	is this reflected in Start's practice, what effect does it have on any outcomes	RQ3	narrative	reflection sessions/ observation	RMR	Quarterly	
5. Starting and continuing with an action research approach to bring learning back into practice	is this reflected in Start's practice, what effect does it have on any outcomes	RQ4	narrative	reflection sessions/ observation	RMR	Quarterly	
Values: our programmes will be		RQ3		reflection sessions/ observation	RMR		
inclusive , open to anyone,	is this reflected in Start's practice, what effect does it have on any outcomes	RQ3	narrative	reflection sessions/ observation/ audience feedback	RMR	Quarterly	

inspirational exciting people to engage again,	is this reflected in Start's practice, what effect does it have on any outcomes	RQ3	narrative	reflection sessions/ observation/ audience feedback	RMR	Quarterly	
Innovative whilst open to experimentation with a range of amazing creative approaches	is this reflected in Start's practice, what effect does it have on any outcomes	RQ3	narrative	reflection sessions/ observation/ peer review (I&I)	RMR	Quarterly	
rooted , grounded in the reality of local life	is this reflected in Start's practice, what effect does it have on any outcomes	RQ3	narrative	reflection sessions/ observation/ core team focus group	RMR	Quarterly	
respectful sensitive to the diversity of our people	is this reflected in Start's practice, what effect does it have on any outcomes	RQ3	narrative	reflection sessions/ observation/ core team focus group	RMR	Quarterly	
Responsive whilst continuously listening and facilitating the creative aspirations of our people	is this reflected in Start's practice, what effect does it have on any outcomes	RQ3	narrative	reflection sessions/ observation/ core team focus group	RMR	Quarterly	
Context							
Lower than average cultural engagement	what difference does this factor make to delivery and outcomes?	RQ3	narrative	reflection/ documents	RMR	Quarterly/annually	
Mix of urban (established and new) and countryside	what difference does this factor make to delivery and outcomes?	RQ3	narrative	reflection/ documents	RMR	Quarterly/annually	
Location on the Thames Estuary – major investments in regen, infrastructure and industry – global connections and heritage. (TEPC and CDF input)	what difference does this factor make to delivery and outcomes?	RQ3	narrative	reflection/ documents	RMR	Quarterly/annually	

Cultural organisations from national significance to newly established and vibrant amateur sector	what difference does this factor make to delivery and outcomes?	RQ3	narrative	reflection/ documents	RMR	Quarterly/annually	
Opportunities to link to broader agendas and funding opportunities	what difference does this factor make to delivery and outcomes?	RQ3	narrative/ investment figures	reflection/ accounts & bids	Start and RMR	Annually	Annually
Inputs							
ACE CPP funding and local funding and in-kind	what is the mix of funding, is this mix right for sustainability?	RQ3	funding split	accounts	Start	Annually	Annually
Skills and knowledge of local community	how is Start using the assets of the local community? What difference does this make to the outcomes	RQ3	narrative	reflection sessions, interviews	RMR	Quarterly/annually	
Consortium of keen, local orgs	is this the right consortium? how is Start using the assets of the Consortium? What difference does this make to the outcomes	RQ3	narrative	minutes, reflection sessions, focus groups	RMR	Annually	
Staff team's years of local knowledge	what difference does it make that the team have local links, what difference is made by having a director with local links and experience	RQ3	narrative	reflection sessions	RMR	Quarterly	

Our Evaluation Tools

Key:

Email or online		Face to face, group	
Paper form		Phone	
Face to face, one to one		Analytics	
Observation			

Tool		Type	Collected by	Collected from	When
1	Audience & Participant Survey	  	Start / Delivery partners	Audiences & participants	During
2	Activity Summary	  	Start / Delivery partners	Events	Ongoing
3	Observation		Start/RMR	Audiences & participants and Core Panel	Ongoing
4	Focus group	 	RMR	Audiences & participants, Core & Hyperlocal Panels, Volunteers & Community Researchers, Evaluation Focus Group	Annually
5	Interviews	  	RMR	Core & Hyperlocal Panels, Volunteers & Community Researchers, Artists, Delivery Partners, Start, Consortium	Annually
6	Artists & Delivery Partners Survey	 	RMR	Artists & Delivery Partners	After/ Annually
7	Core & Hyperlocal Panels & Volunteers Survey	 	RMR	Core & Hyperlocal Panels, Volunteers & Community Researchers	After/ Annually
8	Skills Wheel	 	Start	Artists	Before & After

9	Project Story of Change	😊 😊😊😊 📱 ✎	RMR/Start	Artists	Before & After
10	Co-creation session reflection tools	📱 ✎	Start	Core & Hyperlocal Panels	After
11	Monitoring (sign up data)	📱 ✎	Start/CVS	Core & Hyperlocal Panels, Volunteers, Community Researchers, Artists & Delivery Partners	During
12	Team reflection session	😊😊😊	RMR	Start team	Quarterly
13	Reflection journal	📱 ✎	Start	Start team	Monthly
14	Stakeholder / Consortium reflection focus group	😊 📱	RMR	Delivery Partners, Consortium	Annually
15	Context mapping update workshop	😊😊😊	RMR	Start team & Core Panel	Annually
16	Community peer review	😊😊😊	RMR	Core & Hyperlocal Panels & Community Researchers	Annually
17	Annual workforce Survey	📱	Start	Start team & Consortium	Annual
18	Accounts	📊	Start	Start	Ongoing
19	Document Analysis	📊	Start	Start team	Ongoing

Tools and activities

Activity	Tools																		
	Audience & Participant Survey	Activity Summary	Observation	Focus group	Interviews	Artists & Delivery Partners Survey	Core & Hyperlocal Panels, Volunteers & Community Researchers Survey	Skills Wheel	Project Story of Change	Co-creation session reflection tools	Monitoring (sign up data)	Team reflection session	Reflection journal	Stakeholder / Consortium reflection focus group	Context mapping update workshop	Community peer review	Annual workforce Survey	Accounts	Document Analysis
Community of Thurrock	✓	✓	✓	✓															
Volunteers (Inc Community Researchers)				✓	✓		✓				✓								
Core Panel members			✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	✓				✓	✓			
Hyperlocal Panel members			✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	✓					✓			
Delivery Partners					✓	✓					✓				✓				
Artists					✓	✓		✓	✓								✓		
START: Thurrock team & Consortium					✓							✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Creative and cultural sector locally					✓									(✓)	✓				✓
Funders					✓									(✓)					✓
Inspirations	✓	✓	(✓)	(✓)	(✓)	(✓)					✓	✓	✓			(✓)			
Experiences, e.g. trips & tastings	✓	✓	(✓)	(✓)	(✓)	(✓)						✓	✓			(✓)			
Front Cover, e.g. Meanwhile Spaces	(✓)	✓	(✓)	(✓)	(✓)	(✓)						✓	✓			(✓)			
Chapters, e.g. non-traditional cultural spaces	✓	✓	(✓)	(✓)	(✓)	(✓)					✓	✓	✓			(✓)			
Table of Contents		✓										✓	✓			(✓)			✓
Thurrock Story, e.g. large scale events			(✓)	(✓)	(✓)	(✓)	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	(✓)			
Book Review, e.g. story of START's journey	✓	✓	(✓)	(✓)	(✓)	(✓)	(✓)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	(✓)	(✓)	(✓)	✓		
Core Panel Decision making sessions					✓		✓				✓	✓	✓	✓					

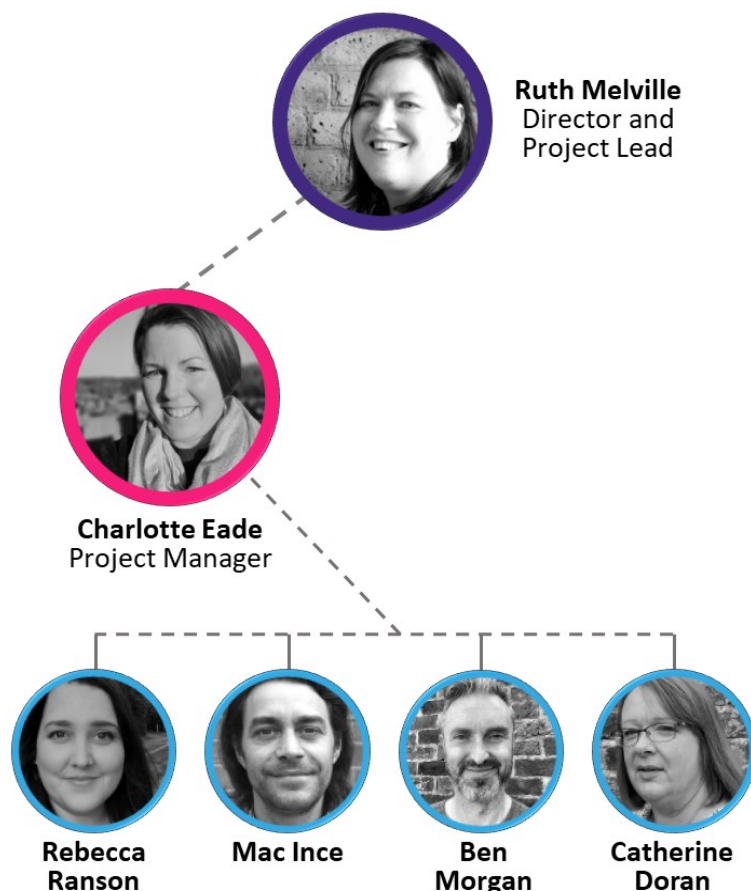
Analysis and reporting

Analysis will take place at the end of each delivery year with interim reports being produced in May 2024 and May 2025.

In May 2026, a final report was produced which reflects on the whole phase.

All reports will respond to Arts Council England's three Research Questions.

Research Team



The diagram shows the lines of responsibility for this project.

As Project Lead, Ruth has overall responsibility, with Charlotte acting as Project Manager and handling the day-to-day running of the project and managing the wider Team.

Dr Ruth Melville, Director and Project Lead

Ruth is the Project Lead, advisor and quality assurance.

Charlotte Eade, Project Manager and Lead Researcher

Charlotte is the main point of contact and manage the project day to day, as well as providing mentoring and being the lead researcher on the project

Catherine Doran, Researcher and Administrator

Catherine will carry out research on the ground and provide research, data and administrative support.

Rebecca Ranson, Quantitative Research Associate

Rebecca leads on quantitative data collection and analysis, as well as creating accessible infographics to present summary findings to a wide audience.

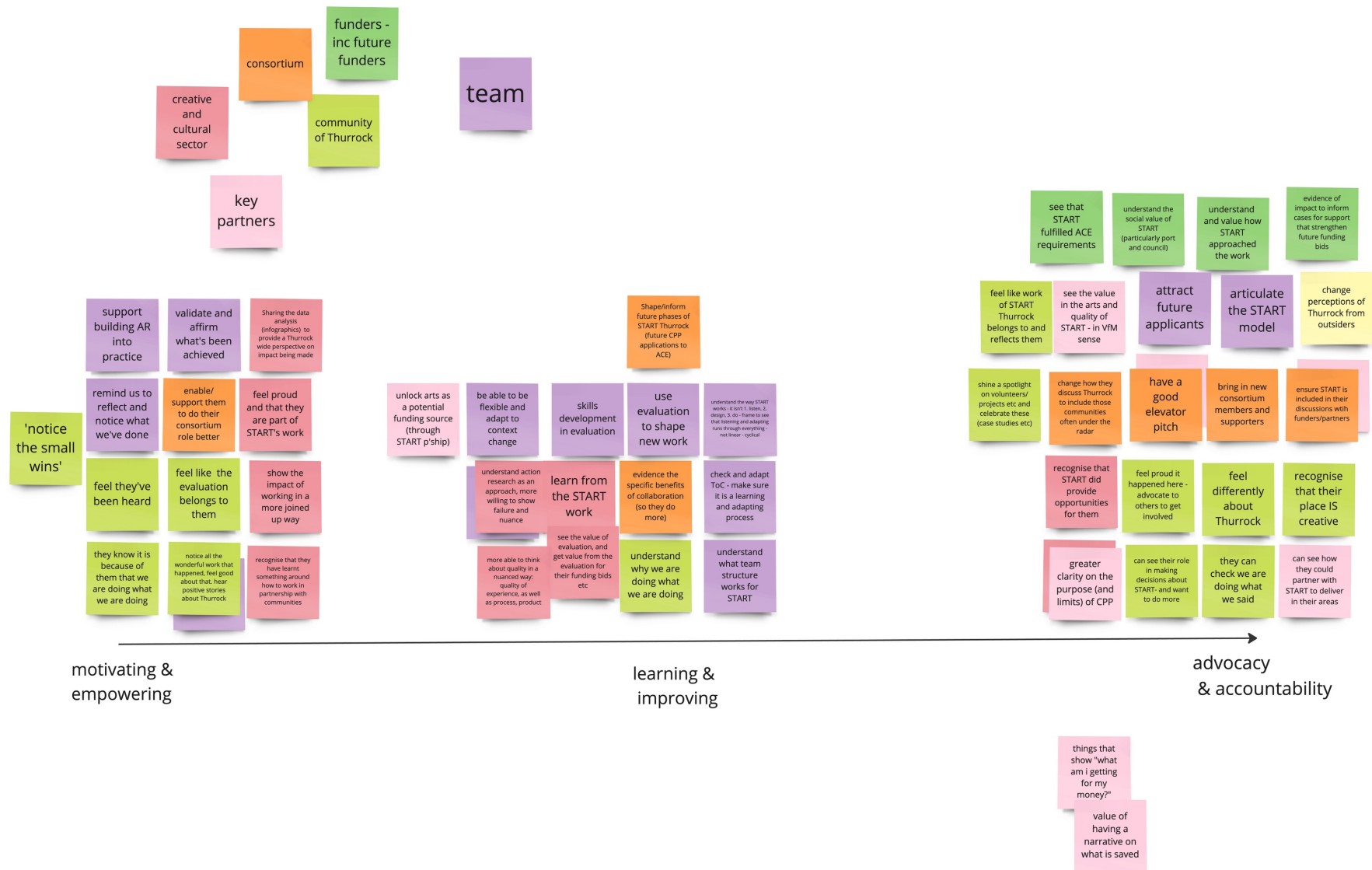
Mac Ince, Data Analyst

Mac carries out secondary data analysis, audience mapping and statistical analysis.

Ben Morgan, Researcher and Communications Associate

Ben will provide research and communications support, as well as overseeing any written outputs.

Appendix A – Scope of the Evaluation



Appendix B – Alignment of Story of Change and Evaluation Framework with Start business plan

The Story of Change uses slightly different elements and language than the Theory of Change within the Business Plan as adaptation is needed to operationalise the Story of Change (SoC) as a basis for our Evaluation Framework (EF). RMR's method goes beyond asking 'did it meet its aims?' or 'what were the outcomes?' into 'what particular aspects of the programme, approach and context led to these?' – the critical success factors, and barriers.

To ensure clarity of purpose we have pulled together a read across mapping the Story of Change elements to the equivalents in the Theory of Change and the Business Plan (BP)¹ as a whole.

Matching outcomes to the 'why of the Story of Change

The 'why' – the difference we make are effectively the outcomes for a Story of Change, the current set are (labelled for efficient linking):

A Communities in the driving seat

A1 Community are empowered to **inform** and **shape** the local cultural offer

B Develop cultural demand

B1 Increased **cultural engagement**

B2 **Confidence** to engage in the arts and sense of **right to culture**

C Develop more high quality and ambitious cultural supply

C1 **More excellent, participatory place based cultural work** produced

C2 **Skills, knowledge and pathways** into work in participatory art

¹ For the purposes of this report we refer to: START Thurrock Business Plan 2023 – 2025 Including Year 2 Delivery Plan (2023-24) START Thurrock Business Plan - May 2023 EXT.pdf, [supplied Sept 2023]

C3 Better joint working between all partners

C4 Arts and culture are **valued** by diverse stakeholders

D Develop Place

D1 Sense of **belonging** and **pride** in place

D2 Recognise the culture and creativity of the place

D3 Develop a **new narrative** for Thurrock

Business Plan outcomes (pp7-8)	Map to SoC
Short Term (during phase 1)	
S1 - Joint working between creatives and community to better engage public	Direct map to C3
S2 - Quality and ambition of cultural programme reflected in public commissioning decisions	C1 and C4 cover this
S3 - Public decision makers have broader awareness of cultural possibilities	C4, hopefully this implies A1 as well
S4 - Better pathways and support for local creatives to work with communities	C2
S5 - Easier for public to access information on cultural provision possibilities	This is a prerequisite/linked to B1 and B2. We could include as an additional outcome if wanted but would be measured under these
S6 Cultural programme is the product of public decision making processes	Direct map to A1 where A1 relates to Start programme – i.e. is a part of A1
S7 Start: Thurrock contributes learning towards national programme	This is an activity/ input, not an outcome – but would lead to D3 and link into our suggested additional ‘approach 5’
Medium Term (by end of Phase 1)	

M1 - Over 4 years, 54% of the adult population (71,277 people) will have engaged in culture	This is a measure associated with B1
Long Term (after phase 1)	
L1 Quality and Ambition of cultural opportunity in Thurrock is higher than before	A1, B2, C1, C4 in particular are leading indicators/prerequisites for this
L2 Supply and Demand of cultural opportunity in Thurrock is higher than before	B1 and C1
L3 A positive placebased narrative from local people supports strategic development of place	D3
L4 Engagement in arts and culture increases nationally	This would follow from B1 – query the ‘claim’ on this as arising from sharing learning.

From the table above, it is clear that the SoC covers all areas of the Theory of Change. We don't differentiate short, medium and long term outcomes in our modelling – although we do in our analysis. Some of the outcomes in the SoC are only likely to fully come to fruition in the longer term, but there are 'leading indicators' of them which form the measures in the evaluation framework

Matching the 'How' of the Story of Change

Approaches and Values

For any Story of Change we need to agree the approaches, principles and/or values which the organisation or project holds as these are usually key to any understanding of what works and why. Within the scoping workshop we developed a set of approaches and values which we shared with Start team. However, once we received the BP it was clear that there are already some strong approaches (within the Mission) and values written in (pg). We suggest that the workshoped ones are used additionally for the evaluation – ie to shape our approach further, but that we revert to the business plan version for the main SoC – with the addition action research as an approach - as it is a core element of CPP and otherwise doesn't really feature in the Story of Change:

Workshopped list

- Principles and Approaches:
- Build on community strengths

- The programme and evaluation belongs to and is accountable to the community
- Importance of sharing and informing in the right language
- Importance of visibility: of those under the radar and noticing the small wins
- Flexibility and adaptability
- Action research inside and outside of Thurrock

BP mission

“Our mission:

More Thurrock people will engage in cultural activity – as producers, audiences, consumers and participants by:

1. Starting from existing community strengths to create place-based cultural programmes together
2. Starting from participatory principles when working with creatives to create excellent art
3. Starting a targeted offer in safe spaces, where our people are
4. Starting a universal offer in our prime places, showcasing the best of Thurrock to forge a new narrative
5. Starting and continuing with an action research approach to bring learning back into practice

Our values:

Our programmes will be **inclusive**, **inspirational** and **innovative**, open to anyone, exciting people to engage again, whilst open to experimentation with a range of amazing creative approaches

Our approach will be **rooted**, **respectful** and **responsive**, grounded in the reality of local life, sensitive to the diversity of our people, whilst continuously listening and facilitating the creative aspirations of our people” p9

Within the picture version the values have been shortened, for the EF they are spelt out more fully – work with the Core group and/or Community researchers will be undertaken at analysis stage to assess programme against these (similar to a peer review approach)

inclusive , open to anyone,
inspirational exciting people to engage again,
Innovative whilst open to experimentation with a range of amazing creative approaches
rooted , grounded in the reality of local life
respectful sensitive to the diversity of our people
Responsive whilst continuously listening and facilitating the creative aspirations of our people

Inputs

We have developed the inputs from our reading of the BP, drawing out those that seemed most likely to be significant

Input (from SoC)	Linked evaluation question (shorthand)	Logic
ACE CPP funding and local funding and in-kind	what is the mix of funding, is this mix right for sustainability?	Start Thurrock has a lot of in-kind support, as well as potential and desire to link to non-arts funding. This could be significantly different to most CPP models so is key to explore. It is also a sustainability factor.
Skills and knowledge of local community	how is Start using the assets of the local community? What difference does this make to the outcomes	As Start is linking into 'Stronger Together' which has an ABCD model this investment should be foregrounded and it's impact explored
Consortium of keen, local orgs	is this the right consortium? how is Start using the assets of the Consortium? What difference does this make to the outcomes	Consortium are a key investment into Start – need to ensure this input is valued and discussed. Need to explore the relative roles of consortium input and other forms of community voice – eg core group
Staff team's years of local knowledge	what difference does it make that the team have local links, what difference is made by having a director with local links and experience	Appointment of a Creative Director with many years of directly applicable experience – within the local area – is not a common model in CPPs but is an aspiration – should be explored for learning.