

THE PANDEMIC AND BEYOND



The Arts and Humanities Contribution
to Covid Research and Recovery



University
of Exeter



Arts and
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INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS THE PANDEMIC AND BEYOND?

The Pandemic and Beyond (P&B) is a cross-disciplinary coordination project based at the University of Exeter. It is responsible for co-ordinating the Arts and Humanities Research Council's COVID-19 research portfolio of 77 UK-based projects that responded to a call, first issued on 31 March, 'for ideas to address COVID-19'. The portfolio projects focus principally on the UK and contribute to understanding the urgent problems created or exacerbated by pandemic mitigation measures in the UK while exploring practical solutions.

The first tranche of 19 projects in the portfolio started their research between May and September 2020, with the first project concluding in October 2020. A second tranche of 58 projects began their work between October 2020 and January 2021, with the bulk of projects concluding either in the summer or autumn of 2022.

P&B began in February 2021 and will conclude at the end of February 2023. Since May 2021, P&B has functioned as a virtual hub where researchers, user groups and policymakers can meet, find out about ongoing and recent research that is relevant to them, and can work together to share expertise and resources. The P&B online policy hub is designed to inform and bring about change in the response to nationwide crises including and beyond COVID-19. It is evidence of the importance of Arts and Humanities research to future crises in local, national and international settings.

P&B is funded by AHRC and is supported by additional funding from the University of Exeter (Policy Support Fund; Open Innovation Platform Fund; Open Access Fund). It is hosted by the Wellcome Centre for Cultures and Environments of Health at the University of Exeter, with the support of the University of Exeter Press Office and Policy@Exeter. Additional policy support was provided from September 2021 to July 2022 by the policy and engagement consultancy, Culture Commons.

PROJECT AIMS

P&B's aims are to:

1. Coordinate the 77 AHRC-funded COVID-19 projects, facilitate collaborative working, identify synergies, and support their legacy
2. Support AHRC in developing medium to long-term plans for the COVID-19 response; make recommendations for future crisis responses
3. Engage stakeholders and decision-makers
4. Create evidence-based narratives for wide audiences, raising the profile of AHRC's COVID-19 research portfolio
5. Disseminate programme outcomes and impacts through publications and non-traditional, non-textual outputs

PROJECT VALUES

The work of P&B is informed by a commitment to inclusivity, diversity, and engagement. From April 2021 to June 2022, the team benefitted from the skills and insight of a Lived Experience panel of advisors who shared their experiences with the P&B team and the cohort of researchers and provided advice on media, website and films. The reflections of our Lived Experience panel members about working with P&B are captured in the Like a New Beginning blog post.¹



Lived Experience panel talking to members of the P&B Team (June 2021)

AIMS OF THIS REPORT

This end-of-project report provides a summary of the work carried out by the P&B team between February 2021 and September 2022. Its aim is to support AHRC with evidence-based narratives and analyses of processes, methods, impacts, data, and case studies. It reports on impacts of the pandemic on the research culture, and it makes recommendations designed to inform approaches to future crisis responses and the coordination of research portfolios.

EVIDENCE BASE

The evidence base for this report is drawn from:

- ▶ Nine themed Knowledge Exchange workshops involving members of 58 research teams in the portfolio.
- ▶ Data provided by 65 PIs leading P&B portfolio projects in response to the UKRI/AHRC Round 3 survey.
- ▶ A survey of researchers attached to projects within the Pandemic & Beyond portfolio (106 responses from members of 55 research teams), carried out in May 2022.

¹ <https://pandemicandbeyond.exeter.ac.uk/blog/like-a-new-beginning-a-message-of-hope-inspiration-and-community-from-the-pandemic-and-beyond-lived-experience-panel/> (14 June 2022).

P&B FACTS & FIGURES AT A GLANCE

PORTFOLIO COORDINATION:

- ▶ 77 Research teams, of which 72 engaged with P&B
- ▶ 9 Knowledge Exchange Workshops
- ▶ 4 Training events

DISSEMINATION AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:

- ▶ 23 Blog posts
- ▶ 6 P&B-themed songs
- ▶ 3 Documentary films
- ▶ 25 Podcasts with P&B PIs and their stakeholders
- ▶ 3.3+ million Twitter impressions

POLICY WORK:

- ▶ 1 policy hub organised into 9 policy themes and hosting 50+ policy briefs
- ▶ 5 policy briefing events showcasing 24 projects
- ▶ 100+ policymakers participating at policy briefings
- ▶ 1 analysis of P&B research for COVID-19 Public Inquiry

ACADEMIC RESEARCH:

- ▶ 4 edited collections under contract with Manchester University Press (in preparation for 2023)

1. THE PANDEMIC AND BEYOND PORTFOLIO

The portfolio consists of 77 projects which we organised into four clusters:

KNOWING THE PANDEMIC: COMMUNICATION, INFORMATION AND EXPERIENCE (26 projects)²

Significant areas of impact

The impact pathways for this cluster demonstrate wide applicability of the research, with a quarter of projects reporting influence on professional practice in areas as wide-ranging as journalism, community volunteer groups, charities, heritage and museum work, and the funerary and death care industry. Another fifth recorded an array of policy impacts including on public health initiatives, housing, care homes, and transport. Perhaps unsurprisingly, considering the cluster's emphasis on social life and communication, this cluster was especially concerned with transforming how the public engage with communicative platforms (e.g., news media) as well as advocating for marginalised communities.

Future directions/opportunities

Pandemic response research has demonstrated the value and efficacy of interdisciplinary and of Arts and Humanities-based methods and approaches for accessing the experiences of minoritised communities and of those experiencing inequalities. New configurations of inequalities have emerged during the pandemic, and these need to be better understood. Additionally, future research should examine the role that can be played by creativity and culture in relation to sense-making and agenda-setting within the sciences, and for scientific communication.

² <https://pandemicandbeyond.exeter.ac.uk/projects/knowning-the-pandemic-communication-information-and-experience/>

COPING CREATIVELY: ARTS, HEALTH AND WELLBEING (17 projects)³

Significant areas of impact

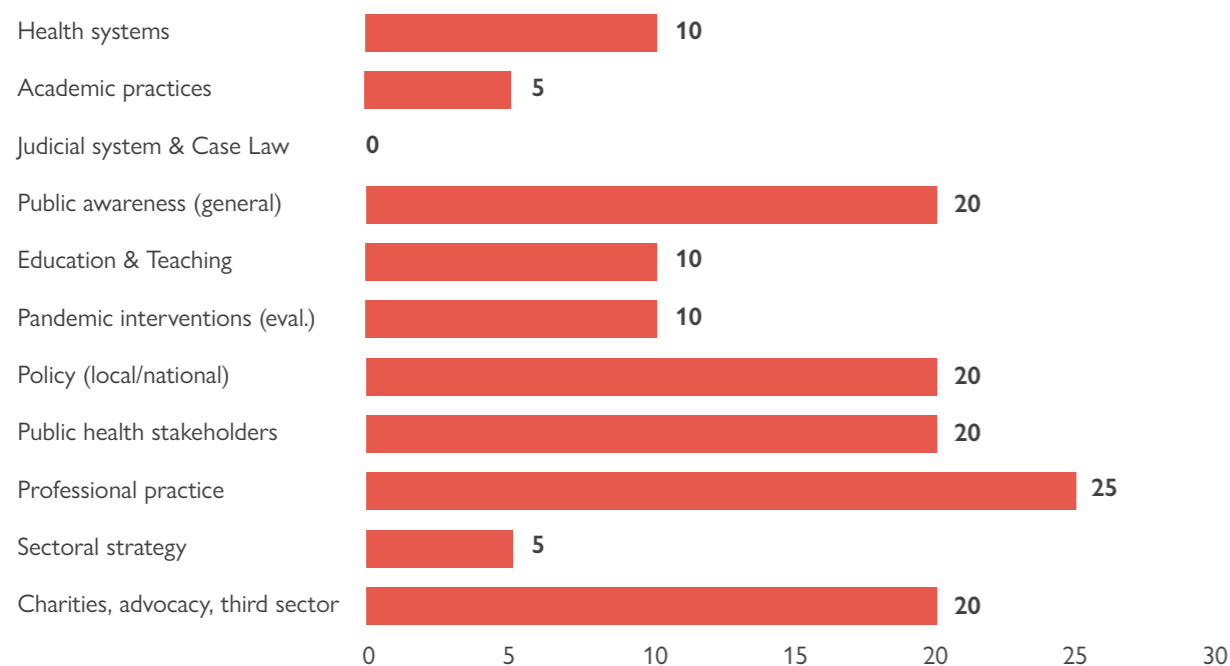
Reported impacts for this cluster were focused on four key areas: policy, public health, professional practice and the work of charities/third sector groups. The co-creative and participatory ethos of many of these projects generated impact for project findings through networks, such as LENS (Culture, Health & Wellbeing Alliance). Because of the clear health remits of many of these projects, impacts were focused on producing change through various strategic routes, including the work of policy institutes (e.g., Heseltine Institute of Public Policy), local authority cultural policy, and national level arts organisations (e.g., Arts Council England).

Future directions/opportunities

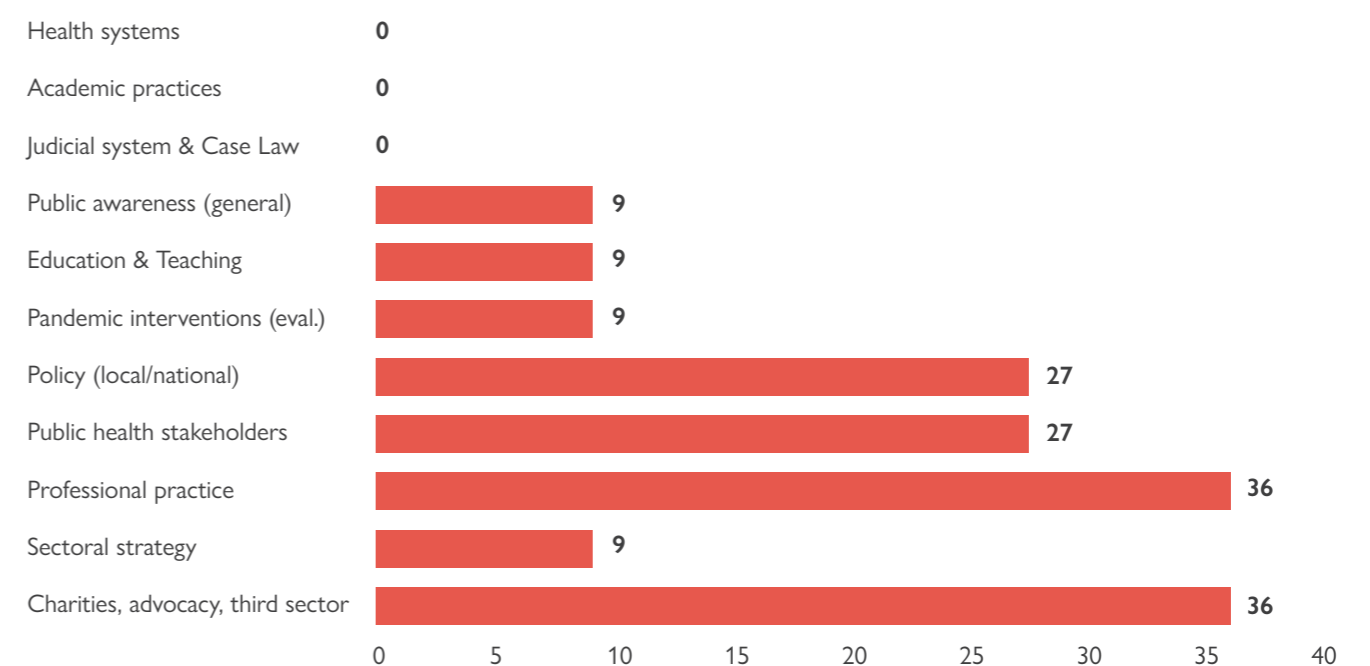
Researchers indicated opportunities to build on and learn from geographically specific pandemic response research, examining how and why arts, health and wellbeing activity has an effect within local, regional, national, and in international contexts. This should include attention to differences within the UK, including where devolved nations depart from UK policy. There is likely to be much more to be learnt from mapping of partnerships and networks of cultural assets and resources as part of exploration of what works, where and how. The needs of diverse communities, and the impacts of a full range of inequalities must be considered, to inform future cultural provision. Research should be attentive to ensuring that initiatives involving partnerships and collaborations (such as with local authorities, third sector, health, community, faith, and cultural or creative organisations) which thrived during the pandemic can continue to deliver benefits for individuals and remain sustainable.

³ <https://pandemicandbeyond.exeter.ac.uk/projects/coping-creatively-arts-health-and-wellbeing/>

Analysis of reported impacts in AHRC round 2 survey of March 2022 (56 projects reporting)



Analysis of reported impacts in AHRC round 3 survey of March 2022 (56 projects reporting)



BRIDGING DISTANCE: THE CREATIVE INDUSTRIES AND HERITAGE SECTORS

(20 projects)⁴

Significant areas of impact

Findings from this cluster show the importance of Arts and Humanities research in analysing the impact of COVID-19 on the creative sector and informing strategic approaches to recovery. A large proportion of projects (63%) reported working within strategic partnerships with organisations to support COVID-19 recovery. Another large proportion (56%) reported influencing professional practice, e.g., developing digital performance, or digital work in museums and libraries. Projects reported working with policymakers at local and national level, contributing to new initiatives to strengthen the cultural sector in the aftermath of the pandemic.

⁴ <https://pandemicandbeyond.exeter.ac.uk/projects/bridging-distance-in-the-creative-industries/>

Future directions/opportunities

There remains an urgent requirement for arts and cultural organisations to evaluate and provide robust evidence of benefits they might provide to audiences, and of their contribution to place-making. There is a need to examine models for effective working between the creative industries and other parts of the economy, building on insight gained during the pandemic. There is scope for further examination of the use of digital technology - its value to various kinds of cultural consumers, how it can best be used by cultural producers, and the role that can be played by hybrid cultural experiences. There are opportunities here for comparative projects involving international collaborations. Finally, the pandemic has further highlighted structural and systemic inequalities within the cultural industries that relate to race, ethnicity, socio-economic difference, disability, and mental and physical health; there is a need to examine the efficacy of processes and systems designed to address these. Linked research might examine attitudes to change within the creative industries, and how best to facilitate successful adaptation.

DECISION-MAKING: ETHICS, LAW AND GOVERNANCE

(14 projects)⁵

Significant areas of impact

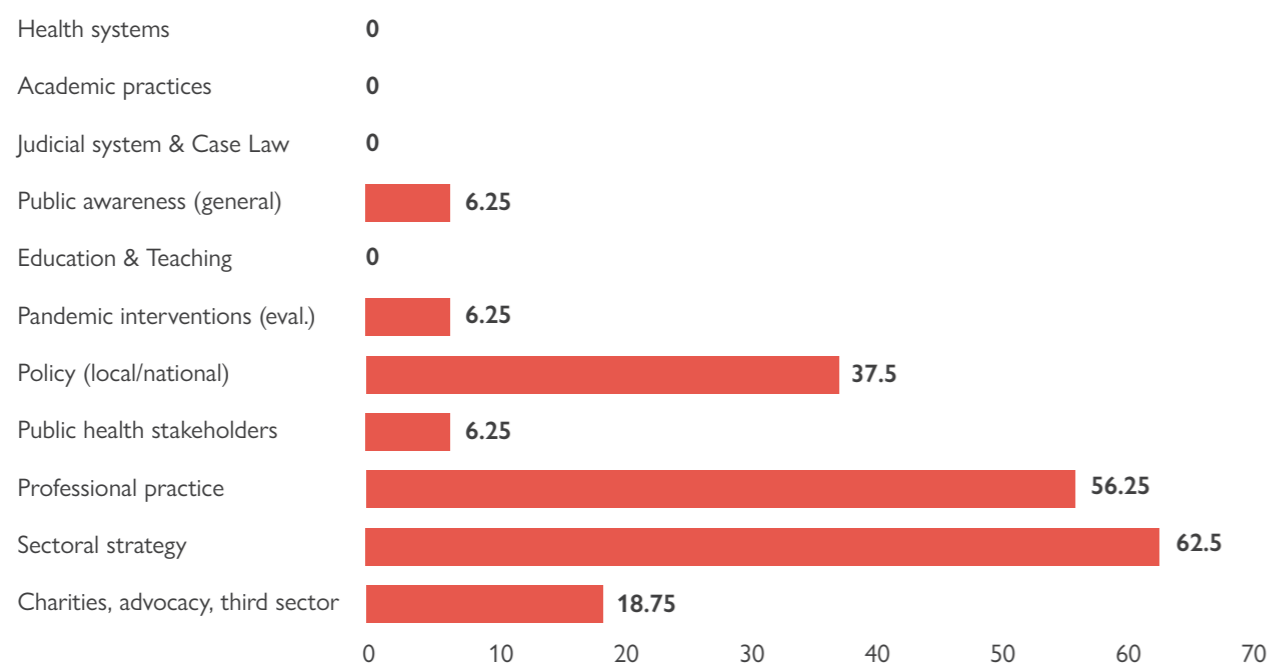
This group of projects reported high levels of impact on routes for policy influence and pandemic intervention evaluation, e.g., submissions of evidence to Parliamentary Committees. This reflects the subjects and expertise within the cluster, including legal analysis and jurist expertise, as well as ethics analysis of COVID-19 governance and technological innovation. Projects reported use of research approaches or findings in several significant areas of this activity, including the House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts review of the government's response to the pandemic and the Joint Committee on Human Rights inquiry. Projects also reported informing aspects of case law on issues such as human rights and fraud.

Future directions/opportunities

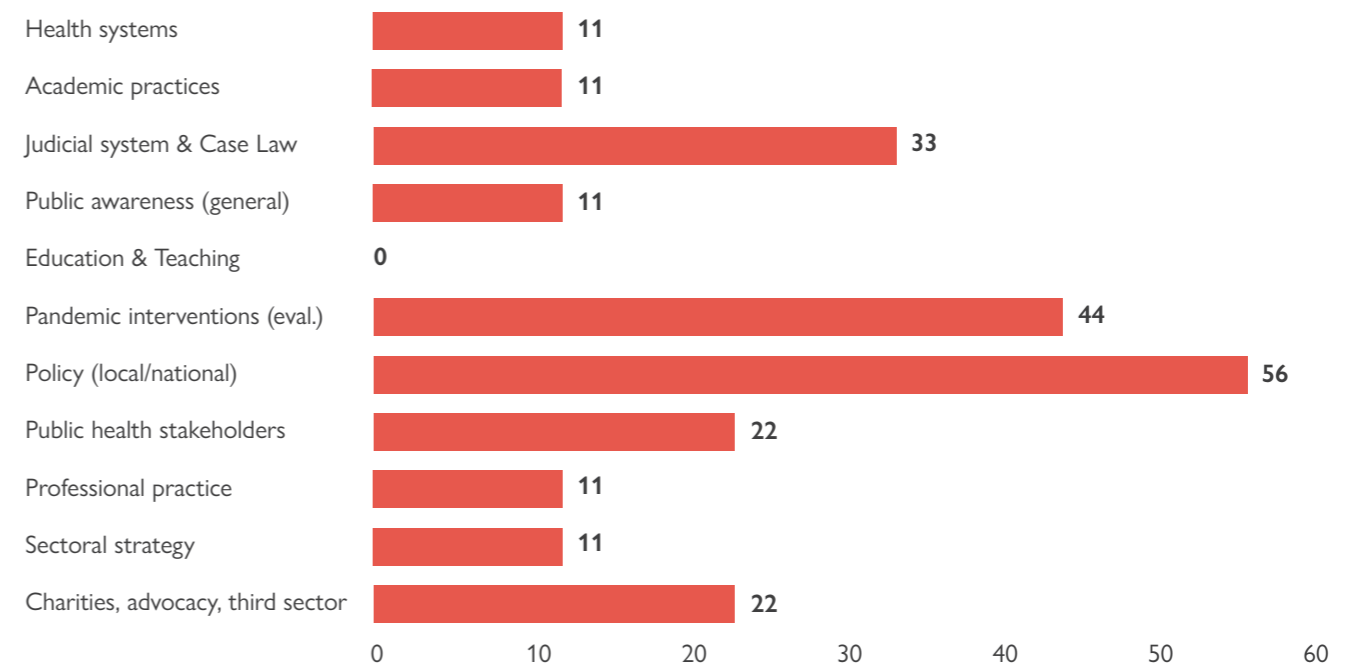
Researchers identified a need to further consider public distrust around data sharing and technology use that involved organisations such as the police and the NHS, as well as government more widely. Future research must also explore ethical, human rights, and legal issues that relate to the production of guidance intended to shape public behaviour and to the relationship between publicly issued guidance and law, as well as the development and implementation of data-driven crisis responses, including those involving Artificial Intelligence (AI). Attention should be paid to identifying methods capable of effectively engaging with diverse public perspectives to inform such work, including the involvement of children and young people.

⁵ <https://pandemicandbeyond.exeter.ac.uk/projects/ethics-law-and-governance/>

Analysis of reported impacts in AHRC round 3 survey of March 2022 (56 projects reporting)



Analysis of reported impacts in AHRC round 3 survey of March 2022 (56 projects reporting)



2. P&B ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS

The P&B coordination project broke new ground in being set up towards the end of a rapid-response funding call to retrospectively co-ordinate and amplify the policy impacts and dissemination of a significant portfolio of AHRC-funded research across a wide range of topics and methodologies, at a time when pandemic mitigation measures were still in place and all communication and meetings had to take place virtually.

To ensure that all our activities were aligned with the objectives of the project, we mapped them on a **Theory of Change** 'living' document that allowed us to track progress and that was responsive to changing circumstances and priorities.

The project was structured into the following six phases:



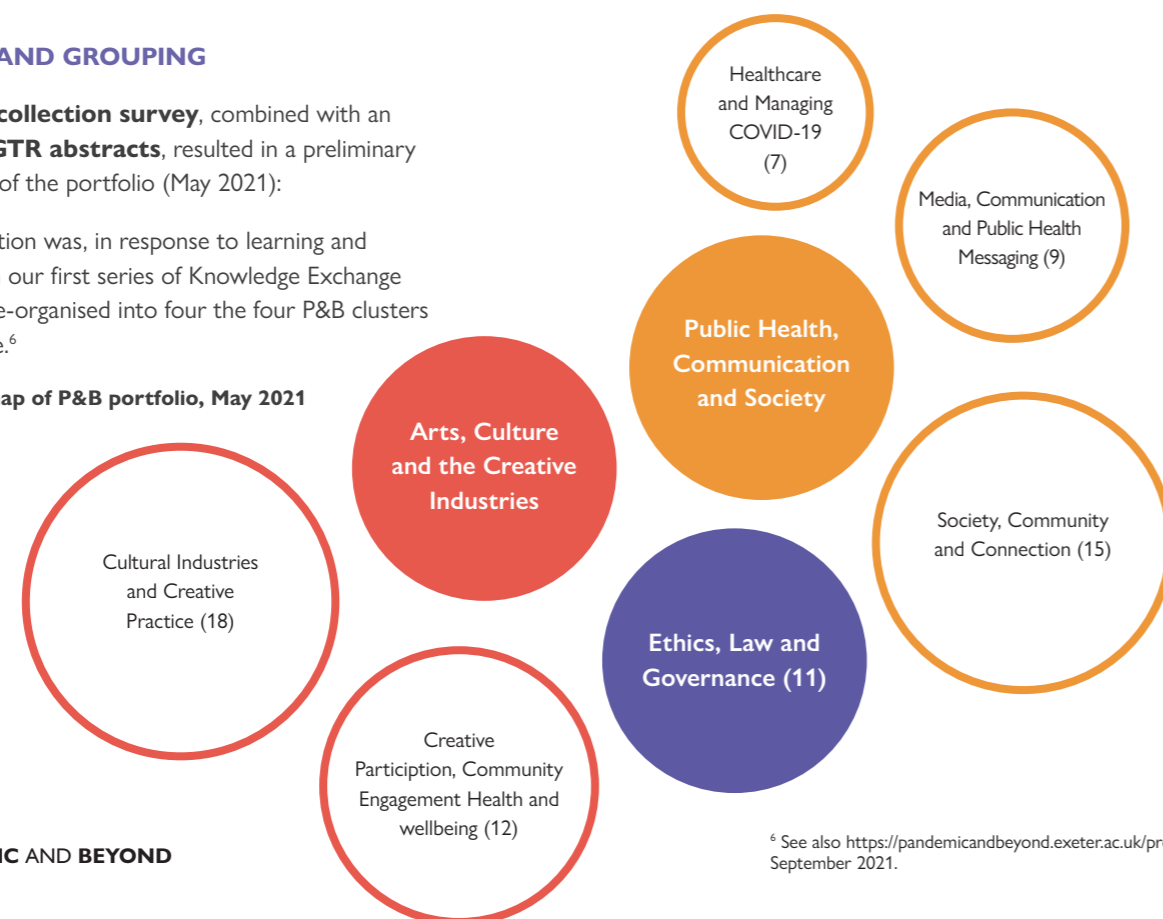
By June 2022, 93.5% (72/77) of projects within the portfolio had engaged with the P&B offer.

MAPPING AND GROUPING

A **first data collection survey**, combined with an **analysis of GTR abstracts**, resulted in a preliminary segmentation of the portfolio (May 2021):

This segmentation was, in response to learning and feedback from our first series of Knowledge Exchange Workshops, re-organised into four the four P&B clusters outlined above.⁶

Preliminary map of P&B portfolio, May 2021



⁶ See also <https://pandemicandbeyond.exeter.ac.uk/projects/>; September 2021.

KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE WORKSHOPS

Five Knowledge Exchange Workshops, held in May and June 2021 with the support of our **Lived Experience Panel**, used a combination of Zoom (for presentations and breakout room discussions) and Kumospace (for informal and social exchanges). Brief presentations of projects were combined with spaces for discussion of overarching thematic links and messages, alongside opportunities to share approaches to working with stakeholders and devising impact and communication strategies. The workshops involved a total of 116 researchers, with an engagement rate of 80.56% (58 of 72 projects running at that point).

A further set of **four Knowledge Exchange Workshops**, which brought together researchers from the re-organised four project clusters, were held on Zoom in October 2021 to explore opportunities for engagement with policymakers, generating impact, and future directions for research,

These formal events were complemented by **ad-hoc networking opportunities** that arose when projects converged for meetings with stakeholders, to record a joint podcast or to work on shared press briefs. Our **fortnightly newsletter** (July 2021 to June 2022), emailed to all PIs and additional stakeholders, disseminated the outcomes of and events led by project teams, alongside relevant policy engagement opportunities and funding calls.

TRAINING: MEDIA, POLICY

P&B ran a total of four training sessions for researchers to upskill them in the areas where our Knowledge Exchange Workshops revealed the greatest need, due to gaps in provision of HEI support.

Our **policy training** Teams seminar (June 2021) was facilitated in collaboration with Policy@Exeter and drew on the expertise of P&B portfolio researchers (Prof Jeff King; Prof Ben Walmsley) alongside Prof Karyn Morrissey (University of Exeter).

Three media training events (September-October 2021) drew on the expertise of P&B portfolio researcher Dr Anna Feigenbaum (How to turn research into news), the University of Exeter Press Office (Mastering media interviews) and the University of Exeter Innovation, Impact and Business unit (How well do you know your target audience?).

With the University of Exeter Press Office and Policy@Exeter, P&B provided additional targeted **individual support**, including help with writing policy briefs, for researchers without access to support from their own institutions.

MEDIA: CAMPAIGN, PODCASTS, FILMS, MUSIC

P&B launched its **website** and the **@PandemicBeyond Twitter feed** in April 2021.

The **P&B blog**⁷ hosts 23 posts that took the reader from 'The Pandemic and Beyond Plan: Connect, Coordinate, Amplify' (May 2021) to 'Arts and Humanities in Times of Crisis' (August 2022), P&B's summative account of learning from the portfolio that was first published by WonkHE.⁸

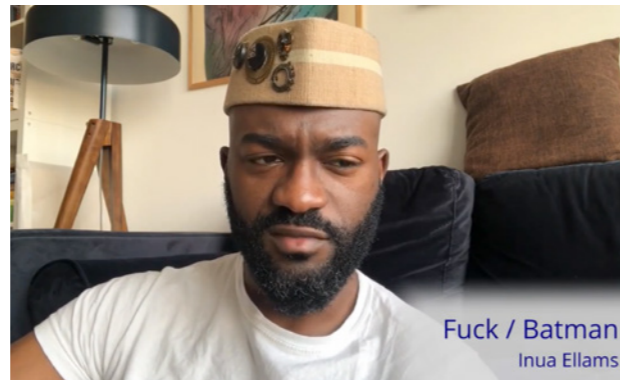


We recorded a **podcast series** with 25 interviews (recorded and published April 2021-August 2022), hosted on Anchor and available on our website, Spotify and Castbox, which facilitated 'deep dives' into individual projects.⁹ The P&B theme music for the podcasts was recorded by Lived Experience Panel member Ronald Amanze, who recorded six songs inspired by the P&B research and poetry.¹⁰

The **three half-hour P&B documentaries**:¹¹

- ▶ Coping Creatively,
- ▶ Getting the Message Across
- ▶ Coming Together

Were filmed and directed by P&B filmmaker Benedict Morrison, who was the only member of the P&B team able to travel and meet with researchers and their stakeholders face-to-face. The films, which were released in May 2022, reflect the creativity, healing power and influence on public health communication of Arts and Humanities research.



Poet Inua Ellams reciting a poem in Anthony Caleshu and Rory Waterman's Poetry & Covid anthology (film still from Coming Together, dir. Benedict Morrison, 2022)

The P&B **media campaign** took place on Twitter (@PandemicBeyond) and LinkedIn. It built over a span of 15 months, with rich content drawn from podcasts, blogs and films directed viewers to our virtual policy hub and the films. The campaign was supported by the University of Exeter Press team, which produced 3 short trailers based on the P&B documentaries. The campaign was targeted towards policy and decision makers, Civil Servants, government departments and academics, with a sponsored segment between 23 June and 3 August 2022.

The campaign was seen 3,319,291 times (impressions), which led to nearly 24,000 clicks to the website or more social media content. Each short film was seen around 1 million times, with the Coping Creatively film alone leading to 8,290 click throughs. On Twitter, the most successfully targeted group was the government and policy maker audience, with nearly 15,000 clicks coming from either policy makers or people related to government or parliament. On LinkedIn, the most successfully targeted group were those in 'Higher Education' (21,610 impressions) and 'Government Administration' (13,169 impressions). 63% of LinkedIn video views were in London.

⁷ <https://pandemicandbeyond.exeter.ac.uk/category/blog/>

⁸ Karen Gray, Eleanor O'Keeffe and Pascale Aebischer, "Arts and Humanities in Times of Crisis." WonkHE, 4 August 2022. <https://wonkhe.com/blogs/arts-and-humanities-in-times-of-crisis/>. WonkHE has a target audience of policy makers, institutional leaders, politicians, and HE professionals. It is their policy not to share data regarding the reach of individual contributions.

⁹ <https://pandemicandbeyond.exeter.ac.uk/media/podcasts/>

¹⁰ <https://pandemicandbeyond.exeter.ac.uk/media/music/>

¹¹ <https://pandemicandbeyond.exeter.ac.uk/media/films/>

POLICY: ONLINE PORTAL, WEBINARS AND BRIEFINGS

The P&B **virtual policy hub**,¹² constructed with the support of Culture Commons (see inset box) and Policy@Exeter, hosted by the P&B website and promoted by the media campaign, is organised into a section with recordings of webinars and 9 policy themes:

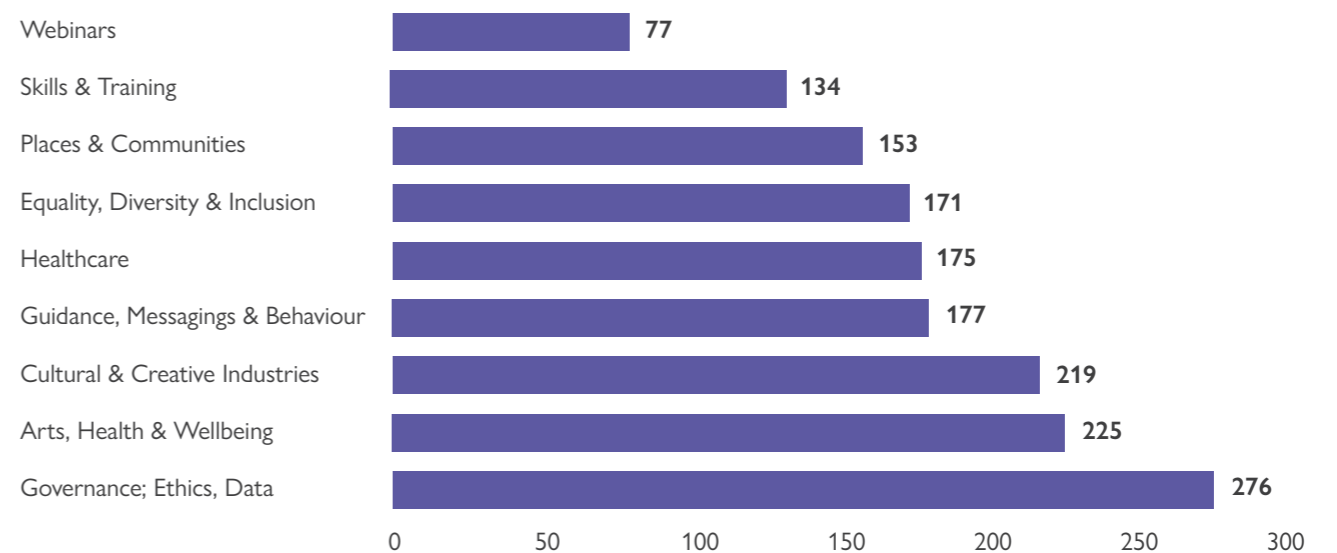
Our data shows that the section on governance: ethics, data and behaviour change attracted most attention:

¹² <https://pandemicandbeyond.exeter.ac.uk/policy/>

Arts & Health and Wellbeing	Cultural and Creative Industries	Skills and Training
Governance: Ethics, Data and Procurement	Guidance, Messaging and Behaviour Change	Healthcare
Nature and Sustainability	Places and Communities	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Sealey Associates, July 2022

Number of clicks on sections of the policy hub



CULTURE COMMONS

Culture Commons (CC) supported the P&B projects to communicate emerging research to policy stakeholders in a timely and relevant manner.

This involved both building researcher capacity (eg. via training, 1:1 support), and advising on the creation of policy-relevant resources (eg. policy briefs, the policy portal).

Crucially, they also conducted stakeholder mapping and brokered connections with targeted policy stakeholders for whom P&B research would be of high, and timely, relevance.

In addition, CC co-organised, with the P&B team, four focused briefing/roundtable events that brought together more than 100 senior civil servants, government officials UK Government Ministers, MPs and other elected representatives, public sector decision makers and third sector leaders.

The P&B policy hub hosts over 50 policy briefing papers written by projects in our portfolio and signposts policymakers to key recommendations, resources, project websites and public engagement activities, including podcasts in our series.

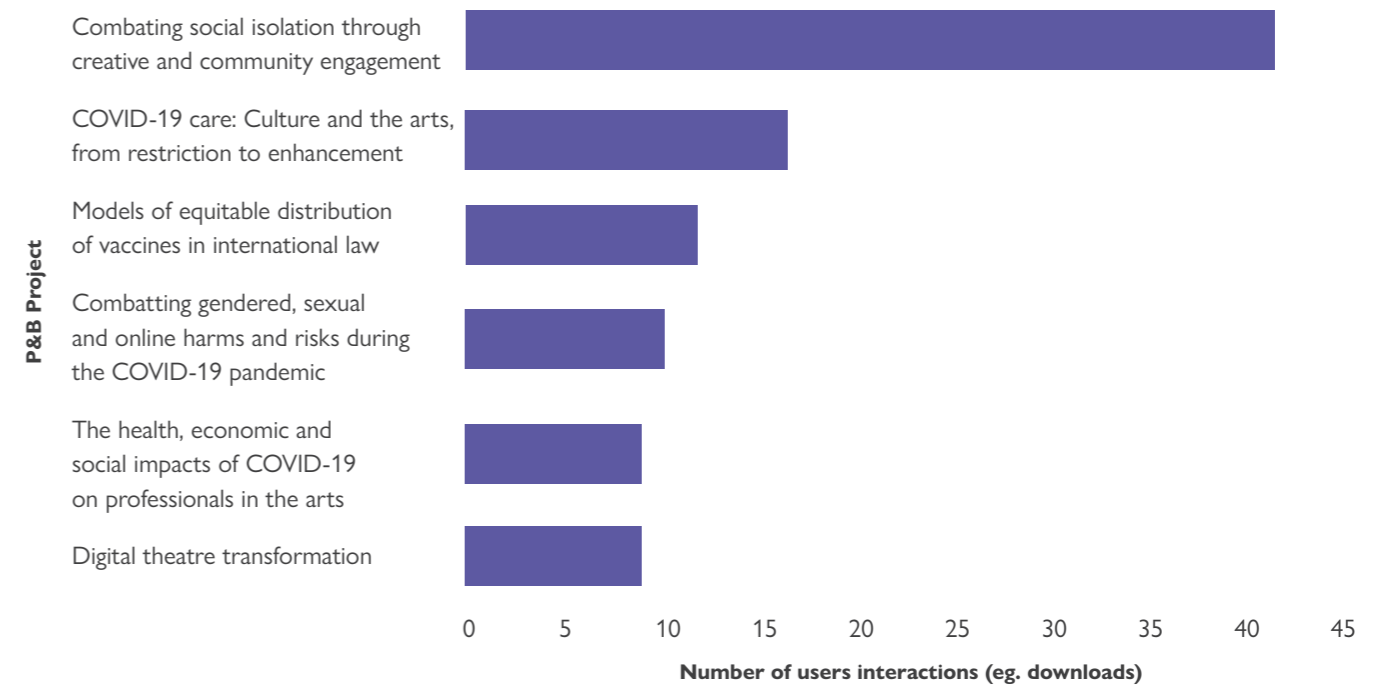
By September 2022, our policy pages had received a total of 1,422 views, of which 945 were unique, and 203 policy briefs had been downloaded.

The following graph evidences the impact on page views of the policy events supported by Culture Commons and the media campaign run by the University of Exeter Press and External Affairs team. While it demonstrates the effectiveness of both types of intervention, it is also clear that the quality of relationship-building with relevant individuals in the policy sphere that was brought to the project by Culture Commons led to greater traffic on our policy pages than did the media campaign, which reached a far greater audience but with less impact on actual engagement with the research.

Views of the Policy Portal, January - July 2022



Policy Portal Analytics: Top Projects



POLICY ENGAGEMENT CASE STUDY 1: ENGAGING WITH THE PARLIAMENTARY OFFICE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (POST)

Sealey Associates, July 2022

POST produces impartial, non-partisan, and peer-reviewed briefings, designed to make scientific research accessible to the UK Parliament. The briefings come in the form of POSTnotes and POSTbriefs. Pandemic and Beyond (P&B)'s engagement with POST began in May 2021, when the team fed back to a call for a POSTnote on home and flexible working and used that opportunity to introduce the P&B project and to signpost research in the portfolio that was also relevant to that topic.

POST undertakes horizon scanning with external experts and shortlists topics based on discussions with internal experts from the Select Committee and Library teams in both Houses. These are then put to the POST Board, which oversees POST's objectives, outputs and future work programme. In June 2021, the P&B team made five suggestions for POSTnote topics, the second of which was for a note on "Digital and analogue innovation/resilience within the creative industries".

POST put out a call for evidence for a POSTnote on 'The impact of digital technology on arts and culture in the UK.' (January 2022). The P&B team responded by submitting a briefing note outlining all the projects within the P&B portfolio that could be relevant to the call.

P&B's main contact point during this time was Ana-Maria Cirstea, a POST Fellow (a PhD student, funded to undertake a placement through a competitive scheme hosted by UKRI-ESRC). Ana-Maria spoke to the Sealey Associates evaluation team in a personal capacity to explain how she had engaged with the P&B researchers and stakeholders while she was preparing the POSTnote on 'The impact of digital technology on arts and culture in the UK'. Ana-Maria explained that

"The impact of digital technology on arts and culture in the UK, was the first POSTnote that has focused specifically on the arts and culture sector, [...], "[T]o have arts and culture in the mix is really exciting."

Ana-Maria explained to us some of the steps she took when preparing the brief. She shared that she used the P&B policy portal and policy briefs during the initial research stage, and subsequently interviewed three P&B project leads. In addition, Culture Commons also contributed evidence sourced from across the P&B portfolio.

As PI of the Digital Theatre Transformation project, Prof Pascale Aebischer provided evidence for the Note in a joint meeting with her research partner, Creation Theatre's CEO Lucy Askew. Pascale and Lucy were subsequently asked to act as external reviewers for the Note, providing feedback that once more used P&B expertise to shape the Note. Importantly, Ana-Maria reported that she found it especially helpful that via engagement with Pascale, she was able to hear project partner Lucy's views. This gave Ana-Maria access to different perspectives and practitioner expertise, all informed by lived experience.

The contacts and reading recommendations made possible by P&B proved extremely helpful. For example, Ana-Maria explained that it was helpful to have the policy portal (i.e. one website with all these policy briefs and publications). This offered a mini-subject directory of experts that POST was able to turn to, and many of their outputs have subsequently been cited in the briefing.

Crucially, Ana-Maria highlighted the importance of P&B offering research on such a recent development within the creative industries.

"This massive digital pivot happened during the pandemic and now is the time to pick up on the learning, which is what the Note does in part, so it was really great to have these projects which are really clear about the impact of the pandemic and about this shift."

The hub hosts the evidence-based documentation that supported the following activities:

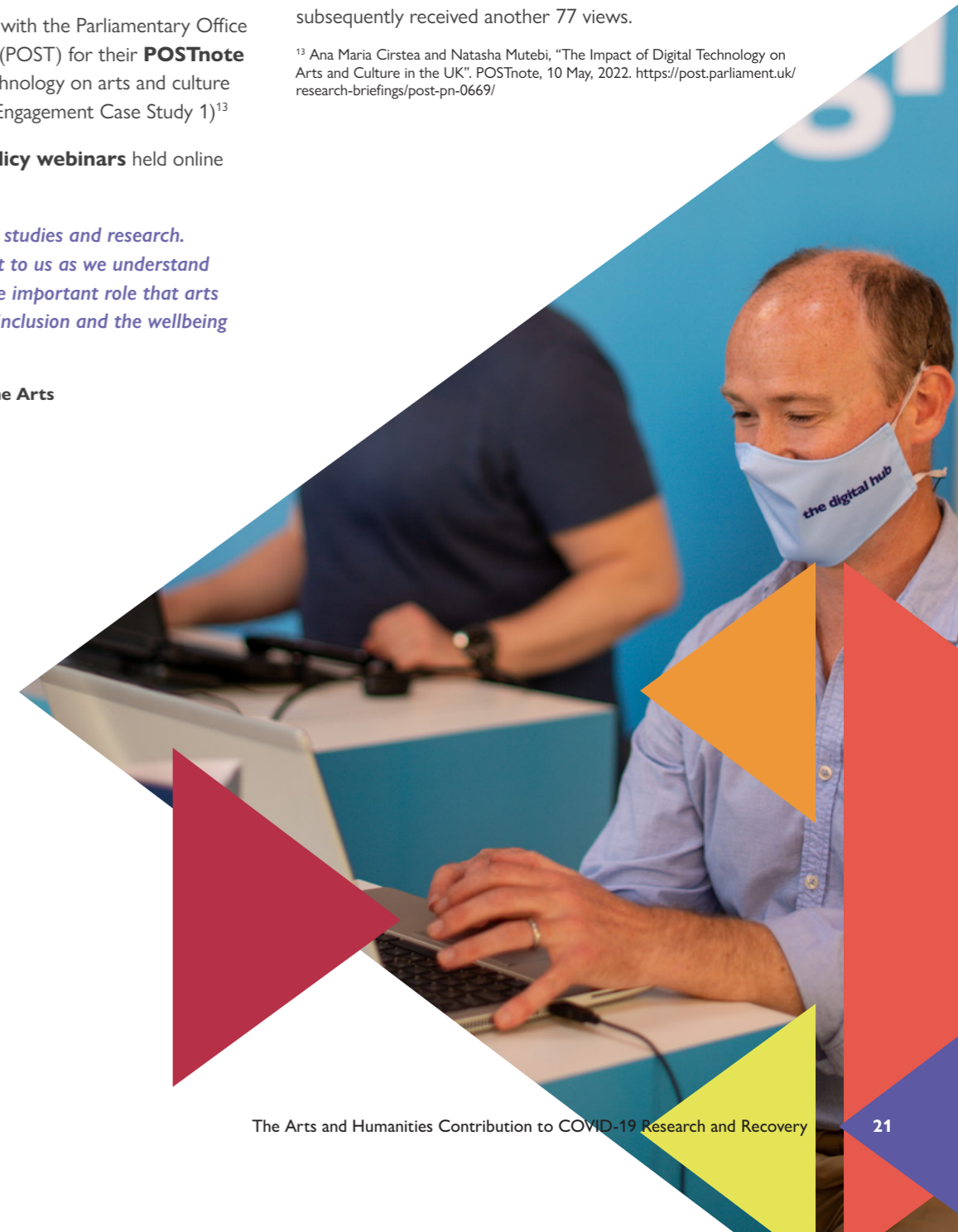
- ▶ the private **P&B policy briefings** with decision makers at the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC)
- ▶ the information P&B shared with the Parliamentary Office for Science and Technology (POST) for their **POSTnote** on 'The impact of digital technology on arts and culture in the UK' (see inset Policy Engagement Case Study 1)¹³
- ▶ the **three P&B public policy webinars** held online in March and May 2022.

"I very much welcome the P&B studies and research. This evidence is very important to us as we understand and spread the news about the important role that arts and culture can play in social inclusion and the wellbeing of our country."

Lord Parkinson, Minister for the Arts

Our webinars (see inset policy engagement case study 2) reached over one hundred Members of Parliament, Scottish Parliament civil servants; UK government departments (senior civil servants), including: DHSC, DWP, POST, the Cabinet Office; local government, and the House of Commons Library. Our recordings of these webinars subsequently received another 77 views.

¹³ Ana Maria Cirstea and Natasha Mutebi, "The Impact of Digital Technology on Arts and Culture in the UK". POSTnote, 10 May, 2022. <https://post.parliament.uk/research-briefings/post-pn-0669/>



POLICY ENGAGEMENT CASE STUDY 2: PANDEMIC & BEYOND, CULTURE COMMONS AND THE NATIONAL CENTRE FOR CREATIVE HEALTH (NCCH)

Sealey Associates, July 2022

Pandemic & Beyond, Culture Commons and the National Centre for Creative Health (NCCH) hosted an event which drew together a panel of senior representatives: Lord Parkinson (Minister for the Arts), Sir Nicholas Serota (Chair of Arts Council England), Lord Alan Howarth (Co-Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Arts, Health and Wellbeing) and Tracey Crouch MP.

The event, chaired by Professor Victoria Tischler (co-investigator of the P&B programme), showcased key findings from P&B. The teams profiled in the event had previously 'very little/little' experience of policy engagement activities.

At the event, Lord Howarth highlighted how *'meetings such as these show how [...] new ways of working can enable more people to take part in the conversation'* and went on to say how *'studies such as these are so important in helping us to begin to understand more fully the impact that the pandemic has had as well as the broader role that arts and creativity have in supporting our physical and mental wellbeing'*. He added that he *'very much welcomed the P&B studies and research. This evidence is very important to us as we understand and spread the news about the important role that arts and culture can play in social inclusion and the wellbeing of our country'*.

Attendees demonstrated a high degree of engagement prior to the event (including those from policy intermediary and practitioner organisations), expressing an interest in learning about:

- ▶ commissioning approaches
- ▶ working in partnership and maximising opportunities through collaboration creating equitable access

- ▶ a greater insight into what can be done to help the arts during pandemic recovery
- ▶ ideas for implementing and extending creative approaches in both the education and cultural sectors

The event attracted more than 100 pre-event registrations including from representatives from the NHS, third sector organisations, parliamentary representatives, and local government.

Influencing the work of policy intermediary organisations

After the event, multiple attendees reported that they planned to take actions as a result of their attendance, for example by finding out more about the research and reading the relevant briefings. In addition, several delegates who appeared to be working within policy intermediary or delivery organisations cited tangible, planned actions. For example:

- ▶ *"Will be briefing my organisation and consortium we are part of"*
- ▶ *"Yes, we are working on creative health and wellbeing zones and piloting these in London. Working across five ICS areas for London and building Creative Health Champions at senior level"*
- ▶ *"[I will] highlight the themes and ideas with my team here at ArtCare to make more conscious collection of data for capturing outcomes that can be used by others"*
- ▶ *"I am commissioner for Creative Health programmes and would really like to look at opportunities for further funding of the programme - looks like partnership working will be key"*
- ▶ *"Reaching out to some speakers and organisations about partnership and collaboration, as well as about better evaluating our work"*

The P&B policy hub also hosts "Setting an Ethical Direction – How the UK COVID-19 Public Inquiry can learn from research in the Arts and Humanities", a **meta-analysis of 26 projects in the P&B portfolio** co-commissioned with the Pandemic Ethics Accelerator project.¹⁴ The meta-analysis demonstrates that projects within the portfolio addressed all the areas investigated by the UK COVID-19

Public Inquiry, with particular relevance to the consideration of disparities in pandemic impact, lessons to inform future resilience planning, and the Public Health response:

¹⁴ https://ukpandemicethics.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/EA_PB_Joint-Commissioning_Call-1_09.12.21.pdf. The report was written by P&B PDRA Dr Eleanor O'Keeffe and is scheduled for publication in October/November 2022.

Policy relevance to UK COVID-19 inquiry terms

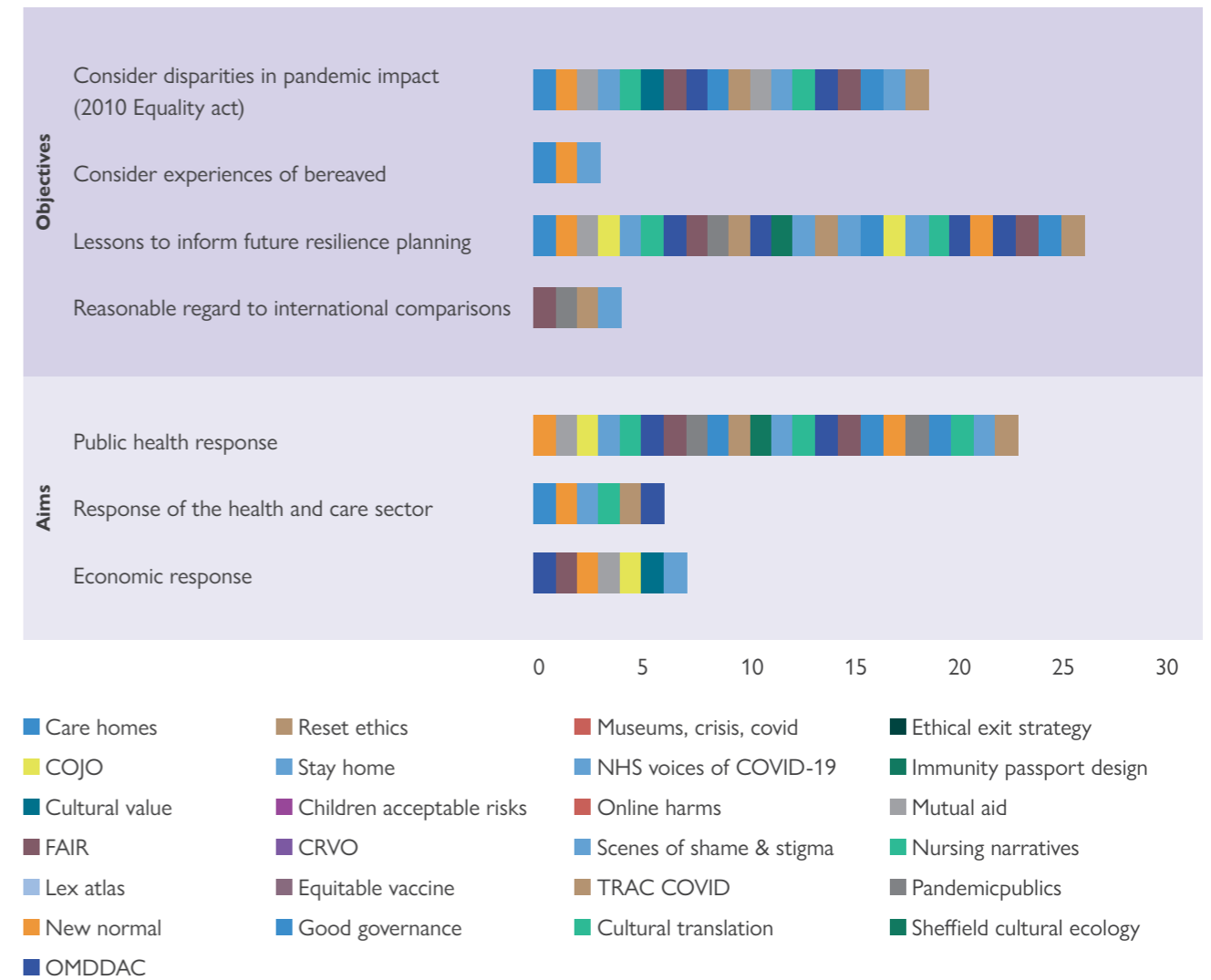


Illustration from Dr Eleanor O'Keeffe, "Setting in Ethical Direction - How the UK COVID-19 Public Inquiry can learn from research in the Arts and Humanities"

External consultants **Sealey Associates** identified the following key impacts of the Pandemic and Beyond project's collaboration with Culture Commons:¹⁵

Impact area 1: Increasing capacity for policy engagement in the Arts and Humanities disciplines

The act of policy engagement in the Arts and Humanities is arguably a significant development in and of itself. We observe this in two ways in particular: 1) engagement with parliamentary scrutiny processes; and 2) contribution to the parliamentary and government evidence synthesis processes.

Impact area 2: P&B research used for research-based critical evidence synthesis for policy stakeholders

We see evidence that P&B research been included as part of evidence synthesis (e.g. by parliamentary researchers) and has been delivered via briefings to policy stakeholders. These briefings were directly supported by the Culture Commons team, as was the brokerage of engagements with stakeholders.

Impact area 3: P&B research has stimulated, informed and contributed to debate

We see multiple instances where P&B projects have stimulated, informed and contributed to policy debates (e.g. through the organisation of relevant events by the Culture Commons team, as well as the creation of briefings shared with Members of Parliament and the inclusion of research evidence in inquiries)

Impact area 4: P&B research has Influenced the work of policy intermediary and practitioner organisations

We have noted instances where P&B projects have informed the campaigns, communication or advocacy activities undertaken by NGOs, charities or other organisations. These engagements have notably benefited from the refinement of policy outputs, with the support of Culture Commons.

¹⁵ Sealey Associates, "Evaluation Report: Pandemic and Beyond and Culture Commons Policy Engagement Activities." Internal Report, July 2022.

LEGACY-BUILDING

The final phase of the project is dedicated to creating a legacy for the P&B research community that complements the creative and informal outputs (films, music, podcasts, blog posts) and the legacy online policy portal¹⁶ with formal publications. To this end, we are producing a **series of four edited collections**, contracted with Manchester University Press and forthcoming in 2023 (Open Access), with each volume showcasing the research of a single P&B cluster.

The series showcases a new form of Arts and Humanities research: one that has learned how to respond to, and mitigate, a crisis as it unfolds, and that is constantly adapting its methods and research questions to the new contours of the crisis and the needs of the research participants. Many chapters include the voices and artwork of the people researchers have worked with; consequently, the series offers unique insights into the lived experience of the pandemic by a broad range of individuals who have contributed to the research response through participation in engaged research.

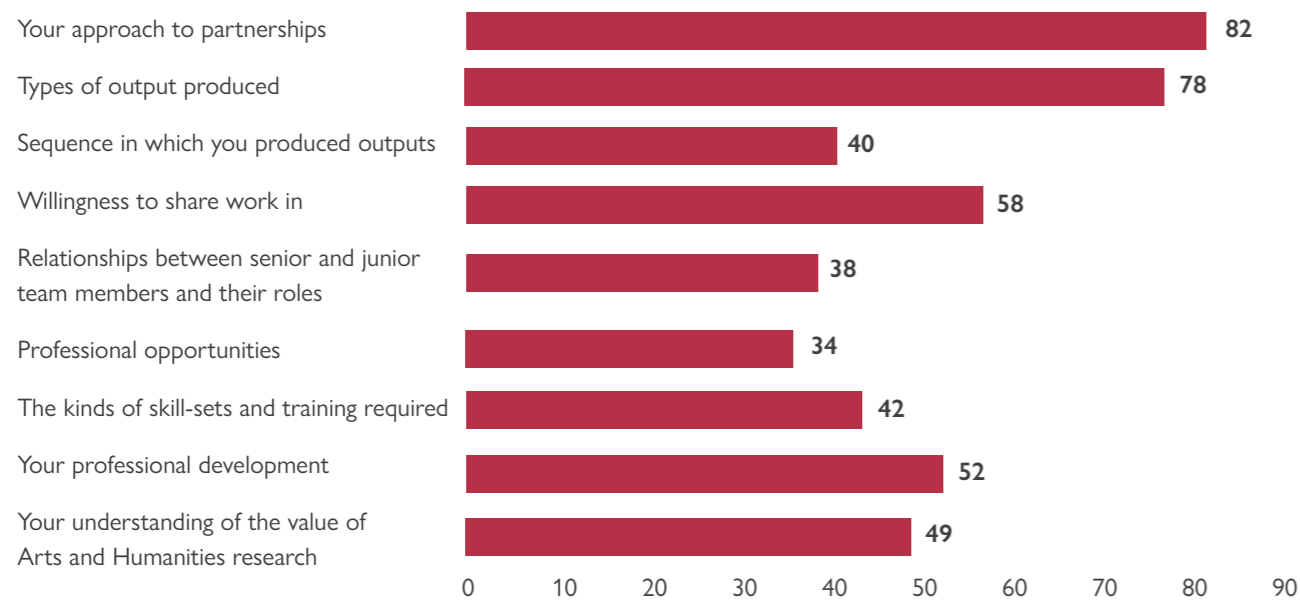
Individually and as a series, the Pandemic and Beyond volumes will function as a witness to a unique moment in history and to the ingenuity and resilience of the researchers who stepped up at that moment of crisis and have learned valuable lessons from that experience. By sharing that learning, the volumes therefore constitute road maps for future crisis-response research, as the authors reflect on how the pandemic has affected methodologies, research ethics and project design and how the current moment is shaping the future of arts and humanities research.

¹⁶ <https://pandemicandbeyond.exeter.ac.uk/policy/>



3. DOING RESEARCH DURING A PANDEMIC

Impact of pandemic on elements of research culture



P&B May 2022 survey answers regarding impact on research culture (n=106)

The sustained contact between the Pandemic and Beyond team and COVID-19 response researchers has afforded us a unique perspective on the experience of conducting research during the period. A final online survey completed by 106 AHRC-funded COVID-19 response project researchers in May 2022 informs this section of this report, alongside our access to a final third wave of survey data provided to AHRC by over 60 project Principal Investigators.

The survey responses highlight how the pandemic provided its unique set of dynamics: its ebbs and flows channeled or amplified by responses from governments, institutions, and the public. Each exerted unpredictable pressures on project timelines, individuals, and on participants and partners. Some proved disruptive from the outset: for example, the effects of repeated lockdowns on data collection and the pandemic's differential impacts for individuals and for societal or geographic groups. Under such conditions, researchers had to be personally and professionally adaptable. Methods,

research designs, approaches to partnership-working, dissemination and surrounding research infrastructure were also required to flex to support decision-making at speed.

PARTNERSHIP-WORKING AND RESEARCH OUTPUTS

Researchers (77% of respondents to our final survey) reported greatest change in relation to how they managed or valued partnerships. For most, working in partnership with non-academic groups was not new, but its worth may have been recognised more fully during the pandemic. The delivery of high-level research with communities or industry or public sector groups led to researchers noting that relationships were strengthened through the flexibility and dialogue their maintenance during a crisis required. Importantly, there are suggestions that Arts and Humanities researchers at all stages had opportunities to learn from engagements including those with key policy and industry stakeholders.

“Working with non-academic stakeholders in a dynamic industrial / social situation (where changing pandemic guidance was affecting stakeholders’ investment in our research and its potential impact) was challenging but very informative.”
(PDRA, P&B survey May 2022)

Researchers reported knock-on impact on outputs; an increased numbers of policy briefings, responses to calls for evidence, and public-facing reporting, dissemination and engagement events using digital and hybrid formats. Over half of our respondents described a greater willingness to share work early and frequently with potential users. This was achieved, for example, through issuing pre-prints, release of preliminary findings and reports or involvement of key stakeholders (such as frontline health workers) in rapid response webinars.

These moves towards more impact-oriented outputs are nuanced by the continued need to ensure a pipeline of high-quality peer-reviewed publications. For those new to policy work (nearly half of those responding to our survey), there is evidence of significant challenges for understanding how to engage policy stakeholders and in how to translate knowledge to achieve impact. It is also important to remember that much Arts and Humanities research will not be intended to generate immediate policy impact despite having unique and enduring value for society.

SPOTLIGHTING INEQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY

We asked researchers to reflect on their work with those for whom the pandemic has had unequal impact. Some suggested that stakeholders and participants representing diverse groups could be harder to engage during the crisis; existing relationships were cited as the key to success here, alongside the presence of diverse voices within research teams. Such voices include those with lived experience in areas such as the demands of working within health or care workforces, mental health issues, or systemic inequalities. As one research leader (Principal or Co-Investigator) in our survey noted, “you cannot build diversity into a project from scratch under these conditions.” While in-depth analysis of

respondent characteristics such as ethnicity or gender is not possible, it remains notable that of those research leaders (n=81) responding to our survey, 64 described themselves as White.

The speed and intensity of pandemic research left little time and few resources to negotiate around gatekeepers and other structural barriers, or to build in accessibility within research tools or outputs. In addition, partners (particularly public sector and health and care workers) were also operating in crisis mode, and pandemic circumstances provoked conflicting feelings and perspectives. Continual, timely and sensitive communication with stakeholders (sometimes including conflict management) was required. Researchers examining experiences of trauma and distress experienced by participants during the crisis also needed support to maintain their own wellbeing.

METHODS INNOVATION AND ADAPTATION

Working with participants affected by the pandemic demanded enhanced sensitivity and heightened reflexivity from researchers; some spoke of wishing to introduce greater openness and transparency into their practice as a result. A capacity to adapt designs in response to changing conditions and time and access constraints was viewed as essential. Similarly, public involvement, and – where applicable – creative and arts-based methods reportedly provided valuable insight. For example, in our survey, one research leader noted a public involvement panel generating findings for a project exploring public health communication that were more meaningful than the results of the large-scale quantitative surveys on which the project had originally been focused. Another described how “arts-based research methods and approaches can generate much more nuanced narratives, capture the complex experiences and engage people that wouldn’t otherwise find research accessible.” Remote and hybrid approaches to data collection developed significantly and continue to be particularly useful where participants have vulnerabilities or accessibility needs. Some respondents also described innovations in remote collaborative analysis methods. “Don’t waste a time of crisis. It throws up new ways of doing things...” one recommended.

PANDEMIC AS ‘DEMOCRATISING FORCE’?

Further planned interdisciplinary and cross-institution collaborations were reported and some respondents noted growth in contacts to support future academic networking. There are also hints of enduring benefits for individuals, with researchers at a variety of levels reporting opportunities to apply and learn new skills, to lead and to take on responsibilities, and to contribute in ways that for some brought increased professional recognition and satisfaction.

“The fact that every member of the team (academic and non-academic) had to learn so rapidly, and learn together, was a democratising force. I experienced more sense of equal responsibility across the team than previously.”
(PI, P&B survey May 2022)

“Our team felt very non-hierarchical and inclusive. I am the most junior member (in terms of academic experience) but came to the project with experience of [relevant sectoral] practice.”
(PDRA, P&B survey May 2022)

However, any resulting benefits will require careful nurturing by universities, research leaders, and funding bodies if they are to be sustained.

For many, the effects of working during the pandemic have been more mixed. For example, several mid- and early career respondents felt the production of fewer ‘traditional’ academic outputs may have put a brake on their career prospects within their institutions. One warned of the temptation to reduce costs in future proposals through continued use of remote working, with potential negative effects on mental health, networking, and staff workload.

THE SINGLE MOST DIFFICULT CHALLENGE THAT I HAVE DEALT WITH IN MY ENTIRE CAREER

In particular, the psychological fall-out for researchers involved in research during this time must not be underestimated. Exhaustion and physical and mental ill-health were frequently reported. Leadership under such conditions brought with it additional challenges, one respondent – for example – described a “constant feeling of not having done enough, failing at work and at family life”.

*“...we learned that any staff vulnerability [...] was *profoundly* exaggerated by the working conditions that we found ourselves under. This was the single most difficult challenge that I have dealt with in my entire career as a researcher.”*
(PDRA, P&B survey May 2022)

Learning and applying new skills at speed, many researchers were dealing with teaching workloads, developing digital and hybrid materials, and managing the requirements of remote working from home with a corresponding loss of collegiality. More than half of research leaders in our May 2022 survey had caring responsibilities, with childcare cited as a particular challenge. Constantly asked to be ‘flexible’, committed to delivering work of value, but discovering that time may have been insufficiently costed in proposals, researchers at all stages reported working over and above their contracted hours.

“It’s certain that we have devoted more of our time and effort that our contracted project hours since we believed so much in the project, and we had such ambitious goals to deliver.”
(PI, AHRC survey 3 2021)

In coping, some developed emotional check-in processes or ‘statements of care’ for teams and partners and advocated self-care. AHRC flexibility and understanding around deadlines was praised.

Challenges related to staffing and administration are those most frequently reported as significant. Projects experienced difficulties in recruiting and retaining fixed-term contract staff, particularly at Postdoctoral Research Associate (PDRA) level. Administrative delays from AHRC and HEIs at the start, alongside AHRC back-dating of project start dates, were seen as detrimental to the quality of research, leaving little time to reflect or build on what was learned through dissemination. These, along with the strictly limited project length and a reported absence of funded extensions also meant that permanent staff found themselves filling gaps when their time was already stretched with other commitments, while staff whose contracts ended were faced with the prospect of having to develop follow-on research or outputs largely unpaid. Of the 18 PDRA’s who responded to

our survey, 13 were female, seven had caring responsibilities and three were limited by a disability. Eight were on part-time contracts. One ECR described a ‘total cliff fall cut off’ effect of a fixed-term contract ending during Covid as leading to rushed research on top of personal, financial and career stress.

HEIs themselves were sometimes described as inflexible at the start; finance, ethics, IT and facilities systems reportedly struggled to cope. Several research leaders included strong recommendations to integrate external expertise in projects where essential skills (including technical or creative capacity, policy or evaluation know-how and lived experience) are not held within the core research team. However, it was not always easy to employ freelance or external consultants because of budget pressures or existing barriers in the system.

A ‘GAME-CHANGER’?

Despite the challenges outlined above, some researchers highlighted the rewards of Covid-response work: “Honestly? This is probably the best and most interesting bit of research that I’ve done in my career.” (PI, AHRC survey round 3 2021). They spoke of valuing their involvement in research with potential for immediate impact, which showcased the value of Arts and Humanities, and which fulfilled a desire to contribute to a sense of collective civic and community responsibility during a crisis.

“This research has been a game-changer, although it has exposed the slow and creaking research infrastructure for funders and universities it has also shown that academic researchers can be incredibly agile and generous in sharing their findings. Most significantly for us, it has radically shifted the ways in which we engage with policymakers and developed some very strong long-term relationships across the UK.”
(Principal Investigator, P&B survey May 2022)

The question that must be answered now is how we sift and learn from the positives and the negatives of what could be ‘game-changing’ impacts for research and its surrounding systems.



4. CASE STUDIES

The P&B cohort of researchers articulated the specific contribution of the Arts and Humanities to COVID-19 research as follows:

Overarching

- ▶ Providing a broad and holistic human / social / cultural / sustainability perspective ('making sense of') that is broader than economic, medical or public health responses on their own
- ▶ The direct and critical application of theoretical knowledge to understanding and answering practical problems, either through direct translation into policy interests or through charting (and sometimes creating) change – at international, national, regional or local levels
- ▶ Providing historic and comparative perspective – the value of being able to say we have been here before, but also future-facing – imagining new worlds

“I am hoping, with the team, that our project will show directly how arts and humanities can contribute to real world challenges for society, and impact upon policy contexts, such as public health, that are not always seen as in the realm of this kind of work.”

“there are a lot of opportunities for our current COVID-19 response projects to evolve and continue as the world looks at how to recover and also build resilience for future crises”

Methods and approaches

- ▶ Multi-disciplinarity / inter-disciplinarity / transdisciplinarity / (mixed methods) as essential to understanding the complex impacts and challenges of the pandemic and our responses to it
- ▶ Methodological adaptability, flexibility and creativity – approaches capable of engendering trust and openness in participants and delivering insight in response to changing and uncertain conditions

- ▶ Specific approaches (especially 'design research' or language and cultural perspectives on public health messaging), that might not otherwise have been funded and data that would not otherwise have been collected
- ▶ Rapid creation of new tools and technologies for future application in practice and for research, emerging directly from understanding and appreciation of stakeholders' experiences and needs:

“I believe what has been evident across our COVID-19 research projects is that arts-based research methods and approaches can generate much more nuanced narratives, capture complex experiences and engage people that wouldn't otherwise find research accessible. Whilst of course medical research in such a crisis is fundamental, so too is understanding different people's experiences, responses and how their lives have been impacted so we can make more effective policies and support people's recovery and resilience looking forward”

Arts and culture

- ▶ Demonstrating the role, significance and value of arts, arts/creative producers and institutions, and of individual creativity for communities and individuals during a crisis, with implications for everyday life
- ▶ Highlighting the fragility and sometimes inappropriateness of existing models for creating and of measuring arts and cultural value:

“Art is sometimes seen as a luxury, but our research suggested that it is actually a vital component of withstanding and navigating through a crisis.”

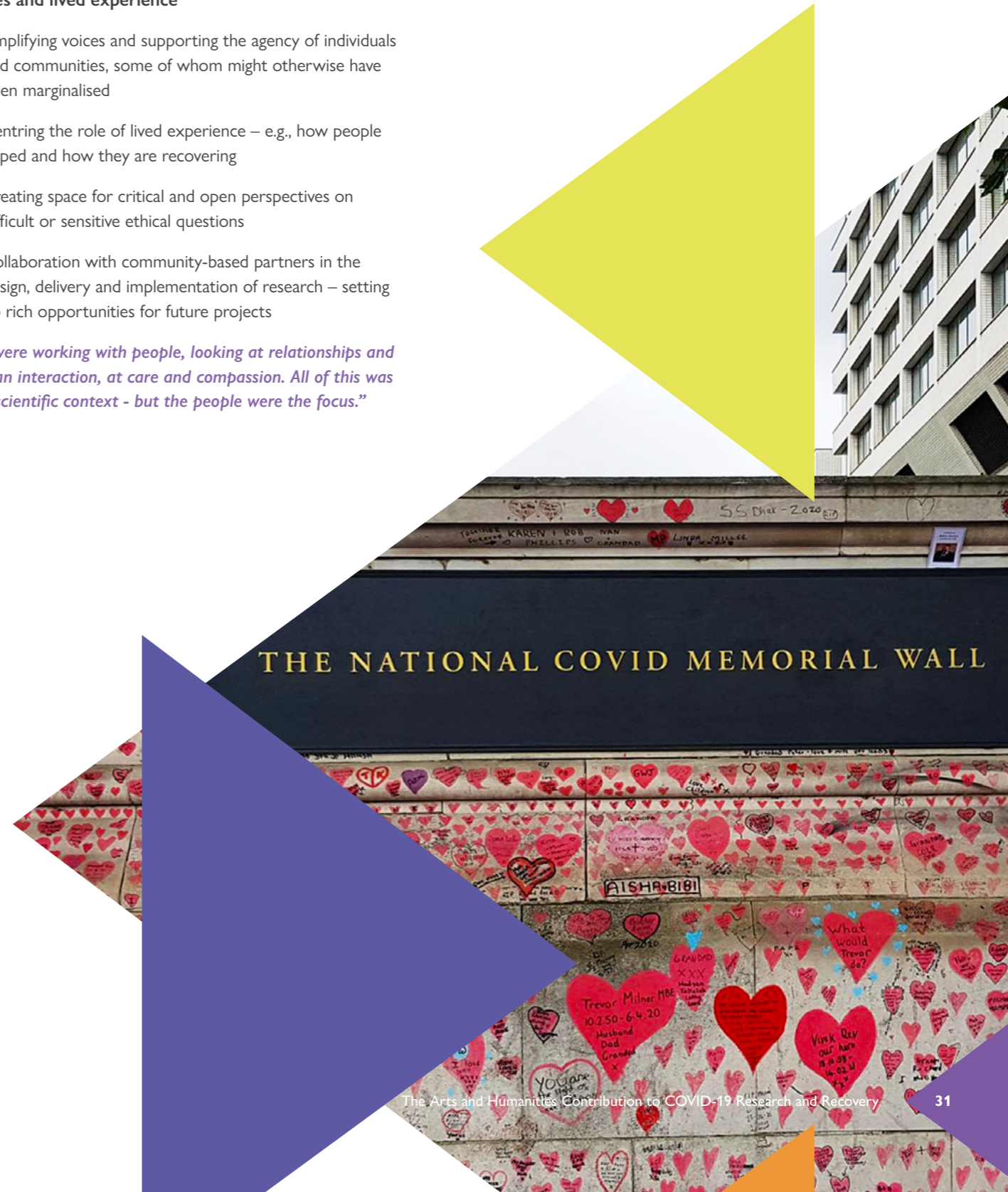
“Studying what it means to be human during covid, how people were represented, how the arts kept people alive, these kinds of questions are at the core of not just human survival but cultural thriving. Without creativity and care, society cannot fully function.”

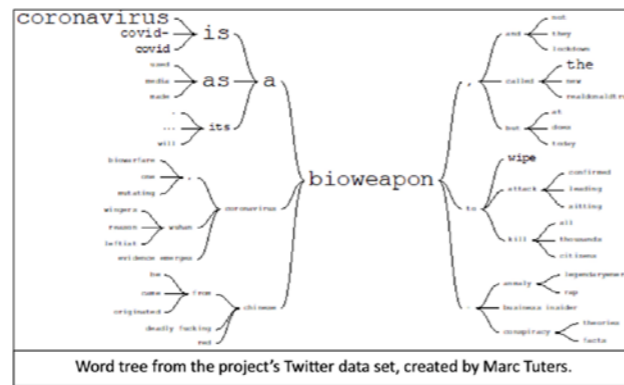
Voices and lived experience

- ▶ Amplifying voices and supporting the agency of individuals and communities, some of whom might otherwise have been marginalised
- ▶ Centring the role of lived experience – e.g., how people coped and how they are recovering
- ▶ Creating space for critical and open perspectives on difficult or sensitive ethical questions
- ▶ Collaboration with community-based partners in the design, delivery and implementation of research – setting up rich opportunities for future projects

“We were working with people, looking at relationships and human interaction, at care and compassion. All of this was in a scientific context - but the people were the focus.”

THE NATIONAL COVID MEMORIAL WALL





CASE STUDY 1: INFODEMIC: COMBATting COVID-19 CONSPIRACY THEORIES

Researchers: Peter Knight (University of Manchester), Clare Birchall, Jonathan Gray, Liliana Bounegru (King's College London), Marc Tutters (University of Amsterdam)

At the outset of the pandemic the World Health Organisation warned that misinformation related to COVID-19 could lead to an “infodemic” as dangerous as the virus itself. This project studied how and why conspiracy theories spread online, and what can be done about them. The team used data-scraping technology to extract millions of conspiracy theory posts on the main social media platforms (Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram and TikTok) during the course of 2020. We then used digital methods to identify key themes and trends, and carried out detailed textual and visual analysis of representative samples. We analysed the historical roots of the conspiracy theories that went viral, how they mutated during the pandemic, who has been promoting them, and why some theories have gained more traction than others.

The research found that COVID-19 conspiracy theories are not simply the result of people having a lack of information, or having the wrong information. Instead, they often reflect legitimate concerns and resentments, even if their factual claims are incorrect. Although social media made conspiracy theories spread faster and more widely, it is not the only cause of the problem. The main recommendation of our research is that to combat the spread of conspiracy theories, we need to understand why people turn to these narratives, rather than simply trying to debunk them.

We shared our findings with UK Health Security Agency, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, Ofcom and think tanks such as ISD Global and First Draft, and published our results in both academic journals, a book (Conspiracy Theories in the Time of COVID-19), articles and interviews in collaboration with journalists. Working with Sense about Science, the project also produced a set of guidelines for science communicators and the public on how to talk to people who have adopted conspiracy theories. With First Draft, we created a set of instructions for journalists on how to use digital methods for investigating online conspiracy theories. And in collaboration with the Institute of Education, we produced a toolkit and training for school teachers on how to address the problem of COVID-19 (and other) conspiracy theories when they come up in the classroom.



Covid Protest in London (copyright Annie Kelly)

CASE STUDY 2: CULTURAL TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETING OF COVID-19 RISKS AMONG LONDON'S MIGRANT COMMUNITIES

Researchers: Nana Sato-Rossberg, Yan Jiang, Lutz Marten, Edward Simpson, Bukola Aluko-Kpotie, Aicha Belkadi, Narguess Farzad, Ida Hadjivayanis, Youkyung Ju, Amy Parsons, Soe-Tjen Marching, Burçin Mustafa, Naresh Sharma, Satona Suzuki, Marie Thaut, and Abshir Warsame (all from SOAS, University of London)

This research addresses the often-noted disproportionate impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on migrant communities and the difficulty of reaching those communities with Public Health messages. To address this problem, we studied how different and diverse cultural communities receive information about COVID-19, interpreted/translated it according to their language conventions and acted upon it. We hypothesized that different ways of understanding this coronavirus affected how communities responded to it and ultimately led to variation in mortality rates.

Our team of 17 researchers from different language communities at SOAS, University of London, carried out a systematic survey that was completed by 688 people. This survey helped us get a first understanding of different tendencies amongst 16 language communities: Arabic, Algerian Arabic/French, Bengali, Chinese, Hindi, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Persian, Punjabi, Somali, Sylheti, Swahili, Turkish, and Yoruba. These were followed up by interviews with 183 people, which followed a more open format to get a more detailed understanding of the challenges each community faces.

We also researched narratives about COVID-19 in communities in London and compared these with those in the places of origin of each language community. Based on this information, we identified how communities understand COVID-19 and why they behave and react in certain ways.

People from ethnic and minority communities expressed concern about the Government's actions in response to COVID-19. Below are extracts of voices from our interviews.

'This country is too lenient- hasn't been strict at all, and still isn't today. Many people over the summer (2020) and even coming into the winter were having private parties, raves etc., but 'you can't blame them either', because the government keep changing the rules. Prime Minister's requests to stay at home were too weak- people took advantage of the leniency.'

Many people also asked for clearer instructions and guidance:

'More disseminations of information for the ethnic minorities. Especially when the regulations change. Sometimes, we are not sure what the regulations are. Because we are minorities here, meeting our friends is very important. The tendency to read news and information in our native language is still quite big. So I wish there is more information in minorities' languages'

Seventy-one percent of our survey respondents obtained information on COVID-19 from outside of UK. Of these, seventy-nine percent thought this helped them understanding COVID-19 better. Below we cite examples of survey responses related to issues that were consistently mentioned. They show that people do not get enough information or that the information they get is not clear. Information needs to be provided in a broad range of relevant languages and by mediators who understand and communicate with people with different cultures and habits.

1. "The language barrier"
2. "Cultural upbringing reflects the application and the adherence to the procedures and precautionary measures"
3. "I don't think people are understanding the information"
4. "I think educating community leaders would help in this regard"

Our interviews revealed that:

1. People across communities do not know about long COVID or do not have sufficient information about this condition.
2. People have mental health problems because of uncertainty regarding COVID-19. In some communities they expressed a need for counselling with someone who understands their culture and speaks their own language.
3. In some communities many people do not trust governmental information, especially about vaccination.

CASE STUDY 3: CULTURE BOX: PROVISION OF CREATIVE ACTIVITIES TO PEOPLE WITH DEMENTIA IN CARE HOMES DURING THE PANDEMIC

Researchers: Victoria Tischler (University of Exeter), Chloe Asker (University of Exeter), Hannah Zeilig (University of the Arts London), Julian West (Royal Academy of Music) and Mary O'Malley (University of West London)



Akim Toussaint Buck, 'Hello Love' (commissioned for Culture Box, 2020)

People living with dementia in care homes have been severely negatively impacted during the pandemic with those from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups disproportionately affected. High rates of mortality, social isolation, loneliness and responsive behaviours (such as restlessness, agitation and wandering) increased as visits from loved ones, artists and creative practitioners were stopped. Culture Box responded to this through regular postal and digital deliveries of creative activities for use in dyads (a resident with dementia and a member of care staff).

Participatory Action Research was used to assess the impact of the project. This used a cycle of planning, delivery, evaluation and reflection.

The Culture Boxes included a range of physical and digital materials and activities. This included an illustrated series of trees from around the world with associated art activities

such as colouring in, musical resources including links to BBC musical memories website, puppet-making, and musical instruments. The project collaborated with a variety of creative organisations including Entelechy Arts, Drawing Life, Paintings in Hospitals, Live Music Now, Spare Tyre Theatre and Pitzhanger Manor and Gallery.

Culture Boxes provided stimulation and interest to care home residents during the pandemic, with visual arts, music and nature-based activities especially popular. Care staff felt supported and inspired by the project at a time of unprecedented challenge.

"It will be quite sad, won't it, when it comes to an end because we look forward to them coming every month. We get excited when we are opening them, don't we?"

The Culture Box materials stimulated meaningful discussion about hobbies, families, travel and other life events. Staff learnt more about residents because of these discussions.

"And it is like totally changing them and it brings them out of themselves a little bit, which is nice [...] It is new, and I mean something that we learn, something we can learn new things all the time and so yeah, it is lovely, we are absolutely loving it actually."

Digital poverty, lack of confidence in engaging with creative materials, and staff attrition were barriers to the success of the project that should be addressed to sustain similar projects in future.

Remote and digital delivery of creative activities can be used successfully used to reduce isolation, improve relationships, and enhance the quality of life for older people in care homes. Future projects should utilise remote and hybrid delivery to work with a diverse range of older people.

CASE STUDY 4: COVID-19 CARE: CULTURE AND THE ARTS, FROM RESTRICTION TO ENHANCEMENT: PROTECTING MENTAL HEALTH IN THE LIVERPOOL CITY REGION

Researchers: Josie Billington, Katia Balabanova, Joanne Worsley, Tonya Anisimovich, Megan Watkins, Wendy Asquith, Melissa Chapple, Richard Snowden-Leak (University of Liverpool).



What was the cost to public mental health of restricted access to arts and culture during the COVID-19 pandemic? How successful were alternative (online or digital) modes of arts and cultural provision in reaching and communicating with established or new audiences? This interdisciplinary study collaborated with 15 arts and cultural organisations and 3 health partners in the Liverpool City Region to address these pressing questions in an area with some of the poorest mental health outcomes in the country.

The study has produced evidence that arts and cultural activities were essential in overcoming isolation during the COVID-19 lockdown. Alternative provision was a vital 'lifeline' for those who were vulnerable, disadvantaged, or 'stuck at home'. For example, 'It was a highlight of my week ... a salvation'. Online activities made arts and culture accessible for the first time to new populations at risk of mental health issues. For example, 'A mobility issue or perhaps even living with anxiety or lack of confidence would have previously inhibited people from coming along to a group in a public setting.'

A key finding is that those who accessed arts and culture during full lockdown had significantly higher levels of wellbeing.

There was a strong appetite among vulnerable people for continued online provision. However, many at-risk individuals remained out of reach due to digital exclusion, and our study

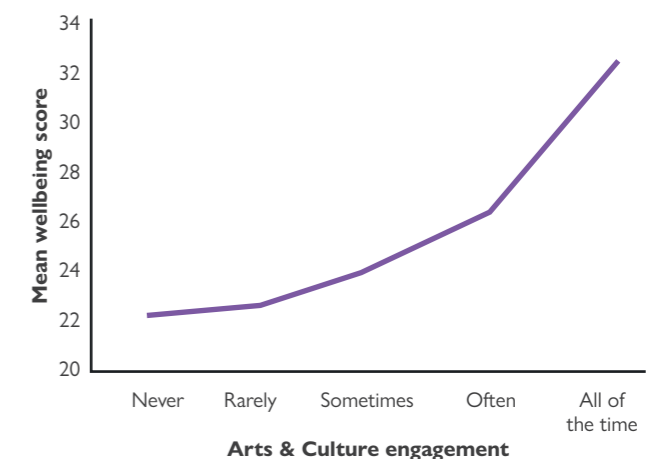
has emphasised the crucial importance of digital training for both providers and beneficiaries.

Our study also found evidence of arts organisations responding when usual services were lacking, pro-actively meeting the needs of disadvantaged people. For example, 'Arts provision and the social enterprises picked up the pieces where statutory care failed people completely.' Arts practitioners spoke of the need for a 'backbone organisation' or 'register' so that local initiatives could be 'pulled' or 'held' together and targeted more efficiently.

Cultural organisations that worked closely with health partners had most success in reaching vulnerable populations. In fact, the research has demonstrated the value of coordinating local initiatives and the need to support sustainable partnerships between arts and health providers to improve the effectiveness of cross-sectoral decision-making by service providers and service-users.

The project team is now working in partnership with the Liverpool City Region Culture policy team, and in continued collaboration with our arts and cultural and health partners, to co-create a digital resource, LivCare, of best practice in inclusive arts-in-mental-health provision. LivCARE addresses our key recommendation regarding fostering cross-sectoral co-operation, and provides a prototype for broader regional and potentially national scale-up.

How often have you taken part in Arts and Cultural Activities? During full COVID-19 lockdown



CASE STUDY 5: CULTURE IN CRISIS: CENTRE FOR CULTURAL VALUE'S COVID-19 RESEARCH

Researchers: The project was led by the Centre for Cultural Value in collaboration with The Audience Agency and the Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre. The study involved a team of 24 researchers from universities and research agencies across the UK.



The Lowry in Lockdown. Photo: Nathan Chandler

In March 2020, it quickly became apparent that to realise the Centre of Cultural Value's aim of developing a shared understanding of the differences that arts, culture, heritage and screen make to people's lives and to society, we would need to carefully track the rapidly evolving impacts of the pandemic on the sector.

We intended to provide robust insights to cultural sector workers, academics and policymakers in real-time. We sought to answer two core research questions: To what extent would the COVID-19 crisis perpetuate, exacerbate or reduce inequalities relating to cultural production and consumption? How might this change the relationship between cultural industries and the public in the short, medium and longer-term?

The research was conducted over 15 months, from September 2020 to November 2021. It was delivered by an interdisciplinary project team of 35 people from across the UK and involved a combination of complementary methods.

The team conducted over 230 interviews with cultural sector professionals and analysed the data thematically to highlight the most significant impacts and implications. The interview data was supplemented by a quantitative analysis of Labour Force Survey (LFS) data, a population survey of cultural engagement, social media analysis and an ecosystem analysis of Greater Manchester.

Having researchers virtually placed in local government meant that policymakers could feed into our research questions as the pandemic unfolded. The evolving research also became an important source of information to policymakers at a local and national level.

“My impression is that it is not standard practice for researchers to give these findings. But the pandemic is fast moving so we needed real time insight... It was a very interactive process from beginning of planning to session to delivery”

Civil Servant, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport

The longer-term impacts of the pandemic on the sector are still unclear. However, what is clear from our research is that the impact of the pandemic has aggravated and accelerated existing inequalities and longer-term trends across the arts and cultural sector. These findings have allowed practitioners, funders and policymakers to reflect on what now needs to be done differently.

“The insight that this particular research has offered us has meant that we're able to have very informed, credible and robust conversations with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and central government.”

Andrew Mowlah, Director of Research, Arts Council England

Our mixed-methods humanities-based research demonstrates how research can be designed and conducted rapidly in the midst of a global crisis. It also shows how this type of research can provide impactful findings that can address complex, multifaceted 21st-century problems and ultimately shape a brighter and more equitable future.

CASE STUDY 6: TITLE: OUTSIDE THE BOX: OPEN-AIR PERFORMANCE AS A PANDEMIC RESPONSE

Research team: Evelyn O'Malley, Cathy Turner, Tim Coles, Giselle Garcia, (all University of Exeter)

Theatre and performance artists innovated in their open-air practices during the pandemic, addressing the impacts upon the cultural sector and social isolation caused by lockdowns, alongside the ongoing protracted crises of climate change and biodiversity loss.

Spanning theatre and management studies, Outside the Box: Open Air Performance as a Pandemic Response worked with civic partners to identify public spaces that might safely be used to allow people to gather safely for live open-air performance, aligned with the environmental aspiration to “Build Back Better” in the cultural recovery.

Alongside scoping interviews and surveys with artists and local authority events officers, the project used a practice-based approach, commissioning six environmentally attuned outdoor performance events in the city of Exeter.

As the country opened up after the first lockdown, theatre makers found ways for people to meet safely with each other and with their environment. Their work responded to the appetite for in-person events by enabling the safe gathering of dispersed audiences. They also modelled possibilities for sustainable cultural practice that can contribute to placemaking and environmental wellbeing.

The commissioned performances took place in lower risk, environmentally sensitive open-air settings. In Exeter, the commissions contributed to the regional revival of live performance cultures.

As these indicative audience remarks suggest, the links between human and environmental wellbeing can be foregrounded in performance:

The whole day, the whole experience felt a lot about connection to me... and the repair, we talked about the visible and invisible repair, of the landscape, which was on our minds, but I also felt there was a repair in us and our connections to each other.

Audience response, GPS Embroidery by Lizzie Philps



Tell it to the bees (Exeter 2021)

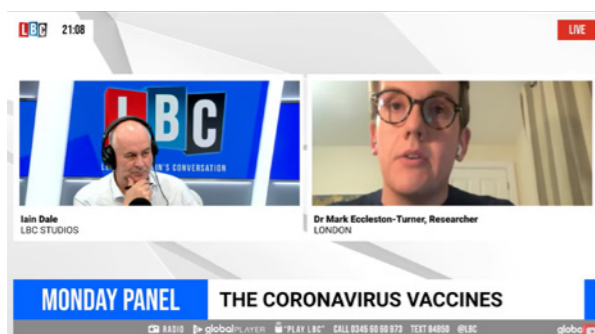
As we walked, I heard about the plague and swine flu and the diseases of bees. I didn't want the performance to be related to this pandemic, but it built up slowly in a safe way. My brain made me think – ‘Who owes what to who?’ It made me think about the relationship between bees and humans. I started to appreciate the sounds, smells and the environment more.

Audience response, Tell it to the Bees by Louise Ann Wilson

The research with local authority events officers across the UK found that live performance plays a key role in local recovery, but smaller, arts-related events in outdoor spaces would benefit from more tailored support. Flexible and creative responses from local authorities are key in supporting open-air practices and increasing the range of outdoor spaces used for performance. Increased administrative burdens are an impediment to success, however. The research points to the importance of bespoke guidance and regulation to enable smaller events and performances that pose less risk.

CASE STUDY 7: MODELS OF EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION OF VACCINES IN INTERNATIONAL LAW

Research Team: Mark Eccleston-Turner, Alexandra Phelan, Michelle Rourke, Harry Upton.



Dr Mark Eccleston-Turner interviewed by Iain Dale at LBC, 17 November 2020 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5ImxvYu3o_I

Our research project 'Assessing the viability of access and benefit-sharing models of equitable distribution of vaccines in international law' predicted that low-and-middle-income countries (LMICs) would receive significantly fewer vaccines, and receive them far later, than their developed country neighbours. We sought to understand why this is the case, and, crucially, to understand if legal and policy options being pursued by organizations like the World Health Organization could improve this clear injustice. To do this our team evaluated, in real time, international efforts to secure improved access to vaccine for LMICs, such as the COVAX initiative. Our research concluded that initiatives such as COVAX were largely unsuccessful, due to a range of factors. These include unsustainable financing, poor contractual

management, insufficient global supply, unequal geographical location of vaccine manufacturing capacity, and intellectual property rights. These problems remain to this day, and unless clear, concrete action is taken, during any future pandemic billions of people around the world will be without timely access to lifesaving vaccinations.

Our project utilised a range of public engagement and impact related activities, including providing a briefing report to Members of the House of Commons and the House of Lords, writing in newspapers such as the Guardian, national and international radio and television interviews, and delivering public lectures. Such activities have increased awareness of equitable access to vaccines issue amongst the public, see for example, the number of reads and shares of the Guardian article, and that Eccleston-Turner appeared on an hour long "Monday night Panel with Iain Dale" on LBC 17 November, 2020, taking calls from the public.

The video of Eccleston-Turner on LBC received over 1800 watches on YouTube, as well as those who listened live on radio. The comments on the link demonstrate how the intervention raised awareness and changed the audience's opinion.

A number of the "questions to be resolved" within our briefing report have been raised in Parliament since our report was submitted to members of the Commons and Lords. Examples include the Hansard contributions by Baroness Goudie (Lab) on Thursday 15 October 2020, Lisa Nandy (Wigan) (Lab) on Thursday 5 November 2020, and Lord Collins of Highbury (Lab) on Wednesday 25 November 2020.



5. RECOMMENDATIONS TO AHRC

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RAPID-RESPONSE FUNDING CALLS

1. Call type: continue to provide rapid-response calls. Our survey suggests that the UKRI/AHRC COVID-19 Rapid-Response call was very popular with researchers, who appreciated the simplified application process ('light-touch' application followed by full Je-S submission for successful applicants; cf. EDIEF recommendation 4) and flexibility and the recognition that Arts and Humanities have a contribution to make to solving urgent problems.

"...it was great to see a scheme explicitly valuing humanities research as 'urgent'"

"Exceptional - very rapid response but not only that it seemed to be well thought through (not just a knee jerk response)."

2. Partnerships and stakeholders: for calls that include an expectation that researchers will work with external partners and community stakeholders, especially including precarious industries and/or minoritised communities, explicitly provide funding to resource the time commitments of these partners and stakeholders. Many of the project partners and stakeholders, especially from minoritised communities, are struggling financially and are therefore unable to carve out the time needed to work with research teams, let alone provide either financial or in-kind contributions. Providing resource to support partners and, in rapid-response calls, to consolidate partnership activities at the start of a project, will enable researchers to work with a broader range of stakeholders and partner organisations. Signposting applicants and award holders to existing resources on inclusive and ethical recruitment of artists in commission work will further support diversifying the range of partners (Cf. EDIEF recommendations 7 and 31)

"Crises shatter ivory towers. We've worked much more closely with the community in this project than before, and that means a very different model of A&H research, with different skill sets, different relationships in the team, and different outputs."

3. Extensions: Set up a light-touch approval process for no-cost extensions. Many projects needed additional time because they were working in a crisis environment. In the responses of our portfolio's PIs to the UKRI Round 3 survey, 40% reported staffing challenges (e.g. recruitment, illness, absence associated with childcare and home schooling); 34% had difficulties recruiting study participants; 20% encountered challenges linked to remote working (e.g. technology and productivity issues); and 18% reported problems involving access to data. All these factors led to delays and pressure on timelines and teams.

"longer grants (if applicable) which allowed research teams to balance immediate/early responses with far more considered and reflective work - urgency is clearly an important component of the grants, but so many of the research themes which have emerged from this scheme are clearly pertinent to (in many ways predictable) future crises, and deserve space for a more extensive treatment. UKRI/AHRC crisis grants should result in work with longevity, and create a bank of humanities work which can be quickly drawn on in future emergencies."

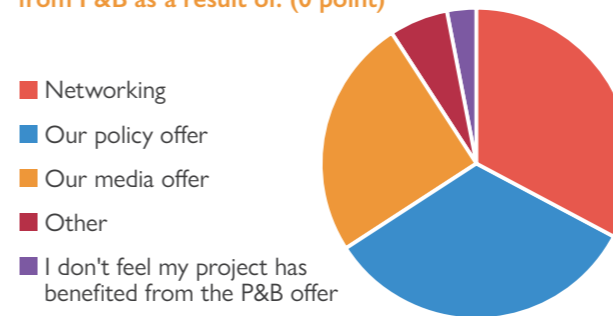
4. Call administration: Ensure that published timelines are adhered to, no start dates need backdating and communication with researchers is timely and clear. Researchers noted delays in the peer review process and issues with communication and backdating of start dates. In the UKRI Round 3 Survey, 32% of respondents noted administrative delays.

5. Reporting: Reduce or consolidate reporting requirements. Researchers complained about the excessive burden of reporting to UKRI on a quarterly basis as well as responding to requests for information from the co-ordination team, with an imbalance between time spent on doing the research and time spent on reporting. Early data sharing with a co-ordination team would alleviate the burden for PIs (see also recommendation 7).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE COORDINATION OF RAPID-RESPONSE OR THEMATIC CALLS

6. Coordination: Continue to coordinate thematically-connected research projects, especially for rapid-response calls: There is a very positive response to the co-ordination by the research community. We helped 81% of survey respondents reach new audiences. Researchers benefited from our networking and co-ordination activities (73 respondents), policy amplification (68 respondents) or dissemination opportunities (55 respondents); only 4 respondents did not benefit from our work:

Do you feel that you or your project has benefited from P&B as a result of: (0 point)



Our May 2022 survey of 106 researchers in the P&B cohort highlighted the the following key features of the P&B coordination:

- ▶ The value of a communal space, network and community of practice to share ideas, network and learning
- ▶ The importance of having a shared platform, which made their research more visible and accessible to policy stakeholders
- ▶ The benefit of networks and engagements generated through events and online communications
- ▶ The value of helping researchers to understand the best way to communicate their recommendations to policy stakeholders

"the Pandemic and Beyond component is a precedent very much worth following. It was incredibly useful to have the P&B team in our corner; their coordination work made the collection of parts much greater than the whole."

"The 'meta project' design that brought together many different projects funded by the call was really innovative. Added tonnes of value."

7. Timelines for coordination: Release the coordination call alongside the initial rapid-response funding call, build time to engage with the coordination into the rapid-response funding call, and provide 'back-end flexibility' for the coordinator(s). Support with media and policy plans and knowledge exchange is most valuable if it is available from the start of research projects and if project teams are roughly at a similar stage in their research and can build the time to engage in knowledge exchange activities into their plans at the application stage, with appropriate resource for ECR members of their teams to benefit from the coordination offer (including training and networking opportunities).

The effectiveness of coordination can be increased by sharing data (full contact details and, if possible, Case for Support) with the coordinator(s) from the outset of the project, with data sharing agreements set in place in advance, thus giving the coordinator(s) the means to understand timelines, team composition, methodologies and dissemination/policy impact plans and reducing the reporting burden for PIs (see recommendation 5).

To enable coordination to be effective at the dissemination and impact stages of the research, ensure that flexibility regarding the end-date of the coordination project and its resourcing in the latter stages is built into that project.

"[Put] the learnings from the P&B project to use - perhaps by thinking about particular research themes and groups of projects from the beginning (rather than identifying them retrospectively) and enabling them to work together on policy or other impacts, and making that collaboration a central part of the call."

"It would have been interesting if we had dedicated specific time in planning for engaging in pandemic and beyond project."

8. Resource: Provide sufficient resource for effective coordination, aligning expectations with the funding on offer. The AHRC COVID-19 Coordinator call specification included a list of expectations (see inset box) that was impossible to reconcile with the resource provided (up to £250,000, FEC).

The coordinator(s) will be expected to

- ▶ Facilitate knowledge mobilisation for the AHRC-funded COVID-19 projects, by engaging stakeholders and connecting projects and PIs to relevant decision makers, including government departments, policy groups, thinktanks, local government, NGOs, business and the third level sector. This will involve establishing new connections, and creating dialogue between stakeholders, policymakers, etc, and the leading experts funded through the COVID-19 call.
- ▶ Encourage and facilitate collaborative working across the COVID-19 projects, as well as making relevant connections with other AHRC programmes and projects, to enable information sharing, foster new opportunities, and avoid any duplication of research.
- ▶ Create evidence-based narratives for wide audiences, to promote and raise the profile of AHRC's portfolio of COVID-19 research, as well as the role of arts and humanities research more broadly in the COVID-19 response.
- ▶ Connect the arts and humanities research to other disciplines where relevant.
- ▶ Effectively mobilise and disseminate programme outcomes and impacts through a variety of routes including publications and non-traditional, non-textual outputs.
- ▶ Support AHRC in developing medium- to long-term plans for the COVID-19 response and identify key research gaps or areas of new research activity. Consider and put forward recommendations for the future role of arts and humanities in pandemic responses.
- ▶ Support the legacy of the AHRC-funded COVID-19 projects.
- ▶ Work collaboratively with AHRC staff throughout the lifetime of the grant.
- ▶ Support the AHRC's COVID-19 portfolio to ensure that its inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and impact are equitable, diverse, and inclusive at every level.

The P&B team modelled a team involving high-level academic leadership from the PI and a significant level of support by a dedicated team of subject specialist CIs (3 cluster leads and a film practitioner CI in charge of producing artistic content). The team included PDRAs, several student interns, alongside external policy consultants, a media team and internal policy support.

Between September 2021 and April 2022, P&B was granted a £40,000 funding uplift from AHRC to resource additional time and policy consultancy support. The project additionally drew on significant additional resources provided by the University of Exeter (a total of over £60,000 from a combination of Open Access Fund, Open Innovation Platform, Policy Support Fund, Student Internships, plus access to administrative support and collaboration with the Press Office) and was heavily dependent on all team members 'going the extra mile'.

Our estimate is that to fully resource and deliver the outputs produced by the P&B team and meet all the objectives of the original AHRC call would require a doubling of the original £250,000 FEC ceiling to £500,000. We recommend that either the expectations for future coordination calls are radically scaled back to cover only coordination or only dissemination/policy impact generation activities, or the funding needs to be increased to match the expectations.

9. Resource collaboration with external policy consultants to maximise policy reach of work in the portfolio. The input of Culture Commons was transformative for the P&B project, as the consultants were able to let projects within the portfolio that had no pre-existing policy contacts and who were geographically beyond the reach of policy makers in Westminster and devolved governments access ready-made networks, which the consultants expanded to create new connections with the right decision-makers. For evidence of the added value brought to the project by the collaboration with Culture Commons, see the 'Policy: online portal, webinars and briefings' section in Part 2 of this report.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE CO-ORDINATION PROJECT LEADS

10. Training: Provide training/professional development opportunities for policy and media work for researchers. Institutional support for media and policy work is variable. 48% of survey respondents (nearly half of all PIs) had little or no experience of policy work before their involvement with Covid response projects and with P&B. Levelling this playing field and brokering relationships to policymakers and/or signpost where such support is available is important for equality and inclusion, especially for early career researchers.

“What I have learned in my engagement with Pandemic and Beyond is how to refine an argument for policy-makers and find new strategies to influence the public and political agenda on a particular issue or policy.”

“We were able to reach audiences and stakeholders far beyond our existing networks, through our policy brief for the project and participation in really well-organised and attended policy-facing events”

11. Public engagement: Provide support for a wide range of public engagement opportunities, including podcasts: although the audiences for the P&B podcast were relatively modest (700+ plays in total, with 10-70 plays per episode), researchers valued the opportunity it gave them to deepen their networks, involve their stakeholders and reach new audiences. Podcasts also yielded rich content for social media campaigns.

“the podcast was exceptionally useful and a pleasure to engage in.”

“Participation in one of the podcasts formed an even more ‘curated’ encounter with two other project groups, neither of whom seemed particularly close to our own project’s work, but in fact were VERY close to it; a direct collaboration with one of the two projects is currently on the cards.”

12. Cluster size: create small, coherent research clusters: The portfolio for P&B was too diverse to provide a coherent 'fit' for all the projects. Clusters of up to 12 projects that have strong thematic and methodological connections are ideal.

Survey respondents who did not align with other projects in terms of discipline or methodology noted the difficulties in engaging with other projects.



University
of Exeter