

# The more colours you add, the nicer the picture



Photography  
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AccessHE is the pan-London network to support social mobility through higher education in London. Part of the regional organisation for higher education providers in London, London Higher, AccessHE works with 25 HEIs and over 300 schools and colleges in the capital.

Find out more

**[accesshe.ac.uk](https://accesshe.ac.uk)**

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# Executive summary

## → Background

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This report outlines the challenges of widening access to creative arts and design HE courses in London, what is being done to address these challenges and how we can address them better in the future. It draws on analysis of secondary data,

surveys with higher education institutions, cultural organisations and schools and colleges, as well as interviews with students on undergraduate arts degrees in London.

## → Recommendations

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1

### **Support AccessHE Creative - a pan-London network focused on access to HE arts subjects**

Launched in late 2016, AccessHE Creative is a network of over 100 schools, colleges, HEIs and cultural organisations working together to support learners from underrepresented groups to enter HE arts subjects in London. Its website contains information on extra curricular arts activities delivered by cultural organisations, careers in the arts and cultural sector and opportunities offered by HEIs as well as a programme of events and advocacy.

2

### **A London pledge to target arts and cultural activities at underrepresented groups**

Only a small proportion of cultural activities are targeted at underrepresented groups. Targeting of young people for outreach work in HEIs is often still general. Organisations should be encouraged to sign a London pledge to target a given percentage of their activity at specific groups of learners.

3

### **Create an online arts and creative information, advice and guidance (IAG) portal for London**

Improving the quantity and quality of the IAG on careers in the arts for young people and parents, in particular from BAME communities,

is essential. The creation of an online arts and creative design courses IAG portal for London would be a positive step forward, supported by the production of specific materials focused at different BAME communities which are developed in conjunction with students and parents from these communities.

4

### **Develop a London strategy for HE institutional diversity**

There is a real opportunity for HEIs in London working through regional HE bodies such as London Higher to launch a new initiative to prioritise institutional diversity, sharing thinking and developing a shared strategy. Providers of creative arts and design courses could kick start this work and show leadership by committing to double the numbers of academic staff from BAME backgrounds by 2022.

5

### **Maintain GCSE and Level 3 provision in arts subjects in London at 2016 levels**

The Greater London Authority should emphasise the unique importance of the arts and creative sectors in London to the Department of Education and work with schools, colleges, local authorities and academy providers to support a campaign led by the Mayor to maintain GCSE and Level 3 provision at 2016 levels up to 2020.

## → Key findings

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- **London cultural organisations and HEIs are working with large numbers of young people and investing significant resources**

Over 1 million young people were benefiting from the activities undertaken by the cultural organisations in our survey. AccessHE HEIs invest nearly £1m and work with more than 10,000 young people each year.

- **London learners from BAME backgrounds are significantly underrepresented in arts subjects in HE**

Asian and black young people from London are significantly underrepresented on creative arts and design HE courses. In 2015, 100 Asian men from high participation neighbourhoods in London were studying an arts subject in HE, as opposed to over 1,000 white women from high participation neighbourhoods.

- **London learners with physical impairments and long-standing illness are underrepresented on arts courses**

Whilst overall disabled learners are over-represented on arts courses, there are groups of students with certain disabilities that are underrepresented. For example, young people with a physical impairment are 2.5 times less likely to do a creative arts and design course than other subjects in HE. Likewise, just 3.5% of disabled students on arts courses have a longstanding illness compared to 7% of disabled students in HE in general.

- **White students from low participation neighbourhoods in London are overrepresented in arts subjects in HE**

Of every five men from the lowest participation neighbourhoods in London that went into HE, one did a creative arts and design subject. This finding reiterates that males from these backgrounds are not solely interested in sports-related courses.

- **BAME students see the arts programmes as lacking in diversity**

Arts HE is perceived as too white. As one of the students interviewed stated: *'There was one day I was on the phone to my boyfriend, and I just cried on the phone because there was a part of me that felt maybe I shouldn't be doing this. It's very hard when you know you're going on a course where everything is still white.'*

- **Arts subjects are seen as having poor career prospects in BAME communities**

A common theme coming through the surveys and the interviews was that arts subjects are seen as having poor career prospects – especially amongst parents. As one of the students interviewed stated: *'When you first tell them, they say 'ok cool, we need to have a word with you about what you are getting yourself into''*

- **A range of financial barriers to entering arts careers may exist**

Cultural organisations working with young people from across London saw a combination of a number of financial barriers: unpaid internships which still dominate career progression paths in too many fields, the high cost of HE entry and the lower post HE wages levels in many arts fields.

- **The talent pipeline of students from London into arts HE subjects is under threat**

Despite recent declines in the numbers taking arts subjects at GCSE level in London the numbers taking A-levels has actually increased by 6% since 2011 to 14%. However, there are real worries amongst the teachers who participated in our survey that arts subjects were declining in importance in London schools: *'Students always hear about STEM subjects and their importance'*.

# Social and cultural diversity in the arts: a London problem?

## → Meeting challenges

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This report outlines the challenges to widening access to creative arts and design courses in London, what is being done to address these challenges, and how we can address them better in the future. There is increased scrutiny of the extent of social and cultural diversity in the arts and cultural sector. For example, a recent report by the Sutton Trust<sup>1</sup> on social mobility in the arts and creative sectors stated ‘over two thirds (67%) of British winners of the main Oscars attended independent schools, (and) (42%) of British winners of the main BAFTAs’.

The concern over social and cultural diversity in the arts and creative sectors poses particular questions for London. The capital drives a large part of the arts and cultural activities in the rest of the country. It is the home of much of the HE provision

in the field and includes world-leading specialist HEIs in the arts. Compared to other regions in the UK, London contains the largest number of employees in the arts and creative industries by far<sup>2</sup>.

London’s population is also highly diverse, and as London HEIs strongly recruit within the region, the participation levels of BAME young people within London are also high compared to other parts of the country. In 2013, on average 45% of UK students at London HEIs were from a BAME background, compared to 16% in HEIs in the rest of the country<sup>3</sup>. If there is a lack of social and cultural diversity in the arts and cultural sector in the UK, the solutions must start with what happens in London.

<sup>1</sup> Kirby, P. *Leading People 2016: The Educational Backgrounds of the UK Professional Elite*. (2016)

<sup>2</sup> Department for Culture, Media and Sport. *Creative Industries: Focus on Employment London*. (2015)

<sup>3</sup> London Higher. *Students in Higher Education 2014/15*. (2016)

Available at: [www.londonhigher.ac.uk/fileadmin/documents/Publications\\_2016/LdnHigher\\_HESASStudents2016.pdf](http://www.londonhigher.ac.uk/fileadmin/documents/Publications_2016/LdnHigher_HESASStudents2016.pdf)

# About the research

## → Methodology

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The research is based on three types of analyses, each is detailed below. Data on GCSE and A-level uptake in London were taken from school performance tables published by the Department for Education<sup>4</sup>. For these analyses, arts courses

were defined as: Applied Art and Design, Art and Design (all), Dance, Drama and Theatre, Expressive Arts and Performance Studies, Music, and Performing Arts.

## → Interviews with students

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We interviewed two black students currently doing undergraduate degrees in creative arts and design subjects. Due to the small sample, we are not able to make generalisations to the wider group of arts

students from a BAME background. Nevertheless, the interviews illustrate the difficulties some BAME young people may face pursuing a career in the arts.

## → Analysis of secondary data

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Data obtained from UCAS<sup>5</sup> were analysed to determine subject choice in HE by social background. Specifically, the number of acceptances on undergraduate degree courses for applicants from London in 2014 and 2015 were analysed in relation to characteristics of applicants. Data were combined for 2014 and 2015 unless stated otherwise. Arts subjects here are defined as those in JACS3 group W Creative Arts and Design (Fine Art, Design, Music, Drama, Dance, Cinematics

and Photography, Crafts, Creative Writing) and group Y Combined arts. Statistical analyses were performed in SPSS.

For school performance data, the given year is the year in which the academic year starts (e.g. 2012 refers to the academic year 2012/2013). In the UCAS data, a given year refers to when the application was processed, rather than the entry year.

<sup>4</sup> Department for Education. School performance tables. Available at: <https://www.compare-school-performance.service.gov.uk/>

<sup>5</sup> UCAS. EXACT data. Available at: <https://www.ucas.com/corporate/data-and-analysis/analytical-dataservices/exact>

## → Surveys of HEIs, schools and cultural organisations

We sent out three surveys to AccessHE member HEIs, cultural organisations that are part of the AccessHE Creative Network, and schools and colleges in London. A total of 15 HEIs, 31 cultural organisations, and 71 schools and colleges took part in the surveys.

The majority of HEIs that responded were specialist institutions (43%) or post-1992 universities (43%). The remainder of respondents were private or campus universities. This sample is thus well balanced and should give a good indication of the work HEIs are undertaking to widen access to the arts.

The cultural organisations that took part in the survey included theatre and performing arts companies (31%), charities (31%), theatres (25%), galleries (3%), libraries (1%), and other types of cultural organisations (6%). The organisations work across the arts, including: performing arts, theatre, music, dance, fine art, photography, and film. In the schools and colleges survey, the majority of respondents were the curriculum team leaders (45%). Other respondents included teachers (18%), careers advisors (13%), members of the senior leadership team (10%), and other roles (13%) such as the head of art, deputy head teacher or head of sixth form.

## → Acronyms & definitions

The following acronyms and definitions were used in the report:

<b>BAME</b>	Black, Asian and minority ethnic
<b>EBacc</b>	English Baccalaureate
<b>FSM</b>	Free school meals
<b>HE</b>	Higher Education
<b>HEI</b>	Higher Education institution
<b>KS</b>	Key stage
<b>NEET</b>	Not in education, employment, or training
<b>SEN</b>	Special educational needs
<b>STEM</b>	Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics

### **POLAR3**

POLAR3 is based on the HE participation rates of people who were aged 18 between 2005 and 2009 and entered a HE course in a UK higher education institution or English or Scottish further education college, aged 18 or 19, between academic years 2005-06 and 2010-11<sup>6</sup>. These rates are used to assign wards into five groups: the POLAR3 'quintiles'. Quintile 1 indicates the lowest participation rates and quintile 5 indicates the highest participation rates. POLAR3 is used as a proxy for level of advantage.



# The London talent pipeline

## → This is a critical time for arts education

Nationally, the opportunities for young people to participate in the arts are under threat. The EBacc has reduced the opportunities for students to study art and design<sup>7</sup>, with one in three teachers saying that post-16 courses in art and design have closed in their institutions and that they have reduced the time allocated to creative subjects. Extra-curricular activities in the arts have also come under pressure. Over half of sixth form colleges have reduced extra-curricular activities, with the main cuts in music and drama.

The Cultural Learning Alliance have reported a 14% reduction in the uptake of arts GCSEs<sup>8</sup> and Ofqual figures show that there has been a significant decrease in the number of A-level entries in performing or expressive arts (-15%)<sup>9</sup>. In 2011, half of KS4 pupils in London took up a GCSE in an arts or creative subject (Figure 1). The proportion dropped significantly in 2014, when just 44% of pupils entered an art GCSE.

However, this decrease in art GCSE uptake has been coupled with an increase in the uptake of arts A-levels over the same period. As Figure 1 shows, in 2011 just 5% of KS5 pupils in London took up an A-level in an arts or creative subject. The following year, this increased significantly to 14%, and has remained at this level over the following years.

The average number of GCSEs pupils take has remained relatively stable around 8 (8.1 in 2013 and 8.4 in 2014)<sup>10</sup>. Thus, the trends in GCSE and A-level uptake are not due to pupils taking fewer GCSEs and focusing on subjects they are planning to do A-levels in. Instead, since 2012, more pupils have chosen to do an A-level in an arts or creative subject, and this has remained high despite a drop in the number of GCSE entries in arts subjects.

**Figure 1: The average proportion of pupils taking an arts GCSE or A-level in London.**



<sup>7</sup> National Society for Education in Art and Design. The National Society for Education in Art and Design Survey Report 2015-16. (2016)

<sup>8</sup> Kewin, J. & Janowski, L. Key findings and analysis SFCA funding impact survey report 2016. (2016)

<sup>9</sup> Cultural Learning Alliance. Patterns in GCSE entries 2010 to 2015. (2015)

<sup>10</sup> Ofqual. Summer Exam Entries: GCSEs, Level 1/2 Certificates, AS and A Levels in England: Provisional Figures April 2016. (2016)

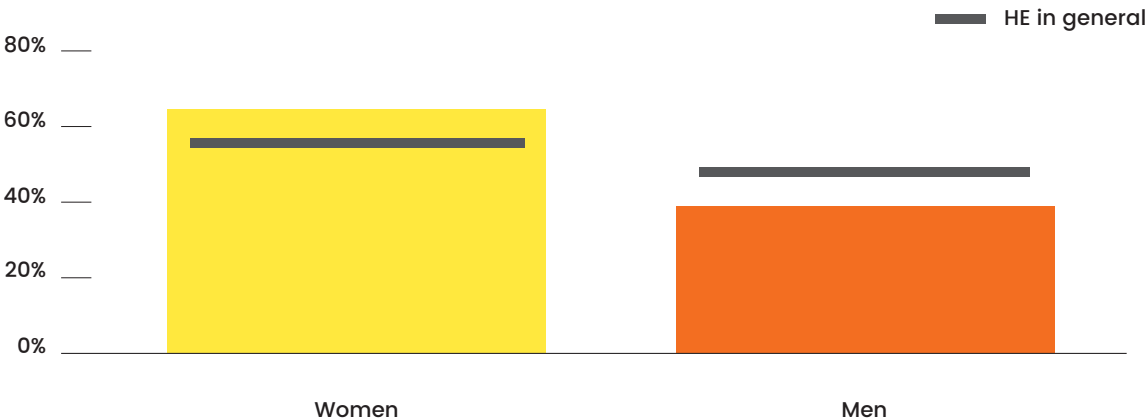
# Who is missing from arts subjects in HE?

## → The relative lack of men

The majority of students on arts courses in HE in the United Kingdom are white, able bodied, middle-class women<sup>11</sup>. This picture is replicated in London. Each year, around 8,000 young people from London accept a place onto an HE arts or creative course. Figure 2 shows that 63% of acceptances on arts courses were made by women. This is significantly greater than the 54% of acceptances women made to HE courses in

general. Just 37% of acceptances on arts courses were made by men, compared to 46% on non-arts courses. In Figure 2, the coloured bars indicate proportions on arts courses; the grey line indicates proportions on other (i.e. non-arts) courses. The proportions for arts courses are significantly different for other courses, indicating that women are overrepresented and men are underrepresented on arts courses.

Figure 2: The proportion of acceptances of places on HE courses by gender.



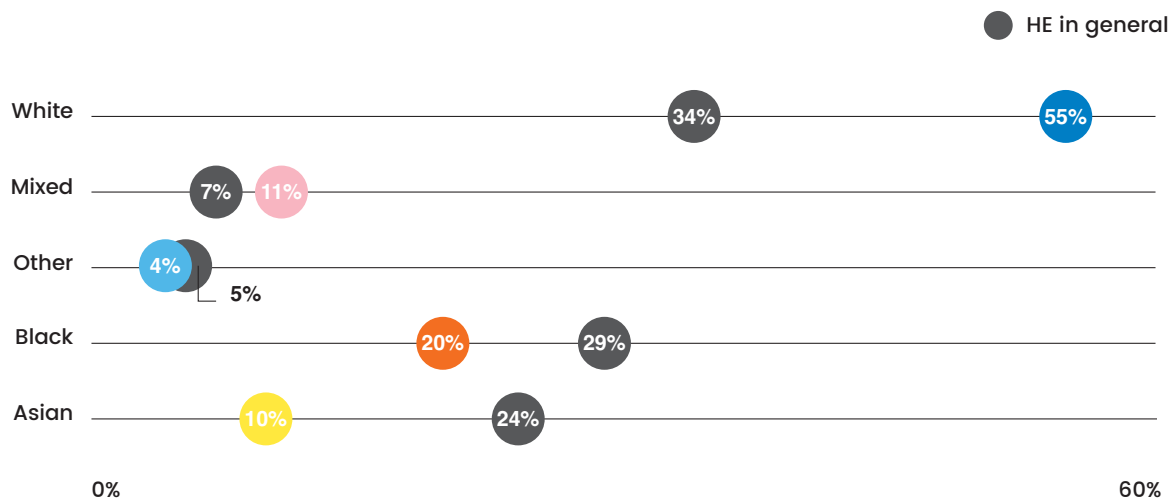
## → Underrepresentation of BAME students

There are fewer students from black, Asian and 'other' ethnic backgrounds on creative arts and design HE courses than expected (Figure 3). In Figure 3, coloured dots indicate proportions on arts courses; grey dots indicate proportions for

HE in general. The proportions were significantly different for arts and other courses, indicating that students from a white or mixed background are overrepresented and BAME students are underrepresented on arts courses.

<sup>11</sup> Hayton, A. R., Haste, P. & Jones, A. Promoting diversity in creative art education: the case of Fine Art at Goldsmiths, University of London. Br. J. Sociol. Educ. 36, 1258–1276 (2015)

**Figure 3: The proportion of acceptances of places on HE courses by ethnicity.**



## → Financial disadvantage alone is not a barrier to accessing arts subjects

To get a better picture of who is underrepresented in arts HE subjects in London it is necessary to bring together data on gender, ethnicity and neighbourhood level of HE participation. This kind of ‘intersectional’ analysis is now being undertaken by UCAS in their end of cycle report, and enables policymakers to identify more clearly the groups of young people who are missing out the most on the chance to enter HE.

Looking at the data for London, the most disadvantaged young people may overall be less likely to go into HE, they are, however, no less likely to study creative arts and design subjects than any other subjects. In other words, young people from all POLAR3 quintiles go into arts courses at the same rates as they do in HE in general. However, when ethnic background and neighbourhood level of HE participation are combined the picture looks more complex. Asian young people are actually less likely to study arts subjects when they are from higher participation areas.

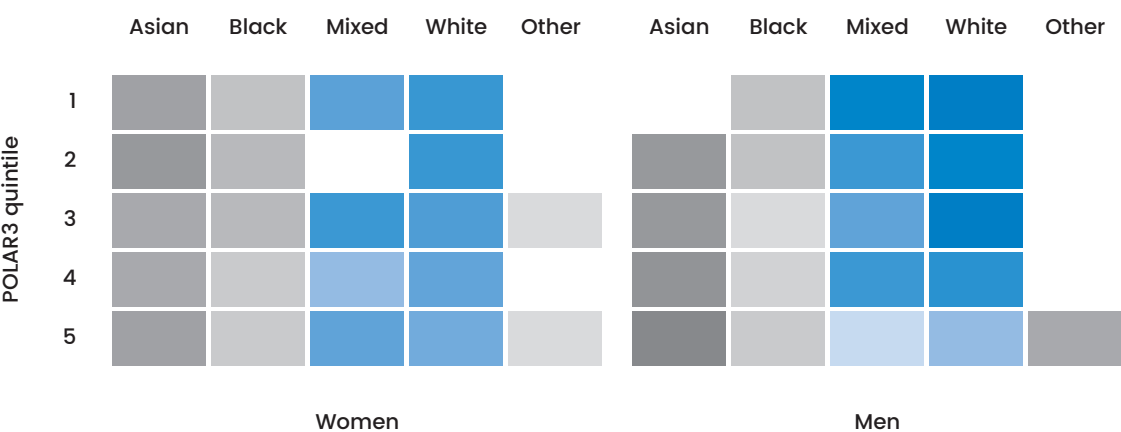
Whereas for black students, again it is not those from the lowest participation areas that are the least likely to study arts subjects but those from the mid participation areas. Students from a white or mixed background on the other hand were the most likely to study the arts if there were from quintile 3. This suggests that disadvantage is not the only barrier to widening access to the arts, and that cultural factors also play a part.

In Figure 4, the relationship between neighbourhood participation area and ethnicity is broken down for men and women. Figure 4 shows that the effect of ethnic background combined with neighbourhood level of participation was stronger for women than for men. In Figure 4, blue cells indicate overrepresentation, the grey cells indicate underrepresentation and the white cells indicates the proportion of students is as expected. Darker values indicate a greater deviation from expectation.

# Who is missing from arts subjects in HE?

## → Analysis of participation

Figure 4: The proportion of acceptances of places on HE courses by gender, ethnicity, and level of participation.



These analyses show that the patterns in participation in arts courses amongst students from London are complex, and at times surprising:

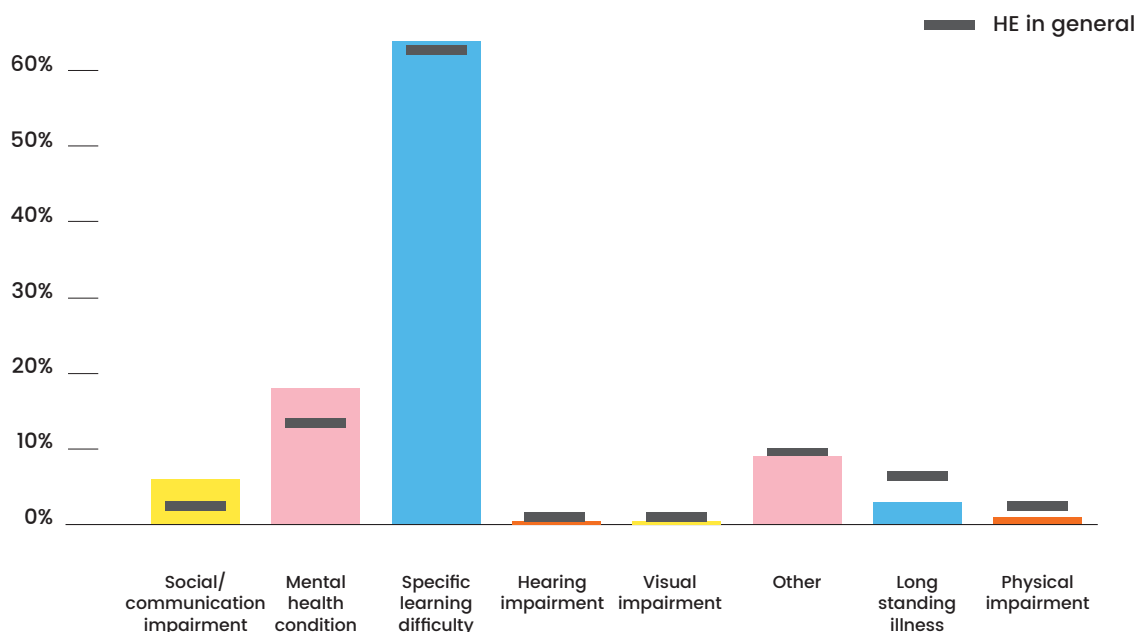
- **The underrepresentation of certain groups is greater amongst women than men**  
For example, there are 42% fewer black women from quintile 3 than we would expect but only 18% fewer black men.
- **White, male students from low-participation neighbourhoods are overrepresented**  
Of every five white men from quintile 1 that went into HE, one did a creative arts and design course. This was one in six for white men from quintile 2.
- **White men and women from higher participation neighbourhoods are most likely to do an arts course.**
- **Asian men and women from the highest participation areas in London are the least likely to enter arts courses:** From the 8,185 London students accepting a place on an arts course in 2015, 1,170 were advantaged white women, and just 100 were advantaged Asian men.

## → Certain types of disabilities are underrepresented

One in ten students who accepted a place on an arts course indicated that they had a disability. This is significantly higher than on HE courses in general, where one in twenty indicated a disability. A larger proportion of students on arts courses also indicated having multiple impairments or conditions; on arts courses this affects one in every 400 students, whereas this is one in every 1,400 students on non-arts courses. However, there is a significant difference in the types of disabilities students on arts courses have compared to HE students in general (Figure 5). Bars indicate proportions on arts courses; the grey lines indicate proportions for HE in general.

Greater proportions of students on arts courses had a social or communication impairment (e.g. Asperger's syndrome/other autistic spectrum disorder) or a mental health condition (e.g. depression, schizophrenia or anxiety disorder) compared to non-arts courses. However, there were fewer than expected students with physical impairments or mobility issues (e.g. difficulty using arms or using a wheelchair or crutches) or a long-standing illness or health condition (e.g. cancer, HIV, diabetes, chronic heart disease, or epilepsy). Proportions of students with a specific learning difficulty, or hearing, visual, or other impairments were as expected.

**Figure 5: The proportion of acceptances of places on HE courses by disability.**





# Why are BAME learners missing from the arts in HE?

## → The role of subject preference

The findings presented in the previous sections show that students from BAME backgrounds are the most underrepresented on creative arts and design courses. In this section we examine why this may be the case.

Despite the underrepresentation of BAME students on creative arts and design courses, these subjects are relatively popular amongst London students of all ethnic backgrounds. Table 1 shows the ranking of creative arts and design subjects in subject choice by ethnicity and gender. Apart from Asian men, for whom arts courses rank in 11th place, creative arts and design courses rank within the top seven of subjects chosen for all groups.

Nevertheless, for BAME groups there were certain subjects, such as business and admin studies, subjects allied to medicine, or engineering that clearly stood out as popular options. For example,

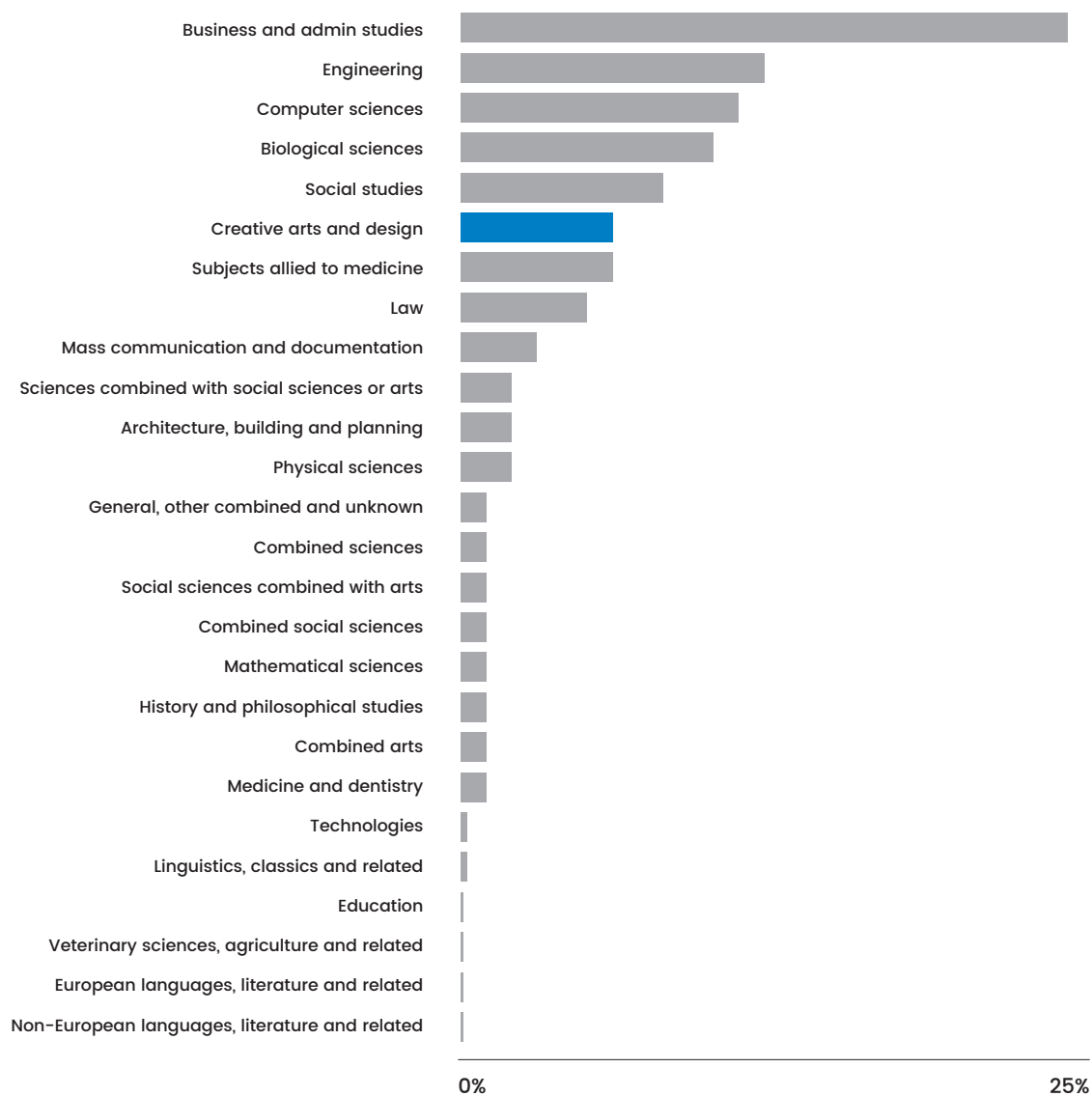
the impact of subject choice can be seen clearly in the ranking of subject choices for black men (Figure 6), where business and admin studies are so popular that it overwhelms students studying other subjects. In other words, although creative arts and design subjects are the 6th most popular for black men, in reality the numbers of black men going on to study creative arts and design subjects are relatively low.

Ranking of arts courses among BAME students is also low compared to students from a white or mixed background (see Table 1). Thus, the low proportion of students from BAME backgrounds on creative arts and design courses is partly due to the great popularity of other subjects such as business and admin studies, and partly to the overwhelming popularity of arts courses for white students and those from a mixed background.

**Table 1: Ranking of creative arts and design subjects and preferred subject choice by ethnicity and gender**

Ethnicity	Gender	Ranking arts and design (out of 26)	Most popular subject
Asian	Female	7	Subjects allied to medicine
	Male	11	Business and admin studies
Black	Female	6	Subjects allied to medicine
	Male	7	Business and admin studies
Mixed	Female	1	Creative arts and design
	Male	2	Business and admin studies
White	Female	1	Creative arts and design
	Male	2	Business and admin studies
Other	Female	5	Business and admin studies
	Male	6	Business and admin studies

**Figure 6: The proportion of black men accepting a place on an HE course by subject group.**



# The views of students

We interviewed two students to get their perspective on progressing to arts and creative HE courses in London as BAME learners. Their stories are below. Names have been changed to protect their identities.

## → Karine

### **“The more colours you add, the nicer the picture”**

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Karine is a black female student from London in her first year at a multi-faculty London institution. Karine did not have much exposure to the arts within her family, because arts were seen as ‘something that white people do’ but was supported to learn more about arts activities in school.

**“My school was really good at making sure we were going on trips, we were doing things that helped for me to be able to see that this is what I want to do. If I didn’t have those opportunities I don’t know what I’d be doing right now.”**

In her wider community, the arts are often viewed as ‘the easy option’. Parents often want their children to choose subjects that can lead to what are perceived as more secure careers, that offer some kind of protection in a society where the odds are stacked against you.

**“If they [parents] felt like the world was not against them, it would probably be different, but I feel like there’s a lot of protection in subject choice. You need to make sure that you are doing something that can keep you secure and no one can take away from you.”**

Karine’s mother was quite concerned about career prospects in the arts. Karine and her mother researched career options and employment rates with Karine’s chosen degree. This information convinced both Karine and her mother that this was the right choice.

Despite Karine setting her heart on attending a particular HEI from the time she was doing her GCSEs, she did not accept a place there choosing instead what she saw as a more diverse institution.

**“I got into a really good school. But when I went there on my interview I saw like three black people and one Asian. I didn’t want to be somewhere that I didn’t feel comfortable. I want to spend my 9k and make it worth the 9k, so I didn’t go.”**

Instead, Karine chose to attend an HEI where there was greater diversity amongst the staff and other students. And although in general Karine is immensely enjoying the course, there are times when she struggles on her course:

**“There was one day I was on the phone to my boyfriend, and I just cried on the phone because there was a part of me that felt maybe I shouldn’t be doing this. It’s very hard when you know you’re going on a course where everything is still white.”**

Karine feels that the curriculum is very white and European, missing out work by artists from other backgrounds. And that even if the curriculum was more inclusive, this can feel like tokenism when the faculty itself is not culturally diverse.

**“What’s really, really upset me was a course in which they have discussions about race and gender. Yet you have one woman and loads of men, you don’t even have a black teacher on your course.”**

Karine feels that everyone in HE would benefit from greater diversity because it has a positive influence on creativity.

## → Nathan

### “Some days you feel like ‘why am I black?’ ”

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Nathan is a black male student who spent part of his childhood in a rural community and part in London. He is in his second year at a specialist London institution. Nathan had a lot of exposure to the arts from a young age. He suggested that in his wider community the arts are not seen as a ‘serious’ career option. Parents often steer their children towards careers in business, medicine, or law, because these are seen as professions that are stable, and from which you can make a living. Even Nathan’s parents needed some convincing that this was the right route for him to take:

**“When you first tell them, they say ‘ok cool, we need to have a word with you about what you are getting yourself into’. You just really need to convince them that this is the right route.”**

Nathan, like Karine, also did research on employment rates and alternative career options:

**“If you have that information, you are ready to go ‘BAM – this course is what I want to do’. Once I told my parents 97% of graduates are in employment straight after they finished, they were like ‘We get this. Do it’.”**

The lack of diversity at his HEI stood out for him, and was part of his decision making when choosing an HEI.

**“If you come to an open day, where the majority of the students are white, and you are a black student, you are like ‘this is not my place. This is not a place for me’. And then straight away our mind goes ‘I don’t need to apply for this, I don’t need to do this, I need to go somewhere else’.”**

While Nathan decided to come to this HEI anyway, he feels others may not do the same.

**“Who wants to pay for institutionalised racism? Nobody.”**

The lack of cultural representation in the curriculum can make BAME students feel invisible and undervalued. Nathan feels that he constantly needs to remind his lecturers to make the subject relevant to him, in order to get the same out of his degree as his white counterparts. Whilst some lecturers attempted to diversify the curriculum, Nathan felt that this was a token gesture to ‘shush the black kids’ – for example Black History Month:

**“We don’t want to have your one month, you know? We want all the months. Because what happens after Black History Month? Because we’re not just here for October and then finish our degree. We are here the whole year.”**

Nathan has also had some difficulties dealing with his fellow white students, who may complain he’s ‘bringing up the black thing’ again, deny racism still exists, or want to touch his hair. This left him feeling like he’s constantly fighting. The burden of the fight can be tiring, and some days Nathan wishes he could just have fun and be a student:

**“Some days you feel like ‘why am I black?’ and I feel that is the saddest thing. Because you start to feel like you don’t want to be black, you don’t want to be here. But then you’re like ‘I should be here, I should feel like I am valued’. It’s tough. It is tough because you’re constantly reminded that you are black.”**

This struggle can have a real effect on the wellbeing of BAME students.

**“There are so many students who are depressed, who have anxiety, who don’t even turn up to lectures, because they are just tired of it. They get an experience of it and then they are just like ‘I don’t want to be here’.”**

Nathan felt that HEIs whilst trying to address diversity by enabling small numbers of BAME students to enter the institution, are not making sufficient efforts to be inclusive by making their programmes, the members of faculty and the students more culturally representative.

## → The view of HEIs

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### **Cultural barriers**

HEIs saw cultural barriers as the biggest challenge to widening access to the arts. HEIs felt that the arts are not always valued in the wider BAME community, and that, as a result, BAME parents do not see the arts or creative subjects as a viable option for further education or a career.

This was also partly due to the lack of knowledge parents have about the possible career options in the creative industries. HEIs also thought that there may be a perception amongst BAME learners that art schools were elitist, and that the lack of cultural representation in the content of arts programmes can deter some BAME learners from choosing arts and creative courses. Problems with inclusivity in the wider creative industries were felt to affect education.

### **Arts education is undervalued in schools**

Arts education in schools and the cooperation

between HEIs and schools was seen as a second challenge. Partly, it was felt that a reduction in the number of schools and colleges offering arts subjects has led to fewer young people being able to apply to HE courses in the arts. Partly, HEIs felt that the changes in the school curriculum have led to schools undervaluing the arts, which also means there is a lack of IAG in schools and colleges for young people wanting to follow a creative pathway. HEIs also found that it was difficult to target BAME young people for their outreach activities, and that there was a lack of collaboration with the HE sector in some schools and colleges.

### **Ability to make reasonable adjustments**

Finally, HEIs questioned whether they were able to make reasonable adjustments for students with a physical impairment or longstanding illness, particularly on programmes with high contact hours.

## → The view of schools and colleges

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Our survey of schools and colleges focused mainly on the challenges faced in this sector rather than attempting to quantify the type of work being undertaken. This should be a priority for future work.

### **STEM subjects are prioritised**

Staff at schools and colleges repeatedly stated that the arts are undervalued in society generally, and that this may be a major barrier to pupils choosing a creative pathway.

**“Students always hear about STEM subjects and their importance. I would like students to learn more about the creative industries – for example, how much money the creative industries contribute to the economy”**

– Curriculum Team Leader from a sixth form college

### **Parents do not value the arts**

Staff at schools and colleges have often found parents to be resistant for their children to follow a creative path, because they think there are few long-term career prospects. Providing information for parents on arts and design courses, the creative industries and its career options, as well as busting some of the myths around arts subjects being limiting for future opportunities, would help pupils who are considering an arts or design HE course.

### **More information on employment opportunities needed**

Over 70% of respondents in the survey felt that learners would benefit from more information on employment opportunities, and presentations by those working in the creative career. However, they placed less priority on information on student finance with only a quarter of respondents seeing this as very helpful. It is not clear if this is because teachers feel this information is not useful in itself, or if students are already getting this information from another source.



## → The view of the cultural sector

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Cultural organisations identified four main challenges to making the arts more inclusive and diverse.

### **Financial barriers**

Financial barriers were cited by half of the organisations. The over-reliance on unpaid internships and placements in the creative sector has meant that only young people from privileged backgrounds can follow a creative route. This is exacerbated by the increase in HE tuition fees and the low starting salaries in the sector. Other financial barriers include the high costs of tickets for events or performances, and the cost of extra-curricular activities to develop skills in order to get into an HE course.

### **Lack of cultural representation**

The lack of cultural representation in the sector was identified as a key challenge by one third of organisations. There are very few BAME role models for young people to identify with. This leads to a lack of young BAME people being inspired to work in the creative industries, because 'You can't be what you can't see'. The lack of diversity also means that BAME learners that follow a creative pathway need to be more confident and resilient than their white counterparts.

### **More information on careers needed**

A quarter of cultural organisations felt a lack of knowledge about creative careers and its prospects may lead young people to decide against an arts and creative course. Parents may discourage their children from choosing creative subjects because they do not know about the opportunities in the creative industries, and worry that such careers are insecure.

### **Arts education is undervalued in schools**

The value schools place on the arts was identified as a challenge by one in four organisations. Schools increasing focus on STEM subjects, particularly due to the introduction of the EBacc, has led to a reduction in the quality of teaching of arts subjects. There is also a lack of information, advice and guidance (IAG) about creative pathways. Combined with the high entry requirements of access courses and degrees, this may mean that young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to get into an arts or creative course.

# Widening access to arts HE subjects

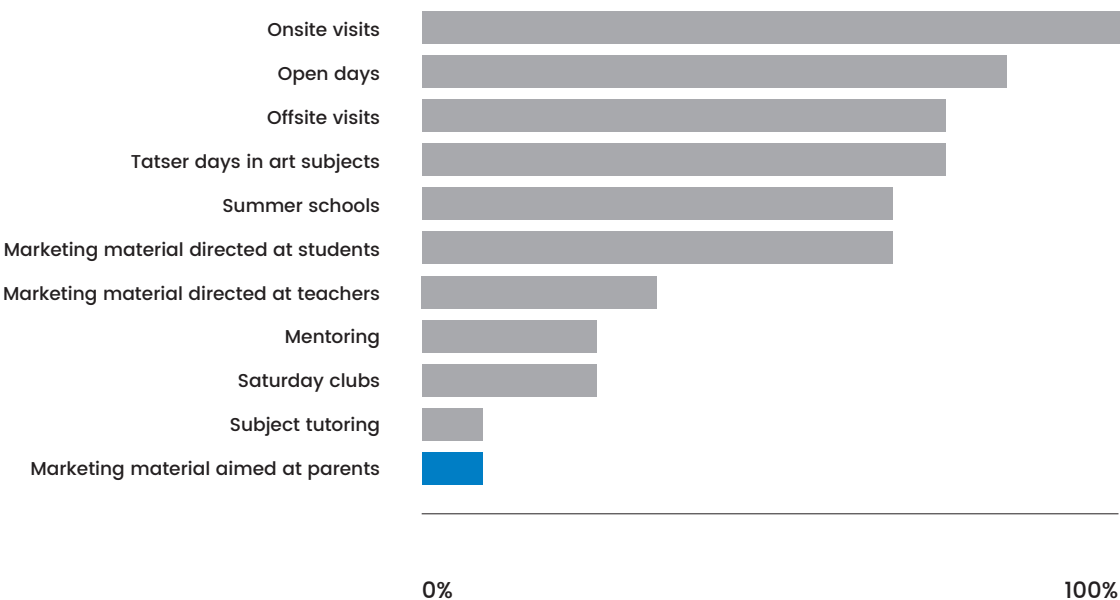
## → The role of higher education institutions

London HEIs are clearly undertaking a great amount of work to try and widen access to HE arts subjects. The vast majority of AccessHE HEIs (80%) who completed the survey have outreach activities that are specifically aimed at widening access to the arts, with the remainder integrating such work as part of other activities. When considering only non-specialist institutions, still 63% of HEIs organised arts-specific outreach activities. The seven HEIs that had data on the financing of WP projects aimed at the arts, invested nearly £1m in this work, reaching more than 10,000 young people each year. Most frequently, these activities are on- or off-site visits, open days, or taster days (Figure 7).

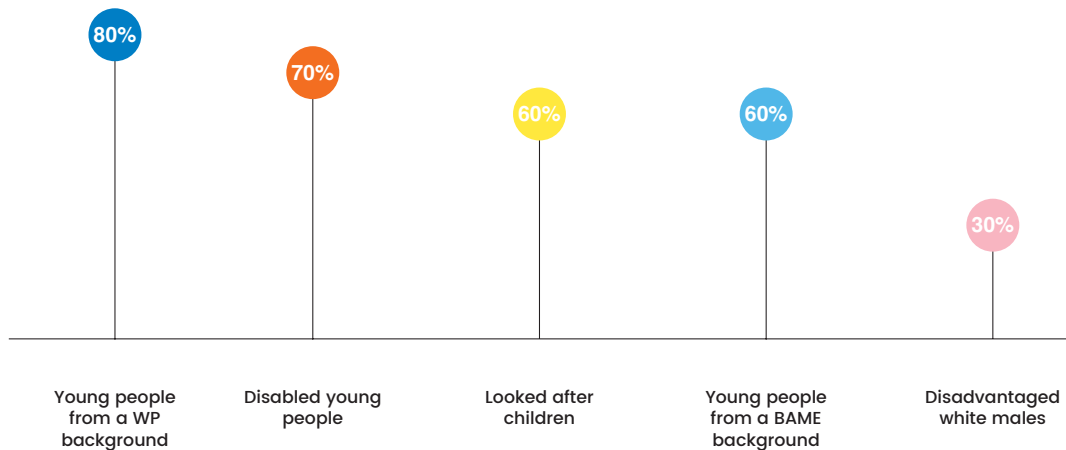
Just one-third produced material for teachers or school advisors, and only one HEI produced material aimed at parents or carers. Box 1 outlines an example of the work that AccessHE HEIs are undertaking in this area.

In delivering the activities above, HEIs mostly work with young people that are 14 years or older. In terms of targeting, the priority appears to be young people from widening participation backgrounds (Figure 8). However, Figure 8 shows that much work is also targeted at disabled young people and those from BAME backgrounds. Interestingly, perhaps as a result of the guidance released by the government in early 2016, 30% of HEIs are targeting their work at white male learners from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Figure 7: The proportion of HEIs providing different types of outreach activities.



**Figure 8: The proportion of HEIs that target young people with particular characteristics for their arts outreach activities.**



**Box 1:**

## → The National Art & Design Saturday Club Inspiring the UK's next creative generation

**The National Art & Design Saturday Club, in 50 locations across the UK, including London Metropolitan University**

saturday-club.org  
londonmet.ac.uk

The National Art & Design Saturday Clubs have been running since 2009, first as part of the Sorrell Foundation, and since 2016 by the Saturday Club Trust. The Saturday Clubs offer young people aged 13–16 the opportunity to study art and design at their local college or university for free, with the aim of inspiring creativity in young people.

Over the past 7 years the Art & Design Saturday Club has grown to a national network, reaching over 50 locations and thousands of young people across the country. Each of these clubs is designed and run locally. Tutors put together a year-long programme of activities using the specialist facilities that universities and colleges have.

As well as the Saturday classes, club members visit London and exhibit their work in the Summer Show at London's Somerset House. London Metropolitan University has been part of the Art & Design Saturday Club network since 2014.

The Art & Design Saturday Club at London Metropolitan University is held at the Sir John Cass School of Art, Architecture and Design. Around 90 young people have taken part in the Art & Design Saturday Club at London Metropolitan University over the past three years, with participants receiving over 80 hours of specialist tuition each year. Workshops have included drawing, painting, metalwork, theatre design, typography, digital editing, musical instrument making, interior design and more.

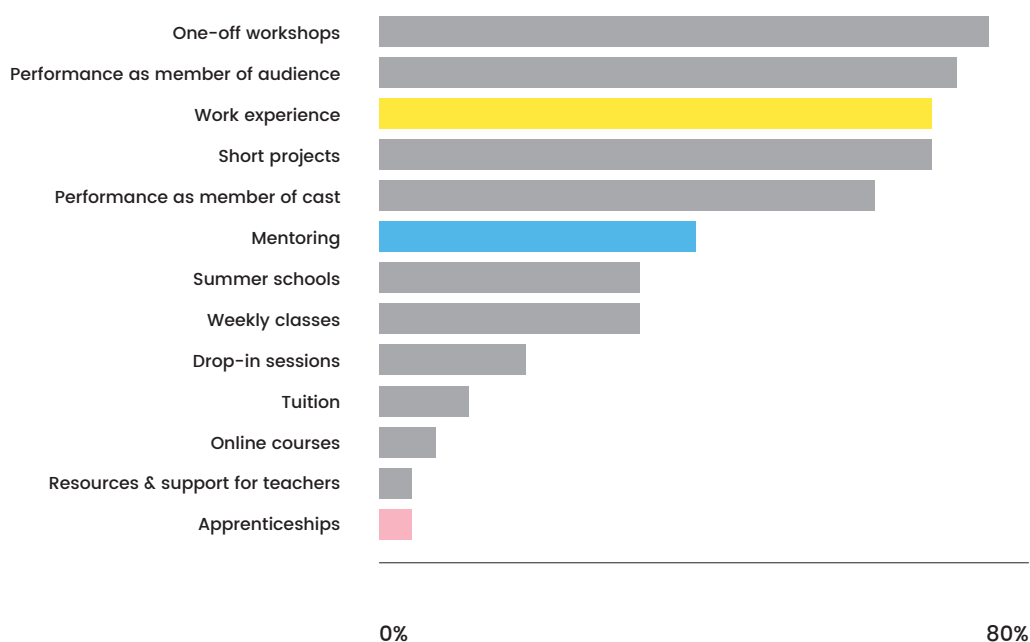
National evaluation of the Art & Design Saturday Club programme has shown its impact: 80% of Club members achieve at least one grade higher than expected at GCSE in related subjects, and 70% want to pursue a career in the creative industries.

## → The role of the cultural sector

Our survey of cultural organisations in London confirmed the extent of work that is going on to engage young people with arts based activities in the capital. The wide range of these activities is shown in Figure 9. Whilst most of these activities are focused on tuition or participation in an art form itself, many cultural organisations offer young

people activities aimed specifically at increasing career prospects, such as work experience, mentoring, and apprenticeships. Thus, whilst the activities run by cultural organisations and HEIs overall have different areas of focus, there is considerable overlap.

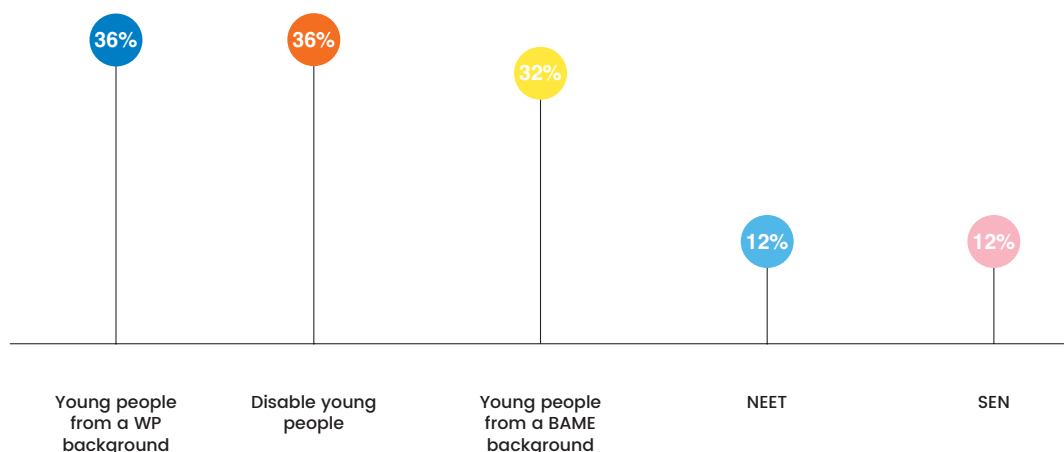
**Figure 9: The proportion of cultural organisations providing different types of activities**



Each year, around 1.1 million young people take part in the activities offered by the cultural organisations that took part in our survey (however the majority of these participants took part in a single, large-scale project that includes online activities). Excluding this project, there are still nearly 136,000 young people in London that take part in cultural activities organised by participants in our survey with projects ranging from 15 participants to 30,000. All but one cultural organisation feel that they make a direct or indirect positive contribution to their participants considering an arts or creative HE course in the future.

As with HEIs, activities were most frequently aimed at young people that are 15 or older. However, the work which is targeted at specific groups of young people differs significantly. This is not surprising as many cultural organisations seek to be inclusive and do not have to meet the specific targets set through access agreements that the HEIs do. Figure 10 shows the percentage of arts and cultural organisations who target their work at specific groups and who these groups are. In terms of cross sector collaboration, 89% work together with schools and colleges and 71% with HEIs. Box 2 illustrates some of the innovative work by cultural organisations in London.

**Figure 10: The proportion of cultural organisations that target young people with particular characteristics for their activities.**



**Box 2:**

## → The Sargeant + Kavuma Project

### Making the arts for everyone

**The S+K Project, Resident Young Company at Hackney Showroom**

[sandkproject.com](http://sandkproject.com)

The Sargeant + Kavuma Project was set up in 2014 by two young black actors from North London. The S+K Project works with young people who want to be involved in an aspect of performing arts but were not able to access these opportunities before. In 2016, the project put on a two-week summer workshop in which young people created a short play from scratch, combining skills and conventional drama techniques with personal experiences to form a narrative. By discussing

topics that young people face day-to-day and exploring these themes creatively, the group generated material to create an insightful and thought provoking show.

Since 2014, the S+K Project has written, directed and produced five original plays, and has delivered numerous creative workshops.

This has given their young people a chance to build up their CVs and portfolios, develop their acting skills and drama techniques, as well as working in costume design, lighting, sound and writing. The S+K project is now permanently based at Hackney Showroom as their Resident Young Company.



# Key findings and challenges

There are a number of challenges that need to be addressed if access to creative arts and design subjects is widened to include groups who are presently underrepresented.

- **London cultural organisations and HEIs are working with large numbers of young people and investing significant resources**

Over 1 million young people were benefiting from the activities undertaken by the cultural organisations in our survey. AccessHE HEIs invest nearly £1m and work with more than 10,000 young people each year.

- **London learners from BAME backgrounds are significantly underrepresented in arts subjects in HE**

Asian and black young people from London are significantly underrepresented on creative arts and design HE courses. However, the extent of underrepresentation differs by neighbourhood participation and gender. For example, Asian students from high participation neighbourhoods are least likely to study an arts or creative subject, whereas white students from mid to high participation neighbourhoods are most likely to do so. A key challenge is how we target learners from these specific groups.

- **London learners with physical impairments and long-standing illness are underrepresented on arts courses**

Whilst overall, disabled learners are overrepresented on arts courses, there are certain groups of disabled students that are underrepresented. For example, young people with a physical impairment are 2.5 times less likely to do a creative arts and design course than other subjects in HE. Likewise, just 3.5% of disabled students on arts courses have a longstanding illness compared to 7% of disabled students in HE in general. HEIs had concerns that they lack the expertise in making adjustments for students with a physical impairment.

- **White students from low participation neighbourhoods in London are overrepresented in arts subjects in HE**

Of every 5 men from the lowest participation neighbourhoods in London that went into HE, one did a creative arts and design subject.

This finding reiterates that males from these backgrounds are not solely interested in sports-related courses, and that HEIs can use the arts to engage white working class males in HE.

- **BAME students see the arts programmes as lacking in diversity**

BAME students see arts subjects as being 'too white', and this was echoed by HEIs and cultural organisations. The challenge is thus to make both programmes and faculty more inclusive and diverse.

- **Arts subjects are seen as having poor career prospects in BAME communities**

A common theme coming through the surveys and the interviews was that arts subjects are seen as having poor career prospects – especially amongst parents. As one of the students interviewed stated: *'When you first tell them, they say 'ok cool, we need to have a word with you about what you are getting yourself into''*.

- **A range of financial barriers to entering arts careers may exist**

Cultural organisations working with young people from across London saw a combination of a number of financial barriers: unpaid internships which still dominate career progression paths in too many fields, the high cost of HE entry and the lower post HE wages levels in many arts fields.

- **The talent pipeline of students from London into arts HE subjects is under threat**

Despite recent declines in the numbers taking arts subjects at GCSE level in London the numbers taking A-levels has actually increased by 6% since 2011 to 14%. However, there are real worries amongst the teachers who participated in our survey that arts subjects were declining in importance in London schools: *'Students always hear about STEM subjects and their importance'*. Worries about the value of arts education in schools were also expressed by HEIs and cultural organisations.

# Recommendations

## → Facing difficult questions

While there is a critical mass of activity going on to try and widen access to arts subjects in HE across sectors in London, this report shows that considerable challenges remain and certain groups of learners are underrepresented.

Understanding who is underrepresented and to what degree requires an analysis of the interaction between gender, ethnicity, and neighbourhood. Proxy indicators of socio-economic background, such as level of participation in HE by neighbourhood, illustrate a familiar level of underrepresentation in this subject area. But there are some striking results for learners from BAME backgrounds that cut across indicators of socio-economic group. There are difficult and

far-reaching questions to answer here. Different BAME groups in London strongly favour certain subject areas. Shifting their preferences from these subjects will be difficult. To what extent should HEIs and their partners attempt to do this, or should they focus on growing the numbers of learners who wish to progress to HE overall and try and steer them to arts subjects? These decisions will need to be taken in the context of real threats to the numbers of learners progressing through schooling with the necessary qualifications to gain entry into arts subjects in HE. How can schools and colleges who want to deliver arts courses at pre HE level be supported to do so? And how can those who are considering cutting their provision in this area be dissuaded from doing this?

## → Recommendations

Below we outline a number of recommendations on the basis of this report which would assist HEIs, cultural organisations, schools, colleges and policymakers in London to address the questions

above. In a future in which creativity is increasingly important<sup>12</sup>, it is vital that arts education is accessible to all.

### 1

#### **Support AccessHE Creative - a pan-London network focused on access to HE arts subjects**

Launched in late 2016, *AccessHE Creative* is a network of over 100 schools, colleges, HEIs and cultural organisations working together to support learners from underrepresented groups to enter arts HE subjects in London. Its website contains information on extra curricular arts activities delivered by cultural organisations, careers in the arts and cultural sector and opportunities offered by HEIs as well as a programme of events and advocacy.

The report shows that the problems here are shared across sectors, thus it is vital that shared solutions are found. We should strengthen and extend these collaborations to increase the success of activities that widening access to the arts, and share practical information and best practice.

### 2

#### **A London pledge to target arts and cultural activities at underrepresented groups**

Currently, only a small proportion of cultural activities are targeted at underrepresented groups. Targeting of young people for outreach work in HEIs is often still general, missing the complex interactions between ethnicity, advantage, and gender. Organisations should be encouraged to sign a *London pledge to target a given percentage of their activity at specific groups of learners*, from groups who the data shows are underrepresented in arts subjects in HE. This pledge could be developed via AccessHE Creative.

<sup>12</sup> Frey, C. B. et al. *The Future Of Employment: how susceptible are jobs to computerisation?* (2013).

### 3

#### **Create an online arts and creative information, advice and guidance (IAG) portal for London**

Improving the quantity and quality of the IAG on careers in the arts would allow young people to better evaluate the prospects available to them in this field. Information should also be targeted directly at the parents of prospective students. In the case of BAME groups this work will need to be both consistent and innovative though as the position of arts subjects in particular cultural contexts is firmly set on the margins. Again, collective effort is required here. The creation of an online arts and creative IAG portal for London would be a positive step forward here, supported by the production of specific materials focused at different BAME communities which are developed in conjunction with students and elders from these communities.

### 4

#### **A London strategy for HE institutional diversity**

Addressing the lack of cultural representation and diversity in the arts in general, and HEI faculty and curriculum in particular, would be a crucial step in removing barriers to access HE in the arts. As the place with the largest numbers of BAME students across subjects, and the most diverse population,

London HEIs need to show leadership. There is a real opportunity working through regional HE bodies, such as London Higher for HEIs in London, to launch a new initiative to prioritise institutional diversity, sharing thinking and developing a shared strategy. Such a strategy would have a series of targets, but *arts and creative subject deliverers* could kick start this work and show leadership by committing to *double the numbers of academic staff from BAME backgrounds by 2022*.

### 5

#### **Maintain GCSE and Level 3 provision in arts subjects in London at 2016 levels**

The concerns over threat to arts and cultural provision are driven by national policy changes. London needs to emphasise its ability to shape its own future. The Greater London Authority under the auspices of the new Mayor Sadiq Khan have an opportunity to emphasise the unique importance of the arts and creative sector in London to the Department of Education and work with schools, colleges, local authorities and academy providers to support maintaining provision in this field from Key Stage 3 onwards. HEIs should also use their influence and resources to actively support this effort. A first step here would be a campaign led by the Mayor to maintain GCSE and Level 3 provision at 2016 levels up to 2020.

## **Working with AccessHE**

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AccessHE through AccessHE Creative is committed to driving forward the widening of access to HE in arts subjects in London. If you wish to work with us to take the recommendations above forward or discuss any of the issues in this report please contact Dr Graeme Atherton, Head of AccessHE on [graeme.atherton@londonhigher.ac.uk](mailto:graeme.atherton@londonhigher.ac.uk).





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