

Evaluation Report: Creative Enterprise Support and Development Programme
Prepared for Creative Bucks and Partners

stArt Advisors' Summary

The advisors found the surgeries engaging. The majority of participants could demonstrate that they were serious about developing a sustainable business or practice and had specific questions or aspects of their business practice that they were keen to develop. Each of the surgeries required research prior to and follow-up work from the advisors, and each client was given a set of action points to progress their business.

Almost all of those who attended full surgery sessions were keen to receive ongoing support in the form of further surgeries, e-bulletins and sector-specific training. They also expressed a need for a telephone or email service where they could, perhaps, email their draft Business Plan or Marketing Strategy to stArt for comments and advice. The surgeries really signposted, gave advice and opened up possibilities, for them to make the most of this they will not only need to follow through on the action points, but are likely to need more support as their practice develops. Most were also regular users of existing support networks locally and expressed the importance of information sharing and networking opportunities.

While it is not the stArt advisors remit to review the quality of the work that the clients show, but to give advice on the commercialisation of their work and other aspects of business support, we did observe that the participants had work of high quality and also the majority of them had a strong understanding of the creative environment that they would be operating in.

We were asked to carry out a survey of participants by the Economic Development team at Wycombe District Council in order to gather information about participant's needs and experience of accessing the stArt service. Feedback from surgeries was overwhelmingly positive – with many requests for more support in the future. The only negative comments were around availability of appointments and access, which was really a demand for more dates and flexibility of timings.

Around a third of surgery recipients wanted specific advice on developing their business into a more sustainable model and requested information and advice on legal structures and constitutions. Other popular areas for advice were marketing, selling, costing and pricing and online provision. Venue provision for exhibitions locally came up as an issue for many of the visual artists and designer-makers we saw – many suggesting that a centralised, online resource with venue listings could be compiled to share information locally. More in depth information on participant survey responses is given further on in this document.

We exceeded the pilot's target of 24 surgeries delivering 27 hour-long surgery sessions in total.

It was clear from the advisors' experience that central administration is essential to the success of surgery bookings as the contact through artworks-mk available 5 days a week allows appointments to be made quickly and information to be passed on effectively. It was also very useful to have Vicky as a contact at Creative Bucks from a marketing and co-ordination perspective.

The marketing undertaken through the established networks in Buckinghamshire was very effective – the majority of people heard about the opportunity through Visual Images Group (either through the AGM, website or emails) with others being signposted through Creative Bucks, local authorities, Arts for Everyone or Chiltern

Arts Forum. Considering the lead-time given to market the opportunity and the timing (with Christmas and the New Year occasionally causing a barrier to marketing) the response was very good and surgery take up was excellent.

Suggestions for Continuation of Creative Enterprise Support and Development Programme:

Based on the information we collated from clients via the survey, pre-surgery information and during the surgeries themselves, the stArt Advisors would make the following suggestions should the service be continued and extended:

- More opportunities for surgery sessions throughout Buckinghamshire, covering at least the localities used in the pilot (Great Missenden, High Wycombe and Aylesbury) and also perhaps extending the reach of surgeries through delivery based at cultural organisations, studio providers or HEIs such as Bucks New University or Amersham and Wycombe College;
- A programme of training to cover develop skills in the following areas:
 1. Marketing and selling;
 2. Fundraising;
 3. Costing and Pricing;
 4. Planning: Financial management and Project development.
- The opportunity to present the service and offer speed surgeries at key network meetings throughout the year in order to raise the profile of the service locally and boost the impact of the service. This worked well in the pilot, and we'd suggest similar events at local HEIs (specifically for graduating students), studio groups and creative/cultural hubs.

Summary of Expected Impact and Outcomes:

The work outlined in the brief submitted to stArt from Creative Bucks was to pilot a programme of creative business support in Buckinghamshire using stArt's existing model of delivery. Creative Bucks identified the following reasons for contracting stArt to deliver this pilot:

- To provide the specialist support required for creative enterprise across the County as identified in the Creative Industries Audit 2007;
- To strengthen the creative economy across the county and encourage growth;
- To raise the profile of creative industries in Buckinghamshire and attract inward investment;
- To ensure that the creative industries in Buckinghamshire are supported in a way that complies with government ambitions to make Britain into a creative hub for the world.

The key objectives and expected outcomes of the pilot are summarised as follows:

- To provide 25 + one to one advice sessions for creative enterprises in Buckinghamshire;
- To participate and offer advice at three creative network, community or party events;

- To monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the work, and feedback to Creative Bucks the outcomes and recommendations at the end of the financial year (2008/09).

Overview of Work Carried out:

In total start carried out face-to-face advice sessions with 53 people as part of the pilot.

Attendance at 3 Creative Industries network meetings / events across Buckinghamshire:

- Chiltern Arts Forum AGM, Chesham
- Visual Images Group AGM, Great Missenden
- Arts for Everyone Community Arts Event, High Wycombe

At each of these events start gave a short presentation where the service was explained in more detail. People were invited to come and talk to start for 10 minute 'speed surgeries' after the presentations. A total of 26 speed surgeries were carried out.

4 Days of Advice Surgery Sessions:

Advice Surgery sessions took place across Buckinghamshire as follows:

- Roald Dahl Museum, Great Missenden: 16 Jan 2009
- Economic Development Hub Offices, Aylesbury: 23 Jan 2009
- Wycombe District Council Offices, High Wycombe: 13 Feb 2009
- The Eden Shopping Centre, High Wycombe: 6 Mar 2009

In situations where clients were unable to attend during these dates and locations, over-flow appointments were offered at Artworks-mk in Milton Keynes. Over-flow appointments took place on 15 Jan 2009 and 12 March 2009.

A total of 27 hour-long advice sessions were carried out. In addition to each of these sessions a follow up email listing any resources, website or contacts mentioned in surgeries was sent to the majority of attendees. At least 7 surgery recipients have since requested ad-hoc phone or email advice from stArt.

All hour-long appointments were taken up, with the exception of 2 (one cancellation and one no-show).

Evaluation and Client Monitoring

Information was collected from surgery attendees prior to their appointments, to help advisors prepare for the sessions and also to provide a snapshot of the kinds of advice and support being sought locally including information on sub-sector and business type. The Economic Development team at Wycombe District Council requested that stArt asked attendees to complete a short questionnaire on their needs and experiences post-surgery – particularly focused on identifying support needs going forward and assessing their experience of stArt support to date. stArt also collated participant data through their pre-surgery booking form.

96% advice surgery recipients returned the pre-surgery information, and 93% returned post-surgery questionnaires. Most information was retrieved from non-respondents during surgery sessions or via email meaning that most data was eventually received.

The questions asked on behalf of Wycombe District Council Economic Development Team were as follows:

- **What Advice, Information or Support Do You Need in Addition to the Surgery?**
- **What other organisations have you approached for assistance?**
- **Have you previously had a stArt appointment or attended a start event?**
- **What was your experience of accessing support?**
- **Size of Business, number of employees, legal status**

Information collated through the surgery booking forms included:

- **Postcode / locality of participant**
- **Sub-sector / artform / type of business**
- **Duration of business / time in practice**
- **Advice and information Sought (What would they like advice or support for?)**
- **How they heard of stArt**

The following is a summary of the information collated through this process:

About the Surgery Recipients

Postcode Audit:

Surgery recipients attended from the following localities:

| Locality | Percentage of Surgery Recipients |
|--------------------|---|
| High Wycombe | 30% |
| Aylesbury | 22% |
| Great Missenden | 11% |
| Amersham | 7% |
| Buckingham | 7% |
| Chesham | 4% |
| Dunstable | 4% |
| Princes Risborough | 4% |
| St Albans | 4% |

Representation of Sub-Sectors:

The following sub-sectors were represented at surgeries:

| Sub-Sector | Percentage of Surgery Recipients |
|-------------------|---|
| Visual Art | 44% |
| Craft | 26% |

| | |
|--------------------|-----|
| Music | 11% |
| Film / Multi-Media | 7% |
| Journalism | 4% |
| Photography | 4% |
| Publishing | 4% |

Duration in Business or as a Practitioner:

| Duration | Percentage of Surgery Recipients |
|-----------------|---|
| Over 15 years | 30% |
| Up to 5 years | 41% |
| 10 – 15 years | 22% |
| 5 – 10 years | 7% |

Legal Status / Constitution:

| Status | Percentage of Surgery Recipients |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Sole Trader | 93% |
| Charity | 4% |
| Voluntary Group (unconstituted) | 4% |

Participant Needs***Describe what you would like to cover in the session?:***

The following represent individual responses that have been categorised by theme:

Exhibiting and Selling:

Costing and pricing

Launching work at Bucks open studios

Negotiating terms with card companies (e.g. The Art Group, Art Angels).

Pricing original work and prints and, in particular, the balancing act between pricing commercially for galleries and pricing for charity exhibitions or Open Studios

Selling on the Internet.

Pricing work, marketing and selling

Selling and promoting work and sourcing appropriate venues

Sourcing galleries and agents to represent work

Marketing:

Marketing with a view to identifying public art opportunities and finding a suitable way to sell prints

Marketing: costing and pricing

Marketing, exhibition tour booking, local contacts and employment opportunities

More support on marketing through availability of local, regional and national information

Marketing and apportioning work

Developing a marketing plan

Business / Practice Development:

Business Development: options and opportunities

Information on managing public art projects and commission

Business planning and plans

Public art opportunities and marketing

How to initiate projects with Local authorities (Aylesbury) and explore ways in which to use skills and training

Practice development

Looking for opportunities and commissions for creation of new work

Information on residencies

Business Development and planning towards sustainability

Developing a franchise

Financial Planning and Funding:

Planning finances and funding

Funding opportunities

Dealing with tax / book-keeping

Finances, health and safety, insurance, CRB,

Project Planning

Systems for admin, accounting and time management

Legal Structures and Constitutions:

Constitutions

Planning, changing business status to non-profit organisation, forming partnerships, paying contractors and implications for tax, income, etc

Website and E-Marketing:

Advice on business plan for moving from paper to electronic information publishing.

Advice on selling art online
Technical Advice on websites
Website optimisation

Networks and Local Information:

Locating groups to work with
Networking and training
Exhibitions and workshops
Venues for Bucks Open Studios

What Advice, Information or Support Do You Need in Addition to the Surgery?:

The following represent individual responses categorized by theme:

Access to Networks, Opportunities and Information at a Local, Regional and National level:

Local networks for media information sharing
Further business skills development, links and referrals to crafts organisations
Ongoing business support for growth, costing and pricing
Networks and information - resources and introduction to working in the sector
Access to a creative network or directory for specific skills relevant to start up, for example, to photographers locally
Venue information and information on upcoming art fairs

Further Advice or Training at a later date or as an email / phone follow-up:

Follow up advice on financial / legal structures
Feedback on draft marketing and website
Ongoing support and guidance - sanity testing ideas
Will follow up the links we sent and assess further needs from there - ongoing support
Training on the 'psychology of selling' - how to sell your work
Help with marketing: tools, retailers, lists, etc
Addition access to service as you go, e.g. checking funding applications and follow ups (phone or email on an ad-hoc basis)
Ongoing support and links
Information on copy-writing skills
More of the same
Information on managing finance specifically for Creative Industries
A follow up surgery in 6 months

Training on project management / planning and presentation. Ongoing advice on projects, in particular around containing ideas

Contacts and ideas drawing on knowledge and industry experience

Further advice on opportunities

Email advice on CV and artist's statement

Signposting to Other People / Organisations:

Contacts including the names of people to speak to

Links and further contacts

Resources - online and offline signposting

Further links and contacts

Funding (Provision and Information):

Funding and ongoing support on where to position work

Funding (start up costs - specifically for production and marketing costs)

Contacts and information on funding

Training on finance and funding

One person commented that they had no further needs.

What other organisations have you approached for assistance?

52% of surgery recipients had approached other organisations for business advice, support and / or information.

Some respondents highlighted the fact that local networks such as Chiltern Arts Forum, Visual Images Group and Arts for Everyone were an excellent source of information and support, as were organisations such as Creative Bucks. Network meetings and websites provided by these organisations seem to be well-used by respondents. Business Link was often seen as the first point of call for business advice, and respondents seemed to think that for specific business issues they received an excellent service. However, when questioned on sector specific issues Business Link advisors were not as helpful.

The following organisations were listed:

- ARC: Aspex Artist's Resource Centre (1 respondent)
- Arts Council South East (1 respondent)
- Association of Illustrators (1 respondent)
- Aylesbury Vale District Council (1 respondents)
- Business Link (7 respondents)
- Creative Bucks (2 respondents)
- Chiltern Arts Forum (1 respondent)
- Federation of Small Business (1 respondent)
- Visual Images Group (1 respondent)

- Women in Business (1 respondent)

Have you previously had a stArt appointment or attended a start event?

7 respondents (26%) had participated in a 'speed surgery' session at Visual Images Group AGM, Chiltern Arts Forum AGM or Arts for Everyone events.

9 respondents had heard stArt presentations at the above events.

1 respondent had attended a surgery with stArt 2 years ago.

1 respondent had attended stArt Fundraising training (they had booked on this as a result of marketing for the Creative Bucks Pilot).

1 respondent received telephone and email advice from stArt prior to their surgery session.

What was your experience of accessing support?

90% said the support they received was either excellent or very good, with other respondents describing it as really useful, supportive or constructive. Specific comments related to both the content of the surgeries and also the experience of booking and attending an appointment.

Specific feedback is as follows:

Useful to receive the appointment reminder yesterday

Got a lot out of it, especially from discussing ways to proactively create opportunities

Missed some of the email communication which made some of the logistics difficult

Timing was excellent and found out via VIG - their site is useful

Great that we ask for information on topics for discussion in advance - but perhaps suggest more areas for discussion on booking forms so that the client has better idea on how to frame their time. Could have done with more time. The practical advice is invaluable! Dead easy to book - Jennifer, the administrator at artworks-mk, is brilliant.

Practical advice on business plan very valuable

Supportive rather than critical - interesting and curiously liberating

Useful - quick availability. More local surgeries would be great

Useful to talk about ideas and use start as a sounding board

Venue was tricky to find (Aylesbury Economic Hub Offices)

Very helpful - great to talk round things and pool ideas. Impressed by sector knowledge and interested in more of the same!

Very positive: reassuring and useful to look at things differently

Wonderful - constructive and creative