

UNITY Festival 2022 - Impact Case Study



UNITY Festival, which took place from Friday 4 to Sunday 6 March 2022, was a weekend of FREE live music, performance, arts, exhibitions, stories and workshops. Set across three locations - Brinkburn Street Brewery, Bar & Kitchen, St Silas' Church in Byker and Seven Stories, The National Centre for Children's Books, festival-goers of all ages and backgrounds were invited to take part in a jam-packed programme of events to celebrate community, nature and social action.

In a first for the Festival, Skimstone Arts young people in 3 bands - Reality Boots, Standing Upright, Jazzy Distopia came together to perform in a Youth Music Showcase of original songs, and gave a seminar called 'Youth Music approaches to song writing', and particularly about approaching the themes of Community and Environment to a large public audience. Another first was our established Byker Commissioning Group (of residents) BCG, organised their own events with their budget that gave a very positive contribution to the festival, along their own exhibition of photography with Associate Artist Ako Ismail.

Outputs/Outcomes

- 41 diverse artists were commissioned and delivered 31 events over 2.5 days underpinning our core programming values of representation, inclusivity, quality and equality.
- 17 interactive workshops and participatory events, 6 live performances attracted 726 unique attendances. accessible in-person at venues, via special broadcasts shared via internet Skimstone Radio and live-streamed via Facebook Live.
- 3 radio broadcasts were hosted with 684 listeners from the UK, Netherlands, USA, Belgium and Ghana
- 810 online attendees took part in the Festival via Facebook Live extending its reach

Impact

- UNITY Festival external evaluation documented stories of how artists, BCG/audience felt a clear purpose, being valued and recognised, resulting in a new resilience, positive mental health and confidence when taking part in a positive festival with social action.

Feedback

"It was just what was needed for my head. For other people's heads too. The spirit of love, compassion, acceptance, inclusion, excitement and creative enthusiasm was evident throughout with a few almost moved to tears moments."

Audience Member

"I'm really grateful to be perfectly honest because I don't think I would have come out of my shell so much if I hadn't done any of this..." **BCG member**

"I'm grateful that I got to meet lots of lovely people. I think that's a thing we've all missed doing, what with Covid happening.."

Reality Boots band member

"Such a diverse group of artists and audience members came together for the Festival, that is so unusual and such a great thing to see." **UNITY Festival Participant**

In total UNITY Festival reached 2,220 people in person and virtually.