

What did we want to do?

1. Facilitate independent mobility in order to broaden the horizons and aspirations of young people
2. Enable access to social, educational and economic opportunities that are sometimes otherwise out-of-reach through supporting the development of confident rail travel
3. Promote sustainable and local travel options available in Blackburn
4. Support positive mental and physical health

WHO: 16 - 24 year olds

HOW: Series of creative projects & rail experience days

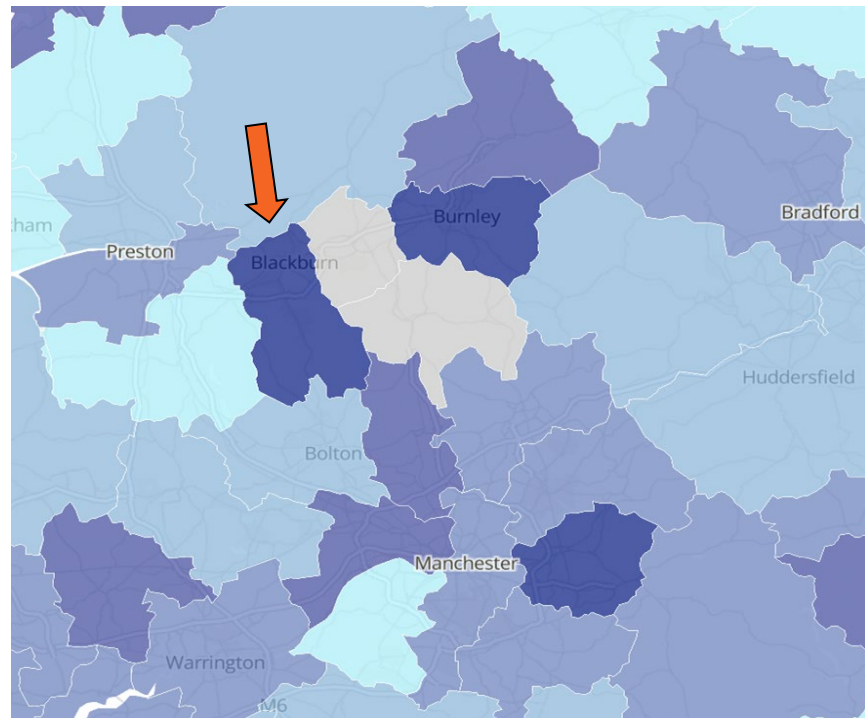
WHERE: Blackburn and Darwen centred around Blackburn Railway Station

WHY: Help young people to develop in:

Confidence (SELF) | Community (PEOPLE) | Connectedness (PLACE)

Why are *Making Connections* important?

- 16-24 year olds disproportionately likely to report feelings of loneliness
- commonly at risk of mental health conditions, which increase risk of loneliness and create mutually reinforcing patterns of perpetuation
- particularly exposed to loneliness and isolation due to the pandemic
- ONS data shows 18% of people in Blackburn and Darwen are often or always lonely and the pandemic has especially hit younger people



— August '22 - May '23

What did we do?

Art Form	Participant Group	Age	Creative Lead
Visual Art	NightSafe & Arts2Heal	16 - 55	Banu Adam
Poetry & Spoken Word	Blackburn College ESOL group	20 - 24	James Varney
Dance & Movement	DanceSyndrome & Crosshills SEND School	15 - 24	Sophie Tickle
Music & Sound	NightSafe & Blackburn Youth Zone	13 - 24	Rob Crisp

- ❖ Creative workshops with professional leads (around 150 participants)
 - ❖ Journey planning workshop and rail experience trips
 - ❖ Series of celebration events at Blackburn Railway Station
 - ❖ A modular approach helped us in terms of resources (budget) and capacity (time)
 - ❖ Held a regular 'Reflections Meeting' with local rail industry partners
 - ❖ Filmed everything!
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Working with a network of community partners

Benefits

- HUGE!
- Local (on-the-ground) knowledge and understanding of people and place
- Expand scope of delivery
 - Participants
 - Locations
 - Physical outputs
- Pre-existing network of support before, during and post project engagement

But....

- Understand and respect the ecology of the community partner - (how do they work?)
 - Ensure that responsibilities and expectations are not assumed - (who's doing what?)
 - Diary crunch 'catch-ups' early on - (communication is key)
 - Get at least the basics in writing - (something to keep you all on track)
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What were the key challenges we faced along the way?

- **Facilitating unexpected developments**
 - Request for online engagement opportunities
 - Excitement for the project grew and word spread!
- **Recruiting participants can be tricky**
 - Even when working with locally trusted partners
 - Be flexible, expand reach and partners and timescales (where you can!)
- **Changes on the railway and the weather!**
 - Industrial action
 - Snow in March!
 - Maintenance at Blackburn Station



— August '22 - May '23 —

Thank you!

Creative Practitioners:

- Banu Adam (visual art)
- Rob Crisp (music)
- James Varney (poetry)
- Sophie Tickle (dance)

Supporters:

- David Page (Blackburn College)
- Fatima Patel (poetry project)
- Jane Wadsworth & Mohammad Owais (NightSafe)
- David Darcy (DanceSyndrome)
- Euan Hilton (Station Manager Blackburn & East Lancashire)

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NORTHERN



Blackburn
College



DanceSyndrome

Dancer Led, Disability Inspired