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(Please note that "Information Only" reports do not require Integrated Impact Assessments, Legal or Finance Comments as no decision is being taken)

Title of meeting:	Culture, Leisure and Economic Development Decision Meeting
Subject:	The Detectives, Conan Doyle Collection
Date of meeting:	15 March 2024
Report by:	Director of Culture, Leisure and Regulatory Services
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Steve Pitt
Wards affected:	All

1. Requested by

1.1. Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Economic Development

2. Purpose

2.1. To update Members on the successful delivery of The Detectives Project, £100,000 funded by the Arts Council in August 2021 – January 2024. Funding was sought from the Arts Council's Library fund, looking at Health and Wellbeing and Culture and Creativity, part of the Universal Libraries Offer.

2.2. This project is a part of the Conan Doyle Collection and leads on from the previous successes of working with past volunteers, looking at ways to develop and support future volunteers.

3. Information Requested

3.1. This project was a success. *'100% of participants agreed that the project did meet their expectations'*

3.2. *'...there is overwhelming evidence to suggest that the Detective Project has not only reduced but has transformed anxiety levels amongst participants, to the extent that they are now able and capable of experiencing new opportunities which would previously have been unattainable to them.'* Flying Geese, External Evaluators.



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- 3.3. The Detective's project has contributed to Portsmouth's creative and cultural economy as demonstrated by the 50+ separate cultural experiences which would not have taken place without this project being funded. These experiences generated 24,847 separate engagements with the Conan Doyle Collection.
- 3.4. It was intended to give Detectives an opportunity to contribute at their own level to 10 (18 delivered) different cultural projects or 4 (10 actual) separate individual tasks within a cultural setting, (100 new products or commissions were produced in total) giving Detectives the skills they requested to realise their ambitions. Detectives are people who may have a physical or learning disability, are neurodivergent, or come from a substance misuse or mental health background and are looking at gaining skills or wellbeing benefits through volunteering within a cultural setting.
- 3.5. Skills were gained by using the Conan Doyle Collection as a resource to design and deliver projects led by the Detectives and trained and guided by staff, artists, authors or creatives for the wider public, therefore spreading the word about this amazing Collection.
- 3.6. *'Absolutely loved the immersive experience. Brilliant use of the space & wonderful to have something so modern & unusual in libraries. Having been 'immersed' the physical art came alive. I had no clue of the synopsis of the books but am keen to read them now as very relevant to modern day themes. A very big well done! ♡ PS: more please! ☺* 'Audience comment
- 3.7. There was a Community Development Officer post (22.2 hrs) recruited through this project, delivered by two members of staff. 32 Detectives were recruited. 5 have since gained paid employment. In addition to this, one Detective got to the second round for an interview with Google, one Detective is about to interview for Hampshire Library Service as a library assistant. All attributed these successes to their time with The Detectives project and confidence and skills gained by taking part.
- 3.8. Volunteers are continuing to volunteer for the Conan Doyle Collection or Library Services, and in addition have gained other voluntary roles in other organisations (e.g. Connor Toy Library/delivering art workshops to mental health groups/John Pounds Centre)
- 3.9. We have reached 14,903 physical audience members through performances and exhibitions and we have seen 18,287 audience numbers through online, written or broadcasting offers, raising the profile of the Conan Doyle Collection within Portsmouth, nationally and globally.



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3.10. *"I was the one telling the children why they were making leaves and dinosaur masks. I explained that they were in connection to Doyle's Lost World, which detailed a time where dinosaurs roamed the world. Now people know that it's not just Jurassic Park, but Doyle that came up with that concept."* Quote by a Detective

3.11 Successes include:

- *'A surprising, unexpected outcome of this project is that the neurodiverse and vulnerable adult participants have a natural skill to understand how heritage can become more accessible and benefit from alternative approaches to interpretation to ensure that it is relevant and meaningful to everyone.'* Flying Geese, External Evaluators
- Empowering people - one Detective was a speaker for Worldwide Doyle 2023, for an International Audience alongside other professionals such as lecturers, authors and PCC's Senior Archivist.
- Deeper knowledge of the Conan Doyle Collection, all Detectives had handling training and a 'hands on' experience searching for archives, and one Detective with a passion for cars researched and created the 'Conan Doyle Boys and Their Cars' Exhibition, shown in Portsmouth History Centre.
- Development of an International audience for Worldwide Doyle, seeing 50 people attending each talk in 2023 and relationships and networks with individual international fans and academics strengthened.
- Building new audiences through regular events and activities while providing many opportunities within cultural settings to empower those in our community who need it the most.
- Work experience opportunities were created within two branch libraries for those Detectives interested. One Detective wrote user friendly instructions for the new printing system, Princh, and is continuing to volunteer at Northend Library.
- Detectives now regularly volunteer for other council events, such as Portsmouth Book Fest.

3.12 Next Steps: 10 Detectives remain, 4 who previously took part in devising and hosting projects, wish to continue volunteering for the Conan Doyle Collection and will now be making the magazines accessible by indexing, adding these to the library Spydus catalogue for public access, and a new task has been created -

scanning the magazines. This will help preserve the magazines and allow easier and quicker access to them for future researchers and academics.

3:13 Alongside this, the Education and Community officer will continue to mentor and support Detectives with their personal goals such as seeking paid employment,



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gaining additional skills and providing space and tasks that encourage constant weekly engagement with others.

3.14 Continuing to develop regular events and projects for members of the public that are in co production with and the Detectives, e.g. a regular monthly open day, themed on different parts of the Collection.

3.15 *'It is clear that the 'change mechanism' to feed into future projects is the presentation of the participants' creative output for public consumption. It suggests that previously, any intervention/ volunteering/opportunity that participants may have experienced to date may have been for their own enjoyment and creativity, rather than having significance for the public as well. This has been significantly rewarding for participants.'* Flying Geese, External Evaluators

3.16 Case study from a Detective:

Before I began the Detectives project I lived with depression. I had low self-confidence, my mental health was in a bad place and I had a background of substance misuse. Due to this, I was shy, not very communicative and very self-contained. I was also a massive technophobe... [A task] brought me a real sense of ownership. I also was asked to sit on interview panels for the project and contribute with suggestions. Because of my role in the project, I have developed confidence. This resulted in [project outcome]. I gained so much confidence that I now teach people in art workshops for MIND, which is something which I developed outside of the project and organisation. I am now more confident in conversations and engaging on personal level. Where I didn't before, I ask questions back to continue the conversation. I am now willing to come out of my comfort zone and attend events that I had no prior experience of. My experience has been fantastic, it's the point of the project. My experience and development shows evidence that we can support neurodiverse people to stand alongside and be equal to academics. It is incredible and how the world should be. The project exceeded my expectations. I am so proud of what I achieved.'

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Signed by
Stephen Baily



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Director of Culture, Leisure and Regulatory Services

Appendices: None

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location