

Plot Lines (West Waterlooville's Public Art Programme)
Evaluation Report



Image: Studio Response & SOUP

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	2
Purpose of the Report	2
Executive Summary	3
Key Findings	3
Regional/Contextual Issues versus Programme-Specific Issues	4
Recommendations	4
An Overview of <i>Plot Lines</i>	5
Programme Aims and Intended Outcomes	5
Proposed Activity	5
Background and Context	6
About the Evaluation	8
Evaluation Aims	8
Evaluation Methodology and Scope	8
Evaluation Tools	8
Ethics	9
<i>Plot Lines</i> in Numbers	10
Online Engagement	10
About <i>Plot Lines</i> (Activity and Outputs)	11
Strand 1: Writer-in-Residence	11
Strand 2: Community Writing, Participation and Creative Development	13
Key Outcomes	19
Case Study 1	19
1. Participation in an emerging West Waterlooville	19
2. Relationships, Partnerships and Community Infrastructure	21
3. The Role of Community Spaces in Shaping Participation	23
4. Publications and Place-Based Cultural Legacy	24
Case Study 2	26
Maryna Melnyk – Participant (Profile piece as part of the Community Spotlight series)	26
5. Creative Confidence and Professional Development	26
6. Learning, Adaptation and a Person-Centred Approach	27
Selected Learnings from <i>Plot Lines</i>	30
Recommendations	31
Short-term	31
Medium-term	32
Long-term	32

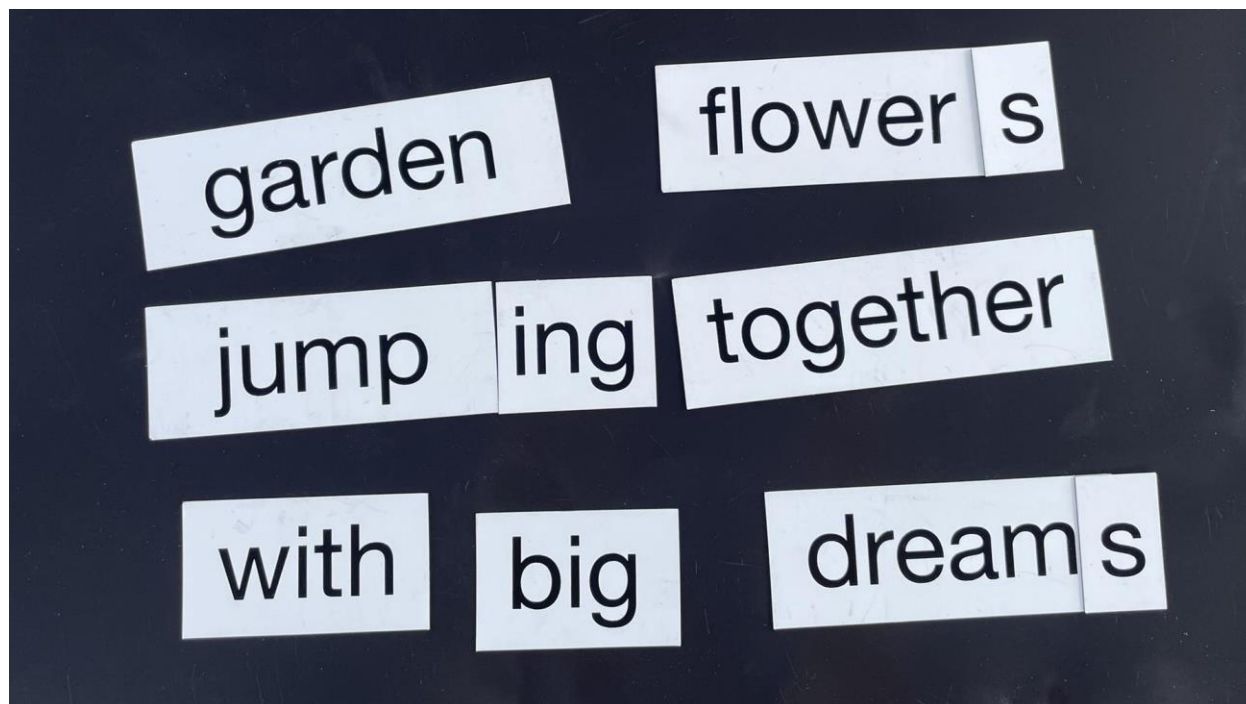
“I’m truly touched by Aoife’s incredible gift for deeply understanding people. She sees the hidden parts of a person, even those they don’t see in themselves. Such a rare and beautiful soul – a true master of words and heart. I feel very grateful to have met you and to be part of such a meaningful and heartfelt project.” – Participant, Community Spotlight

Acknowledgements

Thank you to everyone who generously gave up their time to share feedback on their experiences of *Plot Lines* as part of the evaluation process. Thanks go to the Programme’s Writer-in-Residence and Community Facilitator, the whole *Plot Lines* delivery team, staff from Studio Response and Winchester City Council, and representatives from Grainger PLC and Wellington Vale Care Home. Special thanks to our case study participants, Maryna Melnyk and Han Newton.

Purpose of the Report

This report synthesises and evaluates both quantitative and qualitative evidence relating to the impact of *Plot Lines*. It summarises the Programme’s key outcomes and lessons learned and provides recommendations intended to guide forthcoming cultural programming and public art initiatives in the West Waterlooville Major Development Area (MDA). It is also hoped that the findings will be relevant to the Programme’s Commissioner, the Programme team, art partners, and, in the future, the newly formed South East Hampshire local authority.



Magic Poetry Board, Careers Pathways event, May 2025. Image credit: Studio Response

Executive Summary

Plot Lines was an 18-month public art programme delivered in West Waterlooville between December 2024 and May 2026, using writing and storytelling to connect residents to place, one another, and to a new community still forming its own identity and civic infrastructure. The programme combined a writer-in-residence with a series of community writing and storytelling workshops, supported by sustained community engagement work, and culminated in a three-volume publication series and a set of public artworks. Over 800 people participated across 31 events and workshops, including 221 schoolchildren, alongside 210 community conversations and six published community spotlights.

The evaluation adopted on a mixed-methods approach, combining reflective diaries, surveys, observation records, interviews and reflective workshops with programme staff, partners and participants. There was low engagement with evaluation tools among residents and partner organisations, producing a limited dataset from these groups. The evaluation therefore adopted a predominantly interpretive approach, drawing mainly on qualitative evidence from the delivery team and supplemented by illustrative case studies and quotations. Findings should be read as indicative of impact and direction of travel rather than statistically robust measures of outcome.

Key Findings

Participation and reach: Engagement was strong overall but highly uneven across activities and settings. Structured, repeat-contact settings such as schools and a care home produced the most confident and sustained participation, while open, drop-in and digitally-promoted activities attracted far smaller and less consistent numbers. Awareness of the programme across the wider resident population remained limited throughout delivery.

Relationships and partnerships: The programme was most effective when built on existing local networks and trusted individuals such as teachers, care home staff, and local arts partners who provided routes into the community that would otherwise have been difficult to establish. Partner organisations were broadly supportive, but their contribution was often constrained by their own limited capacity, and feedback suggested resources and opportunities were not always distributed equitably across partners. A more systematic community mapping exercise at the outset may have supported stronger, earlier collaboration.

Community space and infrastructure: The absence of dedicated civic or cultural space in West Waterlooville was a defining influence on delivery, requiring the programme to work across a dispersed range of venues rather than a single community base. This was consistently understood by contributors as a structural condition affecting all local cultural and community activity, not an issue specific to this programme.

Publications and legacy: The three-volume publication series became a central and unexpectedly substantial strand of the programme's legacy, well received by participants, partners and local authority stakeholders alike. Some contributors nonetheless raised questions about the balance of resident voice within the publications, the clarity of the programme's intended outputs from the outset, and uncertainty about how the work and relationships built will be sustained beyond the programme's formal end.

Regional/Contextual Issues versus Programme-Specific Issues

A consistent theme across the evaluation is the need to distinguish between challenges rooted in the wider regional and developmental context of West Waterlooville and those specific to the design and delivery of Plot Lines itself. Contextual issues include the area's ongoing housing growth, its lack of permanent community facilities, its still-forming civic identity, and the pending transfer of local governance to a new South East Hampshire authority. These conditions shaped participation and partnership capacity throughout and will continue to affect any future cultural programming in the area regardless of how well individual programmes are designed. Programme-specific issues, by contrast, relate more directly to choices made within Plot Lines' own scope: the balance between flexibility and structure in delivery and partnership management, the resourcing of an adaptive evaluation methodology, the equity of resource distribution among partners, and the framing and communication of intended outputs. Separating these two categories is intended to help the Commissioner and future partners target action appropriately. Some issues are addressable within the parameters of the project, while others require a coordinated, longer-term regional strategy.

Recommendations

Recommendations arising from the evaluation are organised into short-, medium- and long-term priorities, reflecting both the different timescales over which they can realistically be actioned and the different levels of resource and authority required to do so.

Short-term recommendations are programme-specific and considered achievable using existing Winchester City Council resources and remaining Section 106 funding. They focus on acknowledging local contributions and sharing legacy plans, recognising the emotional labour involved in community-engaged practice, sustaining relationships built during delivery, and simplifying roles and reporting structures for future phases.

Medium-term recommendations require coordinated working between the local authority, delivery partners and the West Waterlooville community. Projects should follow local interest and energy, mapping shared assets and interests, while also centring on formalised partnership arrangements and payment agreements. Practical delivery frameworks across all partners, clear communication routes, and decision-making structures are advised.

Long-term recommendations are explicitly regional and contextual in nature, requiring strategic planning and implementation across Mid and/or South East Hampshire. They call for a shared regional learning and evaluation framework for place-based cultural work, a long-term and realistic approach to investing any remaining Section 106 funding to build sustained cultural value, and adequate time and resourcing for adaptive, reflexive evaluation methodologies suited to participatory and community-led programming.

Taken together, the recommendations point to a central conclusion: Plot Lines succeeded in laying meaningful foundations for cultural participation in a community still taking shape, but the durability of this legacy depends on distinguishing what future programmes can resolve through their own design from what will only be resolved through sustained regional investment in the social infrastructure of West Waterlooville and its surrounding area.

An Overview of *Plot Lines*

Commissioned by Winchester City Council and devised and led by Studio Response, *Plot Lines* was a new public art programme for West Waterlooville exploring writing, storytelling and the power of words to connect people. It worked in collaboration with Hampshire-focused writer development agency ArtfulScribe, local music, arts, heritage and nature-based partner organisations, schools, churches, community and youth groups, a library, sports club and care home.

Plot Lines took place over an 18-month period between December 2024 and May 2026, with activity funded through public art contributions secured via Section 106 planning obligations and conditions linked to the West Waterlooville MDA developments. The programme comprised two interconnected strands of activity: a year-long writer's residency with writer and poet Aoife Mannix, and a series of free writing/storytelling workshops led by three pairs of commissioned writers and assistant facilitators (Anna Jones, Lucy Fackrell, Hannah Newton, Amelia Simpson, Kym Devine and Aoife Mannix). Underpinning both strands was a sustained programme of community engagement led by Community Facilitator Gail Howard, whose role focused on relationship-building, partnership development and connecting the Programme with residents, organisations and networks. Together, these Programme elements were designed to foster creative participation, strengthen community connections and generate new writing inspired by the experiences, stories and identities of local people.

Programme Aims and Intended Outcomes

The primary aim of *Plot Lines* was for public art to have a positive impact on the day-to-day lives of West Waterlooville residents. Furthermore, it sought to:

- Be relevant to the residents;
- Be inclusive and to facilitate participation for all those who wish to be involved in the Programme, whilst also reaching residents who may have chosen not to “actively” participate;
- Produce distinctive, site-specific artworks that resonated locally and that were created through collaboration with experienced artists/designers/writers;
- Contribute to an improved sense of community cohesion and a feeling of belonging within the MDA.

The Programme’s intended outcomes focused on strengthening connections between the MDA and its surrounding geographic context, increasing understanding of both the role and value of public art, of residents’ everyday lives, and supporting local people to develop a sense of ownership over cultural initiatives to inform relevant and responsive public art programming in the future.

Proposed Activity

Proposed activity and outputs for the Programme included:

- 1) a year-long writer-in-residence programme to explore and creatively interpret the stories, experiences and identity of West Waterlooville (**Strand 1**);
- 2) a series of community-based writing/storytelling workshops with participants from a range of backgrounds (**Strand 2**).

Both strands aimed to facilitate the collection of the community's words and stories that would inform the development of a series of publications and temporary public artworks and interventions produced by design and creative development studio, SOUP.

Alongside these creative components, the Programme intended to work closely with the community to establish two resident-led groups — one for young people and one for adult residents — to help shape future cultural activity in the area. Supported by the Community Facilitator, the members of these groups were envisaged as being co-evaluators and critical friends to the Programme, informing its development and exploring future contributions by residents to a longer-term cultural legacy for the area.

A shared visual identity and coordinated approach to physical and digital communications for *Plot Lines* was created by project designers SOUP. This took the form of a dedicated website, social media identity and other public-facing materials (posters and flyers). This area of work was designed to connect the Programme's various activities and deliverables, to increase its visibility and to encourage wider engagement among local people and other stakeholders.

Background and Context¹

West Waterlooville is a major development area (MDA) on the edge of Waterlooville, Hampshire, within the south-east of Winchester District. Housing construction is led by Taylor Wimpey PLC and Grainger PLC and began in 2008. When complete, the development will provide more than 3,000 homes alongside two primary schools, employment space, retail and leisure provision, community facilities and extensive green public open space. In April 2026, around 1,400 homes in Berewood and 550 in Wellington Park were occupied, with further development expected to continue for at least another decade.

The area has a predominantly young population, with nearly a third of residents under 16 and relatively low levels of deprivation. As a new and rapidly expanding settlement, West Waterlooville is still developing its identity, social connections and civic infrastructure. Residents use a range of place names — including West of Waterlooville, West Waterlooville, Berewood and Newlands — to describe where they live, reflecting evolving perceptions of community belonging, cohesion and sense of place. While volunteer-led community groups, creative community-focused organisations and Newlands Parish Council facilitate and support local activity, there are currently no permanent community facilities within the development, with residents relying largely on nearby Waterlooville for services and amenities.

The combination of rapid housing growth and delayed social infrastructure delivery has also created problems for residents, as reflected in anecdotal feedback from locals gathered as part of *Plot Lines*' programme development and media reporting (See BBC article ["Residents hit out at 'dream' housing development"](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/clynj787k42o) by Stafford and Meakin, 21st January 2026). Some have expressed concerns that key community facilities, including health provision, retail and social spaces, have not yet materialised at the pace originally envisaged, and have questions about the respective roles of developers and public bodies in delivering supporting infrastructure. These perspectives sit within a broader pattern associated with

¹ Sources for the information contained in this section include: the West Waterlooville Public Art Plan (2024) and West Waterlooville Info Pack (2024) both written by Studio Response; BBC article ["Residents hit out at 'dream' housing development"](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/clynj787k42o) by Stephen Stafford and Alex Meakin <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/clynj787k42o>; 'The State of Us: Community Strength and Cohesion in the UK' by Jake Puddle, Jill Rutter and Heather Rolfe (2025) <https://www.britishfuture.org/publication/the-state-of-us-report/>; and 'Build, Baby, Build'? A Critical Assessment of Housing Policy over the First Year of the Labour Government in the UK' by Steve Rolfe, Steve Iafrati, Gareth James, Henri Baptiste and Colin Clark (2026).

large-scale new settlements, where housing delivery and the provision of social infrastructure often progress at different rates.

Recent academic reports on social capital, housing and community cohesion help to further explain these dynamics. In ['The State of Us: Community Strength and Cohesion in the UK' \(2025\)](#), Jake Puddle, Jill Rutter and Heather Rolfe argue that strong social connections are fostered through investment in shared spaces and community infrastructure in addition to opportunities for meaningful participation. Their research highlights the role of local authorities, community organisations and other place-based institutions in creating the conditions that enable relationships and networks to develop. Similar themes are identified by Steve Rolfe, Steve Iafrati, Gareth James, Henri Baptiste and Colin Clark (2026) in their article ['Build, Baby, Build'? A Critical Assessment of Housing Policy over the First Year of the Labour Government in the UK'](#), who argue that housing growth alone is insufficient to create thriving communities. Their research emphasises the responsibility of policymakers, developers and public bodies to invest not only in physical housing but also in the social infrastructure, community facilities and long-term engagement needed to support social capital and community cohesion. Combined, these studies suggest that fostering a sense of belonging within new and expanding communities requires sustained investment in both places and relationships.

This broader context is particularly relevant to West Waterlooville and Newlands, where *Plot Lines* sought to contribute to community connection against the backdrop of a rapidly changing built and social environment shaped by large-scale housing growth and the ongoing formation of new communities. Compared with previous proposals, such as allocating £500k to a boating lake, *Plot Lines* was also explicitly designed to build relationships and support sustained engagement, as the strategy states: “We believe that sustained engagement holds the key to delivering a programme of note.”

In early 2026, the Government confirmed the new boundaries for Hampshire’s local government reorganisation, which will see Newlands move from Winchester City Council into a new South East Hampshire authority. While yet to be implemented, this change will further reinforce the evolving nature of governance and identity in the area.

About the Evaluation

Evaluation Aims

The evaluation was co-developed by consultants Henry Mulhall and Siân Rosa Hunter Dodsworth in collaboration with Studio Response and Winchester City Council. Centred around six evaluation questions, its core purpose was to assess the impact and outcomes of *Plot Lines* and evaluate the extent to which it achieved its proposed aims.² Attention was given to understanding the learning, community engagement and creative development that emerged over the 18-month delivery period, as well as reflecting iteratively on insights, achievements and challenges to generate practical recommendations to support future local cultural programming / public art initiatives.

Evaluation Methodology and Scope

The evaluation was initially designed as a participatory process, with the evaluators planning to work alongside the *Plot Lines* team, participants, and residents to co-develop tools and interpret findings. As delivery progressed, it became clear that this approach did not align with the way people were actually engaging with the Programme, so the methodology shifted to a closer partnership with Studio Response, WCC's Culture & Creative Sector Development Officer and the delivery team, using lighter, more flexible tools better suited to workshops and public-facing activities. This change helped the evaluation stay responsive to what was happening on the ground, capturing learning as it emerged, but also took considerably more time than expected, with the evaluators working beyond their allocated days.

Engagement with formal evaluation tools was limited across participants, residents, partners, and local authority stakeholders, resulting in a small and non-representative dataset from these groups. During analysis, the evaluators therefore adopted a predominantly interpretive approach, with this report drawing on qualitative evidence from interviews, reflective accounts and observations from the *Plot Lines* delivery team, supported by illustrative quotations and case studies from other Programme contributors and recipients. Where relevant, limitations in the evidence base have been highlighted, and findings should be understood as indicative signs of impact rather than statistically definitive outcomes.

The Programme's final publication and artwork were completed after the formal analysis period of the evaluation (May 2026). While the reception and impact of this fall out of the scope of this evaluation, references are made to both in their planning stages.

Evaluation Tools

Mixed methods were used to gather insight from different groups and individuals involved in *Plot Lines*. Data collection was structured around a front-end, formative and summative model, and evaluation tools were designed to capture both quantitative and qualitative information.

The final dataset consisted of the following evidence:

- **28 reflection diary entries** from the Writer-in-Residence, Community Facilitator, writers and assistant facilitators;

² See Evaluation Framework for these.

- **24 survey responses** provided by workshop participants and parents/carers of young participants across 4 different workshops and events;
- **12 in-workshop evaluative “body maps”** created by participants from Thrive and library-based workshops;
- **12 observation and reflection records** completed by Programme Leads, delivery staff and ArtfulScribe across 8 workshops and events;
- **9 semi-structured interviews** with Programme Leads, Winchester City Council’s Culture & Creative Sector Development Officer, Writer-in-Residence, Community Facilitator, writers and assistant facilitators, Programme partners and two Programme participants;
- **2 in-person evaluation-reflection workshops** involving Programme Leads, delivery staff, arts partner ArtfulScribe, designers SOUP, and WCC’s Culture & Creative Sector Development Officer;
- **2 survey responses** from local residents who had received copies of *Plot Line* publications;
- **1 survey response** from WCC’s Culture & Creative Sector Development Officer.

Additional data was drawn from reflection logs, attendance records, partnership mapping documents, emails, social media posts, monthly programme updates, and stakeholder feedback from council meetings, forums and team discussions. Quarterly evaluation meetings also provided valuable insight into ongoing delivery, capturing behind-the-scenes reflections from Programme Leads and the Culture & Creative Sector Development Officer throughout the Programme.

All tools were used to support transcription processes, to condense Programme descriptions previously documented in interim reports and summary documents, and to check spelling and grammar.



A selection of data collection tools used as part of the evaluation process. Photos by Henry Mulhall, Siân Rosa Hunter Dodsworth and Lucy Fackrell.

Ethics

Participation in the evaluation (including interviews, focus groups and surveys) was a contractual requirement for Programme Leads and delivery staff, but voluntary for all other stakeholders, partners and participants. Responses have been anonymised, with job titles retained only where needed for clarity. Informed consent was obtained for any audio or video recording, which was used for transcription only and then deleted. All information was handled in line with data protection guidelines and Winchester City Council’s [Privacy Policy](#).

Plot Lines in Numbers

- **800** participants across the Programme
- **221** school children took part
- **210** community conversations
- **100s** of poems and stories created
- **31** events and workshops
- **10** community volunteers recruited to consult on future art programming
- **6** community spotlights published
- **6** writers and artists employed
- **4** Hampshire residents employed and mentored
- **3** community art visits
- **3** printed books shared with every household in the community (totalling 5,400 copies)

Online Engagement

On Instagram, Plot lines posted 150 posts and 53 stories. One post reached over 9,000 views. 52.5 % of the account's engagement came from within 50 miles of West Waterlooville. Adults between 25 and 55 were the most engaged demographic, with 72.9% of engagement coming from women.

The Plot Lines website attracted 1,418 genuine visitors, with a strong UK core audience of 964. Visitors arrived primarily through direct access and social media (particularly Facebook), rather than search, suggesting engagement was driven by existing networks and targeted promotion rather than organic discovery.

Most traffic centred on the homepage and join pages, with meaningful onward interest in specific strands (music, food, film). Critically, 132 unique visitors clicked through to outbound links connecting to project partners and practitioners, including the Plot Lines Instagram page, Aoife Mannix's website, Studio Response's website, and shared Drive/Zoom resources. This indicates that the site functioned effectively as a gateway into deeper programme engagement rather than a static information page.

About *Plot Lines* (Activity and Outputs)

Over an 18-month period, *Plot Lines* brought together a wide range of participants — including schoolchildren, families, young people, care home residents, artists, musicians, writers, community organisers and members of local community groups — across West Waterlooville to explore stories of place, identity and belonging. The Programme culminated in a three-volume publication series and a collection of public artworks, ensuring that the narratives generated through workshops, interviews and community conversations were embedded within the local landscape.

The development of *Plot Lines* was underpinned by two phases of community consultation, which together provided an evidence base for the Programme's focus and delivery approach. The first phase, documented in the [West Waterlooville Public Art Plan \(2024\)](#), was led by Studio Response ahead of the Programme's delivery. It used a combination of community workshops and surveys to gather feedback from 50 local people on their definition of public art, local needs, and potential values for the Programme. Findings showed a strong interest from residents in creative activity that connected people with nature, strengthened relationships between neighbours and reflected the area's emerging identity. The consultation process also highlighted comparatively low levels of participation in organised community activity, alongside limited opportunities for informal social interaction.

A second phase of consultation, undertaken midway through the Programme by the Community Facilitator via doorstep conversations with approximately 130 residents, built on and reinforced these findings. While West Waterlooville was frequently described as a safe and family-friendly place to live, local people consistently noted a lack of shared spaces, limited provision for young people, and practical barriers to participation, including time, confidence and awareness. Many also reported spending leisure time outside the development due to limited local facilities and connectivity.

These insights directly informed the design of *Plot Lines*. The Programme prioritised informal, visible and accessible activity embedded in everyday settings, with a focus on storytelling, nature, wellbeing and intergenerational participation. It was shaped in response to the realities of a place still in formation, where civic infrastructure, local identity, and patterns of participation continue to evolve.

Finally, it is important to note that *Plot Lines* was not driven by pressure to spend funding within a fixed timeframe. The funds used to implement the Programme have been held by Winchester City Council since 2022 and have still to be fully allocated, with a proportion intentionally retained to support continued activity and maintain momentum beyond the formal end date. This longer-term view reflects *Plot Lines'* emphasis on laying sustainable foundations for participation and community development, rather than prioritising short-term delivery.

Strand 1: Writer-in-Residence

Place-based Listening and the Gathering of Stories

Central to *Plot Lines* was the residency of Aoife Mannix, whose role combined creative practice, community engagement and mentoring support for the wider facilitation team. Working across the development areas between February 2025 and May 2026, Aoife set out to capture the experiences, memories and perspectives of local people, building through words a rich portrait of everyday life in West Waterlooville.

From spring 2025 onwards, she conducted interviews, informal conversations and creative workshops with residents and community volunteers. These encounters generated a substantial body of writing, including six profile poems (known as ‘community spotlights’), creative non-fiction and reflective pieces exploring themes of nature, migration, belonging, resilience, care and connection to place. The writing was a central thread that ran through the entire Programme, informing both the publication series and the final public artworks.

Building Relationships Through Creative Activity

Aoife's first public workshop took place at Waterloooville Library in May 2025, bringing together around 20 individuals to share memories, observations and stories about West Waterloooville. The material gathered during this session provided an early foundation for her ongoing work.

Throughout the following months, Aoife became a visible presence at community events and local activities. She joined the VE80 Community Fete in May 2025, delivering informal creative writing activities alongside the wider *Plot Lines* team, and later facilitated a VE Day-themed workshop at Wellington Vale Care Home, where residents reflected on personal “victories,” created thank you cards, and shared stories — some of which later inspired music composed by young participants in an oversubscribed intergenerational event called *Crossing Newlands* jointly organised by Gail and Aoife in partnership with local CIC, the Southern Music Project.

In June 2025, Aoife worked alongside the Community Facilitator to deliver *Plot Lines in the Landscape*, a creative walking, map-making and painting workshop developed in partnership with Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust and Dragonfly Arts. Participants responded to the surrounding landscape through observation, discussion and writing, deepening the Programme's exploration of how people experience and connect with place.

Alongside her direct work with *Plot Lines*’ participants, Aoife helped raise awareness of the Programme through interviews with local media outlets, including That's TV Solent and The Flash Radio, helping introduce *Plot Lines* to a wider audience.

Developing Writing and Supporting the *Plot Lines* Delivery Team

As the residency progressed, Aoife continued gathering stories while developing an expanding collection of poetry and prose rooted in local experience. At the same time, she played an important mentoring role, supporting Strand 2 writers and assistant facilitators Han, Kym, Lucy, Amelia and Anna with creative approaches to their own writing and workshop planning alongside the Programme’s overall development.

A highlight of the Programme was its contribution to Heritage Open Days in September 2025, where Aoife and Assistant Facilitator Amelia presented a selection of writing inspired by the people, places and stories of West Waterloooville. Attended by around 25 people, including several residents whose experiences were captured in community spotlights, the event offered an opportunity to celebrate the growing collection of community narratives emerging through the residency. The presentation demonstrated how local voices were shaping the creative direction of the Programme and provided a powerful moment of reflection on the stories being gathered across the programme.

From Community Stories to Published Works

During autumn and winter of 2025, Aoife expanded her engagement activity through a series of workshops and targeted community projects. These included a half-term workshop (*Talking Creatures*) for children and families at Christ Church Portsdown, exploring peace, nature and place, a creative *Spooky Storytelling Snake* event at Newlands Community Hall, and a workshop with 10 reception pupils at Newlands Primary Academy. Writing generated through these activities later became part of Volume Three of the publication series.



Spooky Rock Snake. Image credit: Studio Response

Additional interviews also continued to enrich the body of work, including conversations with a local post worker, a community volunteer, a young boxer, and a Ukrainian refugee and community art project organiser - whose stories were transformed into poems and creative non-fiction pieces. At the same time, Aoife worked closely with Studio Response and SOUP on the editorial development of Volume Two, while also contributing to the creative thinking behind the Programme's final public artworks.

In early 2026, Aoife met with members of the Springwood Writers Group, inviting contributions for Volume Three, and the focus of the residency shifted increasingly towards editing, refining and preparing the Programme's final outputs, bringing together the many voices, stories and experiences gathered throughout the previous year.

Strand 2: Community Writing, Participation and Creative Development

Creating Opportunities for Participation

Plot Lines' varied programme of free and public workshops, outreach and creative participation initiatives were designed to engage people across different age groups and backgrounds. Led by writers Anna, Han, Kym, Lucy and Amelia, with community engagement coordinated by the Community Facilitator, activity

focused on creating multiple welcoming and accessible opportunities for residents to participate in and contribute creatively to *Plot Lines*.

The strand began with the public launch workshop at Waterloo Library in May 2025 and quickly expanded to encompass community events, information-sharing sessions and outreach activities. Early engagement at the VE80 Community Fete, followed by Grainger PLC's careers and technology event, and Newlands Primary Academy's Christmas Fair helped establish relationships with participants and partner organisations and agencies while building momentum for future activity.

Creativity, Memory and Intergenerational Exchange

One of the most intensive areas of activity centred on a nine-week project with Wellington Vale Care Home (in the north of the MDA), where Han and Kym delivered a series of nine workshops with residents living with dementia. Through collage, poetry and conversation, participants explored memories of local places, seaside visits, green spaces and personal histories.

The workshops, which saw an average of seven participants per session, created a supportive space for storytelling and self-expression, generating material that later formed a substantial part of Volume Two of *Plot Lines*'s publication series as well as a celebratory event for residents and their families. The work also built on previous intergenerational activity, which took place as part of the aforementioned *Crossing Newlands* project, developed in partnership with Southern Music Project, which brought together care home residents and young musicians to create performances inspired by residents' stories and experiences.

Supporting Young People's Voices

Youth engagement became an increasingly important part of the Programme from autumn 2025 onwards. Led by writer-facilitator team Anna and Lucy, workshops incorporated games, creative writing exercises and character development activities and were delivered across a range of educational and community settings, including Waterloo Library, Crookhorn College, Dragonfly Arts, and home schooling and local youth groups. Lucy's involvement in this area of work represented a notable development within the Programme. Having first attended a *Plot Lines* workshop as a participant at Waterloo Library, she subsequently joined the delivery team as an assistant facilitator.

A notable aspect of this area of work was sessions run with Year 7 pupils at Crookhorn College, which engaged approximately 200 schoolchildren. Additional workshops activity programme THRIVE based at Waterloo Leisure Centre engaged much fewer individuals but nevertheless engaged a diverse range of voices and contributions to the *Plot Lines* publication.

By early 2026, around 100 pieces of writing and artwork created by children and young people had been gathered for inclusion in Volume Three, helping ensure that younger residents played a visible role in shaping the Programme's outputs and legacy.

Building Community Connections

Plot Lines was enabled and supported through an embedded outreach process, relationship-building and community engagement led by Community Facilitator Gail Howard. Acting as a bridge between the delivery team and local communities, Gail played a critical role in identifying potential partners,

establishing trust and creating, as well as responding to, opportunities for participation across both strands of the Programme.

From the outset, the Community Facilitator mapped local networks and developed relationships with staff and community leaders from a wide range of organisations, agencies and volunteer-led groups, including Newlands Community Group, Dragonfly Arts, Southern Music Project, Wellington Vale Care Home, Grainger PLC, Crookhorn College and Newlands Primary Academy, alongside local faith groups, youth organisations and local authorities and key individual “community connectors”. These relationships enabled the Programme to reach residents through existing trusted networks and created pathways for collaboration within both the residency programme and workshop series as work was underway.

Many of these partnerships directly informed the Programme’s delivery. For example, in May 2025, Studio Response established connections with Wellington Vale Care Home, creating opportunities for Aoife's early engagement with residents and laying the foundations for Han and Kym’s multi-week workshop project with residents that later formed a significant part of Strand 2. Gail introduced Aoife to local residents, partners, stakeholders and community contacts, helping to identify stories, participants and perspectives that guided the development of writing that ended up in the *Plot Lines* publication series.

Initial open callouts in 2025 inviting residents to join community groups with a view to shaping future cultural commissioning received a very limited response. The Community Facilitator and Studio Response led a coordinated communications campaign across a range of platforms to support recruitment, including promotion via Instagram, the *Plot Lines* website, and the design and distribution of printed flyers and posters for both adult and young people’s groups. A series of promoted Instagram posts were shared from the beginning of May up to the 23rd June deadline to maintain visibility across the recruitment period. The opportunity was also featured in Berewood News, a printed newsletter produced by Grainger and delivered to all households (estimated 1,500) in Berewood in June, alongside wider promotion at local events and meetings by Gail and other members of the team.

In addition, four online Zoom information sessions (two for adults and two for parents/guardians of young people) were scheduled to provide further detail and opportunities for discussion. However, all these sessions failed to have attendees.

Despite this coordinated, cross-platform communications approach, no substantive response was received through the campaign. However, by June 2026, a small group of 10 community members had been formed. Gail achieved this by personally inviting certain groups along to small, simple, personable events. The groups invited were: Purbrook Art Club, Berewood Women’s Institute, Dulcie Warren’s workshop group (based in Cowplain), Havant University of the Third Age (U3A) and Springwood Writers. The group have indicated a willingness to be consulted on future arts programming linked to the development areas, providing a modest starting point for any future engagement activity.

Returning to June 2025, Gail was an active part of the *Plot Lines in the Landscape* nature walk and creative writing workshop, bringing together creative writing, visual arts and environmental interpretation. During this period, Gail also developed working collaborations with faith leaders, including one from Christ Church Portsdown, which later became the site of family workshop activities and community engagement opportunities.

A particularly important partnership also emerged through Paulette Bennett with the Newlands Community Group, whose support helped connect the Programme further with local residents and existing community networks. Paulette’s knowledge of the area provided Gail and the wider delivery team with additional and nuanced context that helped them to better understand and explain fluctuating participation levels. Deepening relationships with the Springwood Writers Group, Dragonfly Arts,

Berewood Primary School and Newlands Primary Academy further strengthened the Programme's visibility as well as credibility, and ensured that activity remained grounded in local knowledge and experience.

Gail's extensive face-to-face outreach and consultation across the area during July and August 2025 involved conversations with more than 130 residents about local identity, leisure, community life and attitudes towards public art. 2,000 promotional postcards were distributed across the Programme by all members of the team, with feedback helping to inform both creative development and wider planning for the Programme. Alongside this, Gail continued to map and connect with potential partner organisations, such as Waterloooville Boxing Club, identifying opportunities for future co-created activity embedded within existing local cultural ecosystems.

Community development activity continued right up until the final delivery period of the Programme (spring and early summer 2026), with Gail focusing on deepening local awareness and strengthening connections with cultural provision in the wider area. During this phase, she organised visits for residents to The Spring Arts & Heritage Centre in Havant and community crafting studio Making Space, offering them first-hand exposure to examples of arts programming and community-led creative practice. In addition, a guided walk around Waterloooville town centre was delivered with Laura Jones from Havant Borough Council, exploring existing public art and creative projects within the town and situating *Plot Lines* within the broader cultural landscape.

The relationships established through this sustained outreach, mapping, and engagement approach supported participation across workshops, events and publications throughout the entire duration of *Plot Lines*. The Community Facilitator also helped to build a more connected network of local contacts and organisations engaged with creative activity, providing a platform for future collaboration that will resonate beyond the life of the Programme.

Publications and Public Art Legacy

The stories, poems, drawings, reflections and creative responses generated throughout *Plot Lines* were brought together in a three-volume publication series (5,400 copies) that documented the Programme's journey, stories and anecdotes from people living in and near Waterloooville. They showcased writing by the cohort of *Plot Lines*' writers together with contributions from members of the local community.

Volume One captured conversations, observations and events during the Programme's early stages, and 1,800 copies were distributed through local venues and community partners as well as directly to residents' homes. Volume Two focused on work created through the Wellington Vale Care Home workshops alongside writing by Aoife, Han and Kym. Volume Three brought together contributions from young people, school pupils, Springwood Writers Group members, community interviewees and Aoife's residency work, creating the most comprehensive reflection of the Programme as a whole.

Each publication included a fun keepsake sticker, intended to reinforce the sense that Newlands is part of Waterloooville and to offer a sense of belonging to a place. The sticker design in each publication reflected the contents of that particular volume. Volume 2, featuring work by many of the area's older residents, our proposed design references the history of Waterloooville, taking the shape of an oak leaf (prevalent in the Forest of Bere) marked with the founding year of the town. Volume 3 included contributions from young people living in the area, so the sticker theme celebrates Waterloooville's past, present and future with a design that is hopeful and future-looking.



Volume 1.



Volume 2

Waterloooville

4eva

Volume 3

All images copyright: SOUP

Alongside the publications, SOUP developed a series of public artworks that will soon be displayed across community sites including Wellington Vale Care Home, Newlands Primary School, and Berewood Primary School. The artworks will take the form of a collection of distinctive yellow geometric aluminium composite panels, inspired by site-specific writing taken from the Programme and using *Plot Lines* graphics to map local places featured in the texts. When the public display is taken down (duration TBD), the panels will be donated to Newlands Primary Academy. Together, the publication series and artworks aim to ensure that the stories gathered through *Plot Lines* remain seen, accessible and embedded within the communities and places from which they emerged.

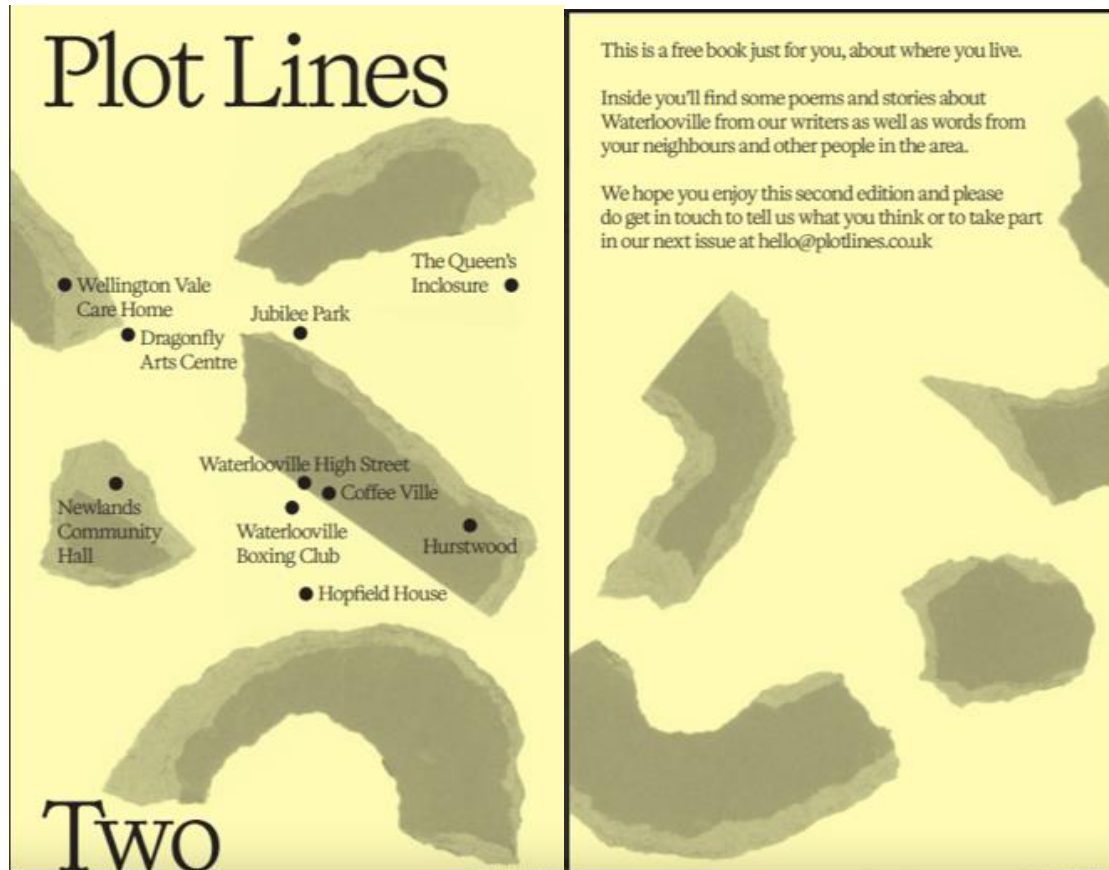
Communications

Communications were woven throughout every stage of *Plot Lines*, helping to attract participants, strengthen partnerships, and share emerging work with wider audiences.

Exposure was achieved through a combination of local media coverage, direct community engagement through public events, and digital and analogue communications via the Programme's [website](#) - which included interactive elements – weekly Instagram posts sharing writing and images and printed posters and postcards. The coverage on That's TV Solent and The Flash Radio aimed to introduce *Plot Lines* to different groups of local people, while events such as the VE80 Community Fete and Heritage Open Days

created opportunities for residents to encounter the Programme, the Writer-in-Residence and delivery team in person.

Partners including Waterloooville Library, Dragonfly Arts, Grainger, Newlands Primary Academy, Crookhorn College, Southern Music Project, Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust and The Spring Arts & Heritage Centre further amplified communications through their own networks, audiences and newsletters.



Front and back cover of Vol. 2 of the *Plot Lines* publication. Copyright: SOUP

Key Outcomes

The following section provides an overview of *Plot Lines*' key outcomes drawn from evaluation findings and based on the Programme's proposed aims and outcomes as outlined in the evaluation framework. Care has been taken to reflect a range of experiences and perspectives from different individuals and groups involved in the Programme with data summarised thematically, highlighting areas of success as well as complexity and challenge.

Case Study 1

Han Newton – Artist on Strand 2 working with residents at Wellington Vale Care Home

Han Newton is an artist and educator based in Portsmouth and was a Lead Artist for Strand 2 of the *Plot Lines* programme. Working alongside Kym Devine, she delivered creative workshops to residents with varying levels of dementia at Wellington Vale Care Home.

Having grown up in Drayton with strong ties to the Waterlooville area, Han brought valuable local insight to her project. She understands the community's complex relationship with place and, in fact, has come to appreciate its lack of strong civic identity, its disconnected pockets, and the way residents use "Waterlooville" as a shorthand for a wider region. This knowledge and lived experience informed her approach to working with residents at Wellington Vale but also provided valuable context and perspective that was helpful for other Programme team members when reflecting and learning from *Plot Lines*' successes and challenges.

Although this was Han's first time working with older people with dementia, her background teaching children with special educational needs gave her a strong foundation. From this experience, she developed the "bento boxes" method: a box divided into compartments into which different sensory and artistic materials were placed by type. Boxes were shared with Wellington Vale project participants in every workshop, and they provided a structured, accessible framework / creative toolkit that gave participants with memory impairment clear parameters within which to engage with planned activities in a way that felt both safe and freeing. This approach is simple, effective, and transferable to other contexts.

Han engaged openly with the mentoring programme offered through *Plot Lines*. She found it especially helpful to reflect on her tendency to overcommit to her community-based practice and to find a more boundaried and sustainable way of working. Han has since applied techniques shared with her through the mentoring process — such as descriptive exercises — to another project she is working on that is funded by Arts Council England. Alongside diary entries, she maintained a session log adapted from her teaching practice, which provided the evaluators with valuable data and enabled her to track her own development through the Programme.

Han approaches her work with genuine enthusiasm and reflexivity. Even where direct change is hard to measure, she believes the conversations sparked by projects like *Plot Lines* are inherently valuable for participants, communities, and artists like herself.

1. Participation in an emerging West Waterlooville

Plot Lines generated valuable experiences for participants and helped establish important foundations for future cultural programming in West Waterlooville. However, engagement varied considerably across activities, with one day of workshops in a school reaching over 200 pupils and some open-access drop-in events attracting very small numbers of participants, or in some cases none. These findings need to be understood within the context of a community that is still taking shape. Ongoing housing development, a changing population, limited civic infrastructure, and fragmented local networks meant that participation could not be assumed; it had to be cultivated gradually through trust, repetition, and familiarity, often within spaces that were already known and valued by local residents. In this sense, the characteristics of West Waterlooville were more than simply a backdrop to the Programme; they were a defining feature that affected both its approach and its delivery.

Some of *Plot Lines*' strongest participation outcomes emerged in settings where residents engaged with the Programme through a series of structured and sustained activities. For example, at Wellington Vale Care Home, participants became increasingly confident and involved over time as they grew familiar with both the creative processes and the writer-facilitators, Han and Kym. Structured workshop formats and innovative engagement methods, such as the 'bento boxes' (see Case Study 1 and image below), helped support this development. The facilitators observed that residents developed "muscle memory" associated with craft skills. This allowed a higher level of engagement with workshop themes which would have been otherwise limited by their lack of cognitive capacity and memory, which had been affected by dementia or Alzheimer's disease. Such improved engagement and self-assurance reflected not only the benefits of repeat participation but also the strength of the relationships established between facilitators, participants, and care home staff, which were central to this project's delivery.



Image of a 'Bento Box'. Kim Divine 2025.

Alongside strong participation overall — totalling around 800 participants over 18 months — contributors to the evaluation also recognised clear limits to the Programme's wider reach, particularly for those who did not take part in *Plot Lines*-related activities. While the quality of delivery and relational approach was widely praised, with the Community Development Manager at Grainger PLC noting that the *Plot Lines* team had "made the best" of local contacts, evidence from engagement activity suggests that awareness of the Programme across the broader community remained limited. For instance, most residents consulted by the Community Facilitator midway through the Programme had not yet heard of it, and a poor response rate to the survey issued at the end of the delivery period provided insufficient data to

show improvement over time. Taken together, these findings point to ongoing questions around the Programme's profile, reach, and longer-term impact beyond its immediate participant base.

On the other hand, early engagement work, including door-knocking and informal conversations, reinforced an important insight: non-participation rarely reflected a lack of interest in the Programme. More often, it showed that local people had established routines in which additional commitments — especially unfamiliar ones — were not prioritised. As the Community Facilitator described it, West Waterlooville was defined by a sense of “contentment [plus a] lack of free time”, and it was this “that seemed to be the cause of the lack of appetite, rather than apathy.” In this context, it appears that engagement depended less on what the programme offered than on pre-existing community factors.

2. Relationships, Partnerships and Community Infrastructure

Plot Lines was most effective when it built on existing community networks and connected creative activity to people's lived experiences of place. Partnerships with organisations provided the Programme's delivery team with trusted routes into the community and created opportunities for deeper engagement. Activities such as *Plot Lines in the Landscape*, identified as a highlight by the Writer-in-Residence and Community Facilitator, demonstrated how creativity, nature, and local identity could be brought together in ways that resonated with residents' interests while also showcasing the value of a cross-sector collaboration fuelled by, as the Community Facilitator put it, the “infectious enthusiasm” of “fabulous” local practitioners.





Plot Lines in the Landscape. Image Credit: Studio Response

When partners were directly involved in delivery, they were paid for their time, and this was managed on a case-by-case basis by the staff member leading that activity. The project collaborated with the following partner organisations:

- Dragonfly Arts
- Southern Music Project CIC
- Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust
- Newlands Community Group
- Wellington Vale Care Home
- Newlands Primary Academy
- Waterloooville Library
- Crookhorn College
- Making Space
- The Spring
- Christ Church

Although resources were never denied to partners and offers to pay people for their time contributing and working on Plot Lines were always requested by WCC and S/R, participation of some organisations was constrained by existing pressures and limited capacity. Evaluation feedback from staff members working on the ground also highlighted shortcomings in the Programme's ability to distribute resources, including its budget, more equitably among local cultural providers. This suggests the need for further scrutiny of the extent to which the Programme fostered meaningful collaboration with organisations, and whether sufficient attention was given to long-term sustainability, capacity-building, and ongoing support mechanisms. More broadly, limited evidence from community partner organisations themselves (only one provided feedback on their experience), makes it difficult to assess the benefits of *Plot Lines* for them.

The importance of strong relationships with key individuals should not be underestimated. Care home staff, alongside teachers, librarians, and community group leaders/informal 'community connectors' such as Paulette Bennett, were central to enabling participation in *Plot Lines*. Their local knowledge, trusted

relationships, and commitment created opportunities for engagement that would otherwise have been difficult to achieve. While many successful partnerships were ultimately developed through sustained presence and relationship-building driven forward by the Community Facilitator and others, a more systematic community mapping exercise at the outset of the Programme might have saved time and supported stronger collaboration with organisations and groups whose aims most closely aligned with those of *Plot Lines* (see Springwood Writers Group). Combined, these experiences highlight the importance of embedded local relationships and early strategic mapping in effective place-based cultural delivery, suggesting that future programmes should invest in structured partnership development and sustained, long-term engagement that supports local organisations as both collaborators and beneficiaries.

“Thank you all for what I know was a highly appreciated event by everyone present.”

– Organiser of Heritage Open Days

3. The Role of Community Spaces in Shaping Participation

A defining factor shaping *Plot Lines* was the absence of dedicated civic, community, or cultural spaces, alongside the ongoing development of West Waterlooville’s social infrastructure. Without a central hub for activity to coalesce around, the Programme often relied on the use of a dispersed range of venues offered by partners rather than a single, recognised community base.

This was widely understood as a structural condition rather than a Programme-specific issue. Contributors across the evaluation noted that other local cultural, community, and voluntary initiatives faced similar challenges in building momentum and visibility for their work due to the lack of available community spaces, with this constraint even contributing to the closure of one group. These experiences also reveal a wider imbalance: while physical development in West Waterlooville has progressed apace, the social infrastructure needed to support community life has not developed at the same rate.

Within this context, *Plot Lines*’ partnership work, events, and workshops were described by Programme Leads as being a form of “cultural groundwork”. Working outside an established cultural ecosystem, the Programme focused on creating the conditions for participation to develop over time by connecting people, organisations, and places, and by experimenting with storytelling as a form of public art practice. Delivery team reflections, drawn from diaries evaluation-reflection discussions, described the activity that they delivered as being well received by those who attended, but emphasised the difficulty of sustaining and scaling engagement beyond existing relationships and trusted entry points. This was particularly evident in the young people’s strand of work, where sessions delivered in libraries and other out-of-school settings were logistically demanding and less well attended, whereas those delivered in a school - a known and trusted setting - saw far higher levels of engagement. This prompted one of the writer-facilitators to reflect that it would have been better to have worked for longer with “one group, in one place...as some of the children we worked with could have benefited greatly from seeing us week after week [...]to grow their writing”. According to the facilitators, the school setting — alongside its existing routines, relationships, and sustained access to pupils — offered a more stable and advantageous environment for developing ongoing engagement and deeper creative progression. The activities with Crookhorn were successful, but despite follow-up requests to work with them, the team received no response. A proposal to work with a consistent group of young people from early on in the program would have been advantageous. However, we note that local senior schools are difficult to consistently engage, highlighting the strain on schools and their limited availability within a busy school term.

The Programme also highlighted how existing institutions function as the area's informal cultural infrastructure. Schools, care settings, libraries, leisure centres, and faith groups provided the spaces and trusted frameworks through which activity could take place, enabling engagement in the absence of dedicated facilities.

4. Publications and Place-Based Cultural Legacy

A key outcome of the Programme was the development of the three-volume publication series, which emerged as one of the most significant ways in which the work created through *Plot Lines* was shared and interpreted. The publications developed into a central strand of the Programme's legacy, becoming more substantial than anticipated and functioning as layered "artefacts" that brought together multiple voices and stories. Programme Leads described them as "snapshots in time" — partial but enduring records of a place in transition.

Across participants and local authority stakeholders, responses to Aoife's writing were consistently positive, particularly in relation to her attentive approach to representing and recognising the lives of others. Those featured in the Community Spotlight Series were especially pleased with how they were portrayed, with individuals often seeking out the Writer-in-Residence at community events to offer their thanks in person. Wider audiences who encountered extracts of Aoife's writing at a reading linked to Heritage Open Day similarly described the work as high quality and impactful. Stakeholders from Winchester County Council also praised the strength of the writing, its authentic reflection of local voices, the breadth of involvement across the Programme, and its innovative approach to engagement. These responses indicate that for many the publications functioned as creative works, representing one of the clearest and most tangible ways in which *Plot Lines'* engagement extended beyond individual events and workshops, translating participation into a shared and accessible public record.

Alongside these strong positive responses, there was also reflection on limitations in reach, ownership, and legacy. Some contributors to the evaluation were disappointed that local residents' writing formed a smaller proportion of the first volume than they had anticipated; however, the number of contributions increased as the programme progressed. Several writer-facilitators also expressed surprise at the Programme's planned anthology as the Programme's main output and uncertainty about how the work would be shared or developed beyond the lifespan of the Programme. These reflections point to a mismatch between some individuals' expectations of the Programme and the reality. This realisation also influenced how some creative sessions were framed, with facilitators describing a tension at times between open-ended creative exploration and the self-perceived constraints of producing writing for a predetermined final output. Lastly, while most contributors to the evaluation agreed that more explicit moments of public sharing or celebration could have helped to strengthen *Plot Lines'* presence, consolidate learning, and clarify longer-term intent, some questioned the likely success of this approach, pointing to poor public engagement with similar types of events at other stages of the Programme. Nevertheless, concerns about legacy remained for some, with one contributor noting: "I still have my reservations on what the long-term effects are going to be of this. I hope it's going to be positive. But I'm not sure, and I don't know what legacy it will leave behind."

Despite this uncertainty, there was broad consensus that the publications provided a meaningful record of place and participation. As one assistant writer reflected, the Programme's main output helped "make people feel as though West Waterlooville isn't a transitory place... but is actually on the map because they

want to be here.” In the context of West Waterlooville, where dedicated civic and cultural gathering spaces are limited, the publications may also be seen as a form of distributed cultural infrastructure — carrying stories, voices, and creative work across dispersed communities over time, while providing the hallmarks of a durable and accessible record of place.

“[I got] quite emotional reading and seeing the collages from our beautiful residents.” – Representative from Community Partner Organisation

“WOW!!! [It’s] so lovely... you’ve all captured their stories and artwork beautifully.” – Representative from Community Partner Organisation

“Aoife, I wanted to thank you one more time for your beautiful writing – The Art of Courage and your poem Brave truly touched me. It means a lot to know that such meaningful work has been written about my experience and all Ukrainians.” – Participant, Community Spotlight Series

“It was a really fun event, emotionally very charged. The poetry (Part 1) was very moving...” – Attendee, Heritage Open Days

Case Study 2

Maryna Melnyk – Participant (Profile piece as part of the Community Spotlight series)

Maryna Melnyk has been living in Petersfield since April 2022, when she arrived in the UK with her daughter and mother under the Homes for Ukraine scheme after the start of the war in Ukraine. For the past three years, Maryna has collaborated with Creatful CIC (www.creatful.co.uk), leading the Ukrainian Art Project — weekly creative well-being sessions for Ukrainian guests living in the area. Previously, groups were active in both Havant and Petersfield, although currently the project is only active in Petersfield. Alongside this, she works as an Art and Photo Technician in a school and is currently studying Psychology, working towards becoming an art therapist.

Maryna was introduced to Aoife and *Plot Lines* by Nancy Fellows from Creatful CIC. Aoife and Eira Szadurski (Studio Response) invited her to an online conversation, which she initially thought was simply an informal introduction before a future interview. Maryna told us that Aoife's ability to create trust and connection stood out to her immediately. “Even during their first meeting, the conversation felt open, thoughtful and very human”, she says. A few days later, Aoife sent Maryna a poem and a chapter inspired by their initial conversation. She was genuinely surprised that one meeting had been enough for Aoife to accurately and poignantly capture so many emotions and experiences. She was deeply impressed by both Aoife's professionalism and sensitivity; as she puts it, “[It was] a real honour for me to be part of this project”.

In the future, Maryna would love to see more international community art programmes that bring together people from different cultures and creative backgrounds. Living in the UK, she has experienced first-hand how creativity can naturally connect people. Through her work with Creatful CIC and programmes like *Plot Lines*, she has met people who share similar values to her and who believe in the healing and connecting power of art. Maryna would love to see opportunities arise whereby artists, writers, and makers from different communities could lead creative sessions inspired by their own cultures and experiences, whether through art, crafts, storytelling, poetry, or wellbeing activities. Maryna believes this could help people forge new friendships, learn from each other and feel more confident sharing their own identity and traditions.

For Maryna, a quote from the Ukrainian poet and artist Taras Shevchenko encapsulates *Plot Lines* perfectly: “Learn from others, but do not turn away from your own”.

5. Creative Confidence and Professional Development

Creative skills and confidence were developed across the Programme for both participants and writer-facilitators through engagement in workshops and delivery practice. The clearest evidence of this progression for participants came from more sustained, in-depth sessions, where individuals and groups were able to return, build on earlier work, and develop ideas over time.

For children and young people in school settings, participation was strongly shaped by feeling relaxed in a known setting and peer support. Facilitators observed that “a sense of comfort [was] found in the familiarity of their friends,” which increased willingness to take part, with pupils often encouraging one another and contributing more freely to collaborative tasks. In sessions at Newlands Primary Academy, reception-aged children responded particularly well to storytelling, drawing, and movement-based prompts, with open-ended and playful approaches helping to reduce barriers to participation. Across

Strand 2's school and youth work more broadly, there was a noticeable shift from tentative contributions towards greater confidence and independence even within individual sessions.

In addition to these participant outcomes, the Programme created significant opportunities for writer-facilitators to develop professionally through reflective practice, peer learning, and an iterative approach to delivery. Mentoring and structured evaluation sessions were repeatedly referenced as being especially valuable and relatively uncommon in freelance creative work, providing space to pause, reflect, and adapt practice in real time. One writer-facilitator also described how encouragement to contribute to the final publication became a turning point, explaining that although they initially hesitated due to time pressures, "I just sat down and wrote for a good few hours... it was so strange to think that until I actually forced myself to sit and do it, I hadn't come up with any ideas... then the thoughts were flowing." This reflects a wider sense that the Programme created both permission and structure for creative production that might otherwise have been delayed.

For the Writer-in-Residence, *Plot Lines* supported deeper consideration of her practice as a writer working in community contexts, while also acting as a catalyst for new creative work, including the early development of a novel shaped by encounters with local residents. Similar forms of progression were evident across the wider team, with facilitators reporting improvements in their writing, increased confidence in adapting practice for different settings and needs — including care environments, dementia, and communication differences — and a growing appreciation of reflective writing as a creative tool in its own right. In one instance, an assistant facilitator secured a role with ArtfulScribe during the Programme, demonstrating clear professional progression, while the transition of another from workshop participant to assistant facilitator illustrated how, in this instance, the Programme was proactive in recognising local talent, which in turn became an employment opportunity. Alongside supporting delivery, this individual helped promote activities through local Facebook networks, showing as well how her existing local relationships supported the Programme in terms of its reach in small but meaningful ways.

Overall, these examples demonstrate that the creative impact of *Plot Lines* extended beyond participants to those delivering it. It enabled practice to be developed in real time through doing, reflecting, and responding, while also supporting tangible progression into new roles, new opportunities, and increased professional confidence.

6. Learning, Adaptation and a Person-Centred Approach

Another important aspect of the Programme was its iterative and responsive approach, with delivery, outreach and design evolving in response to local conditions, emerging relationships and practical constraints. Rather than following a fixed model, the Programme relied on ongoing adaptation shaped by what was learned through delivery in real time. While this flexibility enabled responsiveness, it also brought into focus the importance of clearly defined roles, responsibilities and decision-making structures within complex, multi-partner programmes.

One of the clearest areas of learning focused on early assumptions about digital engagement. The Programme website was intended to act as a shared space for stories, enabling participation beyond workshops and contributing to its longer-term legacy as a repository of work. In practice, however, engagement remained very limited, with only three posts generated over the entire delivery period. Reflection from design partners SOUP highlighted a clear gap between expectation and reality, with possible explanations including low awareness, a stronger preference for in-person and relational engagement, and barriers linked to usability and perceived relevance. There was a shared interest among SOUP and the Programme Leads in understanding this more fully so that future work can better align digital tools with how communities choose and prefer to participate.

The role of the Community Facilitator was consistently identified as one of the Programme's greatest strengths. Her approach was highly relational, grounded in sustained, open, and face-to-face engagement. Over time, she developed trusted relationships with a wide range of individuals and organisations, acting as a key connector and point of continuity across the Programme. Delivery partners and colleagues emphasised the significance of this work in a context where formal cultural infrastructure was limited and networks were still emerging.

The Writer-in-Residence was similarly singled out for her role in shaping the Programme's person-centred ethos. Across settings, participants responded strongly to the attentiveness with which their experiences were listened to and reflected in writing, often describing a sense of being recognised in the work produced. This was particularly evident in the Community Spotlight series, where conversations frequently touched on identity, belonging and lived experience, alongside more sensitive themes including memory, loss, displacement, trauma, illness and death. The emotional weight of these exchanges also revealed the less visible labour involved in relationship-led cultural work, where facilitators were required to hold complex and at times difficult personal narratives while maintaining openness and care in delivery.

The Programme experience also highlighted significant structural learning around programme management. Contributors to the evaluation reflected on the complexity of operating within a layered commissioning and delivery model, where responsibilities were not always clearly delineated between partners. The Programme Leads identified the Commissioner as playing an important enabling role in navigating internal processes and providing continuity, particularly within complex local authority approval systems and multi-stage sign-off procedures. At the same time, the combination of a flexible delivery approach and a multi-layered contracting structure placed additional demands on staff, with significant unanticipated coordination and administrative workload falling to Studio Response. This experience was also felt by the delivery team and the evaluators, which created challenges in terms of clarity, accountability, and operational efficiency.

Overall, the Programme demonstrates that successful community engagement is shaped not only by responsive and person-centred practice, but also by the clarity of the structures that support it. While adaptability and relational delivery were central to its success, the experience also underscores the importance of well-defined roles, management structures, and carefully considered partnership models that balance flexibility with clarity.

"[For the Ukrainian community, it seems] creativity is more "it's nice to do a bit of art"; it feels like a lifeline." – Staff Member, Plot Lines



Social media posts by residents following the distribution of Vol.1 publication. Image credit: Studio Response

"I think it's fantastic! I particularly love the introduction, which really draws the reader in. I also like the collages and reading about the stories behind them and capturing glimpses of what life was like in the area before and after development. I think this series of booklets really has the potential to become an enduring piece of social history of the area which can be enjoyed and tapped into by all, whether they are current residents or residents in the future." – Programme Stakeholder

Selected Learnings from *Plot Lines*

1. Participation is relational and shaped by everyday life

The strongest engagement with the Programme came using familiar spaces that fostered trust, familiarity, and repeated contact, such as care homes. In an emerging place like West Waterlooville, participation was also shaped by residents' daily realities such as time, work, caring responsibilities, as well as varying awareness of *Plot Lines*.

2. Familiarity and consistency build confidence

People engaged most and developed creatively when they could return to familiar settings, work with consistent facilitators and follow recognisable approaches. Using trusted local spaces fostered confidence and made the work feel relevant to lived experience.

3. Relationships drive delivery

In a place with limited community and cultural venues, strong delivery relied on trusted local partners such as schools and care homes, alongside individual people who were informal community connectors to enable access and continuity. Building and sustaining these relationships is vital.

4. Partnerships need capacity

Local organisations were often supportive of *Plot Lines*, and many collaborated on it, but for some limited time and resources shaped what they could realistically contribute. Without clearer resourcing and earlier mapping, strong intentions did not always lead to sustained collaboration.

5. Cultural work in emerging places takes time

Impact builds gradually through sustained presence, trust, and repeated engagement. Its value lies less in individual activities and more in the longer-term conditions it created for future cultural life.

6. Delivery depends on both flexibility and clear structure

Responsive, person-centred working was essential, but at times would have benefited from a more simplified project structure. The desire to bring in experts was well-intentioned, but at times added a layer of unnecessary complexity, which had the potential to create confusion and blur responsibility, leading to additional coordination and administrative work.

7. Lasting Impact comes from long-term conditions and tangible legacies

Individual events and activities are less impactful in newly emerging communities such as West Waterlooville than the long-term conditions created through sustained presence, trust and repeated engagement. Publications and shared storytelling extended the reach of *Plot Lines* and created tangible legacies that will carry the work into future phases.

Recommendations

Below is a draft recommendations section structured around short-, medium- and long-term priorities, with distinctions made between actions linked directly to the Programme and considered achievable through existing Winchester City Council resources and those requiring a future strategic approach by Mid and/or South East Hampshire using new tranches of funding.

Short-term

1. Acknowledge local input, share plans for the Programme's Legacy and brainstorm for the future

The commissioner should consider inviting members of the *Plot Lines* Programme delivery team, stakeholders and representatives from local partner organisations to a celebration and 'next steps' online or in-person event, to share WWC's plans for the Programme's legacy, to discuss how any further \$106 funding might be spent, find out what appetite exists for future collaborative programming, and to think about other potential avenues for funding public art. It is recommended that practitioners and staff from community organisations be paid an honorarium to attend.

2. Recognise emotional labour within community-engaged practice

Artists and facilitators working with sensitive personal narratives and histories require appropriate support and supervision to ensure sustainable practice. In future, programming could look into providing trauma-informed training for staff and expanding its mentoring model to include other front-line members of staff besides writers and facilitators.

3. Continue to design engagement approaches that reflect how people participate locally

Programmes should be grounded in an understanding that participation in emerging communities is shaped by time, familiarity, and trust rather than awareness or interest alone. This means prioritising trusted settings, repeated in-person contact, and visible presence over open calls or digital engagement tools. Personally approaching and inviting pre-existing groups - especially those that participated in *Plot Lines* - is key. This work would be best led by a Community Facilitator or similar, in recognition of this role being a core component of programme delivery.

4. Programme structure

Clear management and reporting structures should be maintained. In addition, regular opportunities for freelance contracted staff to meet with their assigned manager/contact to review project progress against agreed milestones and scopes of work are recommended to ensure that expectations of all parties align and any changes or problems can be discussed and resolved promptly. Induction meetings would also be beneficial to share and review policies related to access, inclusion, wellbeing and fair-working practices.

5. Ensure continuity and intentional development of relationships beyond programme delivery

Relationships built during the delivery of *Plot Lines*—between practitioners, organisations, community connectors and residents—should be maintained following the end of the Programme. There needs to be a clear approach for continuing these during transition phases, including identifying who is responsible for holding and nurturing relationships once the role of Community Facilitator concludes. Without this, there is a risk that valuable trust and knowledge will dissipate. Alongside continuity, there is also an opportunity to actively grow and extend these networks into future activity, building on what has already been established rather than starting again.

6. Simplify future phases of programming

Future programmes should set clear boundaries between commissioning, delivery, evaluation and oversight at the point of design. This reduces confusion during delivery, avoids overlap in responsibilities, and helps prevent delivery teams from absorbing unintended coordination and administrative work.

Medium-term

(Requires coordinated local authority and partner working)

7. Formalising partnerships

Future programming in collaboration with local groups and organisations should continue to follow energy and interest, accepting that while not every relationship may be immediately fruitful, each interaction could plant the seeds for future collaborations. Once an informal agreement to work together has been established, a more structured and formalised partnership arrangement is recommended, making use of some or all of the following: a) an initial exploratory conversation mapping shared assets, resources, strengths, points of pride, challenges and barriers, and exploring if and how working together on a particular initiative may enhance, strengthen, support or overcome these; b) payment to organisations for work beyond direct delivery (e.g. consultation, audience development – including access to existing networks of potential programme participants -, marketing or evaluation); c) jointly-written MOUs; d) visible support for and mutual advertising/promotion of each other's activities and events.

8. Simplify delivery frameworks across partners

There is a need for more consistent, practical frameworks that set out how programmes operate day-to-day. This includes clearer communication routes, decision-making structures, and agreement on coordination responsibilities at different stages of delivery, so that flexibility does not lead to blurred accountability.

Long-term

(Requires strategic planning and implementation across Mid / South East Hampshire)

9. Establish a regional learning and evaluation framework for place-based cultural work

A shared framework would help ensure that learning from programmes is not lost between commissions. It would support more consistent evaluation approaches, build a stronger evidence base over time, and improve how future cultural work is designed and commissioned.

10. Future programmes should continue to take a long-term and realistic approach to investment, using the remaining 106 funding in ways that build sustained cultural value.

Focus on how resources can build on relationships established through *Plot Lines* and strengthen local capacity over time. A key question for future models is how learning and relationships are carried forward once delivery ends—who holds responsibility for maintaining these connections, and how they are supported through transition periods, so momentum is not lost between funding cycles.

11. Be realistic about resourcing adaptive and reflexive evaluation processes

Build sufficient time and resources into evaluation design to allow for adaptive approaches beyond the odd tweak or change. Programmes that rely on new creative, participatory and community-led engagement may not generate robust data through traditional evaluation methods or those proposed at the outset. However, the development of a fully reflexive evaluation methodology that responds to significant shifts in delivery models and participant trends requires additional time and dedicated funding that should be built into programmes at the outset.