

Internationalism

Deep dive case studies from
across the UK

July 2022

Acknowledgements

This report was written and prepared by Rowena Hay from Shortwork for the British Council.

The author would like to thank Julia Handelman-Smith and Asya Robins from the British Council, the Shortwork team Duncan Hay, Jamie O'Brien and Roger Newton, the steering group including Louise Greer, Tiffany Smyly, Ray Kirtley, Lusi Manukyan, Brian Stobie, Alban Stowe, Ian Thomas and Fiona O'Carroll, and members of the Internationalism Alliance. Special thanks to those organisations and individuals who generously participated in the research in each of the case study areas.

Contents

Forward

1. Research overview	04
1.1 Introduction	06
1.2 Research methods	07
2. Shared lessons from across the UK	11
2.1 Defining internationalism	11
2.2 Supporting internationalism	12
2.3 Effective programme design and delivery	13
2.4 Challenges to delivery	13
2.5 Benefits of participation	15
2.6 Approaches to measuring impact	17
3. Deep dive case studies	17
3.1 Belfast	17
3.2 Cardiff	20
3.3 Wrexham and surrounds	22
3.4 Glasgow	24
3.5 County Durham	27
3.6 Coventry	29
3.7 Manchester	31
3.8 North East Lincolnshire	33
3.9 Plymouth	35
4. Recommendations	38

Forward

We started the Internationalism Alliance research and mapping project to support our ambition to empower all children and young people with international and intercultural skills and connections. In order to strengthen our understanding of where international and intercultural engagement opportunities currently exist in the UK, we developed an interactive map which plots international programmes across the UK, alongside the connections forged between UK organisations and partners across the globe. The map gives the British Council and members of the Internationalism Alliance a clearer idea of the scope and breadth of international activity, as well as the diversity of organisations involved in delivery. It also highlights the areas where there are gaps in provision, as well as opportunities for collaboration between organisations working at the local level.

This set of accompanying deep dive case studies goes into more detail in nine locations across the UK. It provides more nuanced analysis of the programmes and organisations involved in internationalism in those regions, as well as the demographic and local policy context that they are working in. What is striking is the diversity of approaches each illustration reveals, and the far-reaching impact that small, grass roots engagement can achieve with the right level of political and community support. Many of the programmes illustrated here become sources of deep pride for the whole community, as well as a means for individual and community job creation, well-being, and prosperity.

The collective wisdom drawn from practitioners working on the front line of delivery of international programmes, offers a clear mandate for the importance of international education, both for young people and professionals. It also provides rich insights into the conditions that make internationalism particularly effective, as well as a window into innovative and creative ways to engage young people in global projects and issues.

We hope the mapping project and accompanying case studies will continue as an integral part of the Internationalism Alliance's wider work: existing as a way to both tell the story of internationalism, and encourage more to join us.

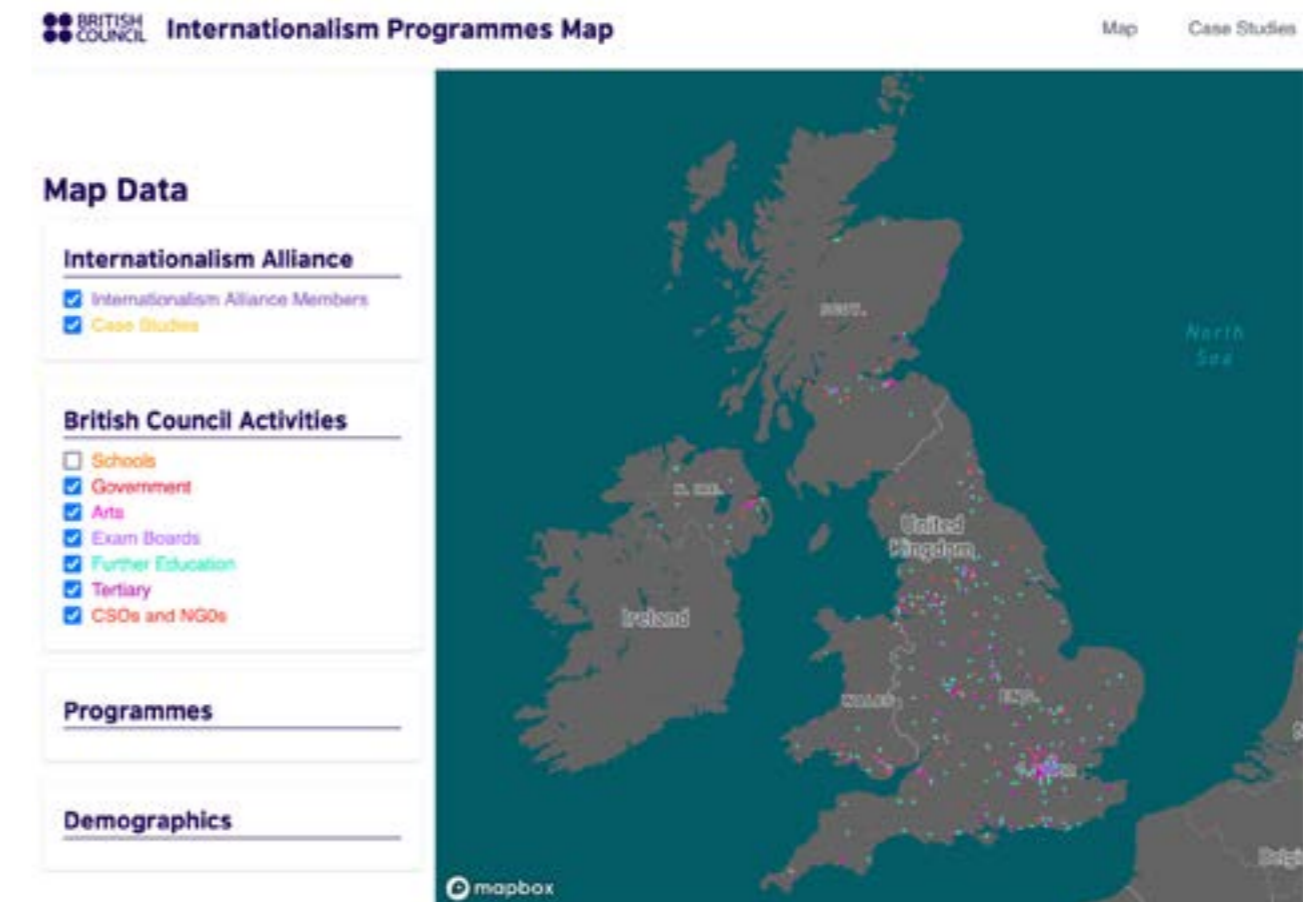
Our Pledge

We want to offer every child and young person in the United Kingdom, whatever their background or interests, the opportunity to learn from – and connect with – other people in the UK and around the world.

The UK's future will be shaped by our international links and the way we work with partners to tackle the challenges facing us all.

We pledge to do what we can to give our young people the understanding, skills and confidence to make those connections for themselves – to enrich their lives and the lives of everyone in the UK.

Figure 1: Interactive map of international programmes across the UK



What is striking is the diversity of approaches to internationalism that each illustration reveals, and the far-reaching impact that small, grass roots engagement can achieve with the right level of political and community support.

1. Research overview

1.1 Introduction

In the summer of 2021, the British Council commissioned [Shortwork](#)¹ to develop an interactive map (see Figure 1 above)² of international activities undertaken by the British Council and members of the [Internationalism Alliance](#), alongside a piece of research to explore the opportunities, barriers, and impacts of internationalism across the UK through a series of 'deep dive' case study areas.

The project seeks to fill a gap in current knowledge and reporting processes for the British Council and Internationalism Alliance partners, by strengthening understanding of where international and intercultural engagement currently exists in the UK, identifying key trends and impacts for young people, and crucially to develop a system to map progress over time.

The development of a more robust and accessible evidence base is central to supporting the delivery of the British Council's strategic framework which sets out the importance of internationalism in creating a more connected and trusted UK, in a more connected and trusted world, as well as the commitment of partner organisations in the Internationalism Alliance to work collaboratively to widen access to international opportunities for children and young people. It is also crucial in showing how internationalism can help policy-makers at the national, devolved and local level to promote individual and community wellbeing and prosperity with a particular focus on less advantaged and under-represented communities.

The purpose of this document is to report on the key findings from the deep-dive case studies, alongside contextualising data on international activities and demographics that can be explored in more detail on the internationalism map.

The report is structured around four main sections:

- 1. This first** introductory section includes the methodology for the deep dive case studies, including selection criteria, data collection, and approach to analysis.
- 2. The second** reports on shared findings from across the UK.
- 3. The third** presents insights from each of the case study sites.
- 4. The final** concluding section draws out key recommendations, for the British Council and the Internationalism Alliance, from across the case study areas.

¹ Shortwork is an independent social research CIC based in Liverpool.

² The Internationalism Map shows British Council and Internationalism Alliance activities across the UK, global links, alongside contextualising local level demographic and geographic data.

This research seeks to fill a gap in current knowledge by strengthening understanding of where international engagement currently happens, identifying key trends and impacts on young people.

1.2 Research methods

Case study selection

The deep dive case study areas were selected on the basis of a number of criteria defined in order to capture the diversity of different geographies of internationalism across the UK.

These include case studies from:

- All four of the UK nations
- Cities, towns, rural areas, and coastal locations
- Poorer and more affluent places
- Predominantly white British populations and multicultural areas.

As the case studies will explore the impact of international activities on children and young people, a number of indicators were identified that focus on this age group. These include data on Free School Meals (ONS, January 2021 release³), young adults claiming out-of-work benefits (ONS, May 2021 release⁴) and pupil ethnicity (ONS, January 2021 release⁵). Areas were also selected to respond to the UK Government's 'Levelling Up' agenda - with a focus on places identified as 'left behind' by the Levelling up and the Community Renewal Fund⁶. Case studies were also selected on the basis that they have a vibrant internationalism offer for young people delivered by the British Council (BC) or by International Alliance (IA) members, with two focusing on parts of the country with less international activity in order to understand the barriers and opportunities to developing internationalism in these areas.

³ Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/schools-pupils-and-their-characteristics-january-2020>

⁴ Available at: <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/datasets/ucjsa>

⁵ Available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/fast-track/e223aa63-31c5-4550-9845-48eb73e01610>

⁶ Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1052710/Delivering_for_all_parts_of_the_United_Kingdom_Hi-res.pdf

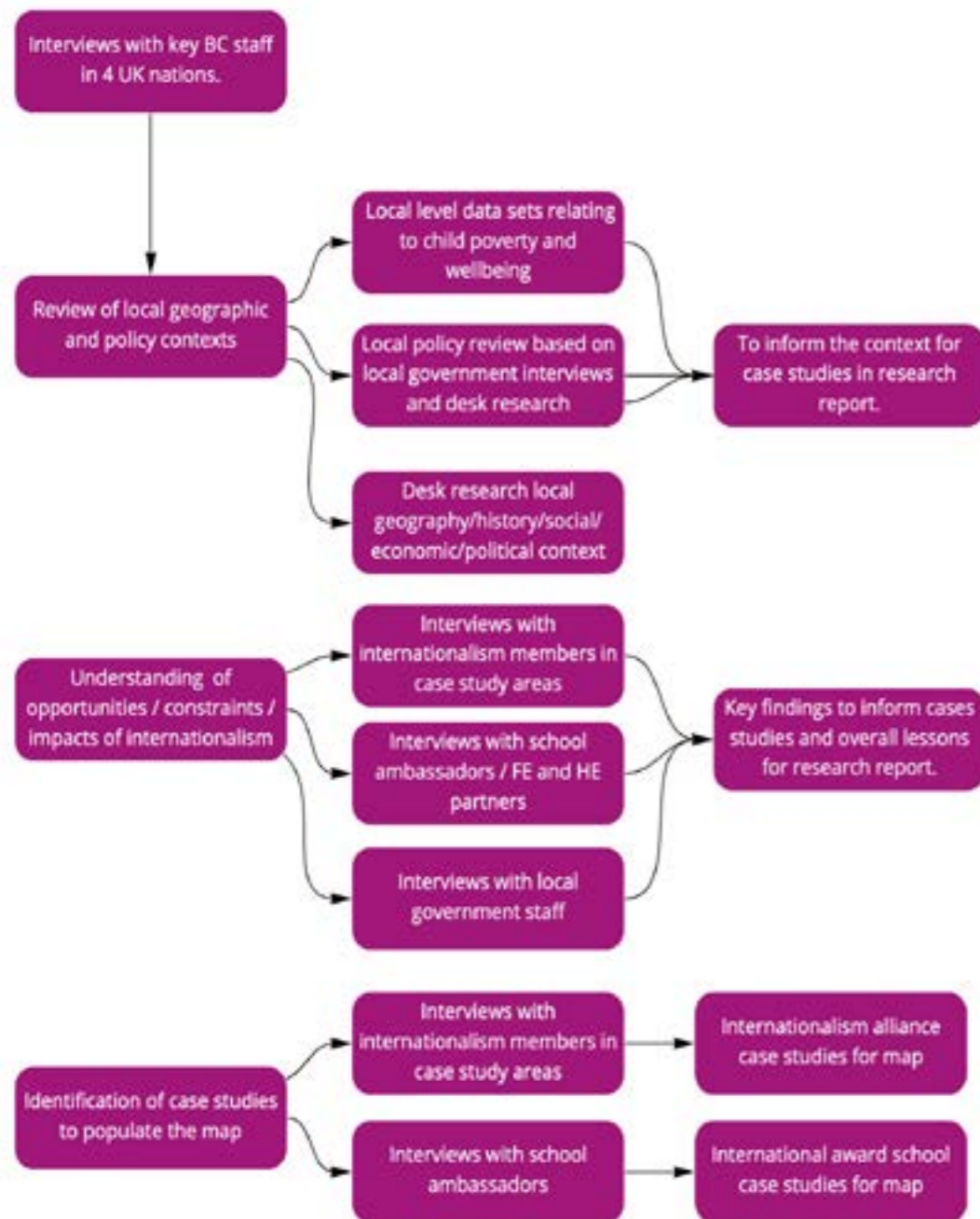
Table 1: Internationalism case study selection criteria

Case study area	UK nation	Geography	% free school meals eligibility	% White British pupils	% 18-24 y/o claiming benefits	Levelling up area?	Active IA / BC area?
Belfast	Northern Ireland	Urban	28.4	94.8	5.6	N/A	Very active
Cardiff	Wales	Urban	23.6	65.0	5.5	Y	Very active
Wrexham County Borough	Wales	Town/rural	19.9	86.8	8.7	Y	Not very active
Glasgow	Scotland	Urban	32.4	75.8	8.3	Y	Active
County Durham	England	Urban/rural/town/coastal	27.4	93.8	8.0	Y	Very active
Coventry	England	Urban	23.0	45.7	5.9	N	Very active
Manchester	England	Urban	37.7	33.6	7.4	Y	Very active
Plymouth	England	Urban/coastal	23.1	86.0	6.4	N	Active
North East Lincolnshire	England	Town/coastal/rural	27.4	89.2	11.0	Y	Not very active
Nottinghamshire	England	Town/rural	18.2	82.2	17.8	Y	Not active

Once the case study areas were identified a standard protocol was defined to be followed in each deep dive area (see Figure 2 below). These include interviews with key British Council staff in regional offices, a review of local geographic and policy contexts including demographic data visualised on the Internationalism Map, in-depth interviews with key contacts with particular expertise and understanding of international opportunities identified on a snowballing basis, and finally the identification of potential case studies of organisations and particular projects to be written up and uploaded onto the internationalism map.

In the course of the research, Nottinghamshire was dropped as a case study area as it proved difficult to identify and recruit interviewees to participate in this area.

Figure 2: Case study research protocol



Interviewees

Across nine case study sites a total of 47 interviews were completed, with at least four interviews taking place in each area (see Table 2 below).

It is important to note that the findings from the interviews do not represent a comprehensive picture of internationalism happening in each case study area. Interviewees were selected using purposeful rather than statistical sampling logic. They include a mixture of professionals heavily involved in internationalism work in their patch identified through snowballing recruitment, including representatives from education, the voluntary and youth sector, the arts and local government.

The interviews were semi-structured, lasted between 30-45 minutes and sought to explore the opportunities, impacts, and barriers of international and intercultural engagement locally, alongside approaches to evaluation and impact and recommendations for change.

The interviews were carried out via zoom or over the phone, and were recorded with permission of participants, anonymised and transcribed verbatim.

The transcripts were then analysed thematically with the aid of qualitative data analysis software Hyperresearch⁷, in order to draw out key findings and recommendations.

In the process of analysis it became clear that there are a number of themes and lessons that are shared across the case study contexts. These are presented in section two below. The findings unique to each case study are presented in section three.

⁷ Available at: <http://www.researchware.com/products/hyperresearch.html>

Table 2: Interviewees engaged in the study

Job title	Sector	Case study area
Youth leader	Community and charitable	Belfast
Arts manager	Public	Belfast
Senior manager	Further Education	Belfast
Tutor	Further Education	Belfast
Project manager	Public	Belfast
Head of Global Opportunities	Higher Education	Belfast
Director	Public	Belfast
Arts manager	Arts and culture	Coventry
Languages teacher	Primary Education	Coventry
Senior Lecturer	Higher Education	Coventry
Arts facilitator	Community and charitable	Coventry
Head teacher	Primary Education	County Durham
Primary teacher	Primary Education	County Durham
Internationalism lead	Public	County Durham

Table 2: (continued)

Job title	Sector	Case study area
Director	Higher Education	County Durham
Head teacher	Secondary Education	County Durham
Education advisor	Community and charitable	County Durham
Project manager	Community and charitable	Glasgow
Research assistant	Higher Education	Glasgow
Director	Arts and culture	Glasgow
International officer	Public	Glasgow
International Education Officer	Public	Glasgow
International School Partnerships Specialist	Community and charitable	North East Lincolnshire
Vice Principal	Further Education	North East Lincolnshire
Teacher	Primary Education	North East Lincolnshire
Schools Outreach Manager	Public	North East Lincolnshire
Cultural Education Manager	Community	Manchester
Languages Lead	Secondary Education	Manchester
Artistic Director	Arts and culture	Manchester
Project Manager	Arts and culture	Manchester
Councillor	Public	Plymouth
Internationalism Lead (recently retired)	Public	Plymouth
International Development Manager	Further Education	Plymouth
Languages Lead	Secondary Education	Plymouth
Teacher	Primary Education	Plymouth
Head of Engagement	Community and charitable	Plymouth
Outreach Manager	Community and charitable	Plymouth
Co-Founder and Booker	Arts and cultural	Wrexham and surrounds
Head Teacher	Primary Education	Wrexham and surrounds
Creative Director	Arts and cultural	Wrexham and surrounds
Founder and director	Community and charitable	Wrexham and surrounds
Arts manager	Public	Cardiff
Education coordinator	Community and charitable	Cardiff
Artistic Director	Arts and cultural	Cardiff
Chief Executive Officer	Arts and cultural	Cardiff
Chief Executive	Community and charitable	Cardiff

2. Shared lessons from across the UK

Despite the considerable variation in geographic contexts across the case study areas explored, there are a number of shared lessons that can be drawn out of the study relating to:

- Defining internationalism
- Supporting internationalism
- Effective programme design and delivery
- Benefits of participation
- Approaches to measuring impact

This section summarises the key findings under each of these four areas.

2.1 Defining internationalism

The definition of internationalism varies both across and within case study areas. Traditionally, it has been defined as supporting students and staff from schools, colleges and universities to participate in a trip or exchange visit abroad. Whilst mobility opportunities often find a natural home in language teaching and learning in education settings, in recent years there has been a move to offer international visits as part of other subject areas, at least within the college and university sector, for example in hospitality, business studies and engineering.

This definition has expanded to include mobility opportunities for young people and professionals outside of the education field, for example youth work, community-based arts organisations, and for young artists and creatives from different arts disciplines.

Within schools, internationalism is also understood to embrace a range of activities that do not involve mobility opportunities. These include teaching and learning that focus on other cultures and countries, as well as global issues that affect young people all over the world such as climate change, inequality, racism, forced migration, and human rights.

The use of new communications technologies such as zoom, as well as bespoke platforms such as eTwinning⁸ and Bili⁹, have enabled virtual connections between UK children and young people across the world. The use of digital technologies to facilitate internationalism have accelerated in the context of the global pandemic in all sectors, with champions finding new and innovative ways to engage with young people online.

Champions are keen to promote internationalism at the local level by connecting young people to new cultural experiences, languages and world views within their own towns, cities and communities. The concept and benefits of 'internationalism at home' appears to be gaining traction, facilitated through cultural celebrations, creative projects, and co-production activities.

This extended understanding of internationalism is reflected in the British Council's own definition developed in partnership with the Internationalism Alliance.

⁸ <https://www.etwinning.net/en/pub/index.htm>. In 2020 the UK left the e-twinning network.

⁹ See <https://bili.uk.com> for more information.

2.2 Supporting internationalism

Internationalism depends on supportive national organisations that provide funding and support for international partnerships, exchanges, and programmes.

Participants reported that the UK has traditionally offered a very supportive funding environment for internationalism, compared to other countries in the EU and beyond.

The British Council plays a crucial role in providing the infrastructure to support internationalism across the UK nations. In the arts, education and community sectors the British Council provides funding for particular projects and programmes, learning resources, training opportunities and links to international partners, as well as support for collaborations between organisations operating nationally and at the local level. Access to the knowledge of British Council staff, many of whom have a wealth of knowledge and passion for the internationalism agenda, is a key asset that is valued highly by those on the front line of delivery.

Local authorities are also pivotal in supporting internationalism work through the development of cross-sectoral bids for specific pots of funding or high-profile programmes, support to foster and make connections with partner-cities abroad, and through the day to day support and coordination provided by a council department or officer with specific responsibility for internationalism.

National and local bodies provide crucial support for networking and peer learning amongst staff responsible for internationalism. These include networks supported by national organisations (for example the British Council through the Schools Ambassadors and the Internationalism Alliance¹⁰), by Local Authorities (facilitated through a team or member of staff responsible for supporting international connections), within sectors (such as the Outward Mobility Network in Higher Education¹¹) and within larger organisations (for example working groups focused on internationalism across academy and college trusts).

At their best these networks are more than “talking shops” but forums to develop international programmes collaboratively, and to share both expertise and resources.

Within individual organisations interviewees stressed the importance of having senior staff and decision makers on board to promote internationalism at a strategic level so that it is embedded rather than seen as an operational extra or “nice to have”.

Strategic decisions to support internationalism include the extension of international opportunities as part of work placements in colleges, embedding internationalism across curriculum areas in schools, and opening up of curriculum modules to international students through the module revalidation process in universities.

Even with strategic and institutional support for internationalism, the work depends on the enthusiasm of passionate staff - champions who understand the impact and value of international experiences.

Champions of internationalism are often those who have benefited from an intercultural or international experience themselves, either as a young person, or in their professional careers.

They are key to developing and nurturing connections with partners abroad. This is supported by regular contact and visits, often over many years, which helps build understanding, trust and genuine friendships between staff and their counterparts in other countries, and in the development of programmes and ways of working that can be sustained and are of genuine value to everyone involved.

Interviewees stressed the importance of having decision makers on board to promote internationalism at a strategic level so that it is embedded rather than seen as an optional extra or nice to have.

¹⁰ Find out more about the Alliance here: <https://www.britishcouncil.org/work/partner/internationalism-alliance>

¹¹ More information about the Outward Mobility Network can be found here: <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/universities-uk-international/networks-and-opportunities/networks>

Champions of internationalism are often best placed to share their enthusiasm, stories and impacts of international work with others. They have a key role in promoting the benefits inside and outside of their organisations.

This rings true at the participant level too. Their stories of impact are powerful both in convincing organisations and professionals to take internationalism seriously, but also in supporting peers to take the leap and engage in a new cultural experience, learn a new language, or study abroad.

Peer support is particularly important when working with young people who may not have had the experience, expectation, or confidence to travel, study or work internationally - particularly those who come from disadvantaged backgrounds.

2.3 Effective programme design and delivery

To ensure that participants gain the most value from international visits, a package of pre-departure preparation and follow-up support is vital. Investing in this way ensures that participants see mobility as a meaningful development opportunity rather than a holiday or “jolly”. Effective activities include the development of a code of conduct that is defined by programme participants, setting key objectives for the development of personal and professional skills, and the use of learning journals during and after a trip to allow for personal reflection.

An effective and ethical working relationship with the international partner involved is fundamental. This can be achieved by ensuring ambitions and ethos are aligned, and through the development of action plans and memorandums of understanding to establish clarity. An awareness of unequal power relationships, particularly when working with poorer communities, including the need to be critical of poverty tourism, a saviour mentality, or imposing solutions rather than working in partnership is also key. As is making sure that through long-term relationships, all partners benefit equally.

Delivering internationalism in an online environment has taken on a new prominence as a result of the pandemic. A huge amount has been learned, and very quickly, about what works and what doesn't in delivering internationalism online. The use of innovative methods to enliven online sessions has grown, for example by working with artists to facilitate creative sessions using a mixture of media and approaches both online and offline.

There has also been a move towards co-production in the development of international programmes. For example, allowing young people to take the lead in the topic areas or themes that they want to explore, involving them as peer researchers, as creatives to help produce digital platforms and art works, and in the case of young artists, treating them as professionals and paying them for their work and input.

2.4 Challenges faced by individuals and organisations in delivering internationalism

There is widespread concern about the impact of dwindling resources to support internationalism for young people across the UK. The loss of Erasmus +¹² due to the UK's exit from the European Union (EU), alongside other exchange opportunities facilitated by EU institutions, is an area of key concern, as is the reputational damage that Brexit is seen to have done amongst current and potential partners in Europe.

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¹² See: <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/>

Whilst the Turing Scheme¹³ is welcomed as a replacement for Erasmus +, there is concern amongst participants about the focus on further education, vocational education and training providers, to the exclusion of arts and youth sector organisations.

In the schools sector, withdrawal from eTwinning¹⁴ is seen as a particular loss, with many concerned that without a suitable replacement many schools will disengage with the internationalism agenda altogether.

Uncertainty about the future of funding for British Council programmes is also seen as a key challenge, with participants fearing the loss of staff expertise, support, international connections and the global credibility that comes with the British Council brand.

Unsurprisingly, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a dramatic impact on internationalism activities. These include not only mobility programmes, which have been severely curtailed over the last two years, but also opportunities to participate in international and intercultural exchange within the UK. Internationalism also lost its profile, locally and nationally, as leaders at all levels dealt with the challenges of the pandemic and its impacts on children and young people. This is seen as a particular problem in the state education sector, where the pandemic has reportedly had a catastrophic effect on international education, including language teaching, because it was not deemed a priority for live lessons.

Another structural barrier highlighted is the decline in foreign language teaching and learning at all levels.¹⁵ In secondary schools, colleges and universities, language departments have always been a natural home for internationalism. The decline in uptake of language subjects, and the closing down of modern foreign language departments, has had a detrimental impact on opportunities to travel and has closed down long-standing links with exchange partners abroad. The lack of language skills is also seen to have a corroding impact on the quality and depth of internationalism experienced by young people, based on a belief that to fully understand another culture's perspective you need to speak their language.

In schools, colleges and universities, internationalism champions can face difficulties in trying to convince subject-leaders to embed internationalism opportunities within their curriculum. The fact this is rarely supported strategically through compulsory mobility programmes makes this job much harder. Internationalism is often associated with particular subject areas, for example modern languages and business studies. It can also be a struggle to find time for international mobility within busy timetables. This is true for both academic subjects, where internationalism may not be perceived as adding value to students' learning outcomes, and for vocational subjects where a trip abroad is seen to compete with a work placement year. In addition, the pressure of exams, at all stages of education, makes it hard to prioritise and find time for internationalism in an already packed curriculum.

A change in the culture and attitude towards risk, liability and safeguarding is also identified as a barrier to mobility schemes. This is a particular concern when working with children and young people under the age of 18. In the schools sector this has transformed the nature of international visits, which rarely include overnight stays with host families.

Smaller organisations with less resource, particularly in the youth, schools and community arts sector, find the bureaucracy of applying for funding particularly burdensome, and do not have the capacity to dedicate to internationalism activity. They also feel that

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¹³ More information about Turing can be found here: <https://www.turing-scheme.org.uk/>

¹⁴ See: <https://www.etwinning.net/en/pub/index.htm>

¹⁵ Broady, E. (2020) Language Learning in the UK - taking stock. Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09571736.2020.1812812>

the funding of short-term relationships or programmes rather than supporting established ones is a shortcoming.

Whilst the use of digital technology has opened up new possibilities for international exchange, there are many challenges faced when working online, particularly with children, and participants report that it is hard to establish the depth of engagement compared to in-person visits. Language barriers are extenuated online where non-verbal communication and rapport is hard to develop. The lack of secure and reliable internet access among partners abroad also impacts the effectiveness of digital collaborations.

Ethical issues are also a factor that international champions face. Increasingly this includes a heightened awareness of the impact of taking flights on carbon emissions, and the need to carefully balance the costs and benefits of travel as a result. The unequal power relationships between UK organisations and their partners abroad, particularly those from poorer parts of the world, is also problematised, not least where colonial attitudes are reinforced through stereotypes and paternalistic interventions.

2.5 Benefits of international work for young people and professionals

Participants from across the case study areas highlighted many shared impacts of international experiences for the young people involved.

Interaction with people from other countries and cultural backgrounds is enriching, allowing participants to expand their minds, enabling them to see the differences and similarities that they have, as well as the shared challenges they face in a global world.

Working collaboratively with peers living in different contexts, and across disciplines, is seen as a crucial life skill, and central to developing attributes required to tackle complex problems such as sustainable development and climate change.

This is seen as particularly important when young people are competing in a global marketplace for jobs, and where cultural and linguistic competence is likely to be increasingly important.

International exposure can challenge the prejudices and divisions that young people experience in their own communities. The celebration of difference and diversity that comes with international experience can instil pride and self-worth amongst young people and particularly those from disadvantaged and minority communities.

Finding space for internationalism post-covid is seen as particularly important for young people who have seen their lives and world-view much reduced due to remote working and home schooling.

Children and young people develop important life skills such as independence, effective communication and increased confidence.

Young people at risk of falling out of education and work benefit from increased motivation and raised ambitions.

College and university students who spend some time abroad are more likely to look for work outside of their home country and set their sights higher in terms of the positions they apply for after they graduate.

Young artists benefit from exposure to professional creative practice, resulting in career development and opening up to international markets.

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For professionals, including teachers, lecturers, youth workers, and creative facilitators, internationalism can be transformative. International connections are motivating and invigorating for staff, who feel valued as a result. They allow reflection on their own working practices, and support the application of new approaches and pedagogies to their own organisations to the benefit of the young people they work with.

2.6 Approaches to measuring impact

There is variation in the level and type of impact evaluation across the case study areas and in the different sectors.

Across the board there is a lack of consistency in the evaluation of international programmes. Even larger organisations with more resources do not evaluate all their activities. They struggle to collect and store basic monitoring data such as participant numbers and demographics, let alone apply participant surveys or qualitative approaches.

Particular funding streams mandate for evaluation data to be collected and analysed, but the scope and methods used vary from programme to programme. These include monitoring information on the number and demographics of participants involved, baseline and endpoints surveys with participants, Social Return on Investment¹⁶ evaluations, to Theory of Change¹⁷ models bringing together a range of data sources to evidence the impact of bigger more complex programmes.

Measuring Internationalism in a university context is in some cases more comprehensive and rigorous. By using a combination of methods including surveys, in-depth interviews and focus groups, universities seek to understand the impact of international mobility on students, as well as to learn from what worked, what didn't and to identify ideas for opportunities going forward. Particular projects also have their own impact analysis specific to programme contexts.

Participants felt that more work needs to be done in the higher education space to quantify the impact of mobility on student retention and achievement, as well as longitudinal studies that measure the long-term impact of internationalism on a young person's life.

In the college sector, students are supported in defining their learning objectives, which are captured and then reviewed, to enable an understanding of the change that someone has been through as a result of internationalism.

Smaller organisations have less capacity to support monitoring and evaluation. Some have resourced evaluation projects through collaborations with local universities.

Creative and community-based organisations are keen to adopt more creative methods in the evaluation of their projects. Some adopt visual methods to tell the story of impact by working with artists to create visual outputs, as well as engaging with innovative qualitative methodologies such as Most Significant Change.¹⁸

There is an appetite amongst advocates to measure the impact of international programmes across the UN's Sustainable Development Goals¹⁹, so that the cross-cutting nature and benefits of international education can be understood and clearly communicated.

The contribution that internationalism can make to achieving key objectives in the national curriculum in all four UK nations also needs to be researched as a priority, with the results communicated clearly to education providers and policy makers.

There is a lack of consistency in the evaluation of international programmes. Organisations struggle to collect and store even basic monitoring data, let alone apply more complex methods to measure the impact.

¹⁶ More information about SROI can be found at the NEF Consulting website linked here: <https://www.nefconsulting.com/training-capacity-building/resources-and-tools/sroi/>

¹⁷ https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/managers_guide/step_2/describe_theory_of_change

¹⁸ https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/plan/approach/most_significant_change

¹⁹ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

3. Deep dive case studies

This third section reports on the findings from each of the nine case study areas explored through the research. Each has a unique flavour, showing how internationalism has been used to address particular contexts and needs at the local level. They include case studies from across the four nations of the UK, including a mixture of urban, rural and coastal locations.

Each case study should be read alongside the data plotted on the International Programmes map, including international activities by sector and demographic data on free school meals, educational attainment, ethnicity, population density and age.

3.1 Belfast

Helping to bridge sectarian divides through international mobility

Continued instability in the devolved government has prevented the development of a joined up policy on internationalism in Northern Ireland. The Northern Ireland Executive does have an International Relations Strategy, and three Bureaus to support diplomacy and cultural exchange in Washington, China and Brussels.²⁰ However, the strategy hasn't been updated since 2014 and does not respond to big changes in global politics, not least the impact of Brexit, nor does it include details on how the Executive aims to support international exchange. The different parties involved in the cross-community power sharing agreement also have very different global outlooks, are likely to choose very different international partners and '*as a result international connections can be quite controversial*' (Director, Public sector, Belfast). In this context internationalism is unlikely to be a priority for the devolved government or '*top of the agenda anytime soon*' (ibid).

There is support for internationalism at the local government level, and particularly the bringing together of cross-sectoral partners, including national bodies such as the Arts Council and the British Council, in the development of bids with a global platform, such as the Belfast's recent success in gaining UNESCO City of Music status.²¹ Belfast has three Sister Cities agreements in place, with Boston and Nashville in the USA, and Hefei in eastern China²². The city hosts high-profile festivals including the Belfast International Arts Festival²³, the Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival²⁴, Belfast Film Festival²⁵ and Outburst Arts Queer Festival²⁶. Strong international programmes are fostered through close partnerships with other countries, and particularly, post-conflict, fragile-states including those in the Middle East and North Africa.

Beneath the local government level, there are a network of organisations who are active in delivering internationalism. These include the education authority, schools, colleges, the universities, as well as arts organisations. The vibrant youth sector is a particular asset in this regard, and is seen to have a greater presence in Belfast than other UK cities.

Building coalitions around internationalism is seen as more straight forward in Belfast compared to other parts of the UK, because the population is relatively small and '*people and organisations working in*

²⁰ <https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/articles/international-relations-team>

²¹

<https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/belfastmusic>

²² <https://legacy.sistercities.org/>

²³

<https://belfastinternationalartsfestival.com/>

²⁴

<https://cqaf.com/>

²⁵

<https://belfastfilmfestival.org/>

²⁶

<https://outburstarts.com/>

this area and in different sectors tend to know each other well' (Programme manager, Public sector, Belfast). The appetite and efficacy of UK-wide networks such as the Internationalism Alliance is questioned in this context.

Within schools and colleges, there is support for internationalism at the strategic level and particularly amongst senior managers. For example, in one large college trust internationalism is embedded operationally across all campuses. Representatives from all colleges come together to collaborate through an International Working Group, have developed core principles, as well as individual college-specific international plans which are supported by each Principal. This has led to vocational mobility opportunities being offered across curriculum areas.

In the University sector, and in the context of a growing push to recruit international students, the internationalism agenda has taken on greater prominence recently. Queen's²⁷ and Ulster University²⁸ both actively recruit international students, support international links in research and teaching, whilst also offering global opportunities to their students to study abroad. They also offer subject-specific opportunities in collaboration with other institutions, including the British Council, for example through the Venice Fellowships Programme.²⁹

In institutions where the internationalism agenda is relatively new, advocates face barriers in ensuring international mobility is embedded and supported at a strategic level. The traditional regional orientation of some institutions in the sector is also seen as a barrier to developing a truly global outlook. This is reflected in the fact that many international mobility opportunities amongst students in Northern Ireland have been to the Republic of Ireland. It can also be seen in the historic difficulties reported in recruiting home students to embrace opportunities to travel further afield.

In the youth sector a lack of resources is a key barrier. The short-term nature of the funding that is available is also a deterrent, particularly if it doesn't support long-term programmes built on sustained involvement with a partner abroad. One participant urged against *'chasing funding for fundings sake'* particularly if it is limited to *'taking the poor wee kids away for the weekend for an activity, buying them hoodies and nothing more'* (Youth leader, Community sector, Belfast). Applications to general pots of funding to support internationalism is also difficult due to the misconception amongst funders that the benefits of international experience do not stay within Belfast communities. A reliance on private fundraising, particularly when working in areas of deprivation, is a challenge made worse *'in this present climate, where you're coming up at the back of one of the largest pandemics the world has ever seen'* (Youth leader, Community sector, Belfast).

In Belfast, internationalism operates in the particular context of post-conflict Northern-Ireland, and is seen



by advocates as a useful tool to help bridge sectarian divides in the community.³⁰ Young people, and particularly those who live in Belfast's most deprived wards, are, according to one participant, *'still very much segregated and apart'* (Senior manager, FE sector, Belfast). Internationalism is one way to address divisions by bringing young people from Protestant and Catholic communities together. Young people form friendships when faced with the shared challenge of travelling and confronting a different culture and language. It also focuses them on what they have in common rather than their differences. These include the shared challenges of poor mental health, high suicide rates³¹, and a lack of opportunity.

The impacts of internationalism extend beyond individuals, out to the wider community, by challenging entrenched views about *'race, colour and religion'* (Arts manager, Public sector, Belfast). Internationalism can also turn around perceptions of young people themselves who are too often labelled negatively as anti-social in the popular imagination and media.

Advocates of internationalism in Belfast are committed to ensuring that the benefits are focused on young people from disadvantaged backgrounds based on the belief that internationalism *'shouldn't just be the privilege of the privileged'* (Tutor, FE sector, Belfast). This is particularly important in Belfast communities that are not very diverse and where young people are less interculturally confident and aware. Those with less resources, who are unlikely to have travelled abroad, have much to gain.

Many young people have not even travelled abroad on holiday. They have not really experienced a new culture, or been exposed to global issues outside of their communities.

Youth leader, Community sector, Belfast

In the youth sector, international work is focused on at-risk groups living in poorer Belfast communities in the north of the City. These include those who are in danger of dropping out of school or of falling into para-militarism. Internationalism is an important part of a long-term package of support to help young people to develop skills, confidence, and raise aspirations. For example, one long-running mobility project, **RCITY** Belfast, takes groups of young people to Cape Town to work with and learn from ex-gang members and their families. They also organise visits for teenagers to work with children and older people in the city's townships. Both programmes have substantial pre-preparation activities, including the involvement of young people in fundraising, journals to reflect on learning while they are away, as well as community celebrations and debriefs on their return. Opportunities are also created for participants to mentor young people back home.

In the college and university sectors, programmes have been designed to support under-privileged groups, including young people with disabilities and those with caring roles. For example, through short-term mobility opportunities rather than a whole term or year abroad, which are more accessible to students whose resources and personal responsibilities mean they can not commit to a long period away from home. The development of tailored programmes has also been important in encouraging Northern Irish students to build the confidence they need to take the leap and study abroad, including the significant number of commuting students who travel from home to study during the week.

Internationalism is seen to contribute to improvements in educational attainment and employment prospects. Those who engage in the programmes at college and university are, according to interviewees, more likely to stay on their course and achieve higher results. Internationalism is seen to be an asset on CVs for work and to enrich personal statements for college and university applications.

Programmes that actively focus on entrepreneurship or on solving real world problems in an organisation, company or community abroad are seen as particularly valuable from a job-readiness perspective. Young people stretch themselves as a result, with some applying for positions that are outside of their immediate comfort zone, in a more competitive playing field. They are less likely to settle for *'a lower skill profile and salary profile than they're equipped with because they want to stay in Northern Ireland'* and are more likely to look for opportunities abroad (Arts manager, Public sector, Belfast).



It's a great way of not only being exposed to a new culture, but also being forced to reflect on your own cultures in Northern Ireland and see how we often have much more in common with each other than is generally thought. There are important benefits for reconciliation, building social cohesion and social capital.

Programme manager, Public sector, Belfast

We've done a substantial amount of work to grow the breadth and range of options to make them accessible, and have seen a notable rise in the number of students taking up these international opportunities as a result.

Head of Global Opportunities, HE sector, Belfast

²⁷ <https://www.qub.ac.uk/International/International-students/>

²⁸ <https://www.ulster.ac.uk/goglobal>

²⁹ <https://venicebiennale.britishcouncil.org/fellowship>

³⁰ Sectarianism in Northern Ireland: A Review. Available at: https://www.ulster.ac.uk/___data/assets/pdf_file/0016/410227/A-Review-Addressing-Sectarianism-in-Northern-Ireland_FINAL.pdf

³¹ Protect Life: A Strategy for Preventing Suicide and Self Harm. Available at: <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/health/pl-strategy.PDF>

3.2 Cardiff

Supporting international experiences across Wales

The devolved Welsh Government supports internationalism through a range of policies, not least the International Strategy for Wales, which sets out ambitions to raise the profile of Wales internationally through the promotion of its unique people, culture, history and language, increase exports and attract inward investment, and establish Wales as a globally responsible nation underlined by the Well-being of Future Generations Act.^{32,33} Wales prioritises relations with Germany, France and Ireland; the US and Canada; the Basque Country, Brittany and Flanders. As well as a number of Welsh offices across Europe, in China, India, Japan, the Middle East and in North America. Engagement with the Welsh diaspora, including people with current, second generation and ancestral connections to Wales, is also a priority.³⁴ As is the funding and promotion of specific international learning opportunities for young people in Wales to Lesotho, Namibia, Somaliland and Uganda; and funded collaborations between Wales and Quebec.³⁵

As the capital and largest city of Wales, Cardiff has a well-developed international offer across all sectors. The City is also the most diverse in Wales, with over 18 percent of people coming from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds.³⁶ Cardiff and Cardiff Metropolitan University both attract a large community of international students, as well as promoting global opportunities to study, work and volunteer abroad for staff and students.³⁷ Arts organisations with an international dimension include [Cardiff International Film Festival](#), [Festival of Voice](#), and [Artes Mundi](#) at the National Museum Cardiff. Young artists in Cardiff have also benefited from international programmes such as the [Go Digital](#) which linked up actors and creative practitioners from South Africa and Wales.

The local authority also supports internationalism, and maintains links with twin cities including Stuttgart in Germany; Lugansk in Ukraine; Nantes in France; Xiamen in China; and Hordaland County, Norway. The Council have a dedicated International School Linking Office, who have been successful in securing funding on behalf of ten schools in the City through the Turing Scheme. In recent years Cardiff schools have participated in a number of projects with an international dimension.³⁸ These include the long running Welsh Language project which links schools to the Chubut region of Patagonia, Argentina which experienced a large Welsh immigration in the 1600s, and where today there are still communities where Welsh is spoken.³⁹

Interestingly, many of the Cardiff based organisations supporting internationalism are focused on ensuring the benefits are felt beyond the urban centre. Whilst Cardiff is a hub for international arts, cultural and educational institutes in Wales, a short journey outside of the City tells a different story. In this context, one of the key barriers and thus the focus for organisations



offering opportunities in internationalism is how to get the same chances to those *'in the depths of mid Wales or in the valleys or by the coast, how do we make these opportunities more equal'* (Arts manager, Public Sector, Cardiff).

The opportunities which exist in the city are cut off even for those who are just a 25-minute drive away in the Valleys of South Wales. There is a fear that Cardiff is too big, and that there is too much competition.

Arts manager, Public sector, Cardiff

A number of Cardiff based arts organisations have been successful in doing just that. For example, [Watch-Africa Cymru](#) is an Annual African Film Festival which has, since 2013, brought the best of African cinema to Wales, alongside face to face and interactive activities and events. The festival's key audiences are the African diaspora communities in Wales, with screenings in community venues, and supporting their continued connections to their countries of origin. Initially the festival focused its screenings in Cardiff, where the population density and international make-up of the City ensured that events were well attended. In response to increased interest in African film, the festival now tours from Swansea to Bangor and visits small towns and villages across Wales. Showing African cinema to general audiences has helped to challenge stereotypes and the build a better and more nuanced understanding of African cinema.

The festival works with children and schools, offering PG and Universal screenings and creative workshops. They also work with young adults, including emerging filmmakers from Africa and Wales, providing a platform

for their work that has led to other, bigger festivals, subsequently picking up their work.

A key barrier for small community-based arts organisations in Cardiff and elsewhere in the UK is the lack of long-term funding, making long-term planning difficult. Securing year on year funding is very costly and time consuming for small organisations such as these. The lack of certainty also makes it difficult for the festival to keep up with demand for international arts experiences and extend their reach to new audiences.

[Beyond the Border](#) lead ongoing programmes to support storytelling at the grassroots, as well as a biannual festival for people of all ages, including young people and families. Wales has a strong tradition of oral storytelling, including folktales, myths, legends and epics, often linked to landscape, which are passed on through the generations. There is also a rich scene of young storytellers sharing autobiographical content through spoken word. Storytelling is strongly linked to the celebration of the Welsh language, with an increasing amount of content shared in Welsh and English. Specific projects supported by the organisation include monthly online storytelling meetups, support for people to become storytellers through mentoring schemes, and support to develop links to storytellers around the world through the arts festival and exchange projects.

In particular the organisation has sought links with other countries with a strong oral tradition including Kenya, South Africa and Ghana. International contexts are important in supporting Welsh artists to become more outward looking in their work through nurturing an awareness of how storytelling functions in different communities across the world. International storytellers have come to really value the opportunities to come together through global storytelling festivals, and to sustain those connections *'but in a slower way'* (Creative director, Arts sector, Cardiff)

Another organisation with headquarters in Cardiff but programmes across Wales is the [Welsh Centre for International Affairs](#). The organisation delivers global learning opportunities, inspires global action amongst Welsh communities, and builds global connections with Wales across the world. A key part of their work is their schools programme, which they use to promote students across Wales to examine different perspectives on global issues, to discuss them, and to give them the confidence and skills to act upon them. They support this work through a range of initiatives, including debates and conferences; Peace Education; digital exchanges through Connecting Classrooms for Global Learning, and international exchanges linking schools in Wales, Turkey, Slovenia and Romania. Projects that link historic, local and global issues are particularly valued. For example, an exploration of rationing in WW2, the impact of war on the lives of children affected by conflict today, issues of food-poverty faced by children in Cardiff, and projects exploring the peace heritage of Wales and what this means today.

In common with other case study areas, the barriers faced to delivering internationalism in schools include getting the opportunities and programmes known, and communicating the particular value of international work as opposed to other initiatives. In Wales the case for internationalism is made by showing how engagement in global learning can support the new curriculum in Wales. These include the 'four purposes' for pupils to become ambitious, capable learners, enterprising, creative continuers, ethically informed citizens of Wales and the world, healthy and confident individuals; alongside the development of key skills in creativity and innovation, critical thinking, problem-solving and personal effectiveness.⁴⁰

The festival is a massive tool to engage audiences in terms of challenging narratives. Bringing a new understanding of whats going on in African arts, and film, plays an important role in that.

Artistic director, Arts sector, Cardiff

I think there is a very close connection between stories, ways of being and ways of seeing. There is a big appetite for people to experience that by connecting with international storytellers.

Creative director, Arts sector, Cardiff

³² <https://gov.wales/international-strategy-for-wales.html>

³³ <https://www.futuregenerations.wales/about-us/future-generations-act/>

³⁴ <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-11/diaspora-action-plan.pdf>

³⁵ See <https://gov.wales/international-learning-opportunities-programme.html> and <https://gov.wales/funding-wales-quebec-joint-call-for-proposals-2022>

³⁶ <https://stats.wales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Equality-and-Diversity/Ethnicity/ethnicity-by-area-ethnicgroup>

³⁷ See <https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/international> and <https://www.cardiffmet.ac.uk/international/Pages/default.aspx>

³⁸ <https://cardiffeducationalservices.co.uk/Page/21324?lang=CY>

³⁹ <https://wales.britishcouncil.org/en/programmes/education/welsh-language-project>

⁴⁰ <https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/designing-your-curriculum/developing-a-vision-for-curriculum-design/#curriculum-design-and-the-four-purposes>

3.3 Wrexham and surrounds

Community-led solutions to international opportunities

In Wrexham and the surrounding areas, grassroots organisations have worked to develop international opportunities for artists in North Wales. Although there are lots of talented creatives in Wrexham and the surrounding rural areas and coastal towns, they do not benefit from the same opportunities as those who live in urban areas and particularly Cardiff and Swansea.

There is a huge barrier for young people working in North Wales because all the funding and support is in Cardiff, which is a four hour and £90 train journey away. So, whereas young people in Cardiff can just go to a training event or arts activities, it's a massive event for us to organise it for them to have the same opportunities.

Creative director, Arts sector, Wrexham and surrounds

FOCUS Wales is an international multi-venue showcase festival that has taken place in Wrexham since 2011. Founded by two musicians from North Wales, the festival brings together industry professionals and the public to hear young artists and bands from Wrexham and the surrounding area, as well as more established national and international acts. The festival utilises small venues across the town to host a series of intimate gigs as well as industry panels. The fact that Wrexham is a small place means that the festival takes over the whole town, and this, coupled with the fact that all the venues are within walking distance of each other, helps create an electric atmosphere. As the festival has grown, its international aspects have expanded too, bringing international artists to Wales, whilst also showcasing the Welsh language, culture and music scene to visitors.

In its first year the festival only showcased a couple of non-Welsh artists, in year two there were ten, in 2013 the festival partnered with an organisation in Korea who wanted to showcase artists from Seoul.

The festival is now on the radar as one of several opportunities to showcase international artists in the UK. The festival has also been able to tour artists abroad, supporting them in applying for funding, guiding them through the visa process, and ensuring their gigs have full audiences and that industry professionals attend showcases. They have sent Welsh artists to Korea, Taiwan, France, Canada and America, the Netherlands and Catalonia. They also attend music



conferences and showcase festivals around the world.

The benefits of this exposure have been huge for Welsh artists, and have included label signings as well as features in the press including the New York Times. Wrexham and the surrounding areas have also benefited, resulting in a stronger music community, with more sustainable artists representing a diverse range of backgrounds and genres. The town is proud of the festival and enjoys hosting people from around the world. It has a knock on effect in supporting local businesses, including the local hospitality industry. It has also encouraged the development of local businesses to support musicians, including management and promotion companies as well as record labels - *'it's not just about the artists, it's like the whole infrastructure that is built up around and supports a vibrant scene'* (Creative director, Arts sector, Wrexham and surrounds).

Wicked Wales is another grassroots organisation providing opportunities for young people in North Wales to engage in the arts through a festival that showcases young talent from around the world, as well as a volunteer-run community cinema which offers low-cost screenings to children and adults in the local area. The organisation works with young people who are seen as failing in the mainstream school system, who have few opportunities, and suffer from low self-esteem. A number of them are autistic, dyslexic, or suffer from poor mental health. The programme seeks to reframe them as *'the wonderful, creative, intelligent young people that they are'* (Founder and director, Arts sector, Wrexham and surrounds).

The festival is driven by the creative direction of young people who develop the programme and choose the festival award winners. They are also supported through visits to other international film festivals in the UK and abroad. Projects include a ten-day trip to Serbia to make films with young people from six other

countries, visits to the [Fresh Festival](#) in Ireland, and a digital project linking young filmmakers from Wales, Nepal and India.

Opportunities to travel, like those cited above, are huge for young people, many of whom don't even have a passport when they start. Children with an interest in arts and culture benefit from mixing with like-minded children in different contexts, and this builds their confidence and communications skills. It also makes them realise that they are as good, and just as likely to succeed, as young people from other countries - it raises their aspirations. Young film makers also have the opportunity to enter their work at film festivals abroad, leading to shortlisting and awards, raising their profile in Wales, the UK and internationally.

Schools in Wrexham have also embraced internationalism through the arts as one way to celebrate the increasingly diverse population of the town, which has in recent years welcomed many nationalities from Eastern Europe, Bangladesh, Asia and El Salvador. One primary school asked children to bring objects that are important to them and relate to their family background and culture. They then talked about why they were important, and filmed those conversations. The school then presented a display of the pictures, images, artefacts, musical instruments from different backgrounds, ethnicities and religions in the school and celebrated them with the local community. Teachers have found that there is a more tolerant culture in the school as a result, where pupils celebrate differences rather than pointing them out, and are hungry to learn more about each other and themselves - *'it's just tightening the cohesion in the school, making it more of a family, more of a community'* (Head teacher, primary education, Wrexham and surrounds). The school is also looking to embed more diverse topics into their lessons, and to diversify the leadership and governance to ensure that it represents the local community more effectively.

Another Wrexham primary has been involved in the Peace Schools movement, which supports schools in developing peace as a cross-curricular theme, promoting critical thinking, creative skills and non-violent conflict resolution.⁴¹ Projects included a competition to design a peace icon for the school, topic work focused on role models, and managing conflict through role play.



We were bringing in agents and bookers and people working in music media to see new artists. We're part of that sort of talent development pipeline and part of the artists journey so they could engage in industry.

Creative director, Arts sector, Wrexham and surrounds

We have seen our children put these skills of negotiation and conflict management into practice in the playground - it's fantastic to see.

Head teacher, Primary education, Wrexham and surrounds

⁴¹ <https://www.wcia.org.uk/global-learning/peace-schools-in-wales/>

3.4 Glasgow

Acting local and thinking global

Politically, internationalism supports the government agenda at the national and city-wide level. Nationally, the SNP government is keen to look outwards, and create ties with other countries, including the European Union. Scotland's International Framework sets out the government's agenda to create an environment within Scotland that supports a better understanding of international opportunities and a greater appetite and ability to seize them; and to influence the world on the issues that matter most to Scotland⁴². Scotland's Global Affairs Framework sets out the values and principles underlying the Scottish Government's international work, with a focus on good global citizenship, maintaining a close relationship with the EU, promoting gender equality and climate justice, respecting human rights, supporting international networks, and celebrating Scotland's distinct culture. The role of international education has been recognised as part of this and in particular the need to support the continued benefits of international exchange across the EU. Education Scotland, the national body for supporting quality and improvement in learning and teaching, provides specific guidance setting out the opportunities to embed internationalism in teaching and learning, and the benefits that international engagement can bring in delivering equity and excellence across the curriculum.⁴³

Glasgow too, which is a SNP run Council, has sought to instigate a new international strategy in order to improve links with cities around the world. The strategy examines how best to tackle global issues including sustainability, environmental protection, and regeneration. Glasgow is a significant participant in international education in Scotland, with a high number of primary and secondary schools as well as nurseries involved, particularly in areas where social and economic deprivation is high. There are also a high number of people from Asian and Pakistani backgrounds in the city who are involved. Internationalism is recognised as an important contributor to the city's inclusion agenda and its impact on poorer people living in the city is valued.

Glasgow City Council is one of the few local authorities in the UK which still has a dedicated internationalism officer on staff. The City also benefits from having staff who, as part of the Lord Provost Office, are responsible for looking after Glasgow's connections to its twin cities. These include Nuremberg, Germany, Dalian, China; Havana, Cuba, Turin, Italy, Lahore, Pakistan, Marseilles, France and Palestine. The officer works with young groups across the City to support topics across a range of areas including culture, sport, economics and music. The office has a limited budget but can offer a small amount of funding to help with mobility and exchange, and getting projects started. They can then support projects to apply for further



funding from other organisations. The City Council also provides international excellence accreditation for schools.

The City Council's programmes prioritise mobility opportunities for young people who would never normally have the opportunity to travel outside of Glasgow, never mind anywhere abroad. Their work with youth groups helps them firstly to identify those who will benefit most from the programmes. Once chosen they will then be supported in developing their social skills through discussion about the programme's elements and themes, and then finally with some language work, so they are ready for two weeks in a partner city. Placements include training trips for gymnasts to Eastern Europe, and links through Glasgow colleges to Turin and Marseilles, where students spend time working in hotels with the best chefs to hone their skills in catering and hospitality.

As the host for the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP 26)⁴⁴, Glasgow has benefited from a large amount of international activity, which has brought together organisations from across sectors, including the local authority, universities and schools. A range of projects were developed, focusing on young people, international exchange and sustainability.

Projects include Walk the Global Walk⁴⁵ which, through Global Citizenship Education, mobilised young people as catalysts for transformational changes, localised the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and produced an education model to address the complexities of the issues faced globally. The project, co-funded by the EU, connects local authorities, regional and local communities from 11 European countries: Italy, France, Croatia, Cyprus, Wales and Scotland, Portugal, Greece, Romania, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania. The issues at focus are Sustainable Cities and Communities, Climate Action,

Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions. This three-year project developed resources for teachers to use in the classroom, and facilitated opportunities for young people from across the partner countries, including pupils from Glasgow, to meet at a conference in Portugal in the first year.

Since then, because of COVID 19, activities have moved online, facilitated through an online platform for pupils to come together, learn about and then discuss the SDG focus. This led to the creation of a manifesto that talked about young people's desire for change, which was presented by young people to local and national governments and NGOs. The project was meant to culminate in a protest with young people coming together from different countries, but was adapted to smaller scale, local actions in compliance with public health guidance. In Glasgow these actions included visits with local schools to neighbourhood green spaces to undertake photo-walks looking at local issues, and extrapolating them to global ones.

In Glasgow the schools engaged tended to be secondaries in areas of income deprivation on the south side of the City with a mixture of genders and ethnicities who were likely to have less access to international education.

Schools were supported to weave SDG topics into citizenship, politics or modern studies classes. Teachers valued the project for providing a range of resources which were tailored to the curriculum for particular contexts - this included lesson plans and resources, online and in person delivery methods and training for teachers to support their effective use. Teachers have continued to use the materials which are user friendly, cross-curriculum and Scotland specific to support the curriculum.

A key barrier to this work having a real presence is squeezed school timetables, and inflexibility in the curriculum. Advocates find that the narrow focus on numeracy and literacy in the Scottish system makes it difficult for teachers to prioritise other cross-cutting themes - including climate change and sustainability. As a result, internationalism relies on the good will and spare time of particularly motivated teachers.

Young Enterprise Scotland provide enterprise education to young people, supporting international visits through their [Bridge 2 Business](#) programme. In common with other organisations, the focus is on young people who haven't been on exchanges before. The projects aim to develop entrepreneurial and enterprise skills, including transferable interpersonal attributes such as teamwork and collaboration, effective communication, and time management that can be applied at work and throughout their studies.

Educators also benefit from developing new skills, bringing them back to their departments, and forging new relationships with international partners which they continue to develop. International visits are extremely motivational for staff, who tend to enjoy the experience, and see the benefits from a pedagogical point of view and the impact on students.

Whilst there are a lot of Glasgow Institutions involved in internationalism, including the local authority, universities, colleges and schools, a lot of this work is done by individual institutions in isolation. Whilst there are some networks of support - such as the College Development Network, and Scottish Universities international network, where people involved in international work share ideas and best practice, there is no one organisation really focused on internationalism within Glasgow or more widely in Scotland. The reality is that it is done at the hyper local level by the person or department who shows the most interest.

Within the school day it is very difficult for teachers to do anything beyond the minimum because of pressures on their time. Teachers took this on in a voluntary capacity. It wasn't, you know, part of their responsibilities.

Research assistant, Further education, Glasgow

[Tutors are] constantly updating those skills and standards in different disciplines. That really benefits the particular industry sector, whatever that is automotive, hairdressing, or engineering. The benefit to the wider society from an economic point of view are fantastic.

International coordinator, community sector, Glasgow

⁴² <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-international-framework-9781788514033/pages/1/>

⁴³ <https://www.education.gov.scot/improvement/learning-resources/learners-international-international-learning-opportunities/#>

⁴⁴ <https://ukcop26.org/>

⁴⁵ <https://walktheglobalwalk.eu/en/>

One fruitful global connection in the City has been the twinning between Glasgow and Havana. The [Havana Glasgow Film Festival](#) links these two places, with a director in Glasgow and one in Cuba. This long-running festival sought to involve schools early on, and was supported by the city council to make a documentary in Cuba in order to deepen the organisation's knowledge of working with young children. This annual festival now shows Cuban films in Glasgow schools, and brings Cuban actors and filmmakers to meet young people, alongside film-making projects with local primary schools. The biggest benefit is challenging stereotypes and racist attitudes, opening up the potential for young people, and particularly for those from deprived areas, to open up their minds to the possibilities beyond their local community or neighbourhood. Exploring the links between Glasgow and Cuba have been particularly enriching, not least the openness of Glaswegian and Cubans, their sense of community, as well as historical connections including the hidden legacies of the [trans-atlantic slave trade](#).

In deprived areas of Glasgow, children are very involved in their local area, and they feel that their community is the most important part of the world, because you know children from deprived areas don't get opportunities, and it is realistic in a way to make the world smaller because it seems unrealistic to have wider aspirations - the most important thing to me is to make young people's worlds bigger.

Creative director, Arts sector, Glasgow

They come back a bit braver, a bit more mature, a bit more interested in the world ... open to other members of society.

International coordinator, community sector, Glasgow



3.5 County Durham

Maximising international opportunities through the Durham Global Alliance

In October 2021 the [Durham Global Alliance](#) (DGA) was launched with support from the British Council, bringing together partners from across the County including the local authority, Durham University, Cultural Durham, Durham Youth Council, Durham Sport and Business, as well as representatives from primary and secondary schools and further education providers. All the partners have pledged to work together to offer more young people an opportunity to learn from and connect with others in the UK and around the world. The Alliance works to strengthen links with different stakeholders, promote international opportunities, and to demonstrate the scope and value of internationalism work for young people across the County. The formation of this local alliance was inspired and supported through participation in the national Internationalism Alliance, who, alongside the British Council, supported Durham's bid to be [UK City of Culture](#).

The DGA seeks to build on the international work that has taken place across the County over many years, much of which has been supported by the local authority. The council benefits from a dedicated internationalism officer, alongside an education development team, who have worked with a large network of schools across Durham to provide international opportunities to pupils and teachers. The local authority is able to support schools to gain access to funding through bids to the British Council and other bodies, and through collaborations with local organisations, including [Durham University](#). They have also engaged schools in particular programmes such as Connecting Classrooms for Global Learning and helped them to apply for the British Council's International School Award.⁴⁶ Support for teachers in accessing Continuing Professional Development opportunities is also part of their work, as is helping schools to make links with partners abroad, including Durham's nine twinned communities in Germany, Slovakia, Denmark, France, Spain, USA and Hungary, as well as partners further afield in Africa, the Middle East and Southeast Asia.⁴⁷ Projects include intensive language courses for children and young people; partnerships with schools across Europe so children can practise their language skills; participation in the [North East Festival of Languages](#), the [Eco2Smart Schools programme](#), and the Durham Global Schools initiative; as well as projects linking schools to diverse communities in the North East of England, for example the local Hindu community.

Support is particularly valued amongst the large number of very small rural schools in County Durham, including those with limited capacity to benefit from international opportunities, and with a small number of staff who are 'juggling many roles' (Internationalism



lead, Public sector, County Durham). In the past, the local authority also supported internationalism work in the youth sector. However, cuts to youth services have made international work more difficult in this sector over recent years.

Durham University has a central role in supporting internationalism. They host the Secretariat of the DGA, promote cultural exchange and mobility amongst their students and staff, and provide international education through outreach work with schools. Most recently they have introduced opportunities for international students to volunteer and connect with local Durham communities, to speak about their own country, culture and language.

Our international students are crying out for a UK experience. They want to engage with the local culture and to feel a part of the place where they are living. They want to gain local knowledge and understanding by interacting with longer term inhabitants from the local area.

Internationalism lead, HE sector, Durham

For advocates, internationalism is seen to be particularly important in Durham because the county is not very diverse. Whilst the City of Durham includes mixed communities, particularly through the large student and academic population, as well as a small number of Syrian refugees and Eastern Europeans, outside of the urban area there is little diversity. Across the County as a whole 98.2 percent of the population are White, 0.9 percent are Asian/Asian British, with only 0.1 percent identifying as Black/Black British.⁴⁸

In Durham's remote ex-coal mining towns and agricultural villages, earnings are relatively low, and populations experience economic deprivation, with a large percentage of children living in poverty.

For example, in Coundon Grange 58.5 percent of children under 16 live in relative poverty, with 51.8 percent of children living in absolute poverty in Easington Colliery North.⁴⁹ There is also a lack of access to public and cultural services, such as swimming pools, libraries, cinemas or theatres. In these contexts many young people do not get the opportunity to travel, do not have access to diversity locally, and do not benefit from a strong cultural offer either.

For advocates, providing international opportunities for children and young people in poorer, rural areas is a priority. It is seen as an effective way to develop their self confidence, interpersonal skills and to raise ambitions. Internationalism broadens outlooks, and provides a different perspective on the world by making connections outside of local communities. Internationalism is also seen to have a powerful role in breaking down barriers and racism.

The benefits for teaching staff include opening up opportunities for them to work in very different contexts which are often outside of their comfort zone, encouraging empathy, the sharing of different teaching pedagogies, as well as injecting passion and renewed energy into their teaching practice. Long term connections have meant that teachers have been able to embed teaching practices used in other countries into Durham schools, and from Durham schools to other international partners. During the pandemic, international links continued, including informal support groups for teachers working in COVID conditions in different international contexts.

Teachers have also found ways to embed internationalism in the school day rather than seeing it as an additional extra. For example, by linking internationalism to their school charter, or as a way to explore cross-cutting global issues such as climate change and human rights. One rural primary school focused on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which is - *'now central to our school. That's about every child in every country, making sure that they get that right to an education, the right to be safe, the right to health care, the right to shelter. And those fit well with the global goals. So it's all you know, it's very much linked, and it helps us as a school fit things in because they're not add ons, they're all part of what we believe is the right thing for our children'* (Head teacher, Primary education, County Durham).



Internationalism boosts self esteem and confidence in working in situations which are unfamiliar. It develops presentation skills, it builds on lots of other aspects around teamwork, problem solving and resilience. Young people who take part come away with a skill set and sense of achievement that makes it easier for them to be part of that broader global community.

Internationalism lead, Public sector, Durham

Instilling the sense of respect and value for other cultures, practices, and different ways of being is really important. Racism is often based on fear and misconceptions. If you have a friend from that society or that background then suddenly your mind opens up and you see things in a very different way.

Education advisor, Community sector, Durham

⁴⁶ <https://www.britishcouncil.org/school-resources/accreditation/international-school-award>

⁴⁷ <https://www.durhamnc.gov/292/Sister-Cities-of-Durham>

⁴⁸ <https://www.durhaminsight.info/population/>

⁴⁹ <https://www.durhaminsight.info/children-in-poverty/>

3.6 Coventry

City of Culture - City of Languages

Coventry is a diverse and international city. In the 2011 Census, 33 percent of the population identified as Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) compared to 20 percent for England as a whole. The largest minority ethnic groups are Asian/Asian British communities, making up 16.3 percent of the city's population, including 8.8 per cent with an Indian background. Coventry's population with a Black African background has grown to 4 per cent, which is now more than double the English average (1.8 per cent). The largest numbers of new communities are from Polish, Nigerian, Somali, Cameroonian, Chinese and Roma communities.⁵⁰

The City also has a long history of international connections, and it became one of the first cities globally to establish international friendships through twinning. Today Coventry has 27 twin cities around the world.⁵¹ The original impetus for twinning was as an expression of solidarity with the people of Stalingrad during the Second World War. Following severe bombing, Coventry sought after the war to make links with other European cities that had experienced a similar onslaught, including Kiel and Dresden, with an ambition to promote peace and reconciliation in the post-war years.

Internationalism has taken on renewed prominence in Coventry since the City was successful in its bid to be the [UK City of Culture 2021-2022](#), which through art and culture has sought to make new and consolidate existing connections globally, as well as making links between diverse communities within Coventry.

A number of projects have been developed as part of the City of Culture year building on Coventry's twinning legacy. This includes postcards designed by specially-designed local artists, sent by ten Coventry poets to their counterparts in twin cities across the world. Another community arts project links Coventry and Volgograd via a 'digital tablecloth' showcasing photos, from the past and present, submitted by residents of both cities, on the theme of 'home'. The project is led by [Twin Studios Project CIC](#) a youth led organisation that seeks to reinvent the twinning concept for a younger generation in order to inspire them to look outside of the Coventry bubble and embrace new creative practices.

Coventry UK City of Culture also seeks to build on the city's strengths as one of the youngest cities in the UK. The city has experienced a high rate of population growth in recent years, particularly amongst 18-29 year olds.⁵² The Youthful Cities programme links young adults from Coventry with young artists from global partner cities including Beirut, Bogota, Detroit, and Nairobi.⁵³ The project aims to facilitate cultural and creative skills exchange, and enable young adults to creatively respond to youth-focused issues in their cities. Four project teams explored different art forms



collaboratively including music, poetry and spoken word, street art and digital storytelling. The project aims to enable Coventry artists to improve their practice, raise their ambitions, see themselves as professional artists, and to develop their profile. Other benefits include the ability for young people to learn more about each other's cities and the way that other people live; appreciating art from another place; and building confidence to talk to others about their own artistic practice. The project has also been successful in developing small arts organisations in Coventry, and in supporting them to deliver an ambitious programme and make links with partners abroad which are likely to continue.

The City of Culture programme has been impacted negatively by the pandemic, which curtailed exchange visits and in-person events. Delivery partners have been adaptable in this context and have used media, and particularly those outlets that are used by young people, to facilitate conversation and collaborations between young people in Coventry and partner cities abroad. Some forms of artwork adapt well online, including music and spoken word, others - for example street art - are more difficult to facilitate in a virtual space. Interestingly, the challenges of collaborations, provide opportunities for young people to grow and develop personally and professionally.

It is a huge learning experience to work out the difficulties involved in collaboration. It is not always an easy or smooth process but it can support personal growth and development - not least skills of diplomacy.

Arts manager, Arts sector, Coventry

Alongside cultural events and activities, internationalism is also being supported in the city through the recent establishment of [Coventry City of Languages](#). Led by two modern language teachers, this initiative seeks to celebrate linguistic diversity in the city, improve the learning and teaching of languages, and promote the importance of languages for business and the community. Supported by the two Coventry universities, the local authority, the British Council as well as local MPs, the project seeks to address the decline in language learning in primary and secondary schools, as well as the lack of language students moving through to degree level. They hope to promote the importance of language learning in the context of a globalised workforce and the links between language teaching and internationalisation and raised aspirations in the classroom.

Initiatives linked to the City of Languages include the establishment of an annual awards ceremony to celebrate achievement in languages at all levels and ages from across Coventry. Moving forward, the City of Languages hopes to support the Continued Professional Development of non-specialist language teachers working in primary schools; and to set up a multilingual library for refugee children, their parents and carers. The initiative has also connected key players in internationalism across the city to share resources to support language teaching and learning.

These include collaborations with local universities to connect language lecturers and students with pupils in primary and secondary schools through virtual exchange visits with university students studying abroad; the co-authoring of a book on bilingualism with school pupils in diverse schools who speak multiple languages, and bringing language students in to talk to school pupils directly about learning languages at degree level.

For university partners this aspect of the initiative is extremely important, helping them to widen their outreach work with local communities and supporting schools who have lost budget for languages to make things happen. Exposing young people to language learning and internationalism in schools is also important to the take-up of languages at degree level. In turn, increased uptake of languages by university students is seen as crucial in meeting university ambitions to be genuinely global institutions, and supporting commitments to send as many students abroad for an international exchange or visits as possible.



Nobody ever thought to say, let's all get together and talk about how we can work together, and how we can promote languages and international education and you now find those sorts of opportunities and not just for children but for everybody.

Languages teacher, Primary school, Coventry

If we don't get students or pupils studying languages in schools, then then your internationalisation means the English-speaking world. If you want to be genuinely global and multicultural, then you need the languages as-well.

Senior lecturer, Higher education, Coventry

⁵⁰ <https://www.coventry.gov.uk/facts-coventry/coventry-72>

⁵¹ <https://www.coventry.gov.uk/twintownsandcities>

⁵² <https://www.coventry.gov.uk/facts-coventry/coventry-72>

⁵³ <https://coventry2021.co.uk/explore/youthful-cities-programme/>

3.7 Manchester

Celebrating Manchester's diverse communities through internationalism at home

There is a rich scene of internationalism activity in Manchester, supported by a range of organisations including universities, arts organisations, the local authority, community sector organisations, as well as primary and secondary schools across the city.

The [University of Manchester](#) and [Manchester Metropolitan University](#) both support academic collaborations and study abroad opportunities around the world. With one of the largest student populations in Europe, Manchester hosts around 17,500 international students, supported by organisations including the [International Society](#) and [Student Unions](#), who provide opportunities for international engagement through socials, cultural events and activities, trips and volunteering roles.⁵⁴

Music and arts are a strong part of Manchester's identity and economy, drawing international artists and visitors to the city.⁵⁵ Manchester hosts a range of arts festivals with a strong international dimension, including [Manchester International Festival](#), [Submerge](#), [VIVA](#), the [Fair Play festival](#), [Manchester Literary Festival](#), as well as one-off high-profile cultural events such as the [The Walk with Amal](#) project. Arts organisations have also been active in international activities. Through the Heritage Lottery Funded [Shared Cultural Heritage](#) project, Manchester Museum worked with the British Council to develop youth-led projects to engage and connect young people with South Asian heritage to their collections. Since then the Museum has received Youth Accelerator Funding through South Asian Heritage Month to ensure that the lived experience of South Asian communities informs the curation of their exhibitions.⁵⁶ They have also signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Partition Museum based in Amritsar, India and have pledged to work together to explore the pre-partition links between India and Britain. This was supported by the Manchester-India Partnership which was established in 2018 by the Mayor to strengthen ties, offer arts and education exchanges, and encourage business links and investment.⁵⁷

Manchester benefits from other international civic links and friendship arrangements with cities around the world, including Wuhan in China and Chemnitz in Germany, as well as membership of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, and the [Music Cities Network](#). Specific cultural exchanges are supported by a memorandum of cultural understanding between Manchester, Aarhus and Aalborg in Denmark.⁵⁸ Through delegations across all three cities, projects have been developed in different art forms. Youth-focused initiatives included a piece of research exploring diversity and representation in children's theatre, and an exchange programme for young



musicians to experience and perform together in diverse music scenes. The projects opened the minds of young people and creative professionals to 'new kinds of creative practice from different cultures' and sectors (Artistic director, Arts sector, Manchester).

The youth and community-arts sectors have also been successful in benefiting from funding, including Erasmus+, to support effective youth engagement around global issues. For example, the [Global Curiosity Programme](#) involved a partnership between Manchester and partners in Greece and Poland to explore and share best practice in global youth work to support the development of citizenship, creativity and critical thinking skills.

Despite this breadth of activity, participants in the study report a lack of connection between organisations engaged in internationalism, and a lack of awareness of the opportunities that are available. There is an appetite for organisations to come together and convene an internationalism network for Greater Manchester, but there is currently no organisation with capacity to support it. In particular, participants stressed the need for local grassroots organisations to connect with larger organisations in a mutually beneficial way. This would facilitate links to local people who would benefit from international and intercultural activity, as well as the expertise of grassroots organisations who have skills in effective engagement and strong ties to their communities.

Manchester is one of the UK's most culturally diverse cities, with a long history of migration from Europe and the rest of the world. It is also the most linguistically diverse city in Britain, with up to 200 languages spoken by residents and around 40 per-cent of young people classed as multilingual. In this context, champions of internationalism are keen to explore international connections within Manchester communities.⁵⁹

Local, community-based arts organisations tailor their programmes to reflect the diversity of their area, and ensure their engagement focuses on children and young adults who live locally. In schools, teachers arrange visits for their students to parts of Manchester that have a distinct identity, such as Rusholme and Chinatown. They find that opportunities to encounter internationalism at home are enriching and challenging, particularly for students from poorer backgrounds who may not have had the opportunity to travel to other parts of the city before.

Champions of this approach stress the need to see diversity as a strength rather than a disadvantage. This is particularly important in schools where student diversity, and in particular linguistic diversity, tend to be framed in a negative way. Rather than focusing on the challenges of working with pupils who speak English as a second language, teachers celebrate the bilingual skills that young people take for granted as an asset.

Internationalism programmes are key to installing pride in bilingualism and cultural differences in order to tackle stigma. For example, pupils from one Secondary school were involved in [Multilingual Streets](#), a creative participatory research project led by academics from the University of Manchester and Sheffield University. The project involved 200 year nine students who participated in photo-walks around the streets of Rusholme, where they took photographs of community languages that they found in the public realm. The photographs were then uploaded onto a digital map, and students were engaged in creative workshops at the Whitworth and Manchester galleries to produce their own artworks reflecting on what they had found. The project generated positivity around different languages and cultures in the school community.

Students from Manchester schools also participated in the development of a [Manchester Poetic Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) using creative activities and poetry slams to explore human rights issues and their relevance to young people in Manchester and globally. In this context, internationalism is seen as a good way to explore political debates and discussions, and in broadening the outlooks and aspirations of young people.



There are people doing really important community and youth engagement work in multicultural areas ... but there is a lack of connection between this hyper-local activity and the bigger institutions in the City.

Artistic director , Arts sector, Manchester

We have over 40 languages spoken amongst 800 kids - it is amazing and hugely rich in terms of languages and cultures.

Languages lead, Secondary school, Manchester

We feel a responsibility to make sure that the young people we work with have some kind of global attitude, or global approach to life ... It's about widening aspirations and understanding of the world.

Programme manager, Arts sector, Manchester

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https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/media/1581/greater_manchester_key_facts_january_2016.pdf

55
<https://www.brightersound.com/manchester-music-economy-report-2022>

56
<https://www.britishcouncil.org/arts/culture-development/current-projects/osch>

57
<https://www.investinmanchester.com/about-us/manchester-india-partnership>

58
<https://www.britishcouncil.dk/programmes/manchester-aarhus-aalborg>

59
<https://www.manchester.ac.uk/discover/news/manchester-is-britains-city-of-languages/>

3.8 North East Lincolnshire

Supporting international exchange and cultural enrichment in rural contexts

North East Lincolnshire is a predominantly rural County made up of a network of villages and coastal towns, including the seaside resorts of Grimsby and Cleethorpes. Without an urban centre or key institutions such as universities, arts and cultural organisations, the County does not have the infrastructure to support a rich and diverse international scene. Those who are engaged in internationalism report that they encounter difficulties in understanding what is happening locally, and in linking up with other organisations involved to share opportunities, successes and learning. Despite these challenges, champions of internationalism identify a rich seam of activity happening in the education sector. Much of this work is supported by independent education advisors, who engage schools in internationalism programmes, promote links with international partners and support teachers in designing and managing international projects.

North East Lincolnshire is one of the 20 percent most deprived districts/unitary authorities in England, and about 26 per cent children live in low income families⁶⁰. In this context, champions of internationalism are keen to focus opportunities on young people from deprived backgrounds. These include students who 'haven't been anywhere further than Lincoln, let alone travelled abroad' (Vice principal, Further education, Lincolnshire).

A diversity of school connections have been facilitated in deprived parts of the County. These include links to Poland and Romania, facilitated through personal and professional connections of Eastern European staff working in schools. These links have been particularly effective in celebrating Eastern European communities who have migrated in recent years to Lincolnshire towns⁶¹.

We asked our Bulgarian, Romanian, Polish and Lithuanian parents to make things at home and bring them into school for children to eat, share local music, and get families involved in huge Eastern European line dances - it just created such a fantastic atmosphere.

International specialist, Community sector, Lincolnshire

Exchanges have also been facilitated with schools in Thailand, India and South Africa enabling professionals on both sides to understand and experience different teaching systems. A number of Lincolnshire schools



have also partnered with schools in Agadir, Morocco through the British Council-FCDO funded Connected Classrooms through Global Learning programme. Pupils from both countries explored the journey of rubbish in their own communities, which they shared with their partners abroad in order to learn about different approaches to reducing waste to help the environment and climate. Schools have also worked to embed the UN Global Sustainable Development Goals within their curriculum which is seen as a powerful way to engage young children in global conversations.

We want to have these global goals linked all the way across our school, whether it's in science, whether it's in geography, whether it's in computing, all those goals link somewhere into the curriculum topics.

Teacher, Primary education, Lincolnshire

Raising awareness of the global nature of climate change, and the local impacts is particularly important in the Lincolnshire context which is projected to suffer from extreme flooding as a result of sea level rises.⁶²

You gain the realisation that these problems aren't just either outside your back door, or on the other side of the world - they are everybody's problems. And that's where a global outlook becomes very, very important.

Teacher, Primary education, Lincolnshire

In one Lincolnshire college with a long run international programme, mobility opportunities have been extended across multiple subject areas including the arts, childcare, education and hospitality. The college found that developing experience and refining international programmes in one subject area, provided a great basis to extend out to other subjects incrementally. Students now benefit from trips to France to learn catering skills, mixology and breadmaking, and to Germany to work with book binders, printers, leather workers and sculptors.

Staff invest considerable time and effort in developing connections with partners abroad so they and their students feel confident. Placements are short term, rather than over extended periods, and staff are there for students if they need them, but stay in the background so that young people have the opportunities to take control of their experience and to develop their confidence, communications and technical skills in a new context.

Staff are able to learn from teaching practice and facilities abroad, and bring best practice home to influence the development of course models, assessments, vocational placements, campus facilities, pastoral care, and work culture. They also have an opportunity to share their approaches with others and celebrate the aspects of their teaching practice that they are doing right.

The establishment of an International Working Group has been important in reflecting upon and sharing the impacts of international exchanges for students and staff. The group supports the refinement of bids, sharing of best practice and logistics in particular countries. It also provides a platform for young people to promote international experiences amongst their peers, and particularly to those who are nervous about travelling abroad - *'I think students often listen to students, and she was saying, "Oh, my goodness, I was really nervous, I was really scared." And they said, "of course, we are too", and listening to them talk to each other, this student was able to say, "but you know what, when I came back, I had all the confidence to go on to university, and I wouldn't have done that before'* (Internationalism lead, Further Education, Lincolnshire).



For many students who have not travelled, even organising your tickets, packing, navigating through an airport, and getting through security are daunting. Just knowing that you can do it, you can hold your own with strangers, and that by the end of those three weeks you're presenting your work to people that you've just met - it's just so empowering.

Vice principal, Further education, Lincolnshire

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<https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/static-reports/health-profiles/2019/e06000012.html?area-name=north%20east%20lincolnshire>

61
<https://www.migrationyorkshire.org.uk/userfiles/attachments/pages/664/nelincslmp-2020.pdf>

62
<https://www.floodmap.net/?gi=2644487>

3.9 Plymouth

Celebrating and growing Plymouth's global maritime connections

In the [Plymouth Plan](#), the City Council set out a key objective to promote Plymouth as an international city which is seen as a cultural centre, a key UK tourist destination, a centre for marine science and high technology manufacturing, the home of world class universities and research institutes, welcoming and multicultural. The fostering of international ties with Plymouth's twin cities of Brest in France, Gdynia in Poland, San Sebastian in Spain and Plymouth in the USA are an important part of this objective. So too are the continued international education links which provide opportunities for young people to learn about different cultures, whilst also developing their language, professional and personal skills.

International connections and opportunities for student and teacher mobility have been supported by a network of Plymouth organisations, facilitated by a recently retired internationalism officer at Plymouth City Council. These include the Lord Mayor, Local Councillors, the Chamber of Commerce, Higher and Further Education institutes, as well as leaders from primary and secondary schools from across the City. With support from the British Council, the network has supported the development of international links around the world, including Jiaxing in China, Sekondi-Takoradi in Ghana, and schools and colleges in The Gambia.

One Plymouth primary school has only recently engaged in internationalism and has used it as a tool to bring together a previously fragmented school community, including pupils, parents and teachers. This work has been facilitated through the [Connecting Classrooms for Global Learning programme](#), and through a concerted effort by the internationalism lead in the school and senior management to achieve an International Schools Award. The school has convened an international schools club that brings together children from different year groups to work on international projects, and engage with the broader community through shared food and gardening projects with a global flavour.

Like other primaries engaged in this project, the school has taken the time to embed the sustainable development goals across the subject areas, and has linked them to specific skills and aptitudes that the school wants to support amongst their pupils. The school has also been strategic in ensuring that the exploration of internationalism does not add to teachers workloads, but is embedded and supportive of them achieving objectives as set out in the national curriculum. This is particularly important for Key Stage Two pupils, who arguably benefit the most from international education, but where pressures on the curriculum make finding space for extra-activities more difficult. With help from the [Plymouth-Ghana Link](#) they have established ties with a school in Ghana, and Year Six children now complete a whole unit with a



focus on Ghanaian culture and geography, and pupils of all ages engage in art projects with their partner school.

One secondary school, which has a specialism in languages, has been involved in internationalism for many years. The head of languages has been pivotal in pursuing international opportunities for pupils. The school values those projects that are cross curricular and encourage the use of languages to explore other topics and interests. Students participated in the Erasmus + Magic of Water and Magic of Sound projects, which involved collaborations with schools in Romania, Croatia and Germany, trips abroad, and industry visits to explore the themes in the round - for example how electric car producers embed sound systems into their cars, and a visit to a violin factory. Another project involved Dragon's Den challenges as part of the Passport to Explore programme, which involved Year 10 German learners designing a product to sell to a German market. The designs, models and marketing materials were then presented by students in German and English to a panel of judges in Germany, with prizes given for the best ideas. The school has also been involved with the [Euroscola programme](#), which supports groups of sixth form students to go to the European Parliament, and to deliver speeches on a contemporary political issue in French.

It's about giving them positive and memorable experiences that make language learning seem worthwhile. Learning a language can be quite arduous, it's so important that students can see how the skills can be applied in the real world.

Teacher, Secondary education, Plymouth

Barriers to this work, even in a languages specialist school, include how difficult A-level languages are. According to one teacher, in order to succeed, you have to be almost at native speaker level, produce cultural and political essays, and express yourself verbally and in written form in a sophisticated manner. Brexit has also had an impact, particularly on European projects, but many links have continued, particularly those that don't rely on EU-specific funding. Teacher capacity is also an issue with internationalism coordinators adding responsibilities onto their existing workload.

There are other examples of best practice in the City, not least in the college sector. One city college has run international exchange opportunities for over a decade, and has several members of staff on board both to develop links abroad, apply for funding schemes to support international travel, and to support recruitment of international students from around the world to Plymouth. This college has a wealth of experience, having participated in Comenius and Erasmus + and now the Turing scheme.

The college has many links with partners abroad, and existing and new ties are currently being developed with a particular focus outside of Europe due to a reduction in EU students coming to the College since the UK left the EU. International staff travel to countries in South East Asia as well as China, go on tours, visit schools, and develop opportunities for student recruitment. The college has a dedicated pastoral care officer, who is from China, to support the large cohort of Chinese students in the college. They also have a specialist member of staff to support students getting their visas to study in the UK. International students participate in a four-week induction and integration programme when they come to the UK to support English language learning, the development of practical skills, as well as participation in cultural trips. The college is currently placing key emphasis in facilitating links between international students and home students. This is to support international students in getting the most out of their visit to the UK, whilst also encouraging local students to learn from the diverse students who come to the college.

After a pause in international visits because of the pandemic, the college is offering study-abroad opportunities to their students. All visits involve a practical project which could be engineering or business and marketing focused depending on the discipline. Some subject areas have a longer history of international exchange than others. For example, engineering students benefit from a long-standing exchange programme with a manufacturing company based in Plymouth which has their headquarters in Germany. In common with other colleges in other case study areas, the college has been successful in extending opportunities to other subject areas including computing, hair and beauty and business studies.

The college has a robust recruitment process in order to select students who will benefit most from an experience abroad. This is based on attendance and achievements as part of a written application, alongside a video to talk about the reasons the opportunity would benefit them now and in the future, and why they are a suitable candidate. When they are away, students complete a daily blog in order to reflect on what they have learned, how they will apply that learning to their studies, and how the experience can help them in the future.

Staff too can benefit from a work trip abroad through a self-directed job shadowing programme to support training and development. They find there are huge benefits for motivation, learning best practice and new methodologies.

International students tend to stick with their friends who have travelled from a similar region. We are trying to support connections by developing opportunities to buddy up with local students. It's really important for UK students, because they get an opportunity to meet and work with students from around the world and learn about different countries, languages, cultures, acceptance and awareness.

Tutor, Higher education, Plymouth

The importance of Plymouth as a maritime city is also crucially important in the context of internationalism. The 400th anniversary of the sailing of the Mayflower in 2020-2021 involved a range of activities with young people to explore the challenging colonial history of the ship's sailing from England to America, and the experiences of persecution, loss and oppression amongst the Wampanoag people.⁶³

Young people have also been connected to Plymouth's deep ties to the sea through outreach work by the [Ocean Conservation Trust](#). These include a European project to support ocean literacy through the [Blues Schools network](#) which helps students explore how vital the ocean is in supporting people and communities across the globe, and the negative impact of climate change, overfishing and pollution. Other international initiatives include the European Marine Science Educators Association - a network of teachers and scientists who help children learn about the Ocean, as well as participation in the development of a toolkit for policy makers to try and get the ocean into the curriculum as part of the UN Decade of Ocean Sciences for Sustainable Development.⁶⁴ The trust has also been involved in [Educational Passages](#), a project that engages students in the preparation, deploying and tracking of their very own mini boat across the Atlantic.⁶⁵ Students are then connected to the local school or community where the un-crewed boats land, and have an opportunity to learn about other cultures around the world and connect with other young people as citizen scientists and global ocean stewards.

Children realise that Plymouth has a lot to offer and have their eyes opened to things like the blue economy and blue careers. You can be an artist, you can pursue maths, science, and geography ... they come to understand that all of that is open to you.

Outreach manager, Charitable sector, Plymouth



⁶³ <https://www.mayflower400uk.org/>

⁶⁴ <https://en.unesco.org/ocean-decade>

⁶⁵ <https://educationalpassages.org/boats/hvescruiser/>

4. Recommendations

This final section draws together all the recommendations that participants in the interviews identified, to be actioned by the British Council, the Internationalism Alliance and their partners. They are presented thematically below, and together represent a call for action to help support and extend opportunities for internationalism across the UK.

Networking and cross sectoral working

- Encourage and support the sharing of best-practice in internationalism within and across sectors.
- Develop closer partnership between schools, colleges and universities to support internationalism for young people at all stages in their education.
- Enable organisations to work together rather than compete for international funding and support.
- Support the development of local networks for internationalism so that people and organisations can work together to make stronger partnerships, align their aims and ambitions and share their resources.
- Work together to convey ‘the hearts and minds’ messages of why internationalisation is so important.

Understanding and sharing impact

- Share examples of good practice through the evaluation of international programmes.
- Develop a regional focus on the impact of internationalism so it is possible to see the specific benefits to young people in different parts of the UK.
- Focus on the potential of internationalism to address economic development in different regions, and as a way to address crucial skills gaps at a strategic level.
- Focus on the value and impact of internationalism at home as well as international connections abroad.

- Support the development of local networks for internationalism so that people and organisations can work together to make stronger partnerships, align their aims and ambitions and share their resources.

Influencing change in the curriculum

- Continued support to embed languages and international perspectives in primary and secondary education.
- Demonstrate how internationalism closely links with the national curriculum in all the UK nations, across different subject areas.
- Challenge the narrow view of achievement in schools to include more holistic and broad-ranging skills and opportunities that come from internationalism, foreign languages and the creative arts.

Language teaching and learning

- Promote the importance of internationalism and language competency for work opportunities.
- Celebrate and recognise the benefits of diversity in bilingualism in schools and communities.
- Lobby departments of education across the four nations of the UK to support language mentoring schemes between universities and schools.
- Develop research and awareness of the impact of language learning and literacy on attainment in English and other subject areas.
- Provide resources to support university outreach, and to provide PGCE and CPD training for teachers in language teaching.

Focusing on underprivileged groups

- Continue to focus on providing opportunities for young people from lower socio-economic backgrounds,
- Provide flexibility in funding schemes so that programmes can be tailored specifically to the needs of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds
- Provide short mobility options for students and staff.
- Support the use of the Pupil Premium to extend international opportunities to economically disadvantaged children.
- Provide funding and support for internationalism in youth work.

Facilitating links abroad

- Help to open up new relationships in different regions outside of Europe.
- Provide support to enable links between creative organisations with similar values in different countries.
- Continue to engage with European countries as a key part of Global Britain.
- Provide funding to support initial connections between schools and international partners, and for longer standing partnerships.
- Help organisations to take successful international programmes abroad - promote them via international links and offices.

Tailoring support to smaller organisations

- Offer longer-term funding for projects over a 3 year period (rather than 1 year).
- Ensure that funding bodies have user-friendly application processes in place, and that there is space to provide evidence of the qualitative benefits alongside quantitative data.
- Provide workshops and sessions to support funding applications.
- Provide feedback on funding applications.
- Provide help to small organisations to get visas and work permits, and in navigating new rules for travel and work in Europe.

Supporting the arts

- Work across funding agencies to inject international elements in other, UK focused, arts programmes.
- Provide more funding for artists to benefit from international opportunities.
- Give a smaller number of awards to more artists so they can showcase their work internationally.
- Put those on the coalface of the creative industry on funding panels.

Providing accessible resources and information

- Make sure that internationalism guides and resources are available to teachers and students via the British Council website.
- Curate the British Council website so that it is easier to navigate and be clear about the separation between Secondary and Primary education resources.
- Continue to support schools through the Connected Classrooms for Global Learning or a similar programme.

These recommendations align with the Internationalism Alliance pledge to offer every child and young person in the UK, whatever their background or interests, the opportunity to learn from - and connect with - other people in the UK and around the world. They also offer a set of practical actions to support the British Council and Alliance members’ commitment to champion international and inter-cultural experiences for children and young people, advocate for increased opportunities for international learning and build resources to support high-quality international experiences at home and abroad.

