

Accumulate

Empowering homeless people through creativity

Accumulate Evaluation 2019

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Introduction and context

About Accumulate

Accumulate, [The Art School for the Homeless](#), uses creativity to empower and increase the wellbeing and mental health of young people who are homeless and living in hostels and temporary accommodation. It works with hostels and housing organisations to deliver workshops in visual art, photography, fashion and other creative disciplines. Accumulate works in partnership with leading cultural and creative institutions including Tate, BBC, The Guardian and The Barbican, and the work of Accumulate's participants is showcased in an annual exhibition. Accumulate also provides scholarships so that participants can progress their creative education and study on the one-year 'Access to HE in Design and Digital Media' course at Ravensbourne University London.



An Accumulate Photography Workshop

Homelessness and the arts

There are currently around 170,000 homeless people in London. These aren't just the visible homeless who are sleeping rough in the streets, but those in temporary accommodation like hostels, B&Bs and refuges. Young people are especially vulnerable to homelessness caused by family breakdown, abuse and neglect, mental health difficulties and financial distress. London can be a hostile and expensive place in which to grow up.

Making art and being generally creative is widely understood to be a vital means of improving and maintaining health and wellbeing, making friends and connections, building skills and capacities, as well as the sheer joy that comes from self-expression. There is now a cluster of organisations in the UK working to foster the creativity of people experiencing homeless. Companies like [Streetwise Opera](#) and [Cardboard Citizens](#) are making high quality art with people who happen to be experiencing homelessness.

“People need more than a bed and a roof to recover from homelessness; they need to feel that they are seen and heard, and they need to know that they have a legitimate place in society. People who are or have been homeless are often socially isolated and have suffered a range of difficult experiences. The creative arts are a positive way for people to build confidence and skills and become part of a supportive and creative community.” (Streetwise Opera website)

How Accumulate makes a difference

The overall aims of Accumulate are to:

- empower and increase the wellbeing of young people who are affected by homelessness
- reduce negative stereotypes and misunderstanding about people experiencing homelessness
- help alleviate the ill effects of homelessness on individuals and communities

Accumulate does this through providing high-quality meaningful, structured and purposeful creative activities that culminate in a focused goal and celebration.

How Accumulate evaluated activity in 2019

This report is based upon the following sources of data:

- Project documentation – reports to funders, photographs, videos, blog posts, etc.
- Participant feedback – surveys completed by some of the people taking the Accumulate courses
- Student reflective essays – assessed coursework in which students at Ravensbourne University London reflect on their experience of working with Accumulate
- Media coverage – write-ups of events and activity in newspapers, magazines and online
- Project outputs – the photographs, podcasts, and other creative work generated by learners themselves
- Ad hoc feedback – correspondence between participants and Accumulate staff sent during or after the courses

Activity in 2019

2019 saw a varied programme of activity for Accumulate (which celebrated its 5th birthday at the start of the year). It began with the 'Accumulate is 5' Exhibition at The London Art Fair.



The Accumulate is 5 exhibition at London Art Fair / Briffa Law Firm

This exhibition showcased all the events and history of the charity (from a single portrait photography workshop in one hostel to working with 13 hostels across London). A five-year timeline spread across the gallery walls alongside an exhibition of highlights from the participants' work. The exhibition was held at the Briffa Law Firm's office space.

It was a busy year: a sculpture project in collaboration with BBC and the Art Fund. A multi-disciplinary arts project culminating with an exhibition at a gallery in central London. A podcasting and radio production project funded by Nesta. And finally, a fashion workshop and catwalk show in association with Ted Baker fashion company and the Briffa law firm. Throughout this time Accumulate continued to enjoy continued support and collaboration with Ravensbourne University London.

This short report documents the activity that took place in 2019, the impacts of the work on its beneficiaries, and some reflections on areas of particular strength for Accumulate.

Some headline stats:

Through 2019 there was a total of 176 Accumulate course registrations from people who are homeless with a completion rate of 85%.

This represents a total of 72 individual learners. Just under half of whom progressed onto other courses within the Accumulate curriculum (the majority attending at least 3 courses).

Learners that completed the feedback reported that:

- 100% felt safe
- 100% felt able to contribute
- 100% felt part of the group
- 98% felt they received support guidance throughout the course
- 95% of attendees thought our courses were either excellent or good
- 88% of learners reported that they had achieved the goals they set for themselves

After attending the courses:

- 66% achieved higher self-confidence
- 86% achieved and improved new skills and knowledge
- 24% had improved health and wellbeing
- 70% had the ability to progress to the next step

Expected destinations of learners were as follows:

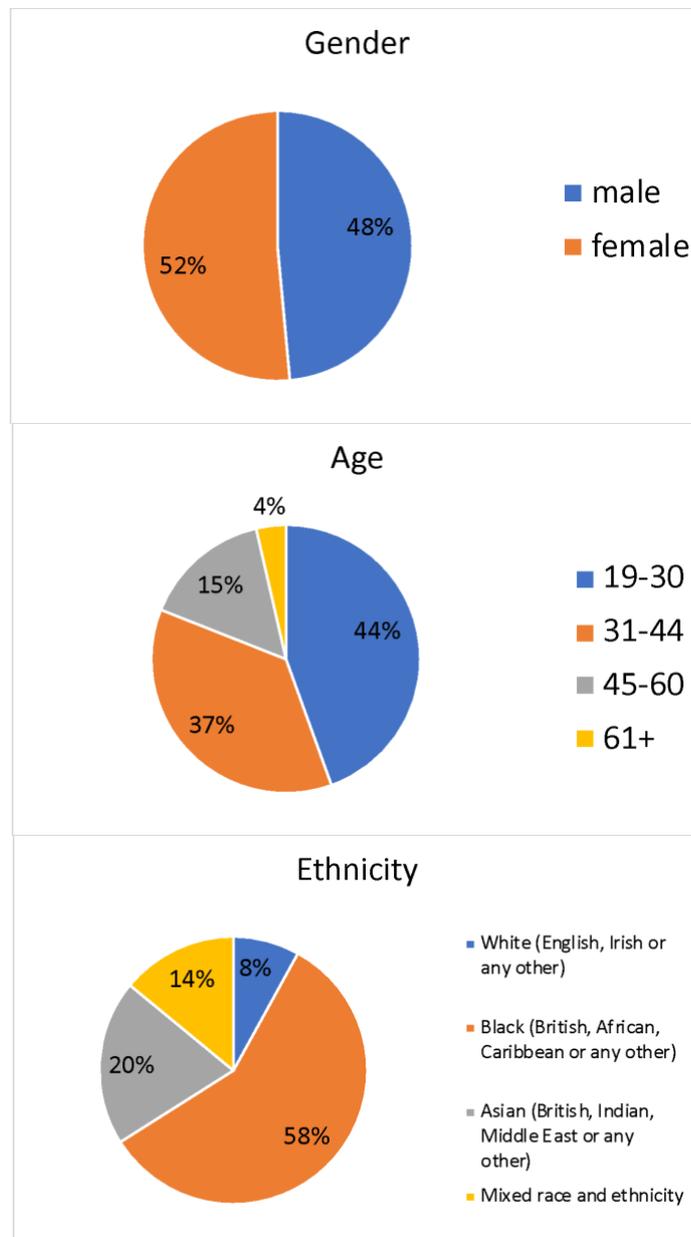
- 68% Attend another course with the same provider
- 9% Attend other college or education institutions
- 11% Work
- 1% Voluntary Work
- 11% Unknown

Scholarships, progression to the Access course at Ravensbourne University London and progression to degrees:

- 5 participants were awarded places on the Access to HE course in Design and Digital Media.
- 3 of these were scholarship places with the other 2 being free due to FE funding criteria.
- 2 Accumulate participants from 2018, and who had been awarded scholarships, progressed to degrees after attending the Access course.

About the course participants

The demographics of the 72 learners in 2019 was as follows:



Project Partners in 2019



AUTOGRAPH

TED BAKER
LONDON



Greenwich Digital Skills



DesignBridge™



★ PRET ★

SAATCHI
GALLERY

+simmons
+simmons

straight forward

BOP
Consulting

BL[ACT]ICULATE

The 2019 Accumulate calendar

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Photography and Visual Art	Youth Culture: Photography 'Accumulate is 5' Exhibition at The London Art Fair.	Youth Culture: Sculpture		Youth Culture: Exhibition at Autograph Gallery	One-Off: Visual Art at Saatchi Gallery	One-Off: Digital Photography Archive Research and Content Creation	One-Off: Digital Photography and Animation			Autograph Residency: Intro to DSLR Photography	Autograph Residency: Exploring and Digital Creativity	Autograph Residency: Exploring and Digital Creativity
Fashion		Youth Culture: Fashion									One-Off: Fashion Project and Digital Storyboarding	
Radio		Youth Culture: Radio Taster Youth Culture: Podcasting	Youth Culture: Podcasting				Radio Station for the Homeless: Podcast Taster Sessions in Hostels Radio Station for the Homeless: Branding	Radio Station for the Homeless: Podcast Taster Sessions in Hostels Radio Station for the Homeless: Branding	Radio Station for the Homeless: Podcast Pre-Production	Radio Station for the Homeless: Podcast Production	Radio Station for the Homeless: Production Radio Station for the Homeless: Post-Production	
Other media		Youth Culture: Zine										

Project: Youth Culture

(Primary funder: Ravensbourne University London and Greenwich Digital Skills)

Youth Culture comprised workshops through January, February and March on photography, fashion, zine (magazine) making, sculpture and podcasting. It culminated in an exhibition at Autograph Gallery, Shoreditch, in April 2019.



The Accumulate participants with their certificates at the end of year exhibition, Autograph, April 2019.

Impacts of Youth Culture:

- Improvement in camera and photography skills
- Increased ability to communicate ideas
- Increased ability to identify 'what makes a good photograph'
- Confidence in customising clothing using different craft techniques
- Ability to create engaging and bold visual content for online magazine
- Familiarity with podcast format
- Proficiency in recording and editing interview audio content

Activity: Three half-day photography workshops held at Autograph Gallery across January and February. Participants learnt the basic skills for operating a DSLR camera, including focus, aperture and lighting and did exercises in portrait, street photography and still life.

Participants: 26 started; 23 finished

Activity: Four days of sculpture workshops in February hosted by the BBC at Broadcasting House, and later at Autograph gallery in Shoreditch (funded by Art UK as part of their countrywide 'Sculpture Around You' project). Working with artist Sadie Edgington learned to photograph and discuss the BBC sculptures in situ – from the famous statues of Ariel and Prospero on the front façade of Broadcasting House to the recent contemporary commissions by Jaume Plensa, Mark Pimlott and Martin Jennings elsewhere in the building. The young people then created their own sculptures based on broadcast which were then exhibited in the Accumulate Youth Culture Exhibition.

Participants: 10 started; 9 finished



The Accumulate sculpture workshops held in collaboration with the BBC.

Activity: Podcasting taster session and introductory-level training through February and March. Participants learnt and practiced interview skills, basic audio recording and editing. They produced content around youth culture which was then available to listen to at the Youth Culture Exhibition.

Participants: 13 started; 13 finished (taster); 7 started; 7 finished (introductory)

Activity: A 2-day long Zine workshop in February held at Youth Club Archive (Museum of Youth Culture) and Ravensbourne University London in which the Accumulate participants created the fourth issue of the Accumulate Zine: DECAY. They were given material from the Youth Club Archive to use for inspiration and the starting point for their visual and written content. This project included a creative writing workshop. Graphic design students from Ravensbourne University London also produced material for the zine which was combined with the Accumulate participants work. Three graphic design students received paid placements to develop and progress all the content into the finished artwork for the DECAY zine.

Participants: 17 started; 15 finished

Activity: A week-long series of fashion workshops to coincide with London Fashion Week (11-14 February). The participants worked full time for a week to customise denim Trucker Jackets that had been donated by Levi's. The workshops were led by David Tovey, ex-homeless artist and campaigner, and Ravensbourne University London fashion tutors (who were assisted by Fashion BA students). The week culminated with the participants modelling their customised Levi's jackets at an on-site fashion shoot at Somerset House and also Printworks, London.

Participants: 15 started; 15 finished



Accumulate participants model their own customised Levi jackets that they made at Somerset House

Activity: 'Youth Culture' was the title of the 2019 Accumulate exhibition at Autograph in Shoreditch, East London. It ran from 10th to 13th April and featured work (photography, sculpture, fashion and zine art) created throughout the project. There was a launch event on 9 April attended by 160 people. Overall it is estimated that 300 people saw the work on display through the run of the exhibition which coincided with the Arts and Participation Conference at Autograph. Three scholarships and two free places were awarded to Accumulate Participants to enable them to progress to the 'Access to HE course in Design and Digital Media' at

Ravensbourne University London. (The scholarships were funded by Ruth Keattch, Simmons and Simmons and Straight Forward Design.)

Media coverage for Youth Culture:

Exhibition: [The National Student 2019](#)

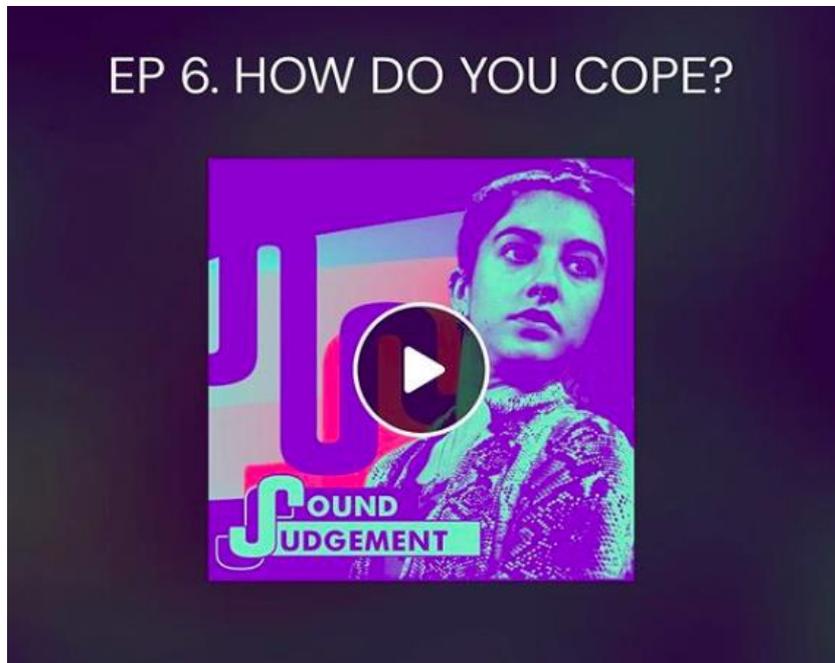
Sculpture: [BBC website](#)

Fashion: [Stylist Magazine 2019](#)

Project: Radio Station for the Homeless

(Primary funder: Nesta – as part of their Amplified project)

Radio Station for the Homeless began with a series of “taster” podcasting sessions in hostels around London from which a group was recruited to develop their skills at Ravensbourne University London. They went on to record and broadcast six episodes of ‘Sound Judgement’. Each podcast episode covered a different theme: homelessness, education, the environment, mental health, the music industry and pets and babies. The Radio Station for the Homeless branding sessions were led by Fahud Ahmed from Design Bridge design agency in collaboration with the Accumulate participants. The initial content was then developed into full design and logo by Advertising students from Ravensbourne University London. The Sound Judgement project was featured on The BBC and in Creative Review and The Big Issue.



Sound Judgement, Radio Station for the Homeless, Spotify and Mixcloud

Impacts of Radio Station for the Homeless:

- Proficiency in recording and editing audio content
- Familiarity with the concepts of branding and brand strategy

- Ability to build a visual identity for a brand
- Increased expertise in storytelling and narrative structure
- Confidence in pitching and presenting ideas
- Three participants went on to attend another Accumulate course and so progressed their learning engagement and skills development
- One participant secured employment after the workshops
- One participant built a studio in their bedroom to begin podcasting their own content

Activity: The project started with one-off five “taster” podcast workshops in July where the tutors went to four different hostels to introduce podcasting to the residents and encourage them to get involved with the project. This was a “taking the learning to the learner” initiative that proved successful in recruiting participants to the follow up course.

Participants: 24 started, 24 finished



Podcast Taster Workshop at East London YMCA hostel

Activity: Two branding workshops led by a facilitator from Design Bridge design agency in July and August. The facilitator enabled the participants to articulate their own objectives, messaging and identities for the Radio Station for the Homeless. The content then was further developed into the name (Sound Judgement) brand logo and visuals for the project which was used for Spotify and associated posters.

Participants: 10 started; 10 finished



Radio Station for the Homeless Branding workshop at Ravensbourne with Design Bridge

Activity: Three workshops on podcasting pre-production techniques in September. Participants attended weekly sessions to start the process of developing the content for Sound Judgement. The focus was on technical skills and building confidence in these areas. All sessions were held at Ravensbourne University London.

Participants: 7 started, 6 finished

Activity: Five workshops on podcast production through October and November. Participants worked in teams and presented their ideas for the podcast episodes to podcast creators from The Guardian and Blacticate. The best concepts were then taken forward, and then researched these for the actual content. The podcasts were recorded at Soho Radio and guests were invited in for the interviews. “Jingle” sessions were produced in collaboration with students from The Global Academy.

Participants: 8 people started, 6 finished

Media coverage for Radio Station for the Homeless:

[The Big Issue 2019](#)

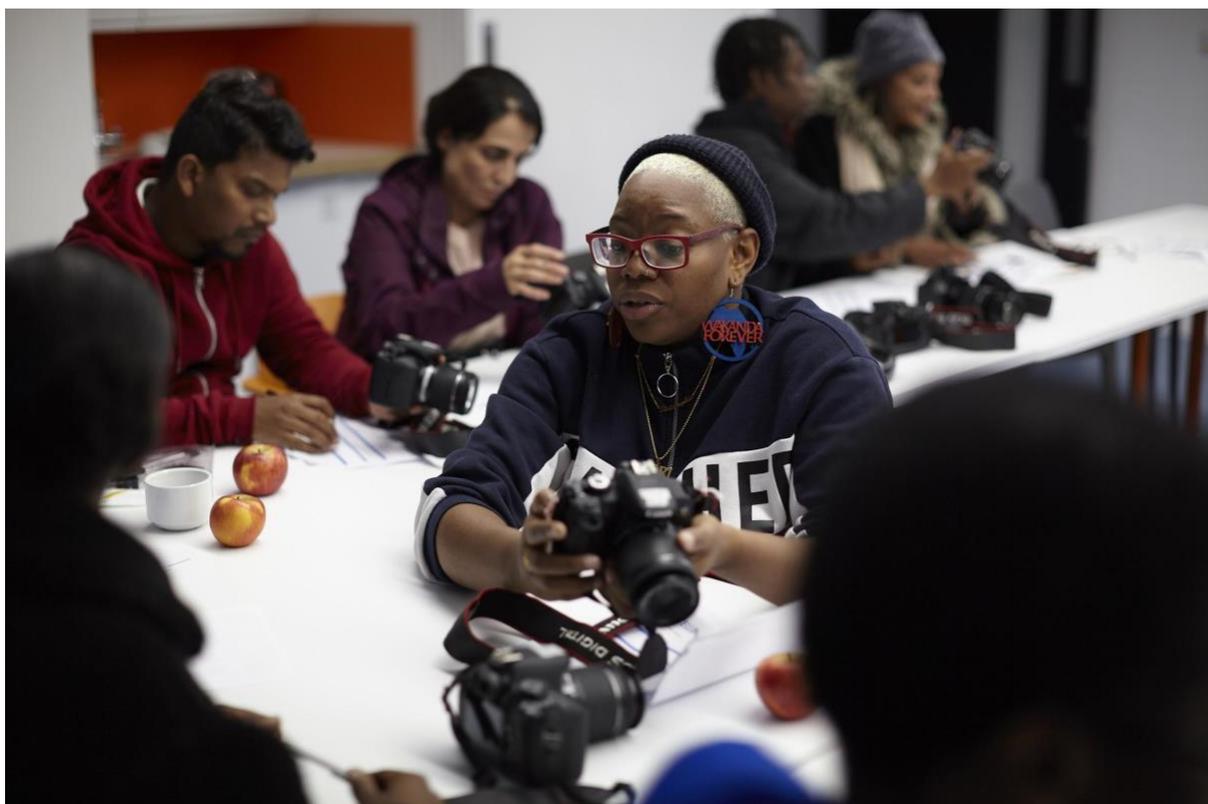
[BBC London 2019](#)

[Creative Review 2020](#)

Project: Six-month Accumulate “Residency” at Autograph Gallery

(Primary funder: Greenwich Digital Skills and Ravensbourne University London)

From October 2019, Accumulate was able to take up a “residency” at Autograph and held its weekly activities in the gallery’s education space.



Accumulate photography workshop at Autograph.

Impacts of Accumulate Residency:

Participant feedback suggests that the shift from having Accumulate activities at different cultural institutions each week to just one was especially important for the wellbeing of the Accumulate participants who are often isolated, disenfranchised and not feeling safe at the hostels. Through Accumulate having a fixed location for its activities, the Accumulate participants were able to connect with a place, have a sense of belonging, feel secure, build their own creative community and be in a safe space. Autograph also holds the archive of The Association of Black Photographers.



Archive Session at Autograph as part of the Accumulate residency.

Activity: Weekly sessions on 'Introduction to DSLR Photography' held at Autograph in October. Participants were given basic skills and exercises to familiarise themselves with a DSLR camera and its operations and build their confidence in this area. Participants also had an archive session looking at work from The Association of Black Photographers.

Participants: 21 started; 16 finished

Activity: Weekly sessions 'Exploring Digital Photography' held at Autograph in November and December. The participants focused on improving their camera and photography skills including

- Composition
- Camera use
- Creativity in photography

Participants: 10 started; 8 finished



Accumulate photography workshop.

Project: ‘No Judgement’ Fashion Workshops

(Primary funder: Greenwich Digital Skills, Ravensbourne University London)

Over a week in November, 14 young people participated in a series of 5 full-day fashion workshops at Ravensbourne. They reworked, redesigned and repurposed surplus clothing stock that had been donated by the Ted Baker fashion company. Each participant designed and made a totally unique outfit for a specific member of the team of the Briffa law firm, responding to the brief of ‘redefining what a lawyer should look like for the 21st century’.

Impacts of ‘No Judgement’ Fashion Workshops:

- Increased ability in design and fashion techniques
- Confidence to make bold visual content for online magazines
- Knowledge of how to style fashion garments for a photoshoot
- Increased ability to plan and execute a project



Recycling fashion workshop with Ted Baker, held at Ravensbourne University London.

One-Off Projects in 2019

There were 3 one-off projects in 2019:

Impacts of one-off projects:

- Knowledge of how a photography archive works
- Increased ability to conduct archive research
- Ability to use drawing to support photography practice
- How to improve photography with digital editing tools
- How to curate a digital exhibition, according to themes, formats or subject matter

Activity: One-day visual arts session at Saatchi Art Gallery (May) Participants toured the galleries, made sketches and then built their own 3D models in response to these.

Participants: 8 started; 8 finished



Accumulate workshop at Saatchi Gallery

Activity: One-day session on ‘digital photography archive research and content creation’ in collaboration with Museum of Youth Culture and Google Culture (June). Participants learned about the influence of the first moon landing on fashion and created collages from archive material from this time. The collages were displayed at The Moon Festival in Greenwich and on the Google Arts and Culture Page.

Participants: 11 started; 11 finished

Activity: Four weekly sessions on ‘digital photography and animation’ arranged in collaboration with Nomadic Gardens (July 2019). Participants practiced their photography skills with a different exercise each week, they also did a drawing exercise. The content produced was made into an animation.

Participants: 9 started; 7 finished

Project: Undergraduate Elective for Ravensbourne Students

Activity: In 2019, the Accumulate offer for students was reconfigured into a curriculum-based “elective” course for second year students who would receive 15 credits on completion. The students actively participated in Accumulate’s work with young homeless people in London, helping specifically on the delivery of the Youth Culture project, including assisting on the workshops and “back room” organisation. At the end of the course they were assessed on their learning and reflection on their engagement with this project.

Participants: 9 students



Accumulate participants and Ravensbourne students at an Accumulate workshop

Impact from Undergraduate Elective for Ravensbourne Students:

- Realisation that the young people on the Accumulate project who were classed as “homeless” were no different to them and the only difference that the students felt that they had was “opportunity”
- Increased understanding about the extensiveness of homelessness, that it is not just street homeless and that a passion for creativity can build communities across groups that would not normally be in contact with each other or even friends.
- Increased skills of self-discipline, time-management, organisational skills, project management and delivery, communication and teamwork. (All valuable assets for the students to include in CVs, use as examples in interviews and use in the workplace.)
- The students that were involved with Accumulate understood more about social action, how creativity can produce social good and how their skills can be used to improve people’s lives, for some it even influenced their career decisions to consider teaching, youth and community work as a career.



Ravensbourne photography student shares his knowledge with an Accumulate participant.

What people say about working with Accumulate

This section presents a few examples of the feedback that is typical from Accumulate participants, Ravensbourne students and project partners.

What participants say

“I have learnt so much in this course, from how to scheme and compose a podcast to presenting skills, edit audio files and use zoom equipment. I am surprised at myself, as I didn't think I'd be able to edit at all but have basic skills now. It has brought up my confidence for presenting and talking in public. How engaging all the sessions were, we had some amazing guests. Thanks to the tutors and the team, they had put in so much effort to help our learning and progress. I feel like this course surpassed my expectations of what I can achieve.”

“I'm very grateful. I'm also enthralled to read such positive praise and constructive feedback. It provides a lot of encouragement to pursue enhancing my technical skills which I was previously very apprehensive about. I would be delighted to look at the further courses having thoroughly enjoyed and feeling empowered by this one.”

“This course gives me a good balance between work and my everyday life. I really enjoy my group, they are all mature, friendly and willing to learn and work together as a team and individually.”

“I learnt that there are not bad ideas, but how to use them properly. I learnt how to use my mind for a creative model. I liked how creative the course was and how the tutors pushed us to do our best”

“I think I have done well in this course. It has allowed me to concentrate with a sense of relaxation and relief from stress.”

“It's been an amazing opportunity to have something so wonderful paid for and has opened some very much needed pathways to a securer and safer future for myself for definite.”

“You all don't judge us but support us in all we do which makes us so happy and get out of bed and look forward to seeing you all and everybody in the group.”

What Ravensbourne students say

“When I first started on this project, I'm embarrassed to admit my ignorance of

understatement on the reality of homeless people. When I thought of homeless people the only thing that would pop up to mind was of beggars on the streets or even refugees that couldn't speak the local language. These people, yes, are homeless, but I failed to identify a much more common category of homeless people, and they are people just like me, that didn't have as much luck as I did."

"I left each session feeling that I did something fulfilling as I was helping people who had a journey that was less fortunate than mine and doing this could have somebody's day, month and life have such an impact that it can make their journey for them a better one in the coming future it's a great feeling."

"I gained various skills that I could apply to my future career. I have improved on my conflict management and team management skills. I also developed my teaching skills during this course. A fair few attendants came to me looking for technical advice or for solutions to technical problems they were having. This forced me to try and think of ways that I could explain what they needed to know without overburdening them with technical words that they would not understand."

"Doing this elective has been one of the most rewarding projects I have done so far with my time at Ravensbourne. Because of this, I may decide to search for jobs like this in the future, paid or voluntary. I had a lot of fun working with people and would enjoy doing it again given the opportunity."

What project partners say

"This project was a great way of interpreting afresh the sculptures we walk past every day, as well as working with these young people to hear what broadcasting really means to them. The results were insightful, surprising and amazing!"
(Robert Seatter, Head of BBC History)

"The BBC's Broadcasting House hosts some amazing sculptures, and it was absolutely fascinating to engage with these young people in reflecting on those sculptures as well as making their own." (Laura Woodfield, Art UK Learning and Engagement Manager)

What audiences say

"What a super 5th birthday party for Accumulate. It was wonderful to watch how you have grown and the successes you've had through the wall panels. Thank you for inviting me – I learned so much more about Accumulate. I also discovered some synergies that I wanted to share with you. Through my volunteer work at the Islington Centre for Refugees and Migrants, I know your 2018 scholarship winner Max. Of course, we were all delighted when he won the award to pursue his photography, but I didn't ask him how. Everyone at the centre is thrilled for Max." (Rosemary Brown, 'Accumulate is 5' Exhibition Visitor)

One of the people who had attended the Youth Culture exhibition at Autograph gallery in April 2019 wrote to the Accumulate team with the following message (shared here with permission from Andrew Mann):



A summary of impacts in 2019



Two Accumulate participants on their first day of starting the Access course at Ravensbourne.

By collating and synthesising all the feedback gathered through 2019 this report presents the following areas where Accumulate has made a positive impact on its participants:

Improved mood and mental health

This is clear from the surveys completed by participants after doing Accumulate activity and the known therapeutic benefits of creating art in structured supportive group settings.

Fulfilled desire for self-expression

There are signs of increased self-efficacy and self-expression from the fact that some of the participants on the Radio Station for the Homeless project continued to develop their interest in podcasting and went so far as to set up their own radio news podcast (and one person building their own home studio)

Acquired new skills and new knowledge

This crops up again and again in the feedback from the learners. At the heart of Accumulate's work is a commitment to high quality practical learning and creative education.

Acquired more confidence and self-esteem

Increased confidence is another impact that comes through strongly in the surveys and feedback offered by participants. Accumulate doesn't just give people a reason to be inspired in themselves, but in others too. One anecdote illustrates this perfectly: the family of one Accumulate learner who had been to see their child's work exhibited at Autograph broke down in tears when describing how proud she was.

Produced work of value

Evaluations of this kind very often forget to mention the fact that people have been generating new work that is of merit to themselves and their creative fields. The Radio Station for the Homeless has generated interesting and high-quality audio content which is broadcasted and serving the needs of young people. The fashion and photography projects have resulted in a portfolio of work that was showcased in a gallery and lives on in the prints and online to influence and inspire others. The Zine is still in circulation and will prompt those who create the next issue. Participants are able to use the creative work they have produced on the Accumulate workshops for their portfolios for entry interviews for the Access course. This enables someone who is homeless and with no employment and limited prior education to become, through Accumulate, a student at a specialist creative and digital media university. Through the Accumulate scholarship scheme in 2019 five Accumulate participants became Access students at Ravensbourne, with 2 from previous years Accumulate cohorts progressing from the access course onto degrees. So far, 14 Accumulate participants have progressed to study on the Access course with 5 of these going on to degrees.

Conclusion

The concluding section of this report represents the opinions of Dr James Doeser, as independent evaluator of Accumulate's activity in 2019. There are four main conclusions worth drawing out from this work:

The value of the Autograph partnership

This partnership is a good illustration of the way that Accumulate is developing relationships with cutting edge and relevant art practitioners in London. It doesn't just lend a bit of glamour and a place in which to work and develop, Accumulate and Autograph are a melding of complementary values: quality production and social impact.

The value of the reconfigured Ravensbourne University partnership

It is very common for community arts organisations to rely on the expertise and enthusiasm of volunteers. This means the work with vulnerable people is often carried out by those with the means and the motivation to do it: this isn't always the right kind of people, and is not always reflective of the people they are trying to help. By devising an elective module for students at Ravensbourne Accumulate has been able to offer something stimulating and meaningful to all involved.

The commitment to a continuity of learning and engagement

The practice that Accumulate has developed of offering taster sessions and then a progressive learning journey to greater expertise and proficiency means that the structure of this learning is more beneficial than the short-lived and one-off sessions that so frequently comprise the experience of those in homeless settings.

The branding of Accumulate

By calling themselves 'The Art School for the Homeless' Accumulate is making a commitment to a degree of quality in what they do – a statement that the Accumulate participant's learning and student experience should be just as good as that of any other arts-based university. It's about not sacrificing quality of teaching, of materials, of peer support. It's also a statement about the idiosyncratic atmosphere that makes art school so special – a safe space for people who are creative, and who may feel outside of the norm, where they can test out their ideas and visual expression with mutual support and a sense of belonging.