

# LIVERPOOL COMMUNITY CULTURAL CHAMPIONS PROGRAMME

IMPACT REPORT

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Executive Summary .....	3
2. Introduction.....	4
3. About Liverpool Community Cultural Champions Programme.....	4
3.1. The champions.....	5
3.2. The aims of the programme.....	5
3.3. Mentors and Steering Group.....	6
3.4. About the evaluation.....	7
4. Methodology:.....	7
4.1. Well-being Impact tool:.....	7
4.2. Private diary and blogs:.....	7
4.3. Focus groups/In depth interviews: .....	8
4.4. Development of the evaluation framework.....	8
5. What is a Cultural Champion?.....	9
5.1. What is culture? .....	9
5.2. Views of the city’s cultural institutions.....	9
5.3. Why be a cultural champion? .....	11
5.4. Different approaches to the role.....	13
6. Outputs: activities and blogs.....	16
7. Outcomes.....	16
7.1. Champions’ Initial expectations and Aims .....	16
7.2. Outcomes.....	17
8. Quality of Life impacts.....	19
8.1. Quantitative analysis: wheel of Wellbeing.....	19
8.2. Health.....	22
8.3. Change in attitude.....	23
8.4. Personal Growth.....	25
8.5. Unexpected/Novelty .....	26
8.6. Self-expression.....	26
8.7. Making a difference   Sense of community   Engagement.....	27
8.8. Enthusiasm   humour/fun.....	30
9. Conclusions.....	31
10. Appendix: indicative Definition of well-being indicators .....	32

## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Liverpool Community Cultural Champions Programme was conceived to build on the local interest and participation in Liverpool European Capital of Culture 2008. It was overseen by the local strategic partnership and run by Liverpool City Council. It ran from April 2010, with this report covering the experience of the first wave of champions up to April 2011.

The aims of the project were to:

- to strengthen the links between the Liverpool First Cultural Task Group and cultural activities taking place in Liverpool's five neighbourhoods
- to give the Champions an understanding of how decisions about culture in Liverpool are made
- to raise awareness of the importance of culture in the neighbourhoods
- to enable the Champions to have a strong voice in the city and to influence the cultural agenda, and
- provide a cohort for examining the impacts of culture on individuals particularly around wellbeing.

The champions lived in each of the five neighbourhood areas of the city, were locally born and had an interest but no formal involvement in culture. During the year they were asked to attend a wide range of cultural events, to communicate about their experiences to others, via the dedicated blog or other route and to promote Liverpool culture in any other way they chose.

The evaluation was carried out using a combination of quantitative data gathering regarding impact on well being<sup>1</sup> and in-depth qualitative interviews and focus groups.

Overall it was an enjoyable, interesting programme and had a massive effect on the well being of the champions. It also placed culture more firmly on the agenda in the city.

They attended up to 80 events each, communicated their experience to others via over 250 blog posts<sup>2</sup>, via email and in person. Between them they carried out a number of interviews with leading cultural figures, organised visits to the city's cultural organisations and put on a comedy night.

There was an increase in the well-being of the champions on all the areas tracked, but particularly in terms of health, personal growth, change in attitude and self-expression.

Champions reported concrete changes in clinical and sub-clinical conditions (particularly mental health) which were echoed by the subjective well-being measures. They also felt more confident from having challenged themselves to do something that they hadn't done before, whether that was attending a new art-form, writing publicly, or advocating and speaking publicly.

They changed their relationship with the cultural sector and their type and level of engagement with it, specifically becoming engaged promoters and critics of the sector, and known within the sector, as well as audiences and visitors.

Undoubtedly the attitude of the champions played a large part in the success of the programme as they all had a massive commitment to their city, culture and their role and worked to make the most of the opportunity.

<sup>1</sup> Using the Impacts 08 developed Wheel of Wellbeing – see main report for explanation.

<sup>2</sup> <http://liverpoolculturalchampions.wordpress.com/>

The support of the city council, both officers and elected members was also crucial, in particular in giving the champions a sense of the value of what they were doing and in constructing the role of Community Cultural Champion as meaningful and attractive.

The first cohort of champions had a very positive experience and the experience had a massive impact on their well being. They are keen to support future cohorts and Liverpool City Council is developing a partnership to continue the project and recruit new champions.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

This report explores the impacts on participants of the Liverpool Community Cultural Champions Programme, the pilot year of which ran from April 2010. It is not a full evaluation of the programme as there was a wish to concentrate on the experiences of champions and the impact of their participation. Some aspects of evaluation are included in this report and further comments have been fed back into the programme steering group.

The research also provided an opportunity to pilot the wheel of wellbeing online tool the results of which, and how they correlate with qualitative findings, form the core of the report below.

## 3. ABOUT LIVERPOOL COMMUNITY CULTURAL CHAMPIONS PROGRAMME

The Liverpool Community Cultural Champions Programme was conceived as a result of being European Capital of Culture 2008 and the huge response from local people in terms of valuing culture and wanting to become more involved. It was run on behalf of the Cultural Task Group by Culture Liverpool, Liverpool City Council's culture department.

Under this scheme, Culture Liverpool invited Liverpool residents to nominate themselves or others as 'Community Cultural Champions' for their neighbourhood,<sup>3</sup> the applicants had to write, in no more than one hundred words, about a cultural event in Liverpool which they were involved in or a cultural event they went to see in 2008/09 and the impact this event had on them or how it changed their life.

After a three month application period (advertised in the local newspaper, on the radio, by e-blast and on the internet), from the many nominations, fifteen candidates were short-listed by a panel of local councillors and officers and invited to attend a celebration dinner at Liverpool Town Hall. The celebration event took place in March 2010 and five cultural champions were announced, one representing each of the neighbourhoods across the city for a twelve month period (April 2010 – March 2011).

From the start the scheme has had strong support and time input from senior officers and from elected members, including and particularly the two executive members who've held the culture brief during the time of the programme.

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<sup>3</sup> In terms of local service delivery, Liverpool is divided into five neighbourhood management areas each having just under 100,000 population. For more information on the areas and a map see: [http://www.liverpool.gov.uk/Environment/neighbourhood\\_management\\_services/Neighbourhood\\_management\\_areas/index.asp](http://www.liverpool.gov.uk/Environment/neighbourhood_management_services/Neighbourhood_management_areas/index.asp)

### 3.1. THE CHAMPIONS

The five cultural champions were:

**Paul Argent**, of Mossley Hill who said 'Biennial changed the way he understood modern art'. Paul represents Liverpool South.

**Kristal Clark**, of Wavertree who volunteered to help at Abandon Normal Devices (AND) Festival at FACT and realised there was more to life than work and the pub. Kristal represents South Central.

**Donna Williamson**, of Vauxhall who was inspired by The Folly, which she helped with as a volunteer at The Rotunda. Donna represents City and North.

**Barbara McGrouther**, of Tuebrook who became an 08 Volunteer in late 2007 and can't forget the Respectables Exhibition. She loved showing people 'Turning the Place Over' too. Barbara represents Liverpool East.

**Becky Smith**, of Walton who supports people with learning disabilities and was inspired by how Superlambananas engaged them. Becky represents Alt Valley.

The role of a Cultural Champion is to:

- attend a variety of cultural events and activities and input into a culture blog their comments and views which will help promote the event or activity to readers of the blog, in turn raising the profile of culture. The blog website address is [www.liverpoolculturalchampions.wordpress.com](http://www.liverpoolculturalchampions.wordpress.com)
- promote arts and culture within their neighbourhood
- mentored in providing brief information updates on culture at their Neighbourhood District Committee
- meet regularly as a group facilitated by a representative of Culture Liverpool to provide an update on their experiences and activities

### 3.2. THE AIMS OF THE PROGRAMME

The aims of the cultural champion scheme are:

- to strengthen the links between the Liverpool First Cultural Task Group and cultural activities taking place in Liverpool's five neighbourhoods
- to give the Champions an understanding of how decisions about culture in Liverpool are made
- to raise awareness of the importance of culture in the neighbourhoods
- to enable the Champions to have a strong voice in the city and to influence the cultural agenda, and
- provide a cohort for examining the impacts of culture on individuals particularly around wellbeing.

### 3.3.MENTORS AND STEERING GROUP

Each Cultural Champion had two mentors to support and advise them throughout the year, one being a councillor within their neighbourhood, who is also a member of the Culture and Tourism Select Committee. The councillors' role was to support the champion during the Neighbourhood District Committee and prepare them beforehand. The other mentor is a representative of Liverpool First and Liverpool City Council who supported the champions throughout the year through one to one meetings and IT support.

The staff and political mentors for each of the five cultural champions were:

**Table 1: Mentor allocation**

Area	Champion	Staff Mentor	Political Mentor
Alt Valley	Becky Smith	Graham Boxer - Head of Arts, Heritage and Participation, Culture Liverpool	Cllr Violet Bebb - Member of the Culture and Tourism Select Committee
South Liverpool	Paul Argent	Christine Peach - Neighbourhood Participation Communications Manager, Liverpool First	Cllr Tina Gould - Opposition Spokesperson for Culture and Tourism
City and North	Donna Williamson	Dominic Smith - Communications Officer, Liverpool First	Cllr Wendy Simon - Cabinet Member for Culture and Tourism
Liverpool East	Barbara McGrouther	Alicia Smith - Arts and Participation Manager, Culture Liverpool	Cllr Brian Dowling - Member of the Culture and Tourism Select Committee
South Central	Kristal Clark	Christine Peach - Neighbourhood Participation Communications Manager, Liverpool First	Cllr Anna Rothery - Chair of the Culture and Tourism Select Committee

In addition to the mentors, a Cultural Champions Steering Group was established which met every quarter prior to the Cultural Champions meeting. The Steering Group membership consisted of -:

- Dominic Smith - Communications Officer, Liverpool First
- Graham Boxer - Head of Arts, Heritage and Participation, Culture Liverpool
- Alicia Smith - Arts and Participation Manager, Culture Liverpool
- Christine Peach - Neighbourhood Participation Communications Manager, Liverpool First
- Mike Doran, News Officer - Press Office
- John Ramsden, Head of Communications - Press Office
- Samantha McEvoy, Partnership Co-ordinator - Culture Liverpool
- Ruth Melville, Freelance Research and Evaluation
- Dave Ellis, Research Assistant

### 3.4.ABOUT THE EVALUATION

In order to assess the wellbeing impacts of the programme on participants an experienced evaluator was included as part of the programme from the inception stage, and regular opportunities for evaluation were built into the programme.

The aims of the evaluation were to:

Evaluate the effectiveness of the pilot scheme and guide decision making on whether to continue or amend the initiative, in particular to:

- Explore how being a Liverpool Community Cultural Champion changes the way champions:
- View Culture
- View, understand and engage with Liverpool's cultural offer
- View, understand and engage with their neighbourhoods and their own role in them
- Experience life in general – in particular how they link any change to their role as Liverpool Community Cultural Champions.
- Assess and recommend how the lessons from this project can be implemented on a wider basis

## 4. METHODOLOGY:

The evaluation used a mixture of qualitative data gathering, through focus groups, interviews and observations and quantitative data gathering through the online Well-being impact tool developed by Impacts 08 – [www.impacts08.org](http://www.impacts08.org)

### 4.1.WELL-BEING IMPACT TOOL:

The tool is used to track change in perceived quality of life (on an agreed set of measures) over time, and give a quantified output. The group jointly selected a group of measures they felt were meaningful to them, these ten measures were tracked over the course of the programme. The wheel was thus updated quarterly and gave a visual representation of how the champions scored their 'wellbeing'. This was used to inform the focus group reflections as well as giving a score.

Please note that this tool is in pilot stage and thus that this project was in effect piloting the tool as used in this way.

### 4.2.PRIVATE DIARY AND BLOGS:

Liverpool Community Cultural Champions were asked to regularly record their experiences in two ways- one is a publicly available 'blog' in which they can write about the cultural events they attended, how it made them feel etc.

The other is a private journal in which they are encouraged to write honestly about their fears, hopes and expectations of the year, how they feel it is going as they go along, and reflect on events in a more honest way – if they feel they have other things to say. This journal was to be private unless they choose to share it but acts as a resource and reminder of their experiences

that they can feed into the focus group. At the end of the year, the Liverpool Community Cultural Champions were encouraged to re-read their journals prior to the final focus group reflection on their experience. In practice this element wasn't kept up due to the already high workloads of the champions, though several champions did keep individual records or reflect personally in the blog.

#### 4.3.FOCUS GROUPS/IN DEPTH INTERVIEWS:

There were be a total of five group sessions for the Liverpool Community Cultural Champions evaluation – one was during the induction, then quarterly to reflect on the cultural experiences over the last three months, then at the end of the year. Around nine months into the programme one-to-one interviews were carried out with each champion to allow further development of ideas and issues arising.

#### 4.4.DEVELOPMENT OF THE EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

As explained above, the central element of the evaluation is the Wheel of Wellbeing which was developed initially through the work of Impacts 08 – Liverpool European Capital of Culture Research Programme<sup>4</sup>, but didn't reach release stage during that project. The Liverpool Community Cultural Champions programme offered a chance to pilot the further developed tool with a group of people engaging in an enhanced level of cultural activity over a whole year, and is also a way of collecting both quantitative data and to provoke qualitative discussion about often hard to discuss issues and concepts such as well-being.

The Wheel of Wellbeing offers a group the chance to score themselves individually, in private, over a set time period on a range of 'indicators' of well-being, either picked by the group leader or by the group as a whole. In the case of the Liverpool Community Cultural Champions, the champions themselves chose the areas they wished to look at using a group exercise, during the induction session.

This involved the opportunity to pick any terms they wanted to veto, and then any they wanted to suggest – up to ten. There wasn't a great deal of time and the terms are quite abstract so this was a difficult exercise but from analysis and matching with 'five ways to well-being',<sup>5</sup> ten values were chosen:

Health | engagement | development and personal growth | changing attitude | the unexpected/novelty | creativity and self-expression | enthusiasm | humour/fun | sense of community | making a difference

The idea of the wheel is that participants are able to interpret the 'values' as they choose, but there was a request for these to be made more clear so a set of questions was designed for the champions (in discussion with them) to give an idea of how to interpret the 'values', however they are flexible for other interpretations. This set of questions is in Appendix 1. The champions were asked to assess how positive or negative they'd felt in these areas over the past week or so at the

<sup>4</sup> See [www.impacts08.net](http://www.impacts08.net) for further information on Impacts 08.

<sup>5</sup> 2010 is Liverpool Year of Health and Wellbeing, they have adopted the "five ways to wellbeing" as a challenge to action for their citizens, based on work carried out by nef in 2008: <http://www.2010healthandwellbeing.org.uk/index.php?page=about>

points when they are asked to fill it in. The idea is that each individual's 'scores' will be assessed against their own previous / baseline scores, not against some external measure.

Champions filled the wheel in 5 times, once as a baseline, three times as interim steps allowing both discussion on the wheel and changes during the focus groups and also an opportunity to spot outliers and deviation from trend.

## 5. WHAT IS A CULTURAL CHAMPION?

### 5.1. WHAT IS CULTURE?

Champions were asked at the beginning, middle and end of the programme to write 'what is culture' for them. The two word clouds below<sup>6</sup> show the main words used before (left) and mid-way and after (right). With such a small group we shouldn't draw too strong conclusions but perhaps the reduction in prominence of the word 'art' and the increase in 'people' is potentially interesting.



What was clear was that for this group, 'culture' already had a broad meaning and also was diversely understood. For example one focused on 'community' throughout her replies, while another focussed on 'art', 'music' and 'theatre' as well as the buildings of the city. One has a particularly broad view of culture as "Everything we do over and above that which is necessary for life", a view he repeated faithfully almost word for word every time I asked the question.

### 5.2. VIEWS OF THE CITY'S CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS

All of the champions had grown up in Liverpool and came to the role with a very clear picture of the city's cultural establishments, often gained from childhood or through entertaining children:

*"... that memory of the Empire theatre, how massive it was, how exciting it was, the sounds and smells and the lights and you might even get an ice-cream, it was just like*

<sup>6</sup> Word Clouds represent qualitative answers to questions based on the number of times each word is used (excluding common joining words 'and', 'the' etc. The larger the font of the word, the more often it is used. These were Created in 'wordle' <http://www.wordle.net/> written by Jonathan Feinberg, I edited the answers only to remove a few spaces to preserve meaning - etc 'walkerartgallery' as one word so that it wasn't split up.

*the most amazing thing. I think because it was such a rare treat, we really, really appreciated it. It was massive, it was like better than Christmas.”*

*“... we always went the museum with them because it was cheap and cheerful and free, you know you've got 4 kids, you need cheap and cheerful, but didn't go there for the culture, went there because it was a place to take the kids that was free and you could look at the nice things that were in cabinets and you know you could have your butties and it was a day out, it wasn't a day out to find culture, it was a day out that was free and you could walk there and walk back.”*

Most of the city's main cultural institutions (including buildings and architecture as well as theatres, art galleries, music venues and festivals) were mentioned at various points and there wasn't a need among champions to discover the actual existence of places, more to recognise the breadth of what they offered and the potential for engagement and possibly difference in approaches and aims from what was assumed. There were some negative views of the aims and intent of the institutions:

*“posh people going to the Tate at openings of posh stuff”*

*“I do have, not ... reservations about those big galleries, I don't know how accessible they are to everybody, I like them but I don't understand a lot of what I'm looking at. I went to a Toulouse Lautrec exhibition recently and that's Ok for me because they're just nice pictures, people often have them as posters in their homes and they just appreciate that just as a nice thing to look at, something just to appreciate but I suppose a lot of modern art ... I just don't get and I don't know whether I'm supposed to even get it or whether I'm supposed to just look at it as completely objectively and go, yeah that's just a head on a stick and nothing more or am I supposed to find meaning, and I suspect that galleries probably prefer it that way and think that, well if you're going to come appreciate this art then you should do some background work and really ... you know there's a reason why it's not for everybody, that it's not just this easily consumed kind of thing like programmes on telly, you have to put some work in order to appreciate it. I don't know.”*

*“I've been trying to approach places as if I've never been there before. Like if you think in the Walker ..., even the entrance is really imposing. If you walk in there and you don't know where you're going or what you're meant to do, it's off putting and people are just as likely to think, oh no it's OK. I mean I know myself in places, the Bluecoat, I've done it myself, I've walked in and thought, oh god, I'm not really sure I don't know what, people are all milling and doing whatever their doing and you kind of feel like, it's not really for me, I shouldn't be here”*

And indeed one of the champions came to a stronger view that art isn't necessarily for everyone and that if someone doesn't like it then it might be because they genuinely don't like it, rather than that they haven't given it a chance yet.

However for all the champions the year gave them a different level of engagement with the cultural establishment which is reflected in their confidence to comment and engage – to the extent of feeling able to promote ideas for things they feel are lacking (e.g. comedy night for female

comedians, more ukulele performances) or go to events and mix with an amazing range of people (including Cynthia Lennon with whom Barbara bonded one evening) feeling confident in their right to be there.

There was a definite change in the sense of the role of the cultural sector, from being grateful for the offer of some experience to be passively received, to having an obligation to offer something actively enjoyed:

*“I suppose now I expect more actually, I now expect more of the people who can, to do ... I expect people with power to use that power to engage more people to give more people opportunity, choice, chance, I expect inspirational people to be bloody inspirational.”*

### 5.3.WHY BE A CULTURAL CHAMPION?

Champions all talked about being extremely excited and honoured by being selected for the role. The fact that there was a competition and a number of people were shortlisted made the whole process seem more prestigious and the award ceremony (which was held at the Town Hall with full ceremony) was frequently cited as one of the highlights of the year. This element of such a programme can be underestimated by project managers and external viewers but was clearly important in giving the champions a sense of the importance of their role and how they were valued. Likewise business cards and council email addresses, as well as recognition by members of the cultural establishment were greatly valued in making the role meaningful.

In terms of why champions applied for the role, the main reasons given were that they had done something to do with culture during 2008, often greatly increasing the level of their cultural engagement and they wanted either to further develop their cultural engagement or to give something back. Most of the champions had been encouraged by others (either friends or colleagues more involved in the cultural establishment) to apply. At the beginning they were very unclear as to what shape the role would have but they were very clear that it wasn't just about getting free tickets (which had been and remained one of the fears of some of the programme organisers) and saw it very much as about:

- Advocacy and promoting the excitement and enjoyment they felt from cultural engagement to a wider group;
- Getting involved in developing the shape of the future cultural sector of the city from a community point of view.
- Personal development – trying out new things and challenging themselves to do something new;

For several of the champions there was a very strong sense of community service and giving something back – either to the city as a whole (they are all clearly Liverpool people with a strong sense of that as a community) or to the smaller community they serve.

Another thing to note is that all five champions continued in the role despite four gaining new (and more challenging) jobs and one experiencing a serious bout of illness. None of the champions seriously considered giving up (despite conversations about it and the steering group making it clear that no one would be annoyed with them for doing so).

Specific outcomes are discussed further below but the reasons they chose to carry on and what they feel they got out of the programme include;

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## PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

This was an extremely clear outcome for at least four of the champions (one emphasised the sense of making a difference much more), rising from being more of an incidental potential benefit at the outset. The areas of personal development included learning new skills, challenging themselves to do something they'd never done before (from attending an art-form they found intimidating to performing in public or making a public statement), viewing themselves differently and feeling different about themselves and their life chances.

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## SENSE OF MAKING A DIFFERENCE

This was the area where champions intended to have an impact and experienced most issues. There were numerous examples of where they made a difference, from putting on events that wouldn't have happened otherwise, to getting issues on the cultural agenda and raising culture as an issue on a wider agenda. However there was some discomfort with the 'community' element of their role and a lack of agreement as to what their 'community' was and where they should be making a difference, as well as several champions feeling not able to do 'enough' due to work constraints. There was also an issue with blogging which was designed as the main way of communicating their cultural champion experiences out to a wider audience and which worked better for some champions than others.

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## SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY

In all discussions in focus groups and interviews, the champions stated a clear view of the responsibility they had taken on in applying to become cultural champions and had a sense that they ought to continue, and usually that they ought to do more. It is worth noting here that a large part of the role of mentors and steering group was to encourage the champions not to be as ambitious in what they set out to do. This drive to do more was clearly coming from the champions themselves. Some of it arose from the different approaches taken by champions to their role, with those taking a more online approach feeling that they maybe weren't engaging with their community enough, and those doing more community engagement feeling that they weren't as good as those who blogged. There was great camaraderie among the champions but there were also numerous occasions when they compared themselves (and nominated someone else as 'the champion champion' - jokingly but perhaps tellingly).

It is difficult to determine where this sense of responsibility came from and a lot of it can be put down to the character of the champions themselves, but part of it definitely seems to have arisen from the respect given to the programme, at the outset by the city council and particularly certain councillors, and by some members of the cultural sector, as well as the behaviour of the steering group and in particular by the overall manager of the programme who treated the champions with immense respect and with a sense of gratitude for what they were doing throughout. This is further evidenced by the responses of champions to situations where they were not treated in this way.

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## BENEFITS

Getting 'free tickets' and invitations to private views or access to special events was a clear perk of the role, which champions enjoyed and made use of. Initially this was seen as a large part of the role, with the proviso that they knew they were expected to comment on them in the blogs or to a wider community later, and that if needed they would be expected to speak at events in some way on behalf of 'ordinary' Liverpool people.

They also appreciated the business cards, and access to recording equipment and videos.

The training and support in using technology – mainly the blog but they were also supported to use other online tools particularly to share photos and tweet – was appreciated and three of the champions greatly increased their technical competence (from almost zero in one case) while the other two acknowledged that they had learned a lot, though didn't put it into practice as much.

There was some concern from the programme steering group that these opportunities would be or were taken for granted and the programme seen as a 'jolly' for the individuals concerned. This didn't turn out to be the case and champions had a strong sense that this was a specific honour and opportunity they were being offered that they had an obligation to make best use of, in promoting to others and in commenting back. In particular there was an attempt to not simply attend art-forms with which people were comfortable but to go to everything and anything that was offered in order to try new things.

There were requests for more support and 'benefits', specifically directed around access and ability to disseminate online – e.g. requests for bus passes, and smart phones to allow blogging on the go.

#### 5.4. DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO THE ROLE

All five champions were very strong characters with different experiences, views and approaches to the role of cultural champion. As there wasn't a blueprint for being a Liverpool community cultural champion none of these is the 'right' way to do it and certainly none of these is 'wrong'.<sup>7</sup>

#### BARBARA

Barbara had been a very active volunteer during 2008 and remained part of the volunteers group helping out with welcoming people to the city and giving information at the 08 Place (tourist information centre) throughout the year as cultural champion. Previously she'd been a volunteer in the cultural scene through involvement in ice skating and dress making for parades for most of her life. Her view of the role of Liverpool Community Cultural Champion was very much about promoting the positive element of culture in the city, and her main learning and effort in the year went into learning more and linking in more with her local neighbourhood of Liverpool East (the area she 'officially' covered as a champion). She also learnt how to blog and blogged extensively about the cultural events she attended including events and activities in her neighbourhood. Her three things she was most proud of for the year were:

- Learning to blog

<sup>7</sup> NB As it would be virtually impossible to anonymise this section so I am using the champions' names throughout

- Interacting with total strangers and ‘bigging up the champions and Liverpool
- Helping and volunteering at events

Overall her approach to the role was advocacy of culture and of Liverpool’s (especially her neighbourhood’s) cultural offer to a wider community

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## BECKY

Becky had a strong interest in cultural activity and a commitment to community engagement but didn’t know either her local community or the wider cultural establishment as well as she’d like and took a dual role in getting to know what was going on locally but also finding out more about what was available in the city and trying to make it more accessible to people who might not otherwise engage. She trips for over 100 people from within the city and well beyond, particularly including people she supported (her job was to support people to live in a community setting) to cultural events in town and locally. She also helped arrange a tour of one of the local cultural institutions for the champions so that they had more idea of how the sector worked. She didn’t blog much though she did enjoy doing so and her few blogs were well written and it improved her confidence that she had been able to do them. She feels she gained a great deal in terms of confidence in her role and a lot of knowledge and new attitude to the local community arts scene and to the city centre culture sector.

Overall her approach was to work on a one-to-one basis to encourage people to take that first step to enjoying culture through personal contact and enthusiasm.<sup>8</sup>

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## DONNA

Donna had been very involved in her own community’s (an area smaller than the neighbourhood she was to represent/cover) cultural activities through her role at a local community and arts organisation, during 2008 she’d been involved in a number of cultural projects including a European cultural exchange. She was already very rooted in her community and in touch with a lot of people locally. Her aimed areas for development over the year were to broaden her reach to the wider area she covered but she also gained a lot in terms of personal development and confidence in particular as acting as an advocate for culture speaking at a number of events aimed beyond the sector. She didn’t use the blog much, citing mainly issues in fitting blogging into her day (with a full-time job and having to fight kids for access to the computer at night). Partway through the year she decided not to worry about not blogging and concentrate on other aspects of the role. Her three things she was most proud of for the year were:

- Representing my community at local organisations
- Giving a speech at St Georges Hall on stage in the concert hall on culture and health
- Giving out my card, allowing me to start great conversations.

Overall her approach to the role was engaging with the community and advocacy of community located culture to a wider group (via an email list of over 200, not via the blog) and advocating wider culture to the community.

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<sup>8</sup> Becky and Kristal were not at the session where ‘most proud’ questionnaire was filled in.

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## KRISTAL

Kristal hadn't done much volunteering prior to applying to be a cultural champion though she had helped out at the new media festival AND and had been inspired by that to challenge herself further, she says she was also looking for ways to make a change in her life and feels that the champion experience supported and encouraged her to do that (starting a new career and a university course). She embraced the blog opportunity, despite not having done much writing before and wrote witty, engaging blogs about her responses to the cultural experiences she was attending. She became quite concerned about the lack of opportunities for female comedians to perform and with no prior experience put on a very successful female comedy night which is probably going to become a regular event. She also strongly embraced the idea of challenging herself out of her comfort zone and feels she went through a change in attitude and increase in confidence in terms of what she could achieve. The area she felt least happy with was the element of community engagement as she didn't feel a sense of belonging to a particular geographical community.

Overall her approach to the role was one of challenging herself and experiencing new things, and sharing this experience to broaden out what culture could mean to her and people like her.

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## PAUL

Paul had been a volunteer during 2008 and continued up to and during his year as cultural champion, he had also blogged and done a bit of online commenting prior to being a champion though hadn't consistently blogged about culture. Paul's focus for the year was on broadening out the appeal of culture to a wider audience. He identified his community as being people like him (middle aged, probably middle class, men, in full time work) and wanted to reach them with a message on the value of culture: that (like him) you could enjoy art, music etc but also like football. He also saw the role of cultural champions as being 'citizen reporters' and informing the cultural establishment. He carried out a number of interviews with cultural figures in the city and reported them on the blog. His approach to blogging was to comment on the political and social issues of culture as well as the events, exhibitions and performances. He also reported a real sense of personal development including a building of self-confidence for example using his 'persona' as cultural champion to allow him to talk to people and ask for things he wouldn't otherwise have had the confidence to do (including promoting his ukulele orchestra!). The area of the role he was least happy with was the element of 'community' and the assumption (from the steering group and programme) that the champions should promote/engage with the area in which they live, he doesn't feel a strong sense of community with that area of the city. His three things he was most proud of for the year were:

- Getting interviews with city's cultural leaders
- Getting Liverpool ukulele orchestra gigs at cruise liner terminal
- Body of work done on blog including articles, photos, movies and a poll.

Overall his approach to the role was of advocating for culture and commenting upon culture from a non-sectoral perspective.

## 6. OUTPUTS: ACTIVITIES AND BLOGS

Perhaps the most tangible aspect to being a champion is the cultural events attendance that the post offers and encourages. All the champions have thrown themselves into this, each attending up to 80 events over the year (bear in mind that all but one of them has a full-time job). These ranged from specially organized opportunities such as an interview with Vasiliy Petrenko (conductor of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra), backstage a tour of FACT Centre for Creative Digital Media and an (exclusive) interview with Phil Redmond to invitations to premiers and openings, such as a local art gallery, or the Picasso Preview at Tate Liverpool, to free tickets to popular shows at the Liverpool Empire and attendance at events within their own communities.

The champions wrote about their cultural experiences and views in their blogs, accessible at <http://liverpoolculturalchampions.wordpress.com/>

By the end of the year (April 2010 – May 2011) there had been 266 posts written, with all five champions getting involved though to different degrees (with the most prolific writing 119, and the least 6<sup>9</sup>), over the time period this is on average between 5 and 6 a week. The blogs have a reasonable profile and are linked to from some of the local cultural venues' websites and blogs. However the programme was not satisfied with the level of profile the site had, as this is supposed to be the main publicity route for the champions, and there was ongoing work and discussion over the year to further develop it.

Over the year the blog site received over 17,000 views, with up to 223 in one day, and in addition to the blogs themselves there are 174 comments, 321 tags and 15 categories.

The champions themselves took a lead in further raising the profile of their work including encouraging other blogs to link to them and mentioning and promoting them to organisations and individuals.

## 7. OUTCOMES

### 7.1. CHAMPIONS' INITIAL EXPECTATIONS AND AIMS

At the initial session, all champions reported an enormous sense of pride in being selected as champions, and a real commitment to making a difference through their work. They were not clear about how their championing role would manifest practically and were looking for some guidance as to this, but had ideas about what sort of cultural activities they'd like to do.

On prompting with "things I'd like to do this year" and "if I only do one thing this year..." some ideas included trying something new (e.g. "go to the philharmonic (or similar) to see an orchestra/band perform that i've never heard before, such as samba music, music from films etc".; learning/creating something (e.g. "participate in some activity involving photography", "Create with artists"), or something specific (e.g. Visit QMII, Interview Kim Catrall, Picasso exhibition) And ... If i only do one thing this year.... I'd be gutted!!

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<sup>9</sup> Mean = 56, median = 67

They had a very enthusiastic and open approach – in particular in response to the negative prompts such as “I really don’t want to ...” there were a lot of replies like “there is nothing i can think of which i wouldn’t want to experience”.

There were a few suggestions about community or championing ideas they had, as opposed to their own cultural engagement:

- Go to other neighbourhood committees in my area and get them involved and doing things – show them what it is possible to achieve through culture
- Get something happening in specific part of my neighbourhood and get local people along
- Taking a group out to a cultural event/experience who don’t usually go
- Perhaps use something like photography to encourage a wider range of people than usual to take part
- Make a film about Mothers day in Liverpool.

But it was agreed that they needed more support in putting these ideas into some sort of shape and action plans were discussed which prompted some of the more ambitious undertakings (such as the comedy night) although they weren’t developed and supported as much as they could have been

## 7.2. OUTCOMES

### CULTURAL PROMOTERS AND INFORMATION POINTS

It isn’t clear how widely read the blog is, however, what is clear from the conversation of champions is that they have used their role, and the access to information that they are given, to spread the word about a huge range of events, the level of community cultural activity, and the opportunities that exist, to their informal networks, whether that be friends, family, work or community. It is hard to assess the full value of this informal marketing role but it has been shown that word of mouth is the most effective way to promote a cultural event, through work with five individuals the impact is clearly being felt by a much wider group. One champion for example has organised visits to the city from Warrington, Oldham, Wrexham & Birmingham, with over 100 people coming and the longer term benefits of this to the city’s economy being illustrated by the fact that all said they’d come again and one of them brought her husband for a visit a couple of weeks later helping him overcome 50 years of prejudice about not wanting to visit Liverpool.

What is most noticeable about all the champions is their wish to be further challenged by the role, they don’t have a lot of time, but they do feel they could and should do something useful with what they have, and they want to step beyond a passive ‘attender’ of culture to a ‘promoter’. Being a ‘champion’ is a challenge in itself and it is likely that a lot of the frustration and negative feelings experienced part way through the programme arose more from a feeling that they would like to do more. It was very noticeable that when supported to develop action plans, all the champions came up with very different but all quite exciting and creative approaches. Developing themselves as information points, as communicators and critics, and as networkers and promoters of culture continues to be an ongoing process for the champions.

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## MEMBERSHIP OF THE CULTURAL COMMUNITY

The champions felt that their relationship with the cultural community of the city was transformed over the year, from being (enthusiastic) audience members volunteers to becoming a valued part of the community. This was illustrated in the fact that they were recognised and included in invitations to events, launches etc (sometimes without the formal intervention of the programme) and also in specific invitations to take part in things, for example Kristal was asked to be a judge for the 'Funny Women' competition. This role allowed them opportunities to promote their own ideas and approaches to culture, their communities, and their own specific interests, such as Paul managing to secure a number of high profile gigs for the Liverpool Ukulele Orchestra. It put community voices on culture clearly into the mainstream cultural agendas and it gave the champions a sense of entitlement and expectation of what the cultural community *should* offer, making them active participants in shaping the city's cultural offer, rather than passive recipients, as discussed in section 4.2 above.

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## VALUE OF THE GROUP

There was immense value gained from the group interaction of the champions, in particular during the more informal sessions. The champions were able to experience a different world view from people they had come to respect and were encouraged to try new things out. In addition there was a (mainly healthy) peer pressure generated by the different approaches to the role with those who blogged less feeling encouraged to do more and those who engaged less with their communities likewise.

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## VALUE OF BLOG-WRITING

The act of writing the blog encouraged a critical appraisal of the cultural experience, with all champions rising to the challenge of the blog in terms of trying to think about events they attended in a different way. This 'critic' role was particularly developed by Paul who addressed the social and political aspects of Liverpool's cultural scene and Kristal who went on to writing in other blogs and settings. Even those champions who didn't blog much commented on how much they enjoyed doing the ones they did write.

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## VALUE OF BEING ENCOURAGED TO DO SOMETHING THEY WOULDN'T TRY OTHERWISE

Champions liked the sense of being able to get tickets to various events, in part seeing it as a reward for their hard work, partly wanting to be able to democratize the reviewing of some high profile events. However the general feeling was that "the 'freebies' have been great but being exposed to new things has been better" and the events and invitations most commented upon were those that didn't really cost a lot (i.e. didn't really save them money) but were new opportunities, or doing something they'd never have done without the role; interviewing a figure in the cultural establishment, attending a first night/private view and seeing how people behave at these; attending a local gallery opening or a community event; or simply going to an artform they wouldn't usually have risked.

In particular one champion articulated the value of having a role within the artistic setting (in this case volunteering at a festival):

*"[there were] loads of crazy people and it was really nice to get out and talk to lots of different types of people and see a lot of art and see a lot of performances for free and I didn't think I'd enjoy it, I thought it would be slightly over my head but it was really, really fun and because there was so much to do during those few days, it was exhausting, I'd go straight from work and stay out until midnight, just showing people around or helping, ... I'd be there handing out biscuits or handing out feedback forms or just stupid dogsbody stuff, but it was just really nice to be there in that situation and help out really, experience the whole festival, I don't think I would've bothered to experience the festival in its entirety like that unless I'd been volunteering. I might've gone, oh that's interesting at the odd thing, but to actually stay and be forced to watch everything they had to offer it was great."*

## GAVE THEM CONFIDENCE TO TAKE NEW STEPS

All of the champions gave examples of steps they'd taken this year that they didn't think they'd have done without the impetus and change in attitude they'd gained from being a cultural champion. Four of the champions applied for and got new jobs, several did things they'd been meaning to get round to but never had, one champion had a particularly changing year including:

*"I've started an arts course this year. It was probably inspired a little bit by the fact I was doing the cultural champion thing and I enjoyed writing. After I started writing the blog, I discovered I enjoyed writing quite a lot and I thought maybe I could explore that a bit more."*

## 8. QUALITY OF LIFE IMPACTS

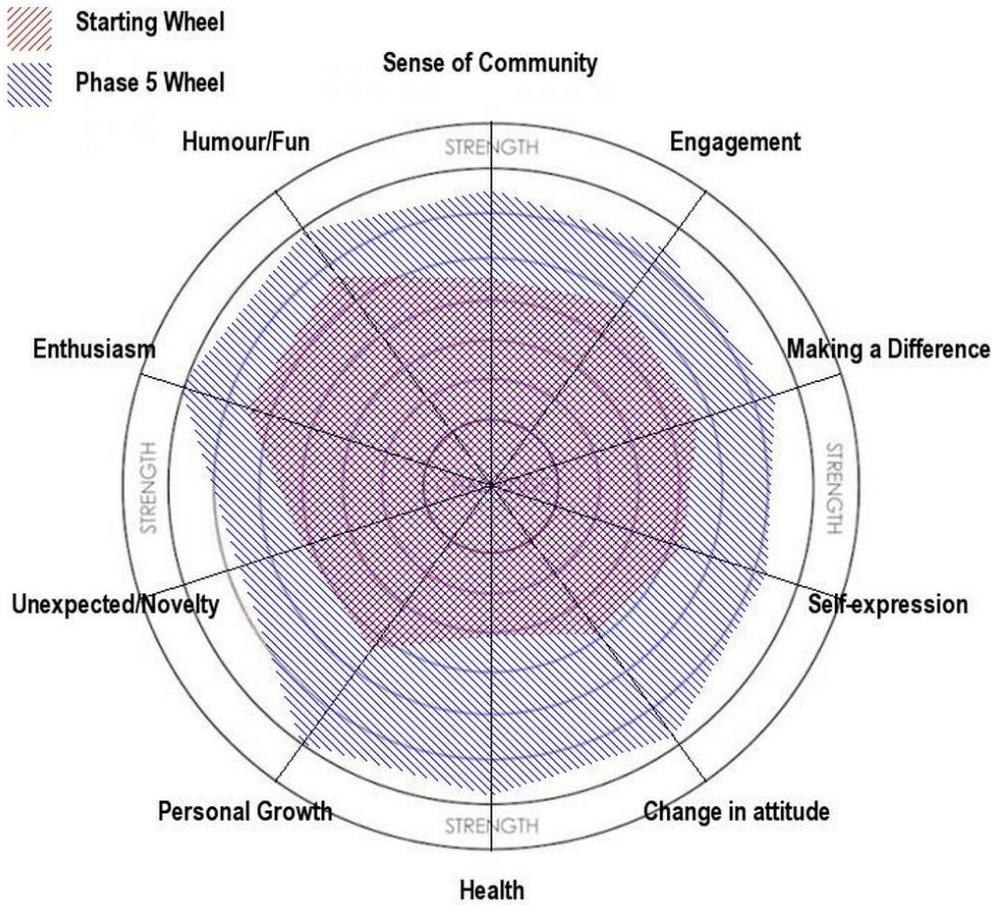
### 8.1. QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS: WHEEL OF WELLBEING

Champions were requested to fill in the wheel of well-being five times during the year of the project – in April, July and September 2010, January 2011 and April 2011. Not all champions found this easy and some needed help or encouragement/reminders, hence not all sessions were completed at the appropriate time but all the initial and final sessions were completed within a fortnight period in April 2010 and April 2011.

Due to confidentiality issues, it was agreed that no individual results would be published, hence averages have been given with ranges mentioned but not assigned to champions. Where results or analysis might indirectly identify an individual champion (unavoidable due to the size of the group) the champion has been approached individually and asked for permission to include the data.

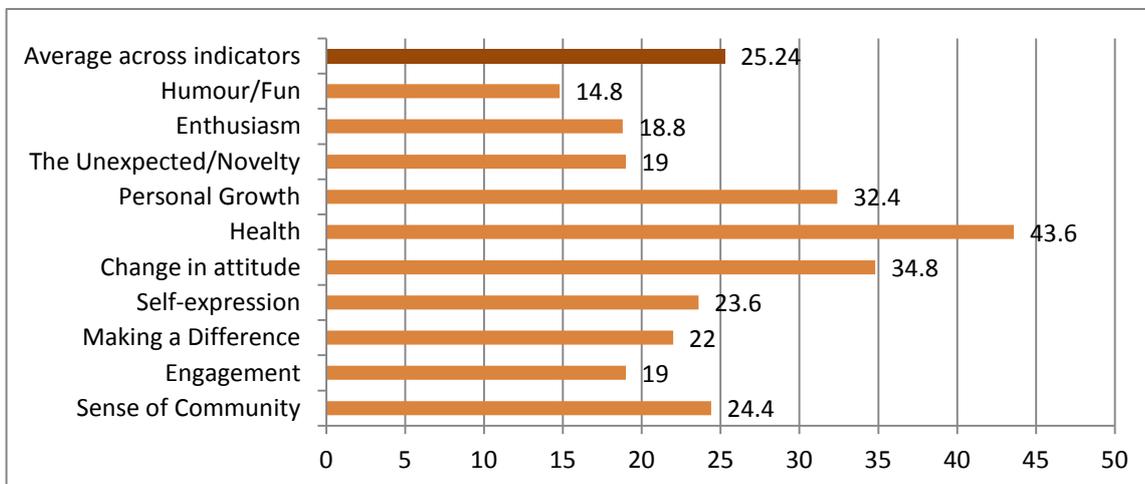
The composite wheel (across all five champions) is as below, fig 1.

Figure 1: Wheel of Wellbeing for Liverpool Community Cultural Champions, initial to end of year



This shows an increase across all indicators, although with clear differences between indicators as to how much of an increase. Fig 2 below shows the changes only (for clarity).

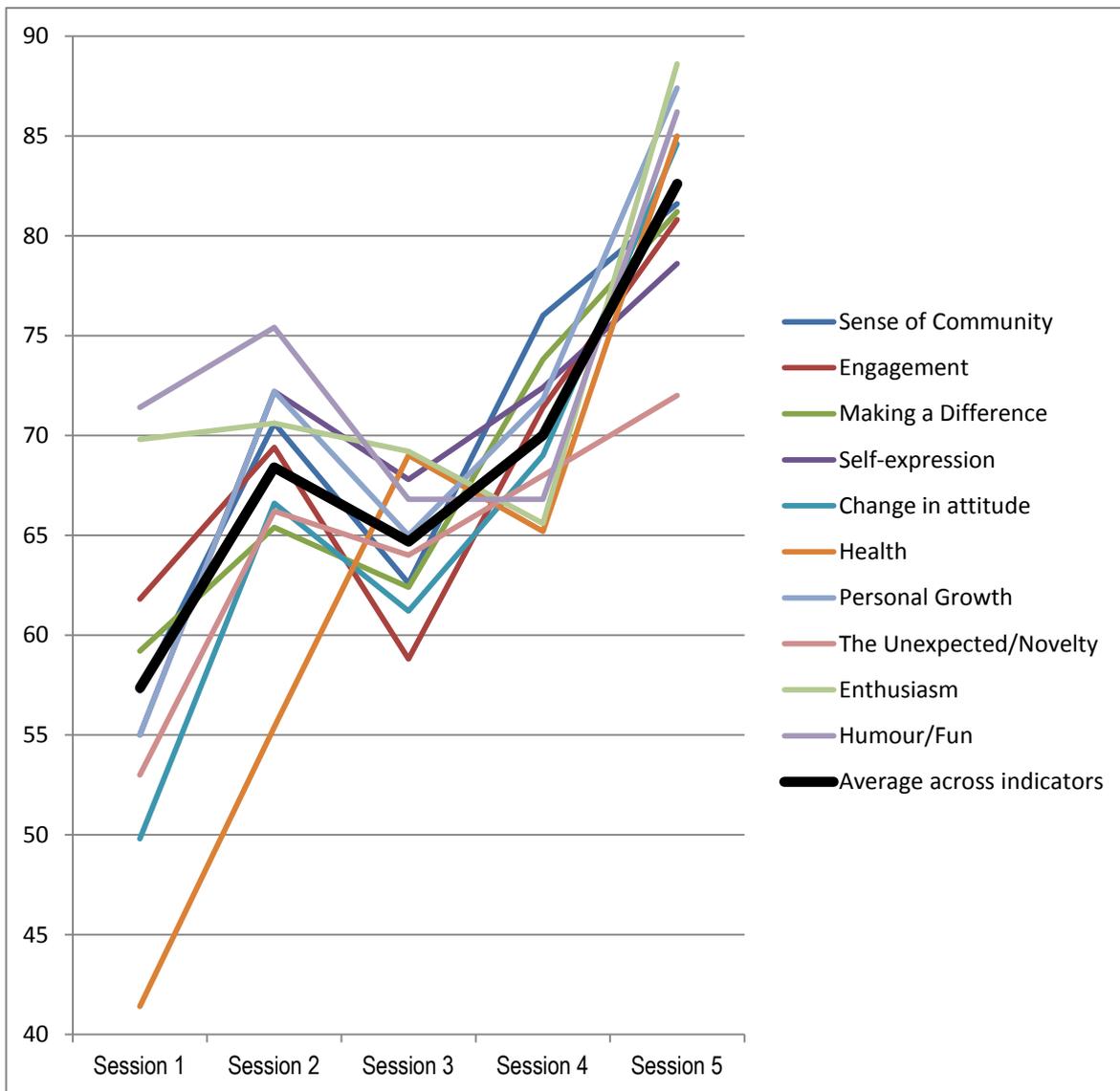
Figure 2: Change in average scores across indicators – sessions 1 to 5



The overall change in score across all indicators within the project is 25, and reflects a range of different average changes between champions (range is 16 to 36).

In terms of overall trends over the length of the project, there were ups and downs in terms of scores (approximately an initially moderate to low score, rose after the first few months, then dropped mid-way through the programme and finally rose again towards the end of the year). Figure 3 which maps individual indicators across the 5 sessions shows how this varies vastly between indicator.

Figure 3: Change in scores by indicator over time



Grouping indicators by how much change there was on them show the general patterns (table 2) but for analysis purposes the similar areas have been combined to avoid repetition

Table 2: Change in scores by indicators

% change on Wheel of Wellbeing	indicators	Type of experience – from qualitative research
Over 40%	Health	Noticeable substantial change experienced in physical and more often mental health
30-40%	Personal growth Change in attitude	Definite substantial changes experienced
20-30%	Self-expression Sense of community Making a difference	Definite positive change in self-expression (though starting from higher base in a few cases so less change likely) More mixed experiences in terms of sense of community and making a difference
10-20%	Unexpected/novelty engagement Humour/fun Enthusiasm	More mixed experiences in terms of unexpected/novelty and issues in what the terms mean. Engagement major problem for some champions Humour and enthusiasm started from high base so less change likely. Clearly no drop in enthusiasm or fun over programme.

## 8.2. HEALTH

All five champions explicitly mentioned an increase in health which they attributed to the programme, for one it was just a sense of ‘feeling better’ but for all the rest there was a considered and clearly expressed substantial change in their health, mainly mental which was linked in their minds to being a champion:

*“I also think it does lift you, so the whole confidence boost of getting it and going to see things and just having that role gives you such a boost and it makes you feel better, I really do think it does, makes you want to skip and sing, well makes me want to skip and sing, do more of it because you know how good it is. So I do think it's boosted my health ...”*

This included for one champion the impetus to help pull themselves from what had been a few years of clinical depression:

*“I am more mentally healthy – at the beginning I was just functioning, this filled my time but in the course of doing more and being more involved I feel a lot better, the champions project was probably the start of me realising there were lot of things I could do ... I knew before that people who are involved in friends and community were better off mentally, didn't know how to start getting more involved, it was a sort of domino effect, champions kicked off things”*

For another the confidence boost they gained from being able to wear the role of champion and step outside their own lack of self-confidence had helped them feel a lot better and the increase in activity that went with that was also a major factor.

For one champion there were substantial physical health outcomes too as they were able to lose a lot of weight which really helped with long term joint problems and getting out and doing things helped with enhancing physical activity which would be an issue otherwise.

This qualitative data completely corresponds with the findings from the wheel of wellbeing where all champions scored an increase in health and the absolute scores started low and ended high

	Min change	Max change	Mean change	Standard deviation	Mean start score	Mean final score
Wheel of well-being statistics -health	30	54	44	8.9	41	85

### 8.3.CHANGE IN ATTITUDE

Both in qualitative feedback and through the wheels champions reported a positive change in attitude, or felt they'd experienced a change in attitude and that this was a positive thing in and of itself. From an external point of view, being a champion had offered the opportunity to think about the world differently, with discussions starting about the meaning of words used as if they were straightforward by the project – eg “culture”, “community” – and discussing what sort of role they could usefully take. It is notable that the champions are very different types of people, with generally different interests and lifestyles, with only two having met before. The interchange between them as individuals and the consensus forming as a group are interesting and offer potential for changes in attitudes.

Areas of change in attitude reported on by champions included around how they view art, arising from the different view one has when one knows they will be blogging about it later, or when they see themselves as having a responsibility to challenge themselves:

*“I've tried to go to things where I don't know what they are deliberately to challenge that. Some random dance thing that was just... but I know I wouldn't go again. What fascinated me most and what I really loved about it is that even going to something like that, it was so fascinating to see... people like stood up and gave it standing ovations at the end and I was thinking; what was that, that was just... it was like screechy noise and weird movements and it was just bizarre, but they, I missed something, that was dead fascinating anyway because it's like; they're loving this.”*

And simply from having been exposed to new things and encouraged to see them as accessible and venues as welcoming, champions talked about how their entire approach had changed and they felt more able to go along with one champion saying that she now takes her children to the art gallery where before she'd have only gone to a museum as being more welcoming.

However the change in attitude also extends to seeing how different people might have a different view of culture, the champions were already very warm to the potential of culture (though with a more restricted set of areas they thought they liked) one champion talked about how going to everything that was on offer made her realise that not everything is enjoyable to everyone:

*“Like I was always into culture, always thought people should go out of their way to ‘better themselves’ by going to art galleries, now realise that we can’t judge, their time is limited and allow them to be selective, I am less judgemental, if they only want to go to cinema that is their choice – people should be encouraged but not forced.”*

Echoed by another:

*“it’s possibly changed my attitude to understanding more the barriers, where people don’t go to things and like I said before, some people really it isn’t for them, ... and yet at the same time you can still see that, in my view, it would do people good to then go and experience these things that to me are so life enhancing.”*

Champions also talked about the change in attitude to wider issues that they’d experienced through their exposure to the art works for example talking about Holocaust day:

*“...You started doing a lot of soul searching. I knew all this history; I was well into the history. [my son] had visited the camps when he was in Germany and it had a profound effect on him. So I knew all the background to this and it still affected me. One of things that really, really got to me was an old lady and she had been brought out on... she’d actually been put on the train on Kristallnacht ... She was put on the kinder train on her own, she was 14 and she never ever saw any of her family again and she travelled right across Germany, across Europe into Britain and ended up on Lime Street station”*

Or about attending local community events:

*“...I’ve seen the way it’s affected people. It’s been, it definitely does have an impact on people’s lives. I always knew it had an impact on me but since doing this I’ve realised it has a greater impact on the community and it’s nice to be able to part of that, ... I’ve quietly sat in on story time and things like that and I’ve seen how this affects the children, but also mothers who you think wouldn’t necessarily be involved in anything but because of this story time, they’re there, they’re involved with their children. So I’ve really seen the benefit.”*

And a broader view of what ‘culture’ means:

*“It’s not just that kind of culture,.. [I went to a soup making session] ... and this was part of the culture thing, the healthy eating, the health and wellbeing, and all the people were there, they’d grown them from seed, they’d brought them in. It really was a community thing ... As I say you wouldn’t think of an allotment as a cultural thing, but it is, it’s part of the community, so then it’s part of our culture, getting people to make healthy foods.”*

	Min change	Max change	Mean	Standard deviation	Mean start score	Mean final score
Wheel of well-being statistics -change in attitude	20	48	35	12.2	50	85

## 8.4. PERSONAL GROWTH

Champions all identified areas of personal growth, specifically in confidence and self-esteem, and development of new skills which were good in themselves but also further developed confidence.

This arose from challenging themselves to do new things: blogging was noted as one area where they had all developed new skills (to different extents), with some champions using flickr and twitter too.

*"... she said, you've got to hand it to [the champion], mother she's the only pensioner I know that's into android and blogging, I'm sending pictures all over the place. So in that respect, I think I might've grown and letting people know about it. My IT skills have grown, they're not brilliant but they've grown"*

More generally there was a sense of taking responsibility for getting things done, and being able to do them summed up by one champion:

*"Well, anything's sort of possible now – if no one else will do it then I'll do it myself, I'd never have done that a couple of years ago."*

This arose largely from challenging themselves to do new things and go outside what had become a comfort zone of daily life, using new technology, attending 'challenging' or scary performances and approaching people as part of their role or setting up events or interviews.

*"I'm more open to the idea of doing new things now. 2 years ago I would never have expected to put on a show that would have been a ridiculous idea ... All the things I've done, so much, people can't believe it."*

*"I would never had got up and read a poem, which is what I did at the Bluecoat. It was a big event and they said i want one of the culture champions to read a poem written by a local person."*

The role proved a spur and a support to the champions:

*"It's given me a reason to voice my opinions on things and I have. Not just to voice them ... it's given me that chance to see things a bit deeper and then express myself about that, to try and get it across to other people as well. Things like the four corners<sup>10</sup> were good and even that district committee<sup>11</sup>, there was point to you having your say that you actually were there in a role and it was a valuable [one] ...."*

And there was a secondary impact on their lives and work:

<sup>10</sup> An art project that takes place in each neighbourhood and with which champions were encouraged to link, it is mentioned frequently by champions.

<sup>11</sup> Champions were strongly encouraged to attend at least one 'district committee' which was at the time the main local decision making forum in each neighbourhood. Their role was to discuss their experience and promote the value of culture on a wider agenda. The feedback from the councillors and officers at the committees was that this was extremely good and the champions were very effective. The champions themselves had been very reluctant to attend and were not massively impressed by the tone and accessibility of the meetings.

*“it give me that confidence and the self-belief and the valuing of myself to go for another job, get another job, then get like begged to stay at my other job but with a full-time managerial position. So in terms of all that, it's been massive in terms of... personally I'm in much different place now than when I was at the start and I do see this whole culture thing as a massive catalyst to me having that confidence to just say; I'm not happy with this, I'm not putting up with this anymore, I'm going for that.”*

*“I can see the effect that it's had on me in as much as I can use this actually in my job, the present job I'm doing now, it's made me understand the richness of a subject and ... not everything's black and white and art can paint those shades of grey, either in theatre or in painting, that's what I've got from it ... my experience of doing this has helped me to understand the diversity of things generally, of situations, of politics, I think that's what it's... broadly what I've taken from this year, and as I say, I've actually used that to do my job in a way which is more... I'm able to communicate better I suppose, to my colleagues and stuff.”*

	Min change	Max change	Mean change	Standard deviation	Mean start score	Mean final score
Wheel of well-being statistics -personal growth	11	48	32	14.0	55	87

## 8.5. UNEXPECTED/NOVELTY

The unexpected/novelty was a difficult indicator or concept to discuss, with some champions saying that they already did lots of cultural things before the project while on the other hand four champions got new jobs during the year (and two were made redundant), while another went on a extended trip to the far east and Australia so there were a lot of other unexpected occurrences – good and bad – happening at the same time. However as is evident from the discussion above, the champions did challenge themselves to do new things and think about things differently. All talked about doing things they wouldn't normally do, from attending a modern style of performance when usually they prefer big shows to trying out the maritime festival to attending a burlesque show where the audience are told to draw the performers in between acts...

They all agreed that they felt more positive about change and more willing to accept new things.

	Min change	Max change	Mean change	Standard deviation	Mean start score	Mean final score
Wheel of well-being statistics -unexpected/novelty	2	40	19	16.6	53	72

## 8.6. SELF-EXPRESSION

This area was selected to reflect the individual creativity of the champions, as well as their ability to get their ideas across. All the champions are creative people, whether writing, doing crafts or singing:

*“Singing to me is one of the things that really lifts me, gives me a boost if I need it. ...I find when I'm not singing it's usually when there's something wrong because I tend to sing every day”*

Both individually and as a group, and through the wheel, all champions noted a positive change in their ability and opportunity for self expression with examples being the ability to blog and the opportunities for creative self-expression that gives them. Several of the champions discussed their particular creative outlet (playing the ukulele, writing poetry, writing articles) and felt that being a cultural champion linked to these.

In terms of the blog, one of the champions notes her increasing willingness to express herself in it:

*“... in the more recent blogs I've been more prepared to put a little bit of what I feel or what I think... First it was a blog and I was very conscious about what I was reporting on things and letting people know what goes on. But as time's gone on, I've been able to say well I really enjoyed this because... or this was great because... and I've put a little thing about family and stuff like that before Christmas you know, it's just sharing a little bit yourself. I think that has developed.”*

And one champion has gone further and begun to write for other blogs

*“I applied to write for some other blogs recently, culture blogs, on the back of doing the cultural champion blogs. I thought, I wonder if I could write for any other blogs and so I've done a couple of articles now...”*

There were also opportunities for self expression through being asked to reflect on their experiences of being a cultural champion and through being asked and expected to voice opinions and views that they normally might have hesitated to do.

	Min change	Max change	Mean	Standard deviation	Mean start score	Mean final score
Wheel of well-being statistics – self-expression	-7	47	24	20.3	55	79

## 8.7.MAKING A DIFFERENCE | SENSE OF COMMUNITY | ENGAGEMENT

It is interesting that the areas where most change might be hoped for from a programme like this: engagement; making a difference; enthusiasm and fun were the ones where the least positive, or even for some individual champions a negative change is shown on the wheel outcomes. However this closely fits the qualitative findings; while all champions felt by the end of the year that they'd made a difference and gained a new sense of community, the expectations placed on them (mainly by themselves, but to a degree by the way the programme and role were framed) meant that they tended to see a lot of things that *hadn't* achieved rather than what they had achieved over the year. At the mid-point of the programme there was even a sense of failure and negativity (and several indicator scores had actually dropped on average). This wasn't the case by the end but the more mixed nature of the outcomes in these areas are probably linked so we are discussing them together.

Making a difference was the main place for champions to express what they thought they'd achieved in terms of giving something to the programme as opposed to receiving from it. As they had all applied to be champions because they wanted to make a difference: usually in introducing a wider range of people to the benefits of culture, though also in advocating for the culture of Liverpool or their local community this is clearly an important factor in the impact of the programme on their wellbeing.

Some of this arose from the lack of clarity felt by all champions about the primary aim of the role. With the more active in the community often not blogging as much and those who blogged not being as active in the community and both groups focussing on the area they didn't do, rather than what they did. The constant low level guilt and concern that they weren't being 'proper' champions and weren't making the real difference they should is summed up here:

*"I did feel quite guilty through the year that I should be doing more to do with my local community and at one point I got really frustrated I thought, oh god I really don't know if I'm supposed to be doing more than this whether it's very meaningful what I'm doing, sure I'm writing about stuff, about how interesting it is and how as a normal person, objectively or subjectively, whether I find things good or not, who's that benefiting really, who's reading the blog, is anyone reading it apart from my friends and family, and is it helping anybody to appreciate culture in Liverpool, maybe I should do some more worthy things, go out there and meet some community groups or people ..."*

The indicator of 'sense of community' and 'engagement' were very much affected by the issue felt by some of the champions of lack of connection to the 'neighbourhood' for which they were champion. These are very large, administrative areas, comprising 6 wards and many instinctive 'communities' and even the champion who most tried to engage in her area didn't feel she covered the whole area. Three of the champions had no prior knowledge that their area even existed as an entity and there was a general agreement by the end that for some people the geographical community wasn't all that meaningful and that they should focus on communities of interest – age, gender, interest related. This issue of community was the main focus of several meetings part way through the programme and even though people moved on from it as a block by the end it did affect the way in which these indicators were scored and discussed.

Having said all of the above, all champions reported a real sense of having made a difference, and most a renewed sense of community and engagement.

In terms of making a difference, this was felt to be in a range of ways:

Through supporting local artists and performers by blogging:

*"Have I made a difference? I'd like to think I have. I think possibly I've helped in some ways and I've always tried to make people feel good about what they're doing and show them that they're appreciated in all the events and listen to what they been doing and how they've been doing it or giving them praise or recognition. I think no matter who you are, all people need a little bit of praise, a slap on the back, a bit of encouragement. I've always thought, if I can encourage people to feel good about themselves and do a bit more in the community, I may have made a little bit of difference."*

Bringing new people to the city and introducing them to the art through the access routes you experienced:

*“... for me [Superlambananas had been my way in so that] ... was my way of getting them inspired in arty things and creative things and culture, ... that had been my way in, I thought surely it could be for other people, so ... we've done loads of stuff like learning more about the city and arty stuff and culture stuff and we kind of tried to bring in as many people, so I wanted to bring in a group from Oldham, ... it ended up about 35 of them coming over, but we did like a cultural tour and it was fantastic, and since then we've had other groups as well. So it's brought loads of people in and raving about the city...”*

Raising awareness about what is on (via blogs, emails etc)

*“I bloody hope so, I'm trying hard enough. Only making a difference in awareness I think, ... I do hope. Otherwise I'm wasting my time... I think I get an opportunity now to ... say I'm community champion, to big up things, to tell people... it's like now I've got a duty to constantly be telling people what's out there and what's going on, you know going shopping on a Saturday and giving leaflets out... here she is again. So... but that's my way of expressing of what I think my role is I think.”*

They also noted the events they'd put on, the comedy night, ukulele performances, visits and local events they'd arranged or helped out with.

Sense of community and engagement also experienced positive changes overall with most champions noting that they'd learnt a lot more about what went on in their own areas and were quite impressed with what was on offer. For others the community was the city as a whole and the chance to really change their relationship with the city's cultural community with several champions mentioning fairly casually that they are often recognised by and friendly with people who work in the main cultural institutions. The city clearly took the role seriously which gave the champions both a personal sense of community and inclusion but also the chance to raise issues as 'ordinary citizens'/'citizen reporters' within an often closed community.

One champion who worked with adults in care used her role to introduce them to local activities and feels they now know and feel part of their local community too.

Even for those most involved in their local communities already there has been a change in the relationship as they talk about seeing the community differently and about it broadening and reaching a wider area:

*“I think my sense of community has grown, in so much as, in my area, my community was my family, my friends, my immediate area, my workplace, but I think my community has become citywide. What am I like? Politics next...”*

Wheel of well-being statistics	Min change*	Max change	Mean change	Standard deviation	Mean start score	Mean final score
Making a difference	6	30	22	9.9	59	81
Sense of community	4	40	24	13.4	57	82
Engagement	-9	37	19	17.8	62	81

\*note that all three of these lowest changes were for the same champion for whom the issue of dislocation from local community was most strong. For the other four champions the minimum changes were: 20, 20 and 16 respectively. This is unusual among the indicators.

## 8.8.ENTHUSIASM | HUMOUR/FUN

These two indicators experienced what initially seemed to be surprisingly low changes (the lowest of the ten areas) considering what the programme was about, however there are a number of factors to take into account:

The levels of enthusiasm and sense of fun associated with it were undoubtedly affected by the concerns and guilt associated with the three indicators discussed above;

The champions started off as a very enthusiastic group, further encouraged by being selected as Liverpool's Community Cultural Champions which they viewed as a real honour, so they started from a high baseline, with less opportunity for positive change.

Qualitatively there was been a waning of enthusiasm as the practical issues and the lack of purpose seemed to get in the way of initial enthusiasm mid way through the year but that revived a bit and they were very enthusiastic about their role.

Probably the main factor for the low change in score was illustrated in focus groups and interviews where discussion around humour and fun were complicated as there wasn't a consensus over how to define them. One champion commented that everyone took the role very seriously (thus raising the potential view of 'humour/fun' as being frivolous, rather than that they were having a good time).

Overall, all champions had greatly enjoyed the experience, and they clearly had a lot of fun as a group, with all sessions, including those with the steering group, being conducted in an informal and appropriately jokey atmosphere. This was reiterated in one-to-one sessions however with a caveat that all champions expressed a certain level of stress over the role, in particular the sense of not doing enough, and having to fit more in.

Wheel of well-being statistics	Min change	Max change	Mean change	Standard deviation	Mean start score	Mean final score
Enthusiasm	-1	35	19	15.3	70	89
Humour/fun	10	20	15	3.7	71	86

## 9. CONCLUSIONS

Overall this was a very interesting programme that had a massive effect on the participants and to a degree also served its aim of placing culture more firmly on the agenda in the city. The main impacts for the champions were in their own personal development where there were very notable changes, linked to feeling more confident from having challenged themselves to do something that they hadn't done before, whether that was attending a new art-form, writing publicly, or advocating and speaking publicly. The success of the programme in building self-confidence and improving mental health was particularly interesting going far beyond what was hoped for in the design stages.

Undoubtedly the attitude of the champions played a large part in the success of the programme as they all had a massive commitment to their city, culture and their role and worked to make the most of the opportunity. The support of the city council, both officers and elected members was also crucial, in particular in giving the champions a sense of the value of what they were doing and in constructing the role of Community Cultural Champion as meaningful and attractive. There would be no problem in recruiting future champions as it is seen and promoted by both the city and the current champions as worthwhile and valuable.

The areas of greatest impact for the champions arose from challenging themselves and taking new steps. Culture is a great mechanism for this as it offers many opportunities for new experiences and is also something that is easy to talk about but at times hard to advocate for in a busy world – a true challenge.

The extent to which the other roles of advocating for and promoting culture at a local level and promoting the value of culture on a wider agenda are harder to be certain of, however the presence and use of the blogs, along with the wide email and verbal circulation of information about events make it likely that the message was spread more widely. Word of mouth from a trusted informant is one of the best ways of enhancing participation in new activity.

The champions themselves had mixed feelings about the role they should play, particularly with respect to the community engagement and online reporting element of their work. This confusion didn't help the sense of well-being of the champions across the programme, but did lead to a lot of interesting philosophical discussions which themselves led to change in attitude. Overall it is clear that the champions did all engage with one or more communities and did widely promote culture, and the fact that different styles and approaches taken was a strength of the programme in terms of allowing individuals to shape and gain and contribute the most to it.

There were some learning points from what was always designed as a pilot programme; these include the need for clear and shared aims for the programme as well as clearer roles for champions (even if they were designed alongside the champions) and although the champions all felt they'd had extremely good input from their mentors when requested, more proactive mentoring would be useful (certainly in response to sticking points or moments of confusion). The online aspect of the programme wasn't clear to everyone and future programmes might want to have a clear line on how much blogging/other social media input champions would be expected to do, but the level of support and training for this was excellent and mentioned positively by all champions. There are some access and equipment requirements with this sort of programme and transport passes and possibly electronic equipment (eg smart phones) should be considered for future use.

An obvious absence in a programme expressly concerned with promoting culture was any presence of representation from the non-local authority cultural sector on the steering group or into the design of the programme (although they were consulted and informed in advance, contributed event ideas and some linked to the champions' blog from their websites). This probably led to a lack of understanding of the role of the champions and certainly prevented the sector from fully engaging with and using the champions in their own work. There is a willingness from some areas of the sector to engage with future rounds of the champions programme.

Positive learning points come from the relaxed and friendly nature of the relationship between the champions and steering group and political mentors. Occasionally there were tensions misunderstandings around terminology and approach between what was a statutory sector steering group and a collection of volunteers giving up a lot of their own time but these were rare and the champions felt very supported by the officers. This was particularly useful in areas where they were trying new things – e.g. blogging and social media and dealing with politicians where the officers concerned were extremely supportive and unendingly giving of time and input. The range of the characters and types of approach, age and lifestyle of champions selected was a definite strength in terms of exposure to new ideas and approaches to communication, politics and culture. This mix did not cause any problems and the only way the champions felt that it could be improved was to have more of them and thus to include a wider range of people (the lack of a champion from the black and ethnic minority community, as well as having only one man was raised a few times).

## 10. APPENDIX: INDICATIVE DEFINITION OF WELL-BEING INDICATORS

**HEALTH** - This concerns your physical and mental (in a traditional sense) health. How do you feel? How well or ill are you. do you get ill a lot or rarely? Do you feel 'down' or suffer from other mental health problems (diagnosed or not).

**ENGAGEMENT** - This considers how much you feel part of something, it might be work, family, voluntary work, interests. Are you 'over-engaged' so that it is a burden?

**DEVELOPMENT AND PERSONAL GROWTH** – how much do you feel you are developing and growing as a person, are you working towards fulfilling your dreams or do you feel you are 'stagnating'?

**CHANGE IN ATTITUDE** – how flexible is your mindset for change – have you changed your views on something fundamental (or small) recently?

**THE UNEXPECTED/NOVELTY** – how much of the unexpected is there in your life? Can you mostly predict what you'll do, who you'll see/speak to, how you'll feel or are there lots of unexpected occurrences (NB – the unexpected could be good or bad!)

**CREATIVITY AND SELF-EXPRESSION** – are you able to express yourself creatively? Do you have the opportunity to be creative in various areas of your life (away from culture – eg work) this might mean creative responses to problems, or redecorating the front room...

**ENTHUSIASM** – how much enthusiasm do you feel at the moment, for any particular thing/activity, your life in general, how much is there around you – this might affect you positively or negatively

**HUMOUR/FUN** – is there fun and/or humour in your life? Black humour?!

**SENSE OF COMMUNITY** – do you feel part of a community? Is this a positive or negative thing? It could be a community of interest, voluntary work, work, family or local neighbourhood

**MAKING A DIFFERENCE** – do you feel able to make a difference – it could be in any area – do you feel blocked from making a difference?