



# FABRIC 2020: REPORT

**“I would just like to say thanks to you and each of the Creative Dundee family for putting on an excellent programme. When I think back to the anxiety I felt at the first session thinking about speaking to all the faces on the screen compared to how comfortable I felt at the end, a massive change, you did a great job facilitating that and aspirational guests.**

**It was a shame I didn't get a chance to speak to everyone, but I will always welcome anyone who wants to have a chat or speak to me about something. For those I did get to speak to, thanks for your openness and warmth and looking forward to chatting again.**

**I like to think doors have been opened for those relations to expand.”**

Fabric 2020 participant.

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## Aim:

We believe that it's in our collective interest to take a proactive approach to nurture the talent and values that will lead us to tomorrow. That's why Creative Dundee runs **Fabric – a creative leadership programme for the city** – which aims to build a **collective intelligence** for Dundee's thriving creative sector and requires to be driven by people who are **actively interested** in driving the direction of the city.

This year the programme has focused on **collective leadership and social justice**, and includes opportunities to hear from city and community leaders, to share knowledge and experiences with each other, and to discuss how we can collectively make Dundee even better!

## Objectives:

Fabric is an **informal peer-to-peer development programme** for people who want to grow their confidence and agency for leading creative initiatives and projects that will have positive impacts in Dundee, and is open to anyone who's looking for:

- **Time and peer support to reflect** on your own creative leadership skills, your core values and your vision for the future;
- **Opportunities to better understand Dundee's** strengths and challenges, and **create new connections** in the city;
- **A safe space to meet and discuss** with other creative leaders within the city.

**“Getting together with inspiring people during this crazy times and taking time to think about the future rather than just constantly worrying about the present.”**

Fabric 2020 participant.

## Sessions:

26/03/2020 - Core Leadership Values

23/04/2020 - Making Welcoming Spaces

21/05/2020 - Reimagining Our Future Together

18/06/2020 - Virtual Field Trip to The Stove Network

## Partners:

**Day 1:** Jonathan Baxter.

**Day 2:** Hot Chocolate Trust, Faith in Community, Dundee Fairness Commission.

**Day 3:** Annie Marrs, Lead Officer at UNESCO City of Design Dundee, Beth Bate, Director of Dundee Contemporary Arts, Clare Cooper, Co-director of CATERAN Ecomuseum, Liam Sinclair, Executive Director and Joint CEO of Dundee Rep and Scottish Dance Theatre.

**Day 4:** The Stove Network.

## Resources:

**Fabric:** read more about Fabric 2020 and find links to the previous years [here](#).

**Blogs:** [Day 1](#), [Day 2](#), [Day 3](#), [Day 4](#), reflections from [Barry Robertson](#) and [Samantha Sherriff](#).

**Content:** find all presentations and interesting links in this [shared folder](#).



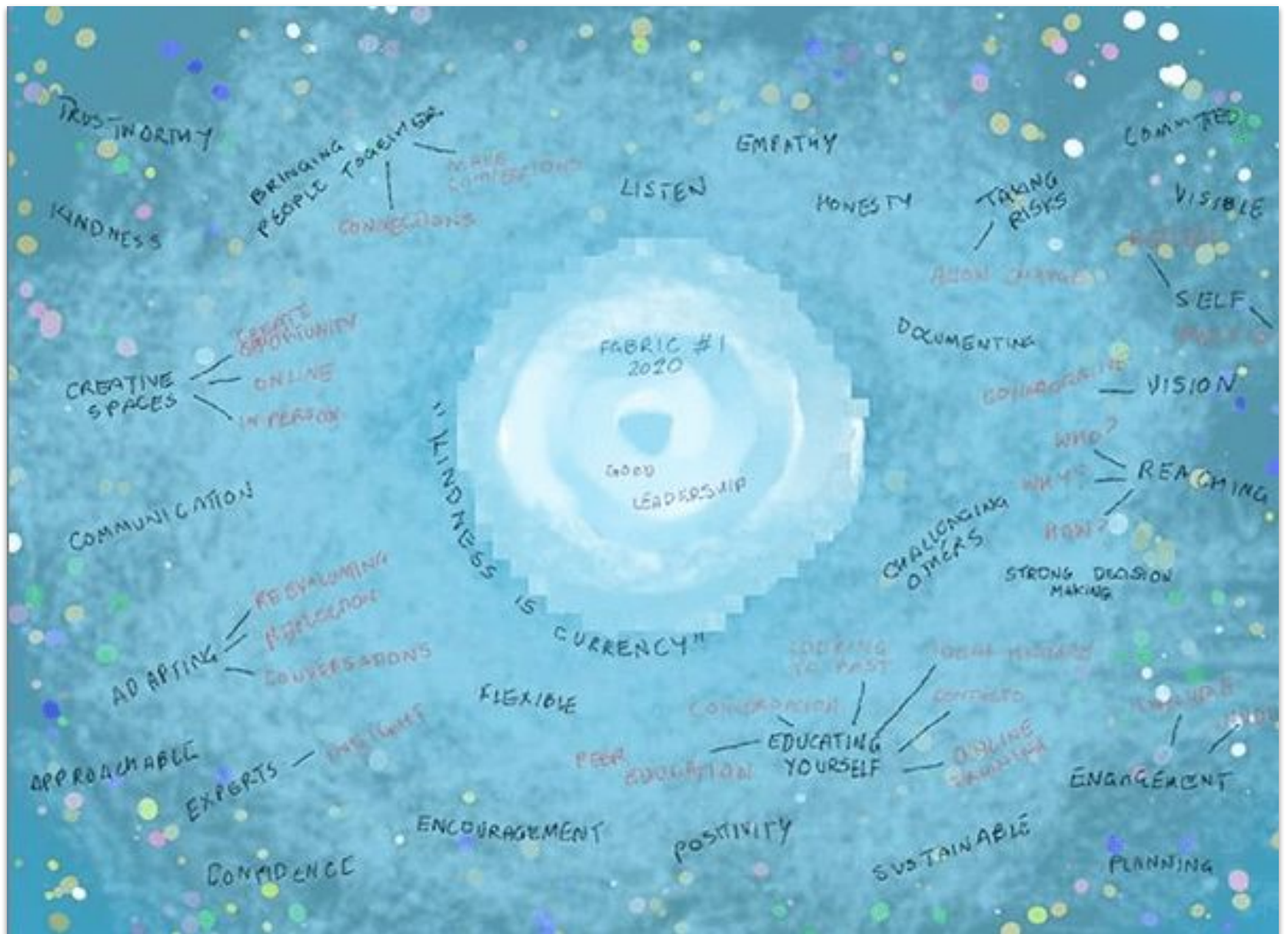
## Participants:

Barry Robertson  
Chloe Nash  
Darryl Gaffney du Plooy  
Eilish Victoria Mackay  
Emma Preston  
Erin Farley  
Esther Farrell  
Ewan McDonald  
Katja Steel Kusakova  
Malath Abbas  
Maryam Deeni  
Mikaela Ahtag  
Pamela Scott  
Paul Docherty  
Poppy Jarratt  
Sam Sherriff  
Sharron Devine

Read more about participants [here](#).

## Expectations:

- **Networking and immersion into creative community** – meet new people and learn more about the amazing things happening in our city // build better connections/partnerships with the creative community // gain a broader understanding of Dundee's cultural scene to know how best to progress my ideas.
- **Peer-to-peer learning and inspiration** – meet like minded people // learn about/from each other and share own experiences // be surrounded by people who are doing exciting, innovative and different things to benefit Dundee // be inspired enough to jump into my ideas with both feet.
- **Developing creative/leadership skills** – develop practical skills in creative project // grow leadership and strategic skills // build on my confidence with interacting with others and leading teams.
- **Time to reflect and grow** – Challenge and grow my vision for the future // reflect on what is needed and what it is I am able to do // re-evaluate my practice and better understand the bigger picture.
- **Collaboration and positive change in Dundee** – work together to make more opportunities for the community // contribute to the development of new approaches to creative initiatives.



Design by Sam Sheriff, on her reflections of Fabric Day 1 – Core Leadership Values.

# Day 1 – Core Leadership Values:

## Content:

- time to get to know each other and share our views on leadership styles and the core values that a creative leader should nurture;
- reflective discussion around the skills that a creative leader should develop, led by [Jonathan Baxter](#).

Read more about Day 1 [here](#).

## Observations:

- open, honest and sensitive chats between participants despite physical distance;
- community resilience is based on safe spaces where people are connected, but today's health crisis has created 'enforced' bubbles which are not accessible by everyone;
- core leadership values identified by participants – kindness, listen, understand and relate with others, self-reflect, admit failures and take risks;
- small activism in communities is essential but there's a need to bring all organisations together to have a larger impact across city;
- organisations should be shape-shifter to best respond to the needs and aspirations of their communities;
- creative leaders drive change and help make the transition from past to future.



# Day 2 – Making Welcoming Spaces

## Content:

- discussion on collective leadership, led by Andy Robertson and David Close from [Hot Chocolate Trust](#);
- discussion on inclusivity in decision-making, led by Jacky Close and Danielle Hinton from [Faith in Community Dundee](#), joined by commissioners Andrew and Kevin from [Dundee Fairness Commission](#).

Read more about Day 2 [here](#).

**“Leadership is not defined by the exercise of power but by the capacity to increase the sense of power among those led. The most essential work of the leader is to create more leaders.”**

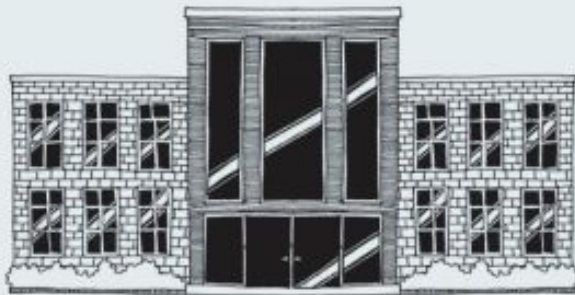
Mary Parker Follett

## Observations:

- dispersed leadership – empowering others by being aware of everyone in the group, fostering leadership and sharing it;
- sharing leadership is offering a space to share, imagine, create and take ideas forward into actions – a place to be (physically and socially) and that people can feel they belong to;
- fluidity of leadership is when people take turns in playing a leadership role;
- people often confuse leadership with control, as in reality it’s about trust;
- Dundee has two narratives, one where the city is buzzing and one where people are struggling - how to close the gap between them;
- being listened is feeling valued and empowered, and we need to create more spaces that are truly open, safe and without agenda.



## The metaphors



COLLEGES

**Colleges** – Arts organisations have a role as places of lifelong learning, enabling everyone to reach their potential.



PARKS

**Parks** – Arts organisations offer shared public space that is open to all. Like parks, they offer people a choice of whether to be active or sit quietly, to come as a group or to be alone.

**Temples** – Arts organisations provide a secular society with an opportunity to contemplate moral questions about how we live and how we relate to others.



TEMPLES

**Town Halls** – Arts organisations provide safe places for considering and debating difficult issues. They can present issues in their full complexity and give them a human texture.



TOWN HALLS



HOME

**Home** – Arts organisations can be places of safety and belonging, where people can be relaxed and feel themselves. They can provide a space to create work based on people's experiences and aspirations.

# Day 3 – Reimagining Our Future Together

## Content:

- panel discussion on *what it means for arts and creative organisations to play a civic role in and around Dundee*, with [Annie Marrs](#), [Beth Bate](#), [Clare Cooper](#) and [Liam Sinclair](#);
- practical workshop to collectively imagine our ideal civic spaces;
- surgeries to share our ideas and get feedback from peers.

Read more about Day 3 [here](#).

## Observations:

- cultural venues should play a role of community spaces, that feels like home, to encourage exchange of ideas;
- hyper-localism – communities looking into and relying on their local civic spaces rather than focusing on national or international ideals;
- how to use the talents and skills within a venue to support the city in time of crisis;
- disconnection between the public and artists/makers – we showcase the end results but the making processes are often hidden;

**“A civic space is a public space. It is a safe space which belongs to everyone and where everyone is welcome, and communities can gather together to agree and disagree in a constructive environment, tell the stories of the past and present that matter to them and imagine the future together.”**

Lyn Gardner, What would Joan Littlewood say?

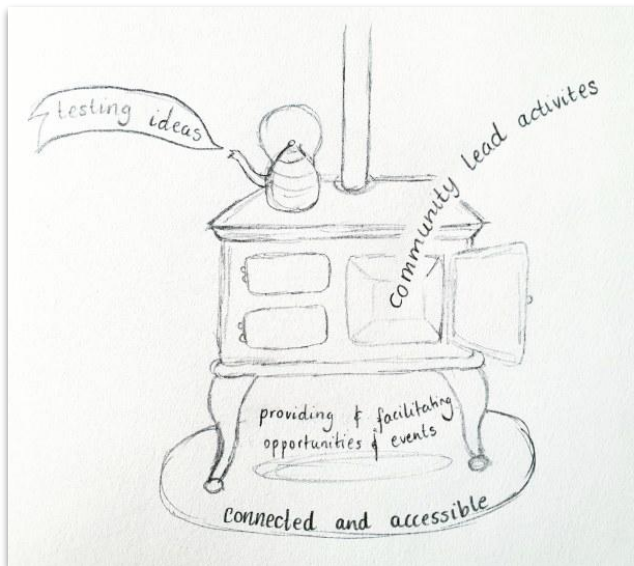
- digital poverty (reduced access to digital spaces or no relevant skills) can a barrier for participation;
- it's important to consider mental health in time of crisis as well as in our civic spaces.

# Day 4 – Virtual Field Trip to The Stove Network

## Content:

- virtual study visit and discussions, led by Katherine Wheeler, Stuart Macpherson and Martin O’Neill from [The Stove Network](#);
- reflective discussion on our Fabric journeys and feedback.

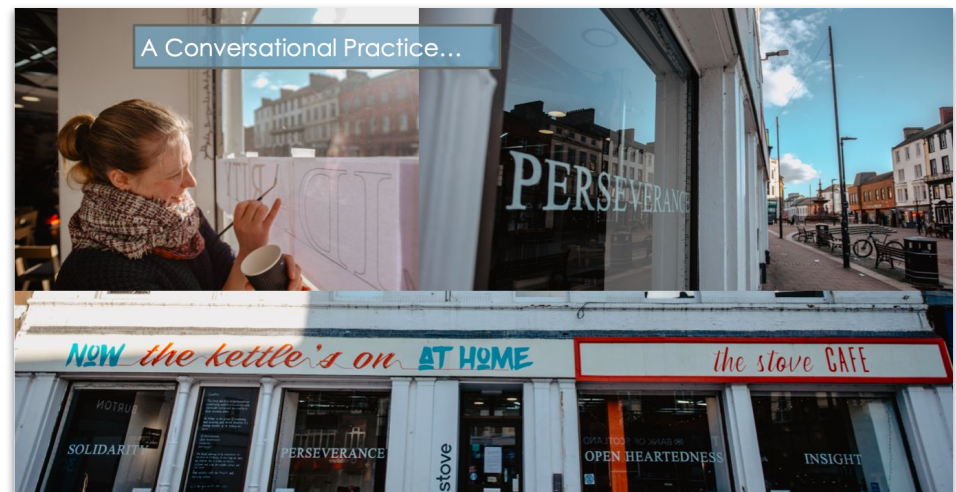
Read more about Day 4 [here](#).



Design by Sam Sheriff.

## Observations:

- using arts/creativity as a tool to support locals and artists to reimagine their future together;
- creative placemaking – build strong relationships to grow a community/civic space where it’s needed and as a response to its location;
- community-led planning agenda – ‘letting go’ while providing support and encouragement;
- making small bets to see what works and doesn’t.





Design by Sam Sheriff, mapping her Fabric experience.

# FEEDBACK

## What did you value most in the Fabric programme? (1/2)

- **New connections and peer-to-peer learning** – The one-to-one chats and group breakout sessions were very good, also enjoyed the 'surgery' sessions, got some very useful feedback // The opportunity to connect with similar spirited people in the sessions and outwith. It made online conversations less intimidating // The opportunity to have fresh conversations with fellow Fabric participants // Creating new connections with the participants // Despite not meeting in person I would feel comfortable to email any of the participants if they fitted into projects or research I am working on and I hope they feel the same!
- **Guest speakers** – The sessions with Hot Chocolate and The Stove Network were really useful in terms of the methods they talked about using in their work // Getting an insight into organisations that I didn't know about // I like the choice of speakers, they seemed like it was intended to flow with the journey of the programme.

**“I’m sad to see the end of fabric, but it was a great experience and provided me with a lot of different insights that I didn’t expect to gain. It’s been a great inspiration for us moving forward.”**

Fabric 2020 participant.

## What did you value most in the Fabric programme? (2/2)

- **New perspectives** – Fresh voices, hearing about different projects from guests and participants // Learning what everyone else is up to. Even though Dundee is quite small, there was still loads of things happening that I wasn't aware of // I valued the insight offered by the other participants and the guest speakers. A lot can be said for hearing different points of view and ways of thinking.
- **Looking forward** – Shared interest for developing ideas // It challenged my vision of my creative future. There were a few talks from guests in particular that made me reconsider how I was approaching my own practice and projects. However, talks with other Fabric guys also made me think and challenged the view I had of my own future.
- **Opportunity to reflect during lockdown** – I feel like it was good timing in a way (for me) with it happening over lockdown, as it was a much needed project with direction to get stuck into and be motivated by // Getting together with inspiring people during these crazy times and taking time to think about the future rather than just constantly worrying about the present.

“With time, the Fabric programme and Creative Dundee at large have altered my perception of the city in which I wish to live. Reflecting on this experience has also made me consider the qualities required for leadership in a resilient social structure. Importantly, reaffirming the urge to learn and improve by engaging with others has impacted my outlook forever.”



**Erin Farley** @aliasmacalias · Jul 2

Good thoughts from the [#FabricDundee](#) programme - work with people, not on people, and find/make temporary autonomous zones where you can be \*for\* something! [@Creative\\_Dundee](#)

1 comment 1 retweet 8 likes



**Erin Farley** @aliasmacalias · Jul 2

Sometimes the life of a project is in the "becoming and making" process, not the finished thing. Make room for disagreement and practice radical hospitality!! [#FabricDundee](#)

1 comment 1 retweet 4 likes



**Erin Farley**  
@aliasmacalias

Far too many thoughts for tweets really! Thank you [@Creative\\_Dundee](#) for adapting [#FabricDundee](#) to digital so quickly - feeling much less lost and more purposeful about taking my work into this uncertain future after the course.

2:53 PM · Jul 2, 2020 · [Twitter for Android](#)

1 Retweet 4 Likes

1 comment 1 retweet 4 likes



**Sam Baxter Art (Samantha Sherriff)**  
@sambaxter10



Community is about the people & place(region),wider picture(world), & shouldn't focus on what physical embodiments that are produced from the group, but about the people&relationships.This 'space' which is created(physical or not)provides learning & creative output.  
[#FabricDundee](#)

11:07 AM · Jun 30, 2020



4 likes See Sam Baxter Art (Samantha Sherriff)'s other Tweets



**Sam Baxter Art (Samantha Sherriff)**  
@sambaxter10



For [#FabricDundee](#) [@Creative\\_Dundee](#) programme, I learnt that leadership isn't just a force that makes the tough decisions. It's a role that can be filled by many people, can have it's purpose in certain contexts and doesn't look like just one person, it's a body of people & ideas.

11:01 AM · Jun 30, 2020



4 likes See Sam Baxter Art (Samantha Sherriff)'s other Tweets

# What did you value least in the Fabric programme? Or what would you change?

- **More one-to-one chats** – I would have more coffee meet-ups, which were valuable during isolation // I would have liked more 1 to 1's or smaller group chats, I struggled in big conversations to know when to speak and when to leave space.
- **Bring people back together** – Hopefully we can all meet up in person at some point to meet properly // It would be nice to maybe have a session in 6 months time to see what changes it has made to us as creatives or to touch on what projects we are doing.
- **Content** – [...] was a bit too personal for me – [...] felt a bit vaguer and more personal than practical, but that is just my preference // [...] was a challenge for me but only because I had heard their stories many times before // The session I felt I learnt the least from personally was [...] simply because they were a newer organisation that [...] didn't seem as established with their working methods/process and this is what I found most interesting with the other speakers.
- **COVID 19** – Unable to have natural chat [...] hopefully future Fabrics will allow for more natural conversation between participants in person // I found the Zoom sessions very difficult. I don't feel as though I really managed to get to know the other members of the group // Wish we could all be in one room! But nothing you could do about it. I think first session was a little bit awkward just because we didn't really know each other and were talking via screens but that definitely got better over time!



# Has your vision changed since applying to Fabric and what will you do differently in the future to make your vision happen? (1/2)

- **Yes** – Fabric has made me think, re-assess and reflect on my role and what my skills and expertise is // Definitely. Both the Fabric programme and the time I have had alongside it due to furlough have given me so much time to research and reflect on my passions, projects and practice [...] Moved away from feeling like my practice has to be held together with a title – My vision for my life has broadened, influenced by the lockdown situation and the creative potential and talent which Fabric has introduced to me // My vision has changed quite a bit. At its core, it's the same. However, my journey to get there needs to adapt and fit the city more [...] The conversations I had have really cemented this for me and have pushed me to go the distance.
- **No really but more confidence to make it happen** – I don't think so because it was quite fluid with the outputs but certainly I feel more emboldened that the vision is more possible // I actually feel a bit more confident thinking of and describing myself as a leader! I'm not sure if my vision has changed hugely but I can articulate it much more clearly // Not as such, but I suppose I would feel more comfortable in actively connecting and reaching out to others and their organisation // My vision hasn't changed. My views and thoughts about community arts engagement has altered in positive ways and broadened. I feel more equipped to tackle my vision, and have confidence on how to involve and encourage others.

# Has your vision changed since applying to Fabric and what will you do differently in the future to make your vision happen? (2/2)

- **Feel more connected** – I feel like I have been given a great insight into all the great things that are happening in our city and my hope is that once we return to some kind of normal then I can get involved with some of these things // Not necessarily my vision but I feel even more connected within the city now [...] In the future, I definitely want to talk more openly about ideas I have with different people and just start talking about them before everything is fully developed and ready.

**“We were paired for virtual coffee meetings which I enjoyed over the length of the programme. Connecting with new people and fresh conversation had never been more important. Insights into different careers and aspirations also opened new ways of thinking about my own future and how I make a living.”**

Fabric 2020 participant.

# Have you connected with Fabric participants outside of the sessions? If so, please tell us more...

- The 1:1 sessions were the main thing that helped me connect meaningfully with others in the group and therefore feel more comfortable in the larger sessions.
- **Yes and...** – Began exploring ideas with [...] This is an area of arts which I would not have thought of participating in // Have been talking with people about future projects and events and have promised some real life coffees in the future!
- **Discussions** – It was a nice informal chat about some of the things we have done as well as chatting about our feelings about lockdown // It mainly focused on my personal projects, but it would lead into more general chit chat about being a creative in the city. I hope the conversations we had inspired the people I spoke to just as much as it did me // After these I shared links, book recommendations and articles relating to the topics we had covered in our chats and it was lovely to share interests and knowledge in this way.
- **Keeping in touch** – I have deepened connections I had previous to the sessions and have people I can reach out too much easier now. I hope that there is space for collaborating in the future // These are connections I would love to maintain moving forward, hopefully leading into some exciting projects – Post Covid I would love to have a coffee with lots of the group! And definitely take a trip to The Stove Network with whoever would be interested! // I have started to follow some others on social media to see what they are up to.

**“I will be honest and thought that it would be better to postpone, but I was wrong. I knew that it would be well organised but I think it worked well even under these conditions.”**

**“Really really impressed with how you have managed to turn this programme digital at such short notice, and I am very glad we still got to do it this year! Have really enjoyed the experience and learnt a lot, and met some brilliant folks. Thank you!”**

**“The programme was very informative and did feel fun and casual. The collection of information/links was very useful. Keep doing what you're doing! Great guests too. Can't wait for a physical meet!”**

**“Thanks for all your hard work putting this together!”**

Fabric 2020 participants.



**THANK YOU**