



CREATIVE DUNDEE X TAKING SPACE

20
21

INTRODUCTION

Over the last few months, we have been meeting with groups, running workshops and creating spaces with young women from across Dundee to explore what barriers they and others face when considering pursuing a job in the creative industries.

During the workshops we met some incredible, talented young women that inspired us with their stories and aspirations. Many of their experiences also left us feeling angry and challenged us further about the work that needs to be done.

This short report will discuss the barriers we discovered as part of our research. They included:

School
Location
Finance
Lack of Support
Lack of Information and Role Models

We will also make some recommendations as to what might be done to address these barriers.

Overall, younger girls who we engaged with did not actively feel there were any barriers standing in their way of pursuing a creative career - they had a very 'I can do whatever I want' attitude. However, when discussing their aspirations for the future - despite identifying creative jobs they would be interested in - they stated they would like to be teachers and that their creative ambitions could be their 'part-time jobs' or their 'other jobs.'

We also spoke to some women in their 20's who have successfully pursued careers in the creative industries and have started their own businesses. They reflected on a wide range of barriers that they faced during school, university and beyond. They also identified that the support they received from organisations such as Launch It and Lift Off has been fundamental in setting-up their own business as well as giving them the personal support to believe in their creative aspirations.

WE SPOKE TO...

7

GROUPS

34

YOUNG WOMEN AND GIRLS

4

YOUNG BUSINESS OWNERS

AGED BETWEEN 12-25

**ALL LIVING AND/OR
WORKING IN DUNDEE**

SCHOOL

The way that school teachers and career advisors engaged with the young women and girls we talked to had a significant impact on how they thought about themselves and their future careers.

Occasionally, the young women mentioned art and drama teachers who had unquestionably encouraged them in their creativity. This, however, was often not the case. Across all the conversations we had, there was a distinct and definite commonality in the lack of support and guidance offered to girls at school.

In one example of many, one young woman, when telling her teacher she wanted to be a fashion photographer, was told:

"The only thing you'll be taking pictures of is cereal boxes "

In addition to this, there was also a sense that if you do display or voice an interest in the creative industries at school, you are 'forgotten about' as that does not fit into the wider school (and government) agenda of supporting young people into more academic or STEM based subjects. This reflection was supported by stories of pupils who had expressed an interest in pursuing a career in STEM being offered multiple meetings with their careers advisors and those who would like to pursue a creative career offered only one session.

A significant insight which emerged on numerous occasions was that the school would only encourage a 'creative career' if it was graphic or tech design - and for many young women, it was felt these were subjects still often pushed onto boys.

Interestingly, the question that was repeatedly asked of those wanting to pursue a career in the creative industries, outside of graphic design, seemed to be:

"WHAT'S YOUR BACKUP PLAN?"

We believe that this stems from two key factors; one, the ongoing perception by many of the viability of a creative career; and two, the lack of knowledge or resources to counteract these limiting assumptions. Throughout the conversations, there was an overwhelming sense that teachers and careers advisors of the young women we spoke to have a lack of resources/knowledge/access to information when it comes to working with a young person who is interested in pursuing a career in the creative industries. Often it feels like they simply don't have access to the information that they need to nurture a pupil's interests, passions and talents. One key example of this is one young person telling us of the time when her guidance teacher refused to write her UCAS reference as she didn't know how to write an 'artsy' reference.

Key challenge: lack of information, resources and encouragement coming from schools.

"I didn't have any encouragement from any teachers - apart from my art teacher. No one had any faith in me"

You're never going to have a career as an artist - get real"

"You're almost seen as a disappointment if you want to go into a creative industry "oh, but you're so smart, why would you want to be an artist?"

LOCATION

" I wanted to be an artist. But I was told that the only industry that is employable in any way and creative in the UK is basically textiles for a lot of young women. But the only problem is that you have to go to London to do your internships, you need money to do that, because you're expected to work for free. When I was there it was the expectation that you would go down, you would work yourself into a burnout in London, you've burned through all of your savings, if you don't have savings and you have to take an overdraft. You have to get it from somewhere...

...There's this overriding limiting belief that I really embodied, up until like, about a year ago, from career advisors and then like family members, just generally like that a career doesn't really happen here. Maybe in Glasgow, if you lived in Glasgow, maybe you could do something like that, but not here in Dundee"

We know Dundee is a very creative place both currently and in the past. However, as we asked the question of the city and its opportunities, there was a clear disconnect between the city we know as artists, and the city the young women know. They struggled to see themselves working and living here as they felt that their dreams were not achievable in Dundee as they don't know of anyone else doing anything creative in the city. Additionally, we found it surprising that the majority did not know who Creative Dundee were or knew of any creatives working in the city.

There was a strong sense that for the younger girls, they believed their options in Dundee were limited, but they still didn't want to leave the city as this is where their family and friends are.

The women aged 20+ we talked to who have pursued a job in the creative industries by setting up their own fashion business, discussed how after studying at university in Dundee, the expectation was that they had to go and get an apprentice in a big city and that was simply a luxury that they could not afford.

“You can only do that if you have rich parents.”

We had many conversations about the need to move to Edinburgh, Glasgow or London. These varied from the perceived barriers of younger teenagers to lived realities.

Key challenge: perception of Dundee as a place to live and work creatively.

“I don't think I could do that in Dundee...”

FINANCE

Finance was also a significant concern with creative careers being viewed as higher risk. There was a sense that this was a view compounded by families, teachers and the wider community; to be successful you have to earn a lot of money.

For those young women who had started their own businesses, they are doing so along with other part-time work, with the goal of one day their business generating enough for them to go full-time. There is a clear stigma around this as opposed to these young women being supported to achieve their dream, they are seen as 'dreamers with their heads in the clouds'.

Many young women we spoke to identified essential life skills such as taxes, budgeting and money management, as something they had never been taught at school but wished they had. There was a distinct desire to access this information but many of the women did not know how. The majority of those who mentioned this have graduated from university in a creative field and felt like it would have been invaluable for this to be a core element of their courses.

Key challenge: lack of information and tangible financial support for young working class women.

“I didn't know I could start my own business”

LACK OF ROLE MODELS AND NETWORKS

There is an immense amount of aspiration in the communities of girls we met with, however, as this report has made clear, there is often a lack of support and guidance. We believe this is magnified by the lack of role models and/or creative networks available to the young women.

For example, many young women are already making their own art, jewellery, clothes in their bedrooms but don't know where to sell it. They feel many markets in Dundee are for more established people and don't think they would be welcome or don't know how to get a foot in the door.

Equally, families and teachers with a lack of knowledge about what a career in the creative industries looks like are less able to encourage and support. It was evident that those who have clear paths planned out, know other people who have similar jobs.

Due to the lack of networks and understanding that surrounds the creative industries, there is also a gap in knowledge about career options outside of the actor, artist, designer, teacher categories, that has had an impact on those we spoke to.

Throughout the conversations we had, there was a clear disparity of how and where information was accessed. Many of the young women feel that information on creative opportunities is difficult to locate unless you have the initiative, confidence, resources or incentive to seek this out yourself. They reflected that, for them, creative opportunities are very much dependent on personal social networks as opposed to the information being accessible through one central point/organisation or being disseminated and shared consistently via school.

NEXT STEPS

How do we better advocate and amplify the creative industries for and with young women in the city?

01

Development of a city-wide programme of work around signposting, information sharing, mentoring and advocacy for the arts

02

Creation of an online 'one-stop-shop' for any young person/teacher/careers advisor looking for opportunities, advice or local networks

03

Creation of a network of 'Careers Ambassadors' (as opposed to Careers Advisors). People who champion creative careers, support all creative career pathways and ambitions and signpost/link up young people, artists, schools, and organisations to create more equitable access to creative opportunities across the city and further afield. They could also be a network of Creative Mentors and Allies.

04

Create an Amps network for young people and professionals

05

Further research needed into how the creative industries are profiled in schools at careers fairs and via careers advisors - what is the training they undertake, how can they be supported and be better equipped to support young people hoping to pursue creative careers?

06

Development of more early-career opportunities across the city.

ADVICE

Below are a selection of quotes from some of the women we spoke to. These are in response to the question 'What advice would you give other young women wanting to pursue a career in the creative industries?'

“To think about what you love and what you are good at. Usually you are good at what you love. Take a year off after school to travel, work, party, chill out, whatever - just learn about who YOU are. Learn about the real world and who you are as a person before you try and plan your future.”

"I would say to believe in yourself fully and go with your gut. Also, there's no finish line or special prize for following the 'generic' way to live your life e.g. get married, get a job, have kids etc. Do what makes you happy."

"Your mental health and happiness comes before everything. This includes; money, family relationships, friendships and careers. There needs to be more support with mental health in schools and university."

"Start meditating!! I was so disconnected from myself and my own intuition and my own wants for myself and the future that I was over saturated with other people's opinions and expectations. If you're prone to anxiety and have a lower self-esteem, being able to trust your gut is the most worthwhile and important thing you can do for yourself."

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We want to thank the 34 women and girls we spoke to during this research. We want to thank them for their generosity, honesty, stories and insight. We would also like to thank the community and youth workers who supported the work and contributed to the conversations.

Hot Chocolate Trust

Launch It

Rock Solid

ADHD Scotland

Arthurstone Library Girls Group

hidde route ensemble

Contact

TAKING SPACE

A collaboration between hidden route and Hayley Blakeman

hello@hiddenroute.co.uk

@hiddenroute_

@hayleyblakeman