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If you would like more information on the approach used, please contact info@matter-of-focus.com

Photography by Yola Sornsakrin and Fraser Stone.
About Matter of Focus

Matter of Focus is a mission-led company based in Edinburgh.

We work with organisations, projects and programmes to explore, map, analyse and assess the outcomes that matter to them, the people and populations they care about, and their funders. We provide tools and techniques to bring together evidence, data and evaluation to ensure that projects and programmes can meet their outcomes, are successful and adaptable, and can demonstrate that success to funders, service-users and other stakeholders.

We have created an innovative and easy to use software tool, OutNav, which enables public service organisations and funders to make effective use of their data and information to learn, improve and tell the story about the difference they make.

Matter of Focus is led by Dr Ailsa Cook and Dr Sarah Morton. Both Ailsa and Sarah are internationally renowned academics, both well known for their ability to develop practical tools backed by robust evidence-based approaches, with extensive experience of delivering solutions for public service organisations.

Executive summary

Creative Kin was a two-year pilot project delivered in partnership between Children 1st and Starcatchers, Scotland’s National Arts and Early Years Organisation. Kinship care families in Moray and Ayrshire were given opportunities to explore music, visual art, drama and other creative activities together as part of an artist-led programme with the aim to help strengthen their relationships and improve wellbeing. The programme ran for two years from 2017-2019.

The Creative Kin programme has had a significant impact on improving the confidence, wellbeing and relationships of both carers and children in kinship families who took part. Through the protected time and space provided by the Creative Kin sessions, families have interacted creatively, building their confidence and social skills as well as nurturing their relationships. Carers enjoyed the space for some respite away from everyday challenges to have fun with their peers and children. The children involved have been able to experience many creative approaches and art forms and have had the chance to play with their peers and families in a safe and comfortable environment, nurturing their creative interests and developing their social skills.

Fifteen Creative Skills training sessions have been delivered to Children 1st staff in Ayrshire and Moray, engaging a total of 30 staff members. Through the training, staff have broadened and developed their creative skills. They have explored new ideas and approaches in creativity which have been used and further developed in their work with kinship families. Staff have also seen the Creative Skills training as an opportunity to develop more team building and raise awareness to new staff of the value they place on creativity in their work with families. As a result, creativity within Children 1st has been further championed and embedded in the organisation.

Acknowledgements

This report is the result of a collaborative approach to evaluation between Starcatchers Creative Kin staff and Matter of Focus. We would like to thank Children 1st and Starcatchers staff, the Creative Kin artists, and the kinship families for contributing to the report in the form of feedback, interviews, focus groups and reflective logs. These have been pulled together by staff at Matter of Focus to create this final report.
Background

The Project

About Starcatchers
Starcatchers is Scotland’s National Arts and Early Years Organisation, providing exceptional arts experiences to support improved outcomes for our youngest children. Starcatchers’ work is delivered over three core pillars: producing and touring, professional development and community engagement.

About Creative Kin
Creative Kin was a two-year pilot project delivered in partnership between Children 1st and Starcatchers from 2017-2019, and funded by the Scottish Government’s Children, Young People and Families Early Intervention Project Fund. The project worked with kinship care families.

A kinship carer is a person who is looking after a child of a relative or friend on a full-time basis. This can be a temporary or permanent arrangement and can also be on a formal or informal basis. The placement of a child with an unrelated person by their parent(s) is known as Private Foster Carer. Under the Looked After Children (Scotland) Regulations 2009, a kinship carer is defined as:

A person who is related to the child (through blood, marriage or civil partnership) or a person with whom the child has a pre-existing relationship.

Kinship care families in Moray and Ayrshire were given the opportunity to explore music, visual art, drama and other creative activities together as part of an artist-led programme designed to help strengthen their relationships and improve wellbeing. Engaging in creative activities provides opportunities for children and their carers to connect and empowers them to understand and use the arts more regularly — not just during the facilitated sessions but also at home. The programme was delivered to families in blocks of weekly sessions over the two-year period.

About Creative Skills training
In addition to the sessions for families, staff from Children 1st received a Creative Skills training course delivered by Starcatchers. The Creative Skills training empowers adults who work with young children, helping them to feel and be more creative, promoting an engaging, playful, open-ended and child-centred approach. The training is run by artists and facilitators who specialise in creative activity for the very young, using playful, child-led experiences that help support the delivery of key policies. The training was delivered over 15 sessions in Ayrshire and Moray, engaging 30 staff members at Children 1st.

About the Artists
Two lead artists were commissioned to deliver the Creative Kin weekly sessions to kinship families in Ayrshire and Moray.

Lead Artists Ayrshire
Naomi O’Kelly has a background as community artist, theatre maker and storyteller and originally trained in physical theatre. She was with the project from the start of delivery in Ayrshire until the end of the Summer of 2018.

Fraser Stone, the project coordinator, also an artist, stepped in to deliver the final sessions with families in this region. Fraser has been a professional musician and educator for over a decade and has created multiple rhythm-based projects for schools and community settings.

Lead Artist Moray
Heather Fulton was the lead artist in Moray. Heather is the Artistic Director of Frozen Charlotte Productions and has been an associate artist with Starcatchers for a number of years, delivering work spanning the organisations three core pillars.

A further 20 supporting artists have been invited to collaborate with the lead artists in the weekly family sessions or deliver Creative Skills training for Children 1st staff.
The Evaluation

This evaluation has been conducted in partnership between the main agencies and Matter of Focus, an independent organisation specialising in outcome-focused evaluation. In summer 2017, Matter of Focus held a workshop with Starcatchers and Children 1st staff, alongside the artists who were going to deliver the sessions, to map out how their activities were going to link to the key outcomes for the Creative Kin programme. The resulting ‘outcome map’ was used as a framework for evaluation, including data collection and analysis, and is the basis for the structure of this report. The outcome map was split into two main pathways: one focusing on children and carers, the other on Children 1st staff.

The evaluation process took place throughout the Creative Kin programme, with Matter of Focus taking overall responsibility, but with artists and staff collecting data each time they interacted with families. Feedback was collected from families weekly and the artists provided their own reflections in the form of a reflective impact log (appendix 2) completed after each session. Children 1st staff also noted observations from each session, tracking participants’ journeys through the project. Team reflections were gathered to aid ongoing project development. Feedback from children and carers came in the form of quotes, pictures and simple feedback forms (appendix 3).

Artists were encouraged and took up the challenge to come up with creative approaches to gathering feedback about the sessions that would be in keeping with the artistic nature of the programme. This was largely successful and embodied the Creative Kin goals to use creativity regularly with kinship families, this included feedback through games, art and sound files.

The feedback was summarised each week by the programme coordinator. When the programme ended, further data was collected and analysed by Matter of Focus, including interviews with key stakeholders and a focus group with Children 1st staff.

The rest of this report sets out the findings of the evaluation, considering all of the data that has been collected. It does so under one outcome map, separated into two pathways. The first is focused on the work of Creative Kin with kinship families and the second focuses on the Creative Skills training provided to Children 1st staff. The findings are then presented against each level of outcomes.
Methodological Approach

The work shown in this report has been carried out using the Matter of Focus approach. The Matter of Focus approach is a theory-based approach to outcome monitoring and evaluation, learning and improvement that builds on contribution analysis. In using the approach, we have gone through a logical and structured process of:

- Developing a theory of change for our project informed by an understanding of the context in which we operate.
- Agreeing one or more outcome maps that show how we think our activities contribute to outcomes, and what needs to be in place to make this happen.
- Identifying clear change mechanisms by which our project or programme works, these are shown in our pathways.
- Developing a plan to gather data to understand whether or not we are making the progress towards outcomes we hope. This includes integrating current data and information we collect, as well as capturing data specifically for this purpose.
- Systematically reviewing this data against each of the stepping stones for each pathway in the outcome map.
- Summarising key findings against each of the stepping stones to tell our contribution story.

1. Creative Kin children and kinship carers pathway

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What we do</th>
<th>Who with</th>
<th>How they feel</th>
<th>What they learn and gain</th>
<th>What they do differently</th>
<th>What difference does this make?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deliver artist-led sessions with kinship carers and their children</td>
<td>Children who are cared for by kinship carers</td>
<td>This is for me! I can express myself! This can be fun!</td>
<td>Understand how creativity improves attachment between adults and children</td>
<td>Creativity is integrated into children and families lives</td>
<td>Relationships between kinship carers and children are strengthened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deliver bespoke creative skills training for kinship carers</td>
<td>Kinship carers</td>
<td>I have more confidence with creative approaches</td>
<td>We know how to interact creatively</td>
<td></td>
<td>Kinship carers have improved parenting skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Attachement between children and carers is improved</td>
<td>Children and carers report increased resilience, confidence and wellbeing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Children and kinship carers

Introduction
This section of the report looks at the experience of children and their carers of the Creative Kin sessions, delivered across four blocks of weekly sessions over the two-year period.

What we do

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Deliver artist-led sessions with kinship carers and their children.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deliver bespoke creative skills training for kinship carers</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Key findings
Diverse creative activities have been delivered to kinship families with the support of Children 1st staff. Creative Kin adapted the creative skills training to ensure value for the kinship carers. Adapting activities in order to provide the best value for kinship families has continued throughout the programme.

Deliver artist-led sessions with kinship carers and their children

Creative Kin has offered unique creative experiences for kinship carers and the children they look after. The family sessions, held in Moray and Ayrshire, offered creative respite for both children and carers and the space for quality time together away from life’s challenges.

With Starcatchers, it’s all about being creative, allowing families time to come together and have some fun. (Children 1st, Ayrshire)

50 Creative kin sessions were delivered in total with 32 Creative Kin sessions delivered in Ayrshire and 18 in Moray. An example activity is shown in the box below. It is a description of the principal theme for one of the blocks, which the artist referred to as ‘Making Space’:

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Participants were creatively engaged by artists who provided a starting place for make-believe worlds to explore. Stimulating and sensorially interesting materials were provided along with visual and audio enhancement to strengthen themes, but the shape of each session was very much determined and led by our participants. We have adventured through foam-infested jungles, sub-aquatic worlds with breakdancing mermaids and even outer space, where participants designed space-suits before embarking on a trip to the moon!
– Programme coordinator
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Initial consultation time with participants highlighted a family’s dynamic, support needs and their creative interests. This enabled the lead artists to gain a real sense of each family they were working with and nurture their interests by collaborating with supporting artists. The artists facilitated a range of creative activities for families in keeping with their interests to ensure maximum engagement. Creative approaches explored in sessions included:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Puppetry</td>
<td>Bringing characters to life as a tool for connecting the physical and the emotional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photography</td>
<td>Using photography to showcase personal interests, make connections with others and bring stories to life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>Delivering a range of activities to aid self-expression and to build confidence within a group setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative Play</td>
<td>Getting back to basics with a workout for the imagination. Inspiring creative thinking which can be duplicated within the home environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>Exploring music to aid interesting learning and therapeutic experiences e.g. raising cultural awareness, using sound for sensory and emotional development and developing literacy and numeracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Art</td>
<td>Promoting different approaches which can be utilised to aid self-expression, without the constraints of a general arts and craft approach and perception of art materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bush Craft</td>
<td>Den building, foraging, wildlife and outdoor creative play, promoting exciting learning experiences in the natural environment and building skills for life</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are lots of different activities and a broad range for kids to engage with, so helpful with social skills. Fun for me too. (Carer)

Overall, the bespoke creative activities delivered by artists in both Ayrshire and Moray were very successful and allowed the families to experience a wide range of creative activities throughout the Creative Kin sessions.

In Ayrshire, it took some time for Children 1st and the artists to work together effectively. There were some initial challenges and a lack of understanding of the roles and responsibilities of both organisations. For example, ensuring that all of those involved had substantial information would have better-highlighted the diverse needs of the families attending. Artists sharing session plans in advance would have ensured all attending staff had a better understanding of the creative focus.

However, after the initial blocks, artists were regularly informed of the families that would be attending each session, which highlighted support needs and the group dynamic. The implementation of session plans enabled Children 1st staff to feel better prepared before each session and support the families through creative activities. Through this collaborative working, sessions and activities were delivered successfully.

[By the end of block three] the lead artist was very flexible and aware — changing her facilitation styles to adapt. (Children 1st, Ayrshire)

After a great deal of learning from the initial blocks of delivery, we worked together and adjusted our approach to best support families. During Block 3 we developed and adopted a more unified approach in our facilitation to such a dynamic and ever-changing group. (Creative Kin, Project Coordinator)

Artists and staff reflected that the session content was informed by listening to the needs of the participants, drawing on the strengths and interests of the group and shaping and facilitating the project in response. As feedback was collected dynamically throughout the programme, there were good opportunities for learning, reflection and adaptation. This approach promoted inclusion and aided the participants’ confidence and engagement, ensuring that the activities during sessions connected with children and carers.
Furthermore, it encouraged participants to find their creative voice. In one particular example, an activity was adapted for a child who was older than the rest of the group to ensure he was able to engage.

*My grandson felt too old the first week but staff adapted the session the next week so he could feel more responsible, he really enjoyed it, especially the photography.*

(Carer)

In this case the child helped capture another family’s creative moments. This sparked his interest in photography, and he was able to connect with his carer by learning about her forgotten love of photography. This then fuelled the idea of holding a photography-based session. The child’s pictures have been used on promotional material for Creative Kin and on the company websites.

*We were taking photos of the sessions and we realised (the child) was really keen and became engaged in photography. We gave him a camera and asked him to take photographs, and that was his way of getting involved in the sessions, and soon after Starcatchers used one of his photographs for an invitation for the next block so that felt like it really validated his work.*

(Lead artist, Moray)

Artists and Children 1st staff also completed a reflective impact log after each session and captured lessons learned to improve delivery over the course of the programme.

*What feeds into the session plan are comments and decisions we make as a reflection and then changes will be made in the next session plan.*

(Children 1st, Ayrshire)
Deliver bespoke creative skills training for kinship carers

Starcatchers worked with carers in Ayrshire and Moray through an adapted version of their Creative Skills programme — a training programme for early years staff that develops creative approaches to working with children and has been used with professionals across Scotland. It had originally been intended to deliver Creative Skills training to kinship carers as a way to help broaden ideas carers could try at home, enable a positive relationship to form between staff and carers, nurture carer confidence and address any barriers to participation. Additionally, it was thought it would encourage them to engage with the project prior to attending the family sessions.

However, after receiving some feedback from carers and Children 1st staff, it was decided that the Creative Skills training proposal needed to be adjusted for kinship carers. A few reasons for this were identified, including limited time for carers, issues with childcare, or lack of willingness to attend creative workshops without the children they look after. This was an important step forward in the project’s development and began a process of adaptation based on feedback that continued throughout the blocks.

“We trialled it but didn’t find it comfortable and easy to do. We decided to just introduce the sessions and invite them in a gentle way, doing training along the way... Making it formal didn't feel as organic.”

(Children 1st, Ayrshire)

Instead, the team in Ayrshire provided Creative Skills training for carers in conjunction with the Creative Kin family sessions, which better suited the needs of the participants. Delivering the training in this way enabled carers to share experiences, further explore creativity and develop ideas together, or seek additional support in the form of consultation time with Children 1st staff.

In Moray, they trialled working solely with the carers at the start of each session. However, the lead artist reflected that for the group in Moray this wasn’t quite right, and they made the decision to spend the sessions working with everyone.

“What we tried to do initially was have time at beginning of each session, to try to do different games and exercise with [the carers] before children were involved but with my group, we didn't really need that. We felt the most valuable use of time was to be spent together, all of the time.”

(Lead artist, Moray)

Artists successfully delivered additional Creative Skills sessions to carers attending Citizens Advice Scotland (CAS) kinship events. These were held in several regions across the country and offered kinship carers, who were not part of the Creative Kin project, the opportunity to experience Creative Skills training. CAS highlighted that carers face many situations where having the confidence to speak, e.g. during meetings with the agencies/organisations, would be of great benefit. This resulted in engaging 38 carers and 17 staff with artists who specialise in theatre work. Music sessions, which focussed on rhythm work and drumming were also delivered for carers and staff.

Overall, the Creative Skills training was adapted successfully to fit the needs of the kinship families in both Ayrshire and Moray which ensured the families received the best value from the time they had given to the Creative Kin sessions.

Who with

| Engagement | Children who are cared for by kinship carers |
| Key findings | 36 carers and 40 children have been engaged across the programme. Kinship families engaged in Creative Kin are often dealing with complex issues in their families which has affected the continual engagement of families across the sessions. Sessions have therefore been adapted depending on who was in attendance. Engaging smaller groups has been most successful, with engagement in sessions increasing as time went on. |
Children who are cared for by kinship carers

The kinship families supported by Children 1st represent some of those in most need of additional help. Creative Kin offers a positive and safe environment, which is important in meeting the needs of vulnerable people. Many of the children attending sessions have been placed in kinship care as a direct result of experiencing significant trauma whilst living with parents. This can be an incredibly difficult time for children and their carers, who can be dealing with disorder and turmoil within the immediate family setting:

*A family group’s dynamic changes, who attends changes, their lifestyles are so dynamic and complex it could change right up until the first session. We need to be very responsive.*

(Children 1st, Ayrshire)

Therefore, there have been some challenges around engaging families during Creative Kin sessions and the number of families attending each session has also varied. Artists reflected on often having to adapt their sessions last minute in order to suit those who would be in attendance. The artists’ reflective logs demonstrate a sensitive response to these changes, with sessions being altered to ensure a good fit for the participants.

*Things were adapted and there was no clear framework for every activity, always an element of ‘if the child isn’t responding we should adapt, rather than expecting them to’.*

(Children 1st, Ayrshire)

This level of flexibility ensured that the sessions would be suitable for all family members, and depending on age and interests in the room, the artists and staff would find ways to engage the family members and similarly hold their engagement throughout the session.

*There was focused, energetic facilitation…— always listening and reacting, with the aim of keeping attention, satisfying creative whims, responding to creative wishes, going with what the children brought up, and adding new ideas in a persuasive way.*

(Artist reflection)

Children 1st staff in Ayrshire also reflected on an important learning point during the sessions with regards to the number of kinship families engaged. During the programme, they decided to increase in the number of kinship families who could participate in the sessions, but staff realised it was "*quite a leap*" that they had "*underestimated*". Families were at different stages in their support from Children 1st, making the group dynamics too challenging. The staff and artists came to a decision that it was better for the sessions to have a lower number of participants with higher levels of successful engagement.

*Had to get to a point where we were OK that the numbers were low if the quality of session was better because the benefits outweighed the low numbers.*

(Children 1st, Ayrshire)

Overall, engaging with a smaller group of families has been a success, with very positive feedback from carers and children. This is partly due to the families being more willing to engage in creative approaches when provided with an intimate setting. The children and adults also engaged well with each other and paired up with other families to work together. Staff and artists reflected on how much more relaxed and confident the families were with each other when sessions had steady numbers:

*It’s quite daunting asking people to step out of their comfort zone, scary at first, but in a consistent group they got to know each other and feel comfortable. We need to be comfortable that we didn’t need a big number of families, because smaller is working well for these sessions.*

(Children 1st, Ayrshire)
Attendance at Creative Kin Sessions

The graph shows the total number of families (28), carers (36) and children (40) who have engaged in the Creative Kin programme broken down by region — Ayrshire and Moray.

Attendance at Citizens Advice Scotland event

The second graph shows the additional people engaged in a Citizens Advice Scotland event, held in North Ayrshire. An additional 38 carers, 22 children and 17 staff were in attendance.
Kinship carers

Carers have benefitted from the Creative Kin programme in a number of ways. It has enabled carers to make new friends and build social networks to better support one another. The sessions have provided a platform for carers to share their own experiences with peers and offer support and advice to others. Feedback suggests the project better prepares carers as it offers the time and the space to meet with others in similar situations and provides some reassurance that they are not alone. This was shown in staff and artist reflections, where carers would feel comfortable in engaging in peer support during sessions:

*I also really liked seeing that they were getting on with each other and were sharing experiences of their situations with each other.*

(Artist reflection, Ayrshire)

*Being around other families that are facing the same issues, able to peer support and see what other people are doing with their situations and being able to learn from that and be supported by that as well, even something practical; what am I entitled to benefits wise, who do I got to for this information or that information.*

(Lead artist, Moray)

Most of the carers were engaged from the outset and very open and honest with the artists and Children 1st about how they wanted the sessions to look and feel. For example, in Ayrshire and Moray, carers provided feedback about the proposed creative skills training sessions, that they did not want to attend without the children present.

*I think because of the way we work, it allowed families to be open and honest about their work with Starcatchers, always clear conversations about what sessions looked like and what they wanted from carers point of view.*

(Children 1st, Moray)
There was feedback from both staff and artists commenting on how the sessions had adapted from being all about engaging the whole family in the activities to allowing the carers to have time for themselves as well as within a family group, again reinforcing the carers readiness to engage in the creative activities and at times step out of their comfort zones:

You saw carers immerse themselves in their own creative bubble and get into their own space which was really good for them.

(Children 1st, Ayrshire)

Participants reacted well, it was nice to see (carer) joining in and making a mask. I know she is pushing her comfort zone when she joins in with activities, but she seemed to have really enjoyed it.

(Artist reflection)

[It is a] lovely moment to watch someone with so much adversity in their life have a moment just for themselves and be so focused on something they enjoy.

(Children 1st, Ayrshire)

Overall, kinship carers engaged well with sessions, although there were some challenges to overcome. The number of families in attendance often fluctuated and sessions with higher numbers of participants presented a more challenging group dynamic. However, through working collaboratively with Children 1st, artists ensured that activities were pitched at the right level, allowing for engagement in varying capacities and an "active involvement" with the group.
How they feel

Reactions

This is for me! I can express myself, this can be fun!
I have more confidence with creative approaches

Key findings

Through routine discussion with Children 1st staff, Artists are better-able to understand family dynamics and create a safe and positive environment which encourages participants to be themselves and have fun. Families have felt increasingly confident in using creative approaches as the sessions have continued, with one family engaging in a participant-led session.

This is for me! I can express myself! This can be fun!

Artists and staff ensured that kinship families’ voices were being heard throughout the sessions, by collecting feedback on a regular basis. This feedback indicates that the families thoroughly enjoyed attending the sessions and getting involved in the creative activities. This word cloud was created using feedback from children and carers after a mask making session:

Carers’ feedback was captured throughout the blocks, to ensure that the sessions were engaging for them and the children. This feedback was also overwhelmingly positive, some example quotes are shown below:

We liked everything, all the sessions we have attended have been brilliant.
The sessions are awesome the way they are, no pressure, just good fun.

(Feedback from carers)

In addition to gathering qualitative feedback from children and carers, artists gathered reactions using simple questions on flip charts or Talking Walls, where participants could display feelings on a Likert scale and use a range of stickers or drawings to demonstrate this. An example is shown here and other examples are provided in appendix 3. The results highlighted the continued positive impact the project had on kinship families, with families consistently choosing ‘agree’ when responding to the key questions as well as providing positive qualitative feedback to staff and artists.
In order to ensure that the sessions were relatable and engaging for participants, at the start of each block there was a focus on bonding with families, enabling the artists to nurture their interest and gain a real sense of the people they were working with. This was improved over the first few blocks by including initial consultation time with Children 1st staff, a source of valuable information in highlighting a family dynamic and support needs. Creative Kin was committed to involving the families in developing and delivering activities that would build on their existing strengths. They did this by identifying the family’s interest and ideas alongside the artist who then developed starting points for shared creative visions.

_It was about not just asking for feedback but actually listening to them to find out if they’re getting value._

(Children 1st, Ayrshire)

Approaching sessions in this way enabled families to gain a real sense of ownership within the group, empowering them to make key decisions which would then inform the direction of the creative journey and helped further develop the group’s engagement with creative approaches to express themselves.

_I liked today as we were able to use our imagination, and it was a good laugh hearing all the story books. I wish the absent families hadn’t missed out._

(Feedback from carer)

_One carer seemed extremely positive after the session, stating ‘I needed that, what a release.’_

(Artist reflection)

The continuous feedback cycles ensured that the activities were engaging, relevant and enjoyable for the kinship families in both Moray and Ayrshire.

**I have more confidence with creative approaches**

The wide variety of activities covered within the Creative Kin session enabled families to access a broad range of experiences and develop initial confidence in many art forms. There is considerable evidence showing an increase in confidence of some of the family members across the blocks, as well as their commitment to shaping the activities across the project. For example, staff reflected on particular children who had initially come to the sessions very shy and unwilling to fully participate and over time they were showcasing what they had been making to the group and felt confident enough to do so.

_I am so proud of what I have made._

(feedback from child to artist)

Kinship families were also encouraged to take on a participant-led role in some of the sessions. For example, Children 1st had identified the last session of a block as a good opportunity for a family to showcase a craft project they had been working on. This resulted in the family having the confidence to lead the main activity. They used canvases and created pictures using an array of materials and paints. The staff reflected that; “this session had a lovely, calm, focused feel.”

Reflective impact logs from Ayrshire also document how one child who had previously been participating in creative sessions on a 1:1 basis with staff and artists had managed to join more regularly in group activities during later sessions, highlighting his improved confidence.

_I can recognise (child’s) confidence increasing which is positive._

(Children 1st reflection)

Creative Kin has had great success in engaging families and ensuring that sessions were fun and enjoyable, with children and carers being able to express themselves creatively and gain the confidence to do so in a safe and comfortable environment.
What they learn and gain

| Knowledge, attitude and skills | Understand how creativity improves attachment between adults and children. We know how to interact creatively. |
| Key findings | Although perhaps not on a conscious level, staff felt that carers did begin to appreciate the link between creativity and attachment. Engagement with the project increased family’s knowledge and skills of how to interact creatively, both within families and with other adults and children. |

Understand how creativity improves attachment between adults and children

Aspects of the Creative Kin programme demonstrated that providing a platform for kinship families to engage in creative play can greatly aid a family’s sense of togetherness and in turn aid attachment. This has been highlighted through staff observations, reflective impact logs and participant feedback. Below is a case study of a family who have been involved in Creative Kin, written by a team leader at Children 1st:

One kinship carer attended Creative kin along with her own two children and her child in kinship — we felt that they would benefit from attending the sessions to utilise opportunities to have fun together, for the children to be able to play, share and laugh together and for the Carer to have adult company (during the day whilst her partner works) with other kinship carers and local carers from her local area that may share commonalities with her.

Within the home there is often high levels of stress and this can create tension within relationships. Together they then find it challenging to regulate themselves which can escalate situations and create distress. Starcatchers has shown the family that they can spend time together without having conflict and this was lovely for the carer to see and therefore this gave her hope that they can recreate this at home within creative activities as well as strengthening their relationships. It was also highlighted that all were present, grounded and able to engage fully bringing their whole selves to the sessions showing self-regulation and self-care skills.

Feedback from the carer has been that she really enjoys seeing what the children are drawn to, learning what they enjoy and seeing them show creativity and imagination to inform what they do at home.

This also acted as a consistent support, focus and form of escapism from everyday life from our perspective over a summer holiday period. The family consists of six members and so activities and days out can be costly and so Starcatchers was valued for the family. Within this block we also acknowledged the carer’s birthday which she beamed over and there was attuned emotional warmth shared by all the children towards her and her with them during this celebration.

This example is one of many observations and reflections given by artists and staff about families becoming closer during the Creative Kin sessions. Part of this was scaffolded into the sessions, where the activities would ensure that the children would have to work with their family in order to help them learn to work together creatively:

There were a lot of activities set up where families needed each other so we did either very detailed work, more craft work, building, where they needed the adults help so they’d collaborate on the same projects... they were both working and solving a problem together that neither of them were an expert at.

(Lead artist, Moray)

Creative Kin provided a valuable platform, with the time and resources needed, for kinship carers to work creatively with their children, promoting a sense of togetherness which aided attachment.
We know how to interact creatively

Team reflections carried out throughout the blocks provide evidence for how well participants interacted with the project and learnt new skills through unique creative experiences. Staff highlighted that particular sessions felt very child centred which has promoted a connectedness within the group.

Staff continually observed good communication taking place over the four blocks, not only between kinship families but also between peers i.e. carers to carers and children to children, and among families and artists.

*It was great to see the families mixing well and working with each other I often witnessed children working alongside adults from other families and it shows how confident they all are working with each other.*

(Children 1st, Moray)
What they do differently

Creativity is integrated into children and families’ lives

Artists have provided a platform for families to explore creative ideas during sessions which could then support them to elevate creativity into other areas of their lives. Throughout the blocks, families were encouraged to further develop ideas and provide a project scrapbook where they could track their creative journeys and reflect on any activities they had tried in their home environments.

In the beginning we were giving them a scrap book to record their creative journeys. It worked to an extent but it some ways just felt like homework for people who already had a lot on their plate, so we didn’t push that after a while.

(Lead artist, Moray)

Although the scrapbook did not continue as a formal activity in the Creative Kin sessions, staff did mention that several of the families had gone on to develop creativity at home as a result of inspiration from the creative sessions. For example, one staff member mentioned that a child who had engaged well with the music elements in the sessions is now having singing lessons out with Creative Kin, showing that one form of creativity will now be integrated into their daily life.

During one of the outdoor sessions held in Moray, the group explored bushcraft. After this session, four out of five families stated that they had tried new skills learned during bushcraft sessions at home and had shown friends and family. One family reported that this had included making charcoal bread.

Staff also reflected that the Creative Kin session gave families “inspiration” to be creative at home without the need of many resources;

Fun can be had with cardboard boxes... it was important to help families understand that you can still have fun and be creative at home with very little.

(Children 1st, Ayrshire)

They also mentioned that children would often take home the objects they had made during the sessions and there was a possibility they would be using those in creative play at home.

Therefore, although the formal activity used to record creativity at home was not applied throughout the Creative Kin sessions, there was evidence of children building on aspects of the activities they had the opportunity to try and furthering them outside of the programme. Staff were also inclined to think that carers might have used some of the creative skills developed during the sessions in their home life.
What difference does this make?

### Final outcomes

- Relationships between kinship carers and children are strengthened.
- Kinship carers have improved parenting skills.
- Attachment between children and carers is improved.
- Children and kinship carers report increased resilience, confidence and wellbeing.

### Key findings

There have been several examples throughout the programme of relationships being strengthened in kinship families. Kinship carers have also shown some improved communication skills during sessions. There is strong evidence of improved confidence and wellbeing among both carers and children.

### Relationships between kinship carers and children are strengthened

Evidence gathered in focus groups and interviews showed that in a number of cases there were examples of relationships within families being strengthened. Carers have used the protected time in the sessions to further bond with children and therefore strengthen relationships. For example, one family who were initially struggling to interact in a positive way were able to develop their relationships throughout the Creative Kin sessions:

> Particularly through playing games and turn taking, everybody having a voice and having their own little moment in the limelight, and different combinations of this carer working with this child and this carer working with this child, there was kind of a balancing and a recognition that everyone has a place and a voice and a role to play which was really nice.

(Children 1st, Moray)

Providing time for kinship families to play together has enabled children and carers to strengthen their relationships whilst having the support of Children 1st. For example, an artist reflected on the developing bond between a family throughout the sessions:

> One child would not work with her mum, she always wanted to work with someone else, her parent was used to that... but that was challenged, this was the time to make sure they did work together, this was the focus to get the families working together and she was supported in that by the Children 1st staff and activities I set up which required that.

(Lead artist, Moray)

The artist reflected that because of the support the carer was given by the group to have the time to work with her child creatively, they were able to have protected time to bond and therefore strengthen their relationship as a family.

### Kinship carers have improved parenting skills

Throughout the Creative Kin sessions, Children 1st observed the groups’ progress and reflected on examples of parents improving in their communications with their children in an age appropriate and stage appropriate way. There were also reflections on the benefit to carers of having some respite, which could then increase their capacity to be attentive to their child’s needs.

One staff member reflected that although they could not say from the weekly sessions that carers had improved their parenting skills, she did feel the sessions made a real difference to the importance placed on the time they spent with their child:

> It showed the importance they place around relationships and highlighted importance of protected time for play. That small amount of time together is what children need and want

(Children 1st, Moray)
One artist reflected on the importance of Creative Kin in providing the space for very positive interactions with their child and new approaches in getting the most out of their child creative skills:

*The approach was different, not about ‘oh what’s that picture you drew’ and more about ‘oh, that’s interesting colours you chose!’*

(Lead artist, Moray)

Overall, the artists and staff have provided a number of examples of kinship carers developing more appropriate communication skills with their children, through having some time to themselves and seeing the benefit of having time together as a family.

**Attachment between children and carers is improved**

Creative Kin has provided space and time for families to be creative together, play together and therefore build attachment. Staff gave examples where they had observed families improving attachment between children and carers through the space and time to do so in a conformable, relaxed environment.

*Offering a supportive nurturing creative environment…. It works!*

(Children 1st)

One child stated that she loved being able to take part in craft activities with her family; "I loved everything about it!". A carer also stated that the sessions had provided the space to be closer as a family:

*Sessions have brought us closer together as a family, we can interact with each other in a different setting.*

(Carer feedback)

**Children and carers report increased resilience, confidence and wellbeing**

Through Creative Kin, families have interacted and supported one another, made new friends and developed social networks. The project has provided a platform for carers to share their own experiences with peers and be supported by the reassurance that they are not alone.

Feedback has indicated the importance of offering kinship families the time and space to spend quality time with each other. The project has highlighted the incredible strength and resilience of kinship carers and the children they look after. Creative Kin provides respite for families from the ongoing daily challenges kinship families face;

*Overwhelmingly the response I got was they enjoyed being in this atmosphere for a couple of hours, away from home, and planning, scheduling, thinking and logistics, they could just turn up, spend a couple of hours having activities suggested for them that they didn’t need to plan and resource and they could just have a couple hours with children and people in the same situation.*

(Lead artist, Moray)

The families’ continued commitment demonstrates the positive impact the project has had. Through Creative Kin sessions, participants have found their voice, gained confidence and experienced new things, contributing to their wellbeing. The sessions have offered a calm environment and a positive place where participants could interact creatively in many forms without the fear of being judged.

*We worked really hard to make it a nice relaxed place to be and I think they really appreciated that.*

(Lead artist, Moray)

*Non-judgemental environment and very relaxed.*

(Carer)
There was an abundance of feedback that both children and carer had increased confidence as a result of the Creative Kin sessions:

*You could see an increase in confidence of some of the family members across the block as well as their commitment to shaping the activities across the project*

(Children 1st, Ayrshire)

*I was surprised how well the adults all interacted and enjoyed the experience. The carers bonded quite quickly and that really helped them form as a group, encouraged them to engage and relax into participation.*

(Children 1st, Ayrshire)

In conclusion, the Creative Kin programme has been hugely successful in improving and developing the confidence and wellbeing of both kinship carers and their children. Staff and families have reflected on the importance of the sessions in providing them with a space to be creative in a protected environment with no judgement and the value of being part of a supportive group.
2. Creative Kin — staff creative skills training

**Staff Creative Skills**

**Introduction**
The second section of this report considers the experience of Children 1st staff during the Creative Skills training sessions, delivered over the two-year period.

**What we do**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Deliver bespoke creative skills training for staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Key findings**

Children 1st staff have been involved in 15 Creative Skills training sessions where they have broadened their own creative skillsets through their participation in a range of creative approaches.

Deliver bespoke creative skills training for staff

The Creative Skills training programme has been delivered over 15 sessions in Moray and Ayrshire, involving 30 staff members. Staff have provided feedback in the form of interviews and a survey which received 22 respondents.

Through the activities, Children 1st staff have been inspired to better support families creatively during Creative Kin sessions and have additionally broadened their own skillsets to use creative approaches in other areas of their work. This has had a positive impact within their workplace settings and across the services they deliver.
Sessions have focused on a variety of creative areas to aid a broader skillset. These have included; music, movement, sensory experiences, visual art, storytelling and drama experiences. Being opened up to a range of creative activities was important as staff were able to experience activities that could be valuable in their work, not just the typical creative approaches:

I have a better understanding that creativity isn’t necessarily using arts and craft.  
(Children 1st, staff survey)

A focus group involving Children 1st staff from Ayrshire gave positive feedback on the Creative Skills training activities reflecting on it as “experiential learning”. The activities during the Creative Skills sessions used minimal resources, which Children 1st appreciated:

It reaffirmed that we don’t need expensive resources for creativity. Lots of new ideas to try with families, using lights and sound. Opens your eyes to the free resources you can use.  
(Children 1st)

Staff training was scheduled to suit regional offices and staff availability. However, in the staff survey feedback, a few people were concerned that the full day training sessions were too long as it took time away from staff to work on their caseloads. One person suggested that splitting the training into half day sessions may have been more suitable:

I enjoyed it but felt it took too much time away from me to do my case load. I felt it could have been more condensed.  
I felt that perhaps we didn’t need two full days of training. One day would have been enough.  
(Children 1st, staff survey)

Overall, the activities delivered allowed staff to try new creative approaches and understand that creativity can be achieved with minimal resources. The realisation that resources are not crucial to deliver creative approaches was an important learning step because 50% of staff involved in Creative Skills training had initially identified inadequate resources and the cost of resources as a barrier to delivering experiences that help children and carers develop their own creativity.

Who with

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Engagement</th>
<th>Children 1st Staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Key findings</td>
<td>The Creative Skills training programme has received high engagement from the Children 1st staff, both during the creative activities and in engaging with fellow colleagues in team building.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Starcatchers have delivered Creative Skills training to Children 1st staff in both Moray and Ayrshire, engaging and training over 30 staff members.

Children 1st staff felt the Creative Skills training was beneficial for new staff, in helping them understand the importance of creative approaches when working with children and families.

We realised you need to get this way of working. Starcatchers do that... it’s about being openminded and laying it all out there as families are asked to do, being able to train our staff and show them this is part of the skills needed, and make sure they are comfortable with this approach.  
(Children 1st, Moray)

Staff also discussed the training activities bringing an element of team building, for example, activities which required putting trust in your partner and working together in group activities.
This again highlights that there was a high level of engagement from staff, both in the creative activities and in the team building aspects:

I think it’s always been a really key part of what we do but what was crucial for me when we did the Creative Skills training with staff is that we had three new members of staff, so for me it was a way of introducing that really important creative approach which is absolutely key to working with children to those staff and it was about giving them that induction to this approach and also a chance to team build with new colleagues. We learnt to trust each other more, we need to know my colleague has got my back.  (Children 1st, Ayrshire)

Through engagement in activities with fellow colleagues and artists, Children 1st staff who were new to the organisation were able to see the value in creative approaches and have some time to get to know the team and engage in team building activities.

How they feel

| Reactions                        | This is for me! I can express myself This can be fun! |
|                                 | This can help me do my job.                           |
|                                 | I have more confidence with creative approaches.     |
|                                 | I feel empowered to use creativity in my interaction with families. |

| Key findings                   | Staff enjoyed the Creative Skills training and were given the opportunity to try new creative approaches. Staff reflected on the ways they could bring the creative skills learned into practice in their work, with some staff members having already done so |

This is for me! I can express myself this can be fun!

Overall, feedback on the content of the Creative Skills training sessions was very positive. Staff enjoyed the activities and found it to be very worthwhile:

Training was definitely a learning experience, see each other in a different light, laughed constantly, really fun time out with everyday support which was really important.  (Children 1st, Ayrshire)

Staff also reflected on the importance of the joyful aspect of creativity and how valuable it is for kinship families to have protected time to express themselves and have fun:

I’ve learned to be creative and be daft and silly and go for it, it’s helped me to not be as uptight I suppose... In our journey with families, there is difficult times, but it allowed us to be part of something fun. And that’s nice and it would be sad if we didn’t have that element in our work.  (Children 1st)

They noted that the sessions helped the staff to understand how it feels for families to do something new and creative; “I had to take myself out of my comfort zone” and see the benefits of expressing themselves and trying something new.

This can help me do my job

Staff felt engaged from the outset and felt the artists linked creativity to their roles, providing examples of how they felt the creative skills learned could be used in their work with children and families:

I am confident that myself and the team can use this training within our current roles and moving forward as we grow the service.  (Children 1st, Moray and Ayrshire)
Creative Skills has inspired and motivated staff across services to use some of the ideas both within individual casework and also group-work that is currently being set up.

Provided great ideas to use with the Kinship families we support.  
(Children 1st, Moray and Ayrshire)

Artists also mentioned that staff had reported taking the activities learned during the Creative Skills training and applying it to other aspects of their work with children and families out with Creative Kin:

They were always keen for new ideas, so one activity we did in the training session they did the next week in a separate session.  
(Lead artist, Moray)

I have more confidence with creative approaches

Creative Skills training has aided the creative confidence of Children 1st staff. This was evidenced in the feedback survey carried out with Children 1st staff where 43% of staff ‘strongly agreed’ that the training had elevated confidence and 57% ‘agreed’. Survey feedback also noted that the training encouraged staff to try new things, aiding confidence in their own abilities and embedding skills and approaches within the work they deliver.

95% of staff also reported they felt confident in their ability to support the peers they work with to develop their own creativity.

Several staff members highlighted that the skills they had gained from the training have already informed the work they deliver, showing an increase in confidence in their approach to using the activities:

I have used some of the creative art things we covered in one to ones, it has made me more confident to be more improvised in my approach.  
(Children 1st)

I feel empowered to use creativity in my interaction with families

The feedback gathered from staff relating to the Creative Skills training showed that the training had provided them with new ideas about the range of ways to be creative with families and use creativity in their workplace:

Expanded my knowledge about how easy it is to create and learn through story’s, music, art and play.

Opening my eyes to how easy it is to be creative.

I have a better understanding that creativity isn’t necessarily using arts and craft.

I am more aware of the simple ideas that can be very useful.  
(Children 1st, Moray and Ayrshire)
What they learn and gain

| Knowledge, attitude and skills | Understand how creativity improves attachment between adults and children. We develop creative skills to use with children and families. |
| Key findings | Staff gave feedback about being more mindful of the simplicity of creativity and the value it can bring to kinship families. Staff also provided feedback the training sessions helped develop their creative skills in a range of approaches |

Understand how creativity improves attachment between adults and children

As a result of the Creative Skills training, all staff in attendance who participated in the feedback survey either strongly agreed (76%) or agreed (24%) that they had a good understanding of the importance that Arts and creativity can play with the families they support.

*The mindfulness aspect, when you understand chaos in family’s life, Starcatchers encourage us to just enjoy it, and take it all in, as much as there’s scary moments, some of the moments are really special*

*Certain aspects I can use in practice, training helped us understand what it is all about, what is Starcatchers, what benefits it will bring and gave another dimension to our practice.*  
(Children 1st, staff survey)

We develop creative skills to use with children and families

Staff reflected on the personal development they were able to gain from Creative Skills training in developing their own creative skills. They also reported that the Creative Skills training has given them more confidence to use creative activities with the children they support, with 57% agreeing and 43% strongly agreeing.

*Learning opportunity for staff to upskill their creativity and explore children’s thoughts and feeling.*  
(Children 1st, Moray)

*Staff always need to be developing and thinking about creativity as they plan sessions.*  
(Children 1st Ayrshire)

As a result of Creative Skills training, I have increased confidence in the following creative approaches:

The above graph shows the increase in confidence Children 1st staff have gained from the training in a range of creative skills. These results highlight that the majority of people who attended the training agreed that they have developed confidence in a range of creative skills.
What they do differently

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practice and behaviour change</th>
<th>Staff creatively support families during sessions.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Staff facilitate creative sessions with clients without artists support.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Key findings**

Several Children 1st staff have reported using the Creative Skills training in their work with families and children without the support of artists.

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Staff creatively support families during sessions

Staff reflective impact logs provide evidence of the support they were able to give artists during Creative Kin sessions. One person mentioned that this was made easier due to being involved in the Creative Skills training and therefore having a better understanding of the artist’s work styles:

> If we had only done training, we might not have used it or been on your own agenda, but seeing artists as examples, you’re motivated by seeing it in action and see benefits in order to be bought into it

(Children 1st, Ayrshire)

One artist reflected that the training was able to provide staff with new ideas and approaches but in terms of supporting families creatively during sessions, they felt that the Children 1st staff were already capable of this but perhaps their style of facilitation was adapted:

> I didn’t feel staff had a huge journey to go on, but one thing I would say that I think happened, is the activities were more open-ended than they would maybe normally do.

(Lead artist, Moray)

Staff facilitate creative sessions with clients without artists support

A number of Children 1st staff mentioned that they had already facilitated more creative sessions with the children and families they support. One person stated how a child had difficulties in communicating and they had to think about more creative ways to help the child express themselves and have their voice heard. The person stated that the Creative Skills training had really helped with that:

> For one young person who doesn’t communicate, (staff member) needs to think about new ways of communicating and find out how they can express themselves and have their voice be heard. And her enrolment with Starcatchers has helped with this.

(Children 1st, Ayrshire)

Children 1st staff also reflected that being open and creative can be challenging as it can require more time and planning, but the fact staff are still willing to try out creative approaches shows that it’s truly valued and seen as important within the organisation:

> It’s not easy, it’s a hard shift, takes a lot of energy but staff still want to be part of it as it’s so rewarding!

(Children 1st)
What difference does this make?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Final Outcomes</th>
<th>Children 1st staff are supporting kinship families in creative ways.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Key findings</td>
<td>Children 1st in both Ayrshire and Moray are supporting kinship families in creative ways and this has become more embedded as a result of the Creative Skills training as it has provided staff with new creative ideas and shown many of the, benefits of creative approaches.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Children 1st staff are supporting kinship families in creative ways

Children 1st staff have further developed their skills in creative approaches through the Creative Skills training. They have also gained more insight into the importance and value of creativity in their work with kinship families:

*It has made me mindful of the fact we should always think about creative skills not just as a therapeutic sense to support them, but to encourage relationships, resilience and opportunities.*

(Children 1st)

Staff at Children 1st in Ayrshire felt that the organisation has become more creative in its approaches and now see themselves as “creative champions”:

*Children 1st has become more creative and supporting everyone to do so, in Ayrshire we’ve had the opportunity to lead on that, we’re vocal as a management team about the benefit of being creative and the opportunity and benefit of it. Become creative champions*

(Children 1st, Ayrshire)

Overall, Children 1st in both Ayrshire and Moray is supporting kinship families in creative ways and this has become more embedded as a result of the Creative Skills training as it has provided staff with new creative ideas and reinforced the value of creativity when working to support kinship families.
**Issues for reflection**

The Creative Kin programme has been successful in supporting the strengthening of relationships between carers and children and providing protected space for creativity, play, and social development. From the evidence gathered during this evaluation, some reflections are summarised below:

**Balancing risk mitigation and creativity**

Children 1st in Ayrshire spoke highly of their respect for what Starcatchers artists could bring to the Creative Kin sessions in terms of their skills and creative approaches. However, there was initially a balancing act between risk mitigation prior to sessions and enabling open-ended creativity during sessions but eventually the two organisations were able to come to a mutual understanding and meet in the middle. This was achieved through a series of challenging but productive conversations between staff and artists. Children 1st staff reflected that although this balance had taken time to get right, it had been a positive learning experience for everyone involved:

“We’ve had to be less risk averse, and that’s scary, and be open minded, and say yes to more things... Be ok with managing risk.

We feel like we’ve built this partnership, and it’s refreshing. Partnerships don’t form straight away... It took time listening and understanding, a lot of conversations... but clearly, we’re sitting here and we’ve grown as partners, and both sides are aligned.

(Children 1st, Ayrshire)

The valued partnership has allowed the Creative Kin programme in Ayrshire to flourish and both artists and staff have been able to bring their expertise to the sessions and ensure that they ran smoothly and successfully while being enjoyable for all involved.

The project has also highlighted that there were inconsistencies in some policies between the regional Children 1st offices. This has made some aspects of planning and general organisation more challenging.

Reflections from the Children 1st staff in Moray highlighted some issues in developing an effective partnership. The project coordinator also agreed that there were issues of geographical distance between Starcatchers being based in the central belt which may have contributed to challenges. However, the lead artist was based in Moray and produced session plans and reflective logs to aid facilitation and delivery of collaborative sessions.

Additionally, due to Children 1st Moray’s kinship funding being cut during the programme, the energy behind the planning and organisation of the sessions seemed to falter (on the Children 1st side) and perhaps the two organisations would have benefitted from more transparent communication from that point forward regarding staff capacity and resources needed for the remaining duration of the programme.
Conclusions

Creative Kin
The Creative Kin programme has been very successful in supporting kinship families to strengthen their relationships, build social supports and develop their confidence, resilience and wellbeing. The programme has been adapted throughout, ensuring value for participants. This has been achieved through regular communication and feedback with children and carers to ensure the sessions were both enjoyable and appropriate. For example, following feedback from carers, the Creative Skills training sessions were adjusted to better suit their needs. The children involved have been able to experience many creative approaches and art forms and have had the chance to play with their peers and families in a safe and comfortable environment, nurturing their creative interests and strengthening their relationships and social skills.

Creative Skills
The Children 1st staff involved in Creative Skills training sessions have broadened their own creative skillsets through their participation in a range of creative approaches. The programme has received high levels of engagement and staff have reflected on the ways they can bring the creative skills learned into practice in their work, with some staff members having already done so. Staff reflected on the simplicity that creativity and creative approaches can have and the value it can bring to kinship families. Children 1st in Ayrshire are supporting kinship families in creative ways and this has become more embedded as a result of the Creative Skills training. In Moray, although the Children 1st kinship funding has come to an end, it has provided staff with new creative ideas and developed their creative skills which can be used in other aspects of their work.
Shown below is a table outlining the data collection methods discussed within the report. Following this is an example reflective impact log which was used throughout the programme by both artists and children 1st staff. There is also a further example of a feedback tool used to gain insights from kinship families.

1. **Table of data collection tools**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data collection tool</th>
<th>Moray</th>
<th>Ayrshire</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Collection/analysis process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reflective impact log: sessions</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Reflective impact logs were completed by artists after each session in supporting the team to understand their impact</td>
<td>Collected by programme coordinator and analysed by MoF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children 1st family observations</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Children 1st staff noted observations and learning after each session which informed sessions following</td>
<td>Collected by programme coordinator and analysed by MoF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback from families</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Families completed evaluation forms on their reactions to the sessions on an ad-hoc basis, a number of methods were used to collect this feedback</td>
<td>Collected by artists and staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>The aim of the interview was to gain an in-depth insight into the reflections of the lead artists on the overall partnership between Creative Kin and Children 1st</td>
<td>Conducted and analysed by MoF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus groups</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>The aim of the focus group was to gain an in-depth understanding of how the Children 1st staff felt the Creative Kin activities went and find out what difference it has made. It involved the service manager and two team leads</td>
<td>Conducted and analysed by MoF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artist reflective logs</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>The aim is to support the team to capture evidence and develop their thinking about the impact of their activity on an ongoing basis.</td>
<td>Collected by artists and analysed by MoF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff survey</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Staff who participated in the Creative Skills training filled out a session evaluation form.</td>
<td>Collected by Starcatchers and analysed by MoF</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Example reflective impact log

Capturing Impact of Creative Kin session: Reflective Log
The aim of this reflective template is to support the team to capture evidence and develop their thinking about the impact of Creative Kin project sessions for families. Please try to answer every question, Try to keep your responses to the questions concise and include specific examples and evidence to strengthen your account.

Indicators:
- Children involved in Creative Kin will show an increase in wellbeing measured through SHANARRI indicators which will be tracked using the Children 1st Outcome Monitoring Framework
- Kinship carers and their children will show enjoyment in participating in shared creative activities leading to improvement in family relationships and strengthened attachment
- Kinship carers demonstrate increased parental capacity to respond to the needs of their children
- Children 1st staff report increased improved attachments between kinship carers and their children through observations and one to one working during and outside of the Creative Kin project

| CREATIVE KIN PROJECT | Date: |
| Location: | Staff: |

About the session

Describe the family's participation within activities

Describe any new skills that the family learned/practiced within the session

What barriers, if any existed in today's session that impacted the family's learning or engagement? And how were these over come.

Please use this space to note any observations towards Creative Kin project outcomes and indicators (Strengthened relationships, parental capacity, improved attachment, resilience, confidence and wellbeing.)

Please use this space to note any evidence of progress towards the family’s individual work plans within Children 1st
3. Example informal feedback tool

We have enjoyed taking part in these sessions

A lot ___________________________ Not Much

We have lots of ideas about creative activities we can do at home

Agree ___________________________ Disagree

Being creative together helps us to feel closer

Agree ___________________________ Disagree

We have learned about different ways of being creative

Agree ___________________________ Disagree

I feel more confident about being creative

Agree ___________________________ Disagree