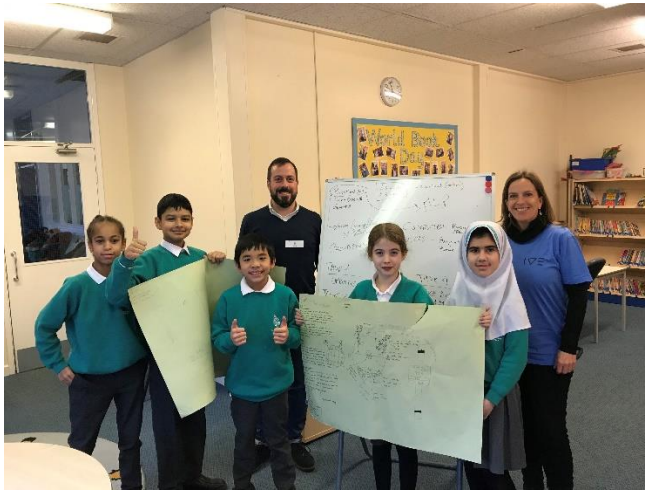




Tess Parker reports on the impact of Applied Creativity Labs (ACLs) on young people led by IVE's Sarah Mumford.

IVE's Applied Creativity Labs – young innovators making change



In these uncertain times of pandemics, climate crises and health and social challenges we must equip our young people to be 'future ready.'. IVE's Applied Creativity Labs (ACLs) empower them to take the reins – honing creative behaviours and thinking skills. Read on to learn how the ACL programme is empowering and inspiring Generation Z so they are primed for the road ahead.

Key success factors

- Enabling young people to find their voice in relation to relevant world issues.
- Pairing young innovators with sector experts to shape and share solutions.
- Impacting on young participants' confidence, oracy and critical thinking skills (evidenced through independent evaluation).

IVE – creativity champions empowering learning and life skills

The late great educator and creativity advocate Sir Ken Robinson wisely said that *“Creativity is as important now in education as literacy and we should treat it with the same status.”*

This championing of creativity as an essential skill for modern times underpins the work of IVE (formerly CapeUK). [With a history that dates back to 1997](#), the Leeds-based development organisation promotes creativity and creative thinking across the board.

Their Applied Creativity Labs programme is geared to give young people the creative behaviours and thinking skills to innovate at school and beyond. The Labs are in step with the global challenges of a 4th Industrial Revolution (Schwab, 2016). Thought-leader Klaus Schwab defines this as an era that will increasingly rely on creative thinking solutions. Young people must be ready to maximise these skills and make an impact in the wider world.

The importance of creativity in automated times

Experts like Schwab warn that these increasingly automated, technological times will require a global skills shift. Equipping our young people with the creative skills to thrive has never been more crucial.

By 2025 the World Economic Forum predicts that divergent, creative thinking skills and practices will dominate the Top 10 tally. They reckon that [50% of employees shall need to reskill](#) in the coming years. IVE's Applied Creativity Labs have been designed to support this.



Applied Creativity Labs (ACLs) - three steps to a more creative mindset



At the core of the Applied Creativity Labs approach is the belief that human creativity drives innovation.

Through a stimulating mix of in-person and remote learning the Labs engage young people by placing STEM concepts within a real-world context.

Over time, IVE has honed a 3-step approach that takes participants through the process and practice of divergent and convergent thinking.

1. Step One: Finding solutions with divergent thinking

The learning begins with the presentation of a real-world ‘challenge.’ IVE deliver creativity training that engages participants in new ways of thinking. Alongside, young people gain access to experts from industry, business and universities; programme partners bring differing angles and perspectives

2. Step Two: Bringing ideas together with convergent thinking

Subsequently, young people undergo a detailed process to explore, develop and refine their creative responses to the challenge in question.

3. Step Three: Sharing our ideas

Finally, participants pitch their best solutions to the expert panel. The strongest ideas are considered for further development.

These three stages illuminate the processes of creative thinking and doing. By pairing young learners with industry experts new light is shone on critical topics.

Keep reading to discover a range of stand-out ACL projects delivered between 2019 and current times.

Spotlight: Young person’s creative training – unlocking innovative solutions

Through IVE’s Applied Creativity Labs divergent thinking skills are made accessible and relevant. By applying creative processes to key problems young people start to understand the influence that they have. Honouring the Synectic’s problem-solving method (Gordon &

Prince, 1970) participants undergo training that takes them from ideas generation to solution formulation. This serves to help young innovators to:

- Think divergently, freely and more creatively
- Develop their problem-solving, resilience and confidence
- Strengthen their teamworking skills
- Enhance their capacity to innovate
- Grow their critical thinking repertoire
- Hone their ability to present their ideas

This process culminates in the presentation of participant solutions to an expert panel. The ACL approach is designed to empower and champion young people as invaluable contributors within their communities.

Read more about [the ACL approach](#).

Spotlight: School innovators - clean air and food waste



#BreatheLeeds – creative solutions to air pollution

Supported by crowdfunding, this autumn 2019 Applied Creativity Lab proved that primary school pupils are motivated to find solutions to environmental challenges.

Learners and teachers from **Manor Wood Primary**, **Mount St Mary's Catholic High School** and **John Smeaton Academy** engaged in creative learning and development sessions, co-led by IVE and sector experts.

Together they explored different ways to clean up their city's air. It sparked discussion about the way society must rally and adapt to reverse climate change. Nerves were held as pupils presented their ideas to industry leaders.

The Lab was delivered in close, multi-sector partnership with Leeds City Council, The University of Leeds, Mott MacDonald, Engie, Bradford Teaching Hospitals Foundation Trust, Magpie Creative Communication Agency, Siemens, The Priestley International Centre for Climate and Sustrans.

“It was refreshing to observe the children grab the opportunity of being creative thinkers. So often at school they are bound by structured lessons. Thank you ever so much.” **Teacher, Manor Wood Primary.**

“I didn’t appreciate how innovative young students could be, I think there’s value in cultivating that. I think creative thinking skills are essential to ensure we provide innovative solutions to problems.” **James Nicholson, Civil Engineer, Mott Macdonald**

“Creative thinking skills are important, especially if there is a genuine pathway that young people’s ideas can be passed onto decision makers. I also think it encourages confidence and resilience, which are important for young people growing up today.” **Kirsty Pringle, Leeds University**

Food sustainability – innovative responses to food waste

In spring 2020 an Applied Creativity Lab inspired pupils and teachers from Lawnswood School, Shire Oak Primary School and St Matthews Church of England Primary School to tackle the urgent subject of food waste.

Once more, interactive creative learning modules were at the fore of this Lab experience. Young people gained fresh insights from experts working within the area of food sustainability. This input would prove vital in helping pupils to formulate and pitch viable solutions to the industry panel.

Participants from winning school Shire Oak Primary had a unique opportunity to engage with tech entrepreneur Cristian Parrino via Zoom - translating their ideas into a potential app. Winning solutions from this ACL round are due to be presented to big brands such as M&S, Innocent Drinks and Ikea.

Once again, industry inputs were critical in animating this subject area. Key partners included: Asda, Food Revival, Future Farmers; Leeds City Council, Harewood Food & Drink Project, Leeds Food Partnership, Magpie Creative Agency, Rethink Food, Waste-Food Solutions; and Zero Waste Leeds.

“We are a school that is keen to ensure a better future for our community and educate our children on environmental issues such as the topic of food waste. The children were very

engaged and motivated and related to the topic, guests and project in a positive way.”

Marcelle Maver Teacher Shire Oak Primary

“I was impressed to see schools and children using problem solving in this way especially looking to solve real-life issues like food waste. I Liked the practical and brainstorm elements and creativity rather than just textbook and ‘let’s google it’ approach.” **Karen Todd, Asda**

Discover more [about the project here.](#)

Spotlight: Digital Lab 2020 - improving teen mental health



Supported by funding from the [Youth Endowment Fund](#) (YEF) this Applied Creativity Lab ran over autumn 2020 – spring 2021 engaging four diverse groups of 10 –14-year-olds.

With the challenges of Covid-19 affecting young people’s lives and wellbeing this project couldn’t have been timelier. Focused on the theme of young people’s mental health, it was the first ACL to be delivered digitally - adding a buzz of excitement. Zoom sessions enabled police cadets, young people recommended by other services and pupils from Calderdale’s William Henry Smith School to engage in the ACL process. Together they explored and identified ways to support mental health and wellbeing.

Having the right multi-agency partners on board would prove vital for this project. At the helm was the West Yorkshire Police Calderdale Early Intervention Team led by award-winning PC Chris Madden and colleagues. Other key input came from **Creative Minds**, **Inspire Ignite**, Lucy Randall-Smith, **Mental Health In Business**, **Noah’s Ark Centre**, **South West Yorkshire Partnership NHS Foundation**, **KOOTH**, **NHS Leeds CCG**, and **TimeOut Calderdale**

The ACL's inclusive, supportive structure was key to the success of this project. Despite the challenges and vulnerabilities of the young participants early evaluation shows positive shifts in confidence, self-esteem and life-skills.

"It taught me to think of different possibilities from the same situation. It massively boosted my well-being and confidence levels and helped to improve my mental health. I would encourage younger people to do the same course as it was a thrilling journey to go down."

Jessica, ACL youth participant

"The young people really got involved and I believe that they enjoyed the theme of mental health as it was so relevant due to the pandemic. The development of confidence in the young people – and the self-esteem it provided them has been great to observe."

Chris Madden, West Yorkshire Police

"I was pleasantly surprised at the extent to which the young people responded to the challenge. This is indicative of how important an issue mental health is to young people but is also testament to the structure of the programme and skills of the facilitators."

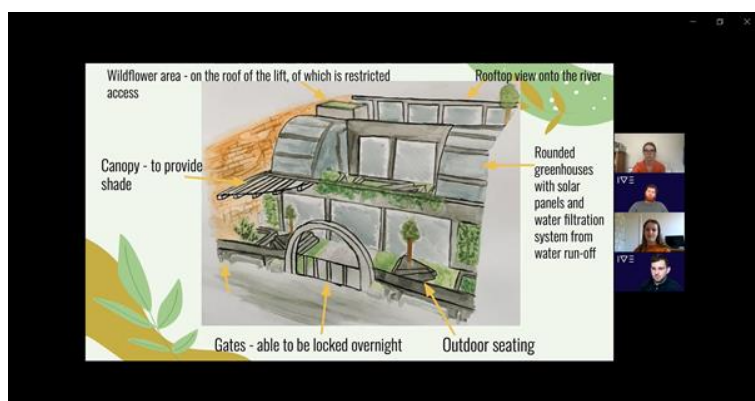
Wayne Hoyle, West Yorkshire Police Violence Reduction Unit

"In my view using the arts to explore mental health and wellbeing is a fantastic idea. It's a great way to engage younger minds and hearts in a fun and playful way to explore a topic that can be difficult to talk about for some people. I was reminded of the pure creativity and 'thinking outside of the box' that youngsters are blessed with."

Steve Heath, Mental Health in Business

Discover more [about the project here.](#)

Spotlight: Re:Vision project – young place-makers in action



Funded by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport's Youth Accelerator fund via the [National Lottery Heritage Fund's Kick the Dust programme](#) this Applied Creativity Lab was part of the four-year, Ignite Yorkshire partnership project co-ordinated by IVE.

Between autumn 2020 – spring 2021 this ACL paired 15–25-year-olds, from both Leeds and Sheffield, with experts in city planning, placemaking, landscape architecture, heritage and waterways.

This multi-location project focused on the Leeds canal zone - between the Royal Armouries and Thwaites Mill and the Kelham Island area in Sheffield. In both cases, young innovators embraced the challenge of improving these environments to boost community health and wellbeing

Key partners that made a difference were: [Ignite Yorkshire](#), [Canal & River Trust](#), [CITU](#), [Civic Engineers](#), [Canal Connections](#), [Leeds Civic Trust](#), Leeds City Council, [Re-Form Landscape Architects](#) [University of Sheffield](#), [Sheffield City Council](#), [Museums Sheffield](#) and [Yorkshire Design Group](#).

As an exciting by-product of the Leeds arm of the project, YTV have shown interest in documenting the implementation of the final idea and council representatives are keen to take the work forward. This offers a great example of how young people can make a positive contribution to enhancing their local environs.

“Overall, I really enjoyed the project and working as a team to prepare our idea and presentation. It was challenging yet very rewarding to see how our ideas and skills improved week after week. The project provoked some great conversation and thinking points and no idea was off the table.” **Riyona, ACL youth participant**

“The young people engaged with the process in their own personal way and brought their own ideas to the design challenge. Creative thinking is a valuable way of engaging young people as it can often give an interesting and accessible entry point into dealing with placemaking issues, and can also lead to low budget, high impact interventions that are realisable in a short time frame.” **Paul Ellison, Yorkshire Design Group**

“Not all the best ideas come with experience and it’s good to have a fresh look at a problem or an opportunity unclouded by years of institutional thinking. This project was an opportunity to gain new insight and offer the imperfect view of experience to the young people involved. The young people clearly got the issues at hand and wanted to find inclusive solutions.” Councillor **Paul Wray, Leeds City Council**

Discover more [about the project here](#).

Future initiatives – Applied Creativity Lab’s (ACLs) go European

Off the back the Applied Creativity Lab's UK success IVE are now partnering with organisations in Europe including - Belgium, Bulgaria, Latvia, Portugal, UK and Spain.

The ACL European programme has been awarded three years of funding from Erasmus+ [the European Union funding programme](#) aiming to support education, training, youth and sport.

Between November 2020 and March 2023, 150 young people will harness their creative and critical thinking skills to tackle a range of environmental and climate change issues.

Sarah Mumford, developer of ACLs at IVE, *"The global environment is in crisis and our futures rely on us reversing the damage that we've done. Young people have reacted strongly to this situation via worldwide protests. Through this European ACL programme, we are looking to empower young changemakers, alongside industry experts to offer applicable, creative solutions to the climate problems we face."* [Find out more about this initiative here.](#)

Get involved in the Applied Creativity Lab programme

As highlighted in this article the ACL programme has already made positive impacts and change. It has enhanced the learning and life experiences of numerous young participants and sector experts alike.

As we move further into this 4th Industrial Age the challenges we face are set to increase. However, honing young people's creative thinking skills is a key step in preparing society for the twists and turns ahead.

If you would like to bring an Applied Creativity Lab to your school or youth group setting or get involved as an 'expert' please contact: sarah@weareive.org.