

Youth Arts Open Fund

Case studies



Jane Cockayne (Freelance Artist)

Shetland Islands | £8,000



YouthLink
Scotland



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About the artist

Jane Cockayne is a Shetland-based freelance artist and creative practitioner with over six years' experience delivering inclusive, person-centred arts projects for people of all ages and abilities.

Her practice spans craft, photography, sound, film and multisensory work, with a strong emphasis on process, participation and wellbeing rather than fixed artistic outcomes. Jane has delivered projects in care settings, community venues and arts organisations, including work with Shetland Arts' Arts in Care programme, wellbeing-focused creative sessions, and intergenerational and community-responsive projects.

Jane is also an Intensive Interaction practitioner and has a particular passion for projects that celebrate Shetland's culture, history and diversity, while creating meaningful opportunities for neurodivergent children and young people to connect, express themselves and build confidence.

The Project

"Putting Shetland on the Map" brought together young people of different ages, abilities and backgrounds to co-create a large-scale, multisensory and interactive map of Shetland.

The project was inspired directly by the creative work and interests of two young people, Fraser and Anna, and developed through conversations with young people across the islands. The map captures sounds, textures, photographs and stories gathered by participants as they travelled to places that matter to them.



The completed interactive map will be exhibited at the NorthLink Ferry Terminal, offering visitors a playful and alternative introduction to the islands, alongside a celebratory exhibition and end-of-project event at New Life Church.

Shetland's island geography can present significant barriers for young people, particularly those with additional support needs, to access inclusive arts opportunities and to meet peers from outside their immediate communities. Travel distances, transport logistics and limited specialist provision can contribute to social isolation.



The project was youth-led from its earliest stages. Jane met young people individually and in groups to listen to their ideas, understand interests and remove barriers to participation. Working alongside young people from New Life Church, Ability Shetland's Holiday Club and Children's Residential Services, the group agreed to create both a physical and interactive map of Shetland.

A key feature of the project was bringing together young people who would not normally meet, supporting new friendships and reducing isolation. Over several months, participants met regularly, travelled together across Shetland and took part in sound recording, photography, creative writing, mosaic, texture gathering and sensory exploration.

The use of Bare Conductive Touchboard technology ensured the project was accessible and inclusive, allowing young people with different communication styles and abilities to contribute equally. Partnership working with Ability Shetland, Children's Residential Services and New Life Church ensured participation was safe, supported and sustainable throughout.



Barriers to participation in arts experiences

The young people involved faced a range of barriers to accessing arts and creative opportunities. These included learning differences, physical disabilities and mobility challenges, neurodivergent ways of experiencing the world, social isolation, care experience, involvement with the youth justice system, and experiences of anxiety and depression.

A small number of participants were from minority ethnic backgrounds, which can bring additional challenges within a small island community. The project was designed to proactively reduce these barriers through accessible delivery, familiar environments, flexible planning and strong relationship-building.

Impact

The project supported 46 young people facing additional barriers to participation in artistic and creative activities.

All participants reported the following outcomes:

- Feeling better connected to their peers and communities
- Feeling better able to express themselves through involvement in arts activities
- Improved mental health and wellbeing through their participation in artistic and creative activities

Beyond the exhibition, young people developed confidence, strengthened social connections and gained a sense of pride in seeing their work publicly valued.

