



# Youth Arts Open Fund Case Studies



Starcatchers



**YouthLink  
Scotland**



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# Starcatchers

## About us:

Starcatchers is Scotland's Arts & Early Years Organisation, Inspiring Babies, Toddlers and Young Children. Our Vision is that our youngest children, those from birth to five, fulfil their right to access arts and creative experiences that give inspiration, joy and wonder to early childhood in Scotland. Our Mission is to inspire babies, toddlers and young children by including them in high quality live performances and creative experiences that fulfil their right to access a rich arts and cultural life in Scotland regardless of where they live or their background.

## Our Project:

### Launching the Baby Studio in Wester Hailes

Starcatchers has recently obtained a public-facing space right in the heart of the Wester Hailes community. Everyone uses the shopping plaza! We were thrilled to take our activities to an empty retail unit and create our very first Baby Studio within a community of multiple deprivation facing the challenges of raising children in poverty.

This Baby Studio is a creative, artist-led play space for babies and very young children, which is free to access. Our aspiration is for the youngest citizens of Wester Hailes to have their own haven: a beautiful, magical space especially for that age group (birth-5 years old).

The funding we received allowed us to launch the studio and offer an initial consistent programme for babies, young children, their parents and carers. We opened every Tuesday and Saturday with an invitation to families to Come Play Together, fostering positive play between infants and adults as opposed to either a creche facility or a baby 'art class'.



There was a demand for creative play sessions on weekdays specifically for local nurseries. These supported the early years curriculum, providing art experiences for young children who wouldn't otherwise have the access of their more affluent peers.

On Saturdays, play activities were different every week, with our team of artists inspired by the interests of the wee ones who come along to create sessions that make everyone feel welcomed and involved. Our artists have created magical, interactive sessions around themes like Ice Kingdom, Carnival, Little Detectives, 70s, Little Bugs, Squeaky Clean, Cardboard City, Clubland, Yellow, and Pom Pom Land.

### Impact:

The project supported 696 babies and toddlers in an area of Edinburgh that is socio-economically disadvantaged and offered 130 hours of direct delivery.

Operating every Saturday enabled Starcatchers to increase the diversity of families engaging in the programme. A decision was taken to have a drop-in format on the weekend, rather than asking families to register or book in, recognising that this can help to make it easier for people to cross the threshold for the first time. Whole families came together for bonding time, several of these also had additional support needs, and families view Starcatchers' Saturdays as a safe space for all these different play styles, needs and interests to interact.



A positive outcome of the pop-up format and the central location at Westside Plaza is that Starcatchers' Saturdays has encouraged a far more diverse demographic from around the area. Dads and Grandparents, including those who are in formal and informal kinship care arrangements, are more represented at the Saturday sessions. The diversity of families' experiences, cultures and expectations has been another challenge for the artists to address, and the learning has been of huge benefit for future planning and delivery.

At the beginning of the year, Starcatchers was able to support local artists to develop their practice to work with early years audiences, enabling us to increase our team of local artists.

Launching the Baby Studio as a public space dedicated to babies has transformed how we engage with the community.

"Thank you again for sharing with the amazing Narnia experience with the practitioners and children within Smile Childcare Under 3`s. Our praise for Starcatchers is huge, the experiences you provide add real depth to our curriculum and staff remark on the thoughtful, non-intrusive interactions you have with the children." - Smile Childcare nursery

