

Go See

Group visits increase opportunities for arts engagement



Image courtesy of First Art

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“By arranging group trips and subsidised tickets, First Art has engaged nearly 500 people in the arts through its Go See initiative.”



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Go See

Increasing arts engagement

First Art is a partnership that links cultural and community organisations working within the former coalfields of North East Derbyshire and North East Nottinghamshire. It delivers a wide range of inspiring cultural activities within easy reach of the whole area.

By arranging group trips and subsidised tickets, First Art has engaged 400 people in the arts through its Go See initiative.



Image courtesy of First Art. Visit to Yorkshire Sculpture Park.

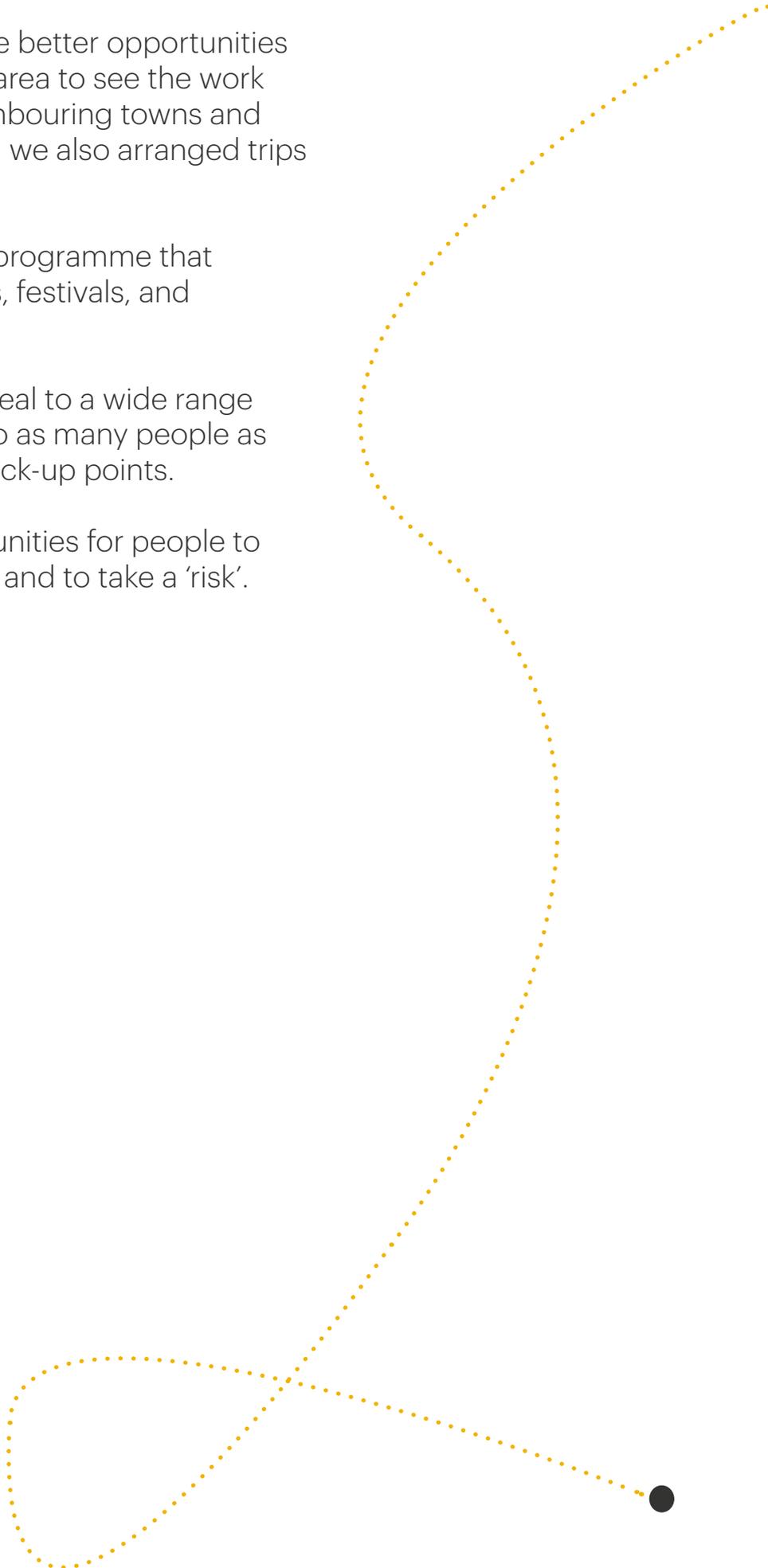
Background to Go See

The aim of Go See was to create better opportunities for people living in the First Art area to see the work that already takes place in neighbouring towns and cities. For the right experiences, we also arranged trips further afield.

We wanted to establish a visits programme that offered trips to events, concerts, festivals, and galleries.

The programme needed to appeal to a wide range of interests and be accessible to as many people as possible, in terms of cost and pick-up points.

We also wanted to offer opportunities for people to experience something different and to take a 'risk'.



Launching Go See

When First Art began, we held community connector events to find out more about what our communities wanted. We talked about the aims of Go See and how people could get involved. We established that people were keen to participate and thought our support would be valuable in enabling them to 'spread their wings'.

We identified and planned a trip to Liverpool Biennial in 2014 as the first Go See outing. We chose the visit because we believed it had ambition and would support people to see something they might not do independently. We filled a 50-seater coach for the trip. It was so successful, we returned to Liverpool for the 2016 Biennial and again had a fully booked coach.

We found out from the initial consultation events that there was a desire to do something different but not the confidence to do or see something that was perceived as a risk.

Alongside the Liverpool Go See, we also organised a Go See that was a specific request from the consultations: a trip to the opera. We chose La Boheme at Buxton Opera House because it was reasonably local and has an excellent reputation for opera.



Making trips affordable

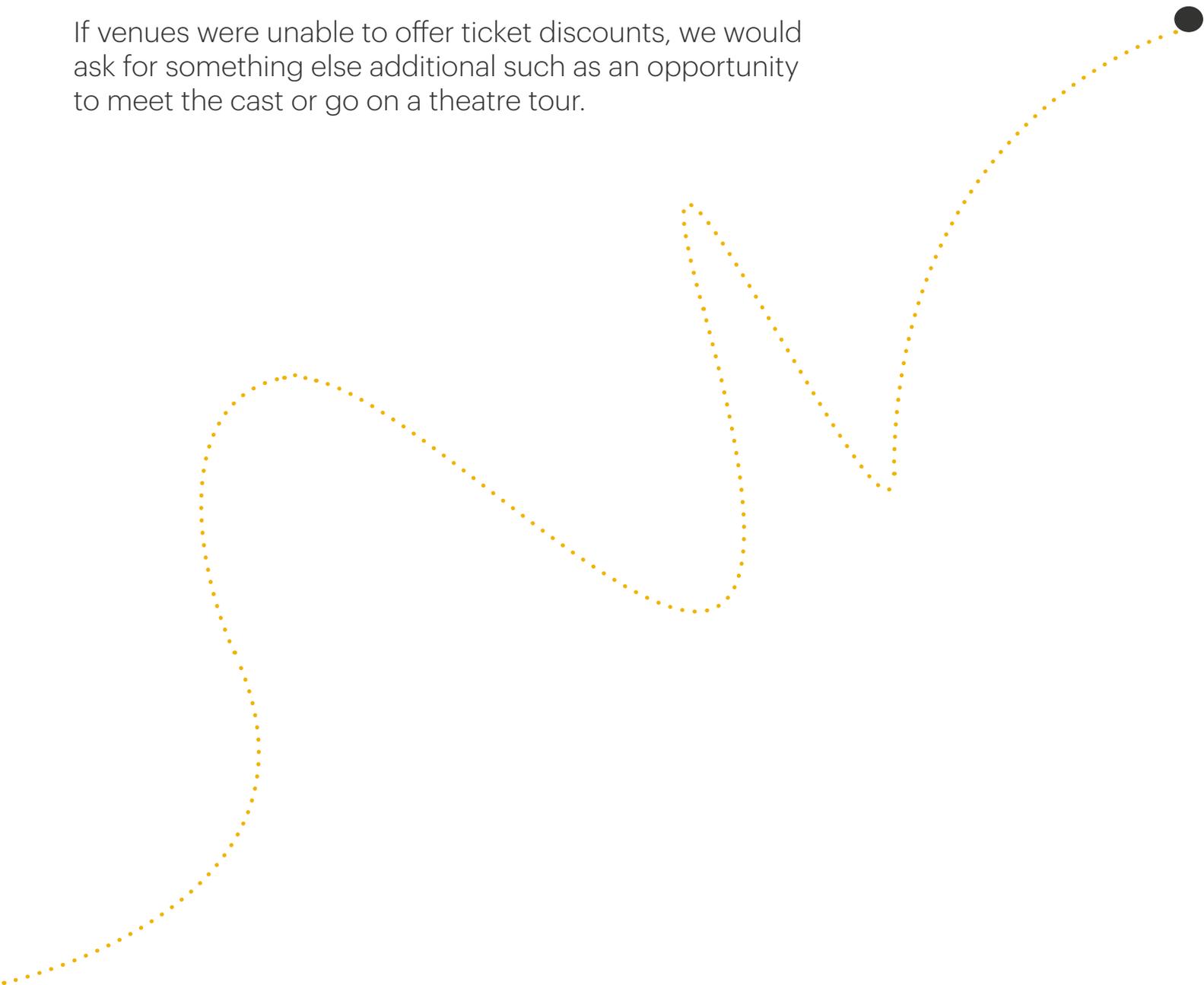
We were conscious that the trips needed to be affordable. We made a judgement for each one about whether we needed to subsidise tickets to ensure that cost wasn't a barrier.

If there was a cost for tickets to an event or exhibition then we covered the transport costs in full. We also subsidised the ticket price if they were expensive.

If tickets were free, we asked people to cover the cost of the transport or make a contribution towards costs.

We also tried to negotiate ticket discounts with the venues. With theatre, that was not always possible — particularly if it was a touring show rather than an 'in house' production.

If venues were unable to offer ticket discounts, we would ask for something else additional such as an opportunity to meet the cast or go on a theatre tour.



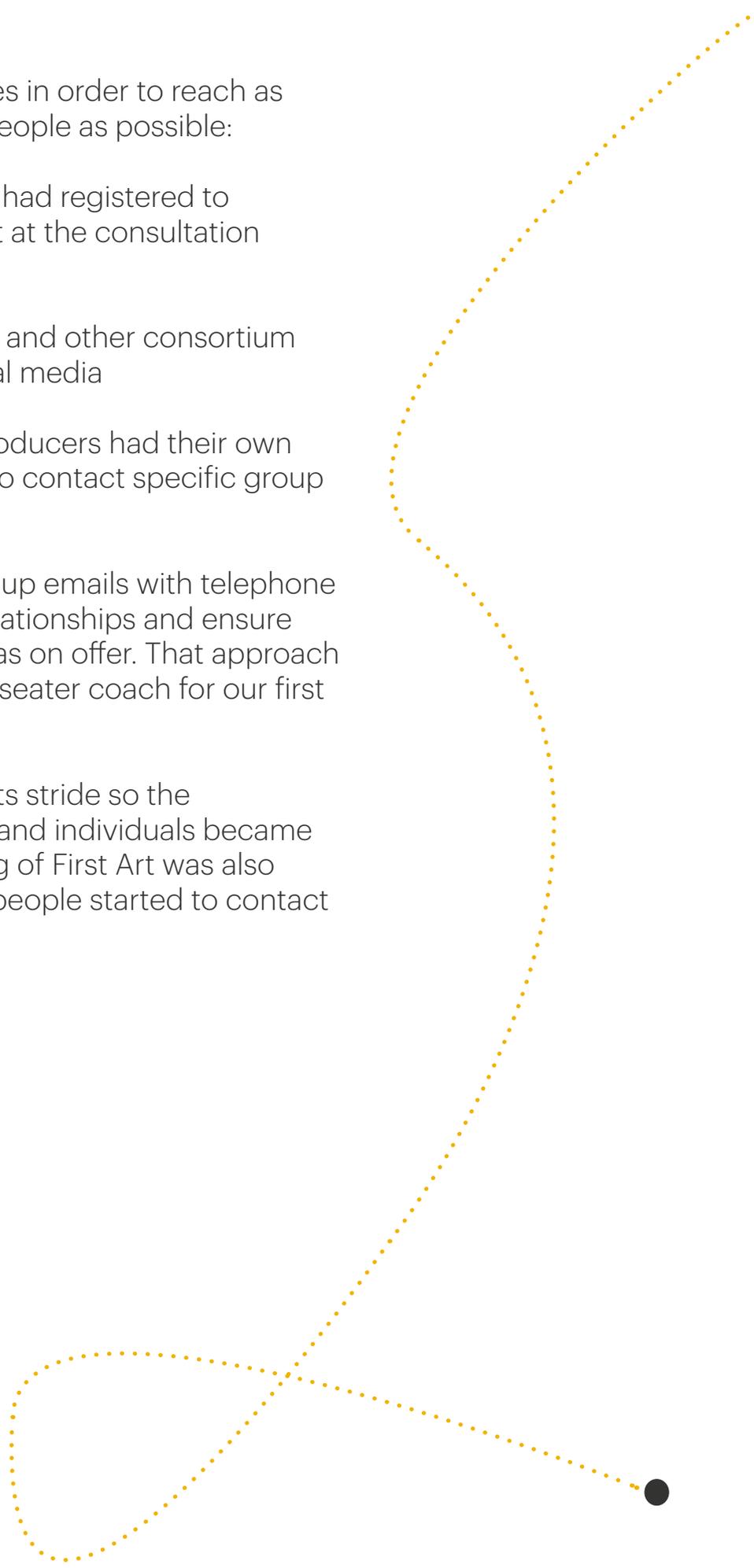
Promoting the trips

We took a number of approaches in order to reach as many and as broad a range of people as possible:

- We contacted everyone who had registered to become members of First Art at the consultation events
- We used the First Art website and other consortium members' websites and social media
- Each of First Art's Creative Producers had their own contact list so we were able to contact specific group organisers and leaders

Wherever possible, we followed up emails with telephone calls or meetings to establish relationships and ensure that people understood what was on offer. That approach was effective and we filled a 50-seater coach for our first visit.

As the First Art project got into its stride so the relationships with communities and individuals became more established. The marketing of First Art was also beginning to reap rewards and people started to contact us with their own ideas for trips.



The booking process

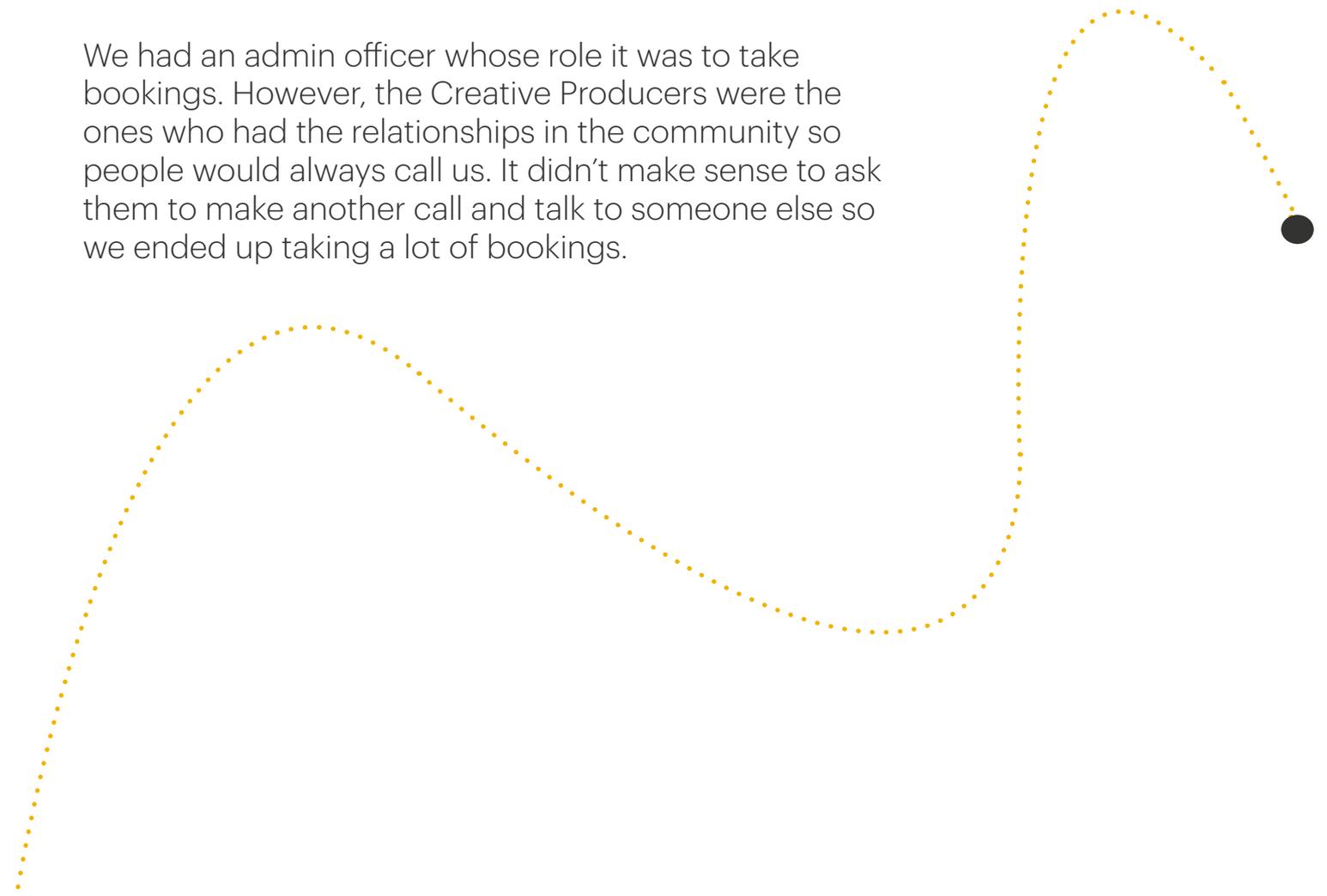
In the early days of the project, we took bookings over the phone or via email and had a booking form with contact details, postcodes and pick-up points.

Later, we tried eventbrite to make things easier for us but this proved not to be the case. Some people don't have computers or didn't like or understand eventbrite so they would call us anyway. We ended up using both eventbrite and the traditional booking method and that was quite hard to manage.

We tried to get money in advance and with eventbrite that was possible. If people booked over the phone we tended to take money on the day.

If a group booked and we had a good relationship with the group leader, they would take the money in advance. As First Art became more established within the community, these relationships developed and we had the support of a key individual to help with taking money and with promotion.

We had an admin officer whose role it was to take bookings. However, the Creative Producers were the ones who had the relationships in the community so people would always call us. It didn't make sense to ask them to make another call and talk to someone else so we ended up taking a lot of bookings.



Results

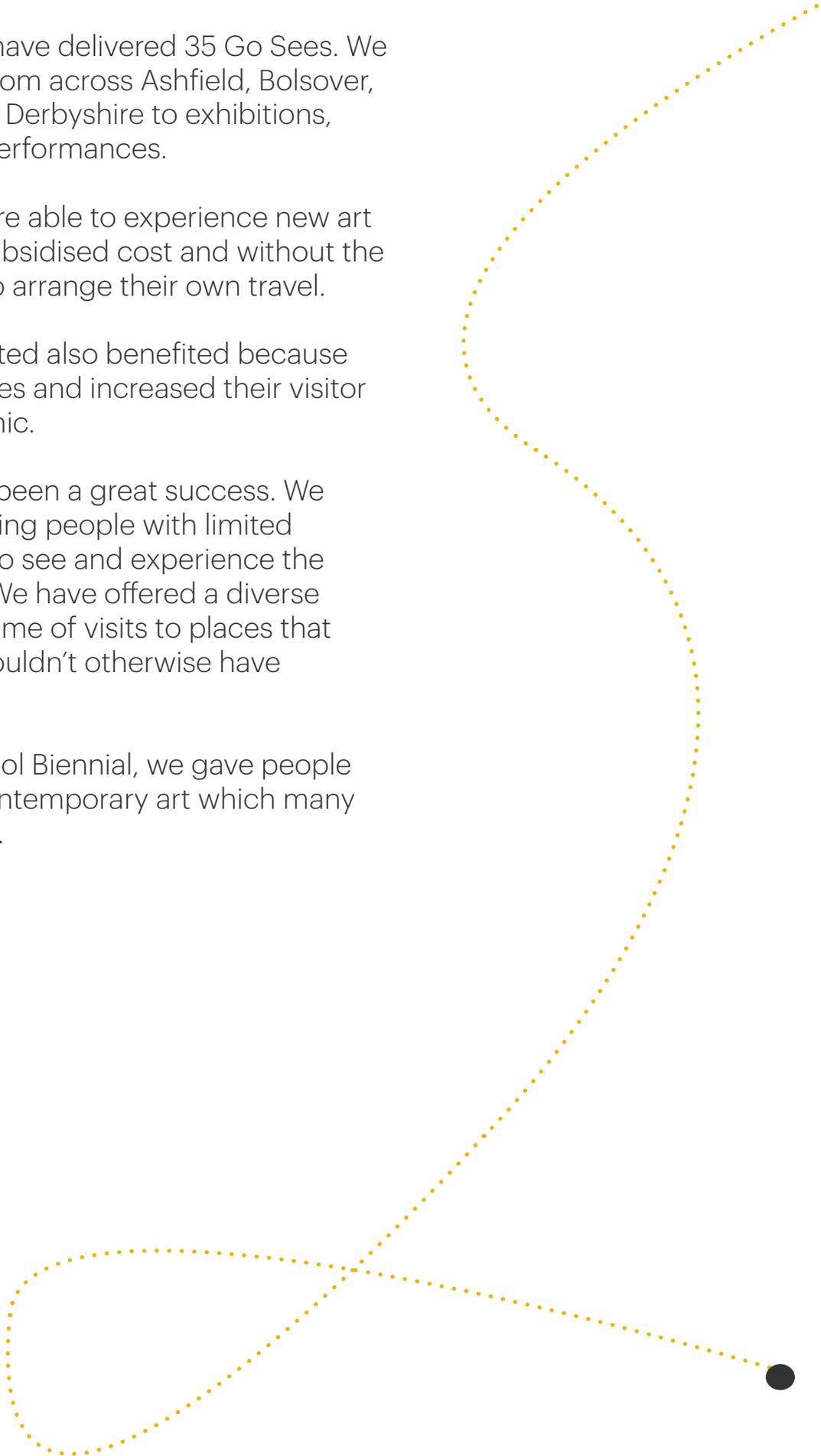
Since October 2014, we have delivered 35 Go Sees. We have taken 400 people from across Ashfield, Bolsover, Mansfield and North East Derbyshire to exhibitions, concerts, readings and performances.

People who attended were able to experience new art forms at a significantly subsidised cost and without the complication of having to arrange their own travel.

The organisations we visited also benefited because we brought new audiences and increased their visitor numbers and demographic.

Overall, the initiative has been a great success. We achieved our aim of offering people with limited options the opportunity to see and experience the arts in a supported way. We have offered a diverse and challenging programme of visits to places that the majority of people wouldn't otherwise have experienced.

In the case of the Liverpool Biennial, we gave people the confidence to see contemporary art which many said they found daunting.



Recommendations

Involve group leaders — When the Go Sees were for a specific group to a place of their choice, it was much easier and less time-consuming to achieve the numbers. Groups also began to share the responsibility for recruiting and collecting contributions and encouraging people to complete the evaluation forms.

Do as much research as possible — People don't always want what they say they want so do as much research as you can. There was a lot of interest in the trip to Buxton Opera from the consultations and it was demand-driven but we were disappointed by the final number of bookings.

Think carefully about pick-up points — Where appropriate, we offered two pick-up points — one from a Nottinghamshire location and one in Derbyshire. They were places we identified as being accessible to the greatest number of people.

Secure payment in advance — Theatres require payment in advance for tickets so you need to have confirmed numbers before purchase.

Be flexible with the booking process — We trialled different ways for people to book. In the end, a lot of people just wanted to call someone they knew to book. Consult with your target audience and develop a system that works for them.



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