



RE:Present 2018

Still representing
one year on

Helga Henry
Lara Ratnaraja
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Executive Summary

This report tracks the longer term impact of the RE:Present programme one year after it officially finished and seeks to gain an understanding of the indirect outcomes of the programme.

The RE:Present programme was a new initiative aimed at emerging and established cultural leaders/producers and artists from diverse backgrounds who are currently underrepresented in Birmingham. Taking place in 2016, RE:Present was delivered by Helga Henry of Creative Shift (now Director of Organisational Development at Birmingham Hippodrome) and Cultural Consultant Lara Ratnaraja. The programme comprised three strands and most participants undertook all three:

Strand 1: A four day “intensive” development course delivered over 1 month (2 x 2-days) with a cohort of peers.

Strand 2: Brokered mentoring with industry specialists including 1-2-1 diagnostics and learning support/guidance at the beginning and end of the mentoring activity.

Strand 3: 6 x evening speaker/networking events delivered in partnership with Aston Business School.

These sessions were designed to attract guests from the corporate, academic and cultural sector.

36 participants overall took part in the programme. One of the success factors of the programme seems to be the range of interventions used. The programme design was based on the premise that no single type of intervention is guaranteed to bring success: the combination of interventions that the individuals were exposed to has proven to be more successful in bringing about individual change and development.

This report shows how the impact of that programme continues to reveal itself. From informal WhatsApp groups between former strangers who now have a virtual water cooler around which to pool ideas and resources, to artistic collaborations between participants who wish to make work around the same issues – the network of RE:Present graduates continues to thrive.

As this document will show, new collaborations, employment and initiatives have regularly unfolded. These opportunities have not just developed between the cohort. Our mentors (predominantly national leaders in their fields) have also been impressed by the talent and commitment of their mentees opening up a host of opportunities for RE:Present-ers.

We would like to thank all those participants who contributed to the report and Thomasina Carlyle of Carlyle Transformations who conducted the research and collated these results.

We would also like to acknowledge Val Birchall of Birmingham City Council (BCC) for making the programme possible, our funders BCC and Arts Council England and our university partners – the University of Birmingham, Birmingham City University and Aston University.



Introduction: RE:Present one year on

This report is a compilation of responses to a survey conducted in October 2017, approximately one year after the “official” close of the RE:Present programme. The RE:Present programme was a pilot leadership programme aimed at emergent and established cultural leaders/ producers and artist/ leaders from diverse backgrounds who are currently under-represented in Birmingham. It comprised training, learning support and brokered mentoring as well as the chance to reflect and hear from inspiring leaders from diverse backgrounds.

A simple questionnaire was designed to find out not just what significant changes or transformations had taken place, but also smaller, day to day changes in work practice. It traced new jobs, roles and commissions as well as collaborations, partnerships, commissions and awards. It was clear to us anecdotally that participation in the programme, and relationships with mentors had presented some life opportunities to participants – we wanted to capture those. We hoped to gain a picture of what the legacy of RE:Present looked like in the real world.

Unprecedentedly, all the participants completed the survey. The results made inspiring reading and appeared to fall into a number of themes which are set out in more detail below:

1. **The power of the cohort**
2. **Focussing on value and working smarter**
3. **Confidence equals outcomes**
4. **Networks, connections and collaborations**
5. **The value of well-chosen mentors**
6. **Upgrades and upscaling practice**
7. **New ways of working**



The RE:Present symposium, September 2016. © BCU. Photo credit: Josh Swetnam

Theme 1: The power of the cohort

The power of the cohort is one of the key themes to emerge from the majority of feedback. Group support was mentioned as being a significant strength of the project from many of those involved. The momentum of this mutual support has continued beyond the life of the project through the group Facebook page and also through regular meet-ups in Birmingham. Participants expressed a feeling of solidarity and strength, of not being alone and of gaining confidence by being ‘plugged into’ the group which offered an environment where the conversation and expectations of the cohort inspired individuals to focus on what they really wanted to do. Increased confidence was very much an outcome, in particular for the 1 to 5 year cohort.

This leadership programme has given me the time and space to reflect on where I have been, and where I want to be, in a safe space amongst some amazing individuals. – Harpeet Kaur

Being on this programme has given me a network of like-minded and professional colleagues to ask for advice, contacts, support. In this region the day to day changes have been subtle but hugely important... it is the ability to have a ‘go to’ bunch of people which did not exist ...had I not been accepted onto the programme. I valued the programme so much that when it was coming to an end I wanted to somehow see its conversations and sense of network survive. I mooted the idea of setting up regular monthly ‘meet ups’. They were really helpful to so many for so many reasons - be it work, getting advice/support and to have a safe space to off-load. The Facebook and Twitter threads still continue. – Indy Hunjan

The Facebook group has also offered an excellent stream of sharing opportunities in terms of jobs, commissions, funding, board positions and requests for recommendations or advice. Helga, Lara and a great number of the cohort, continue to share opportunities on this platform for the group to access.

Theme 2: Focusing on value and working smarter

A recurring theme for many of the participants at this point was the transformation they had made in their work focus. This manifested itself in many ways from small transitions to major changes. Many had changed their outlook to focus on value-driven propositions with much more clarity in terms of prioritising. For some this even included leaving their regular employment or 'day job' to enable to focus on developing the work they really wanted to do on a freelance or independent basis. (In all nine participants gave up their day job) For others it was being more goal driven, reading more, not looking at work e mails when having time off or a new approach to clients they accepted and the fees they charged for their work.

I recognised that what I was presenting in my practice was totally different to what I was trying to achieve. From this I entered my MA with the goal of challenging my tactility, resulting in me becoming a sculptor. Clearer game plan and ambitions. – Lily Wales

It has certainly been a journey and a half for me. I have rediscovered my mojo and have re-presented myself as an artist with a clearer understanding of who/why I am. – Jane Thakoordin

What has been clear is my choices of what I apply for are directly aligned to my 'value based' way of working - I no longer do everything and anything... I am being a lot more strategic. – Indy Hunjan

I have cancelled some projects and am seriously developing others – I have changed my client base – Iris Bertz

I'm more aware that I need to work smarter not harder. I try and make more structure to the way I work. I often select to go to things I wouldn't have gone to before, that are outside of my known circle. – Kate Spence

I have learnt to say No and am much more open to new opportunities that are unfamiliar to me – Annabel Clarke

Coaching from Lynne Howells enabled me to focus on what I wanted to do next and gave me a route map to achieve it. – Sabra Khan

I reflect more, and I try to work less. – Fiona Ord Shrimpton

I established my identity as an 'artist and educator' as well as documentary photographer I'm thinking more about my worth, negotiating, the plurality of my practice, focusing my online presence and networkability. I keep coming back to Helga's key phrases such as 'it costs money to spend money' so I'm reminding myself that if someone approaches me for work it's saving them time, and therefore money, so I feel more comfortable in negotiations. What can the client do for me as well as what can I offer the client. – Inès Elsa Dalal

RE:Present has opened my eyes to quite a lot of things. It especially helped me to realise my value and the value of my work. That it is ok to actually turn down work if the pay is significantly less than value which the client is receiving. Also, realising that I am not alone. RE:Present has given me new contacts and strengthened old contacts. – Jaanika Okk

[I made transformations in] prioritising and decision making and gained renewed direction and determination as a result of RE:Present – Carly Hegenbarth

RE:Present helped me take a step back and evaluate where my career had been and where it could go. In the application processes I was more able to articulate how the numerous roles I had held – Oliver McCall

Theme 3: Confidence equals outcomes

Increased confidence was a key outcome that many expressed. This came both from working with mentors, from leadership by Helga and Lara and from the mutual support of the group. The confidence manifests itself in a range of ways: in more focused pitching for work, in applying for jobs and new roles, in being more proactive, and in enabling people to make brave decisions.

For me it was mainly around increased confidence, the knowledge that there are other people out there! As well as taking a step back and reflecting on my work life balance. – Ellie Griffiths

Confidence through pitching process was important - In the roles and commissions I have had since RE:Present – Joanne Masding

Applying for and getting this job was very much down to RE:Present: Taking part in the programme also enabled me to talk confidently and with purpose about who I am and my career trajectory. – Carly Hegenbarth

More confidence. More contacts and connections in industry. Clear goal setting and direction. More socially active and proactive role. – Maniba Zariat

Building of my own confidence has been a gradual thing but already the investment into my time and my own practise as a direct result of being on RE:Present can be seen. I have been 'going for' jobs and tenders all the time - again something I did not do before. I am successfully being appointed on small but significant and confidence building projects. ... now seeing the bigger picture, what I want to achieve seems so much clearer. – Indy Hunjan

It has been transformational. I have grown into the confident, informed artist that I always was but had for several years kept under wraps. Through the sessions, networking and mentoring I have received great advice and guidance. – Jane Thakoordin

RE:Present has had a significant impact on my career, it has given me the confidence, support and encouragement to make the brave decisions I needed to make, to ensure I was back on the right career path. Most significant for me, was the exercise focusing on barriers and how I was creating them, but could also remove them. – Jemima Waltho

The changes have been huge! I value my worth so much more... I feel very confident in writing proposals and selling my work. This is a huge advancement for me. My confidence has grown as a leader and I feel more able to have conversations with others in the same position as I am. – Rebecca Hemmings

It gave me a huge confidence boost at a pivotal career moment as I stepped up into a leadership role. – Aaron Wright

[I gained] a better understanding of how to budget for a project and include a fair wage for myself! Inspired by the people I met and the training to believe that it is possible to design own projects and apply for money – something I hope to do soon! –Chloe Lund

Theme 4: Networks, connections and collaborations

One of the key outcomes at the heart of RE:Present is the infrastructure of a wide range of new networks and connections. Many new connections were made and conversations about joint ventures started during the RE:Present programme and are still on-going. A complex web of overlapping working relationships has emerged through the process including collaborations, recommendations, introductions that have led to work opportunities, mentors employing participants and participants employing each other. A map showing collaborations and working relationships can be seen on page 14.

Four RE:Present “graduates” have been employed by **ASTONish** as a result of meeting Helga and Lara through the programme. These are **Rebecca Hemmings, Kate Spence, Inès Dalal** and **Shekayla Maragh**. **Maniba Zariat** also briefly assisted with the recruitment elements of ASTONish.

“The major thing that happened for me is I increased my networks, and also met people who I’ve gone onto create work and projects with (Suriya Aisha, Shekayla Maragh, Aaron Wright / Fierce Festival). The wider support of the network is also great. Overall RE:Present has been really useful in helping build my confidence and networks.” Pippa Frith



Suriya Aisha & The Horizontals | Photo by Alison Baskerville

Suriya Aisha started her collaboration with **Pippa Frith** who became her producer for Horizontal. Pippa and Suriya entered into the programme in different cohorts. However a change of schedule for Suriya led to her attending the 5- 10 year cohort’s training programme dates. Pippa and Suriya happened to sit together and to start new conversations about invisible disabilities which lead to them developing new work together. Following the project throughout August Suriya Aisha lead an R+D period funded by Arts Council England G4A, Birmingham REP and Live Art UK Network’s Diverse Action Programme exploring the themes for **Horizontal** working with a small group of participants living with invisible disabilities.

Suriya is now in a longer-term working relationship with **Pippa** who feels that this professional friendship born out of RE:Present involves deep robust conversations that informs her other projects in particular in relation to themes around diversity in its broadest sense: race, gender, sexuality and disability.

“I have started working as a writer, securing my first paid commission as a playwright as a result of the RE:Present network. It was in RE:Present that I was able to identify that this is really what I wanted to focus on and refocused my vision to enable it to happen. As a result of RE:Present I also made a strong working relationship with producer Pippa Frith and went on to secure my first Grants for the Arts to develop a piece of work Horizontal which was supported by REP Birmingham and as a result of the research and development we gained an opportunity to speak at TEDxBrum. I am now more confident and focused in working as an artist.” Suriya Roberts-Grey

Suriya Aisha as Freelance Programme Coordinator (Finding Faith) at Birmingham Museums Trust invited **Jaivant Patel** to perform a piece exploring faith and sexuality at BMAG. The project is a programme of events and activities in partnership with The British Museum. This work explores the perception of storytelling challenges notions of diversity in a subversive way in a dance context.



Jaivant Patel Dance. Photo: Matthew Cawrey

“My networking has become much more strategic when it needs to be and therefore much more successful. RE:Present opened my eyes” Katie Banks

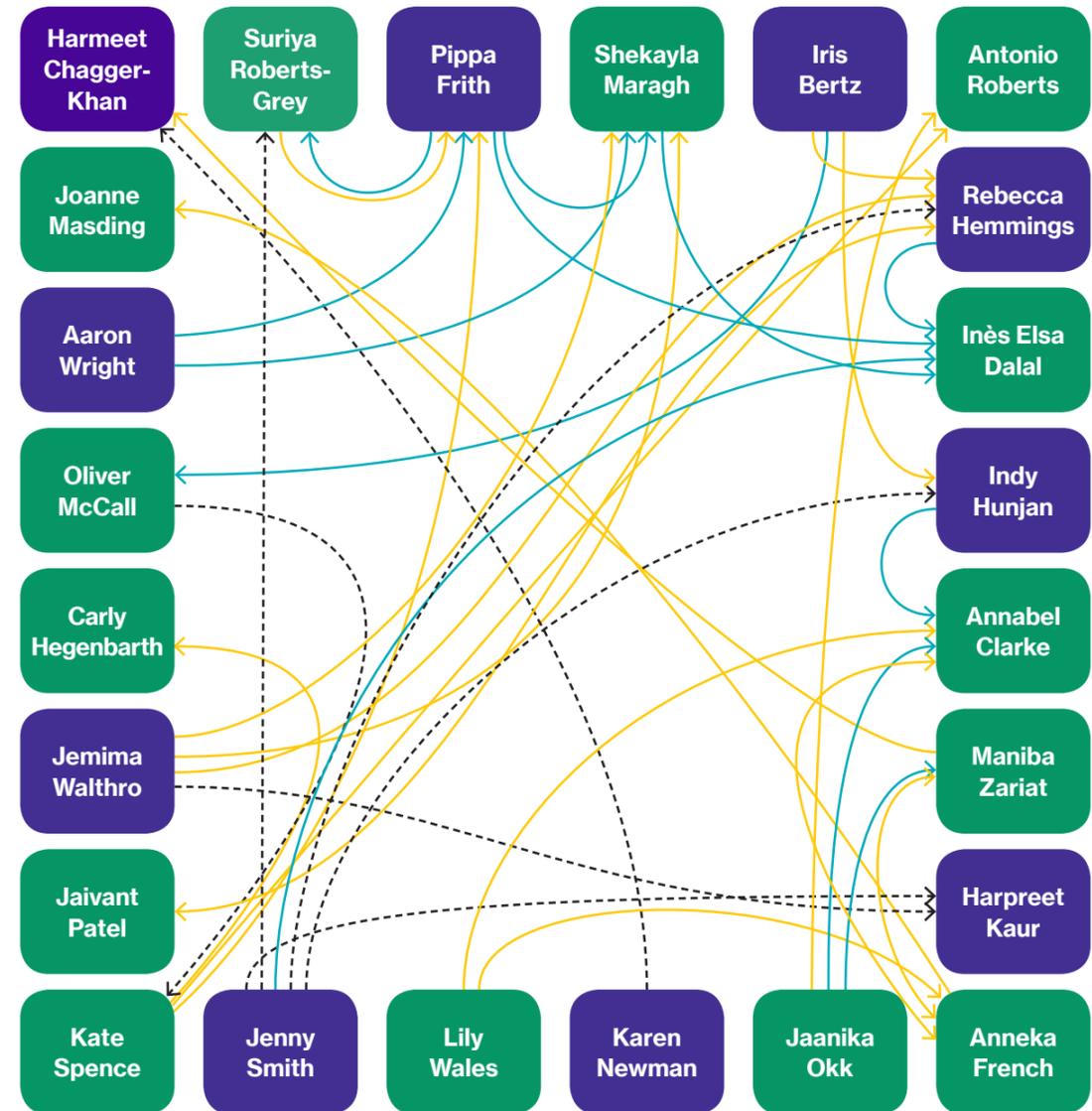
“The biggest impact RE:Present had was opening my networks in Birmingham...it allowed me to reconnect with people I already knew, make new contacts and scope the cultural landscape in Birmingham that had shifted in such a short time.” Harmeet Chagger-Khan

“Since RE:Present I have worked with Iris Bertz Ltd. as Iris’ assistant. This freelance role came about as a direct consequence of the programme and still continues.” Oliver McCall

“I have gained two major commissions and two smaller ones. I have hired other RE:Presenters I am still working with fellow RE:Presenters”. Rebecca Hemmings

“[I gained] more awareness of arts programmes and organisations in the UK. More connections with other people working in the arts in Birmingham.” Chloe Lund

A map of collaborations and working relationships



- Key**
- Cohort 5-10 years
 - Cohort 1-5 years
 - A Employed B
 - A Collaborated with B
 - -> A Supported B in work or introduced to work

Theme 5: The value of well-chosen mentors

The programme emphasised the importance of formal and informal mentors. All participants had the opportunity to identify specific learning or development needs in their 1-2-1 meetings with Lara. Some participants had not thought about who would be a suitable mentor, others had very specific mentors in mind. Following the 1-2-1 process, some had more ambition around their proposed mentors, seeking out national figures who originally seemed to be “out of their league”. The mentoring was a very powerful element of RE:Present with a host of mentors continuing a professional relationship with their mentees after the formal element had concluded. Some continue to have informal mentoring, some have worked directly for their mentors and some have had referrals and work passed to them by their mentors.

Andrew Jackson, www.andrewjackson.photography

The programme enabled Andrew to work with the mentor he had already wanted but had previously been unable to get. Photographer Andrew had already approached **Dr Mark Sealy MBE, Director of Autograph ABP** asking him to be his mentor before the RE:Present programme but without success. An introduction to Mark by Lara through the auspices of the programme finally secured him as Andrew’s mentor. Mark subsequently nominated Andrew for the Lightworks residency in New York. Andrew’s work can be seen in 2018 Autograph ABP

“Introduction to my mentor Mark Sealy, director of Autograph ABP, has proven to be a brilliant opportunity that has resulted in being nominated to attend the prestigious Light Works residency in Syracuse, NYC” Andrew Jackson

Sabra Khan, Sampad

Sabra Khan describes being part of the mentoring programme together with a “stepping out” planning exercise with **Indy Hunjan** during the training as helping her and feeding into her professional growth over the last year.

“Helga, Lara & Lynne (Howells her mentor) helped me to focus on my next steps & gave me the confidence in my experience & skills to go for a strategic leadership role on my terms” “I secured a new job as Strategic Projects Director at Sampad. As a direct result of coaching from Lynne Howells and attendance at RE:Present sessions” Sabra Khan

For **Karen Newman** the process supported a process of organisational development for BOM

“The mentoring supported a process of organisational development, which included: Value proposition work to re-align our core values; Options appraisal around our sublease model and capital project plans. Subsequent taking ownership of our cafe space and income model; Writing a new, five-year business plan; Securing Arts Council NPO status and four year funding; Action research with the BOM

team using the SCARF model of neuro-leadership, to predict challenges and solutions during the development phase. As this was a significant scope of work, the RE:Present programme covered only the initial mentoring. We contracted Shannon directly until March 2017, to see through the final phase of development. However the RE:Present support was vital in finding the right mentor, with the right approach to support our transition.” Karen Newman

“Nicola has been fundamental part of the company’s development. She gave me a lot of tools to work with and advised how to negotiate with the companies as well as with artists.” Jaanika Okk

My mentor pointed out job opportunities that I might otherwise have missed or not had the confidence to go for - including my current role” Carly Hegenbarth

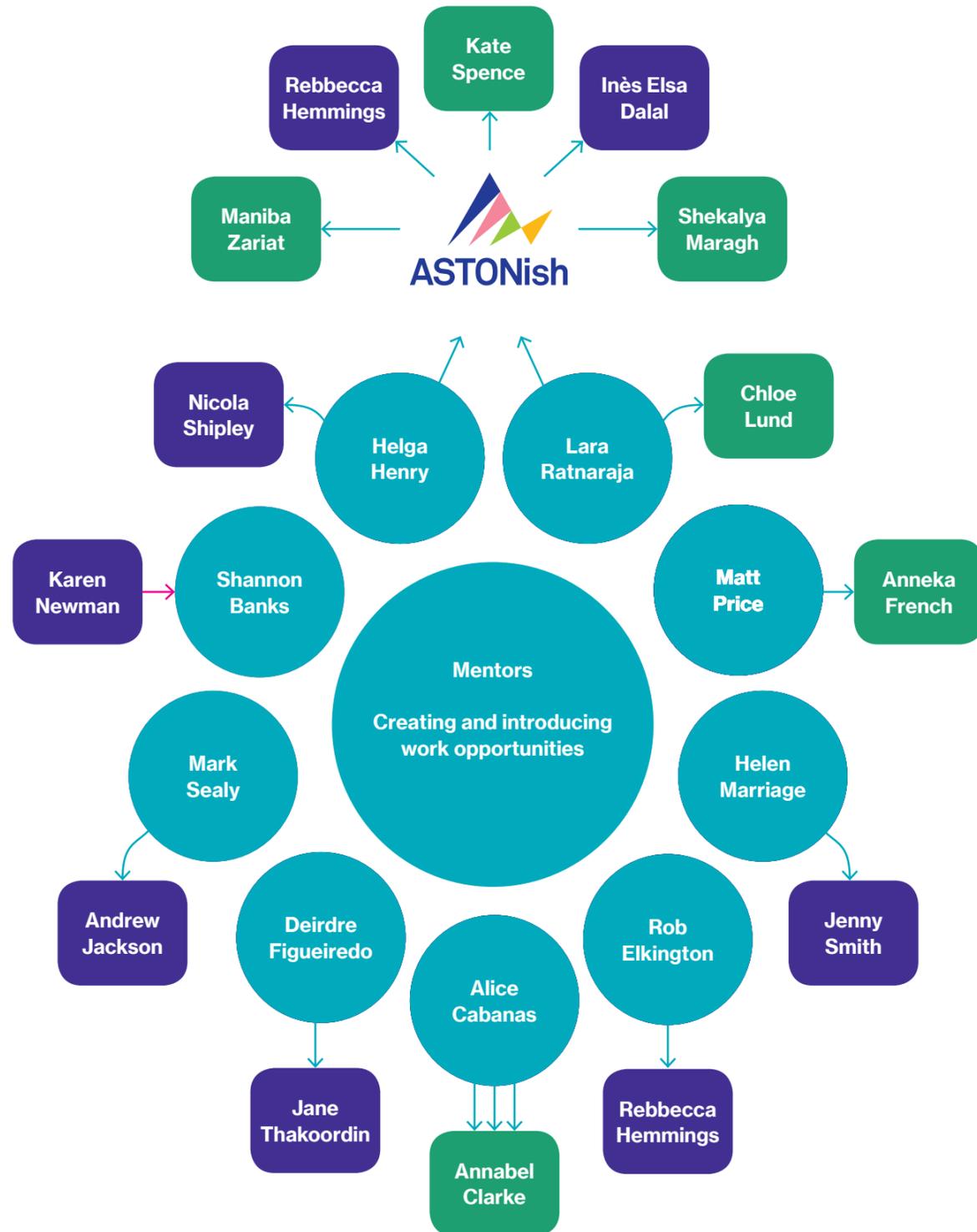
RE:Present was a very personal journey for **Pippa Frith**. Through the programme she redefined her ambition as wanting to make work that was deeper and meaningful to her or resonated with her after a period of illness. She felt that she needed to make work that was making a difference. Her conversations with her mentor Lynne Howells enabled her to place more value on the work she was doing, to take stock, grow confidence and to push back when needed. Pippa felt that this programme has changed the way she operates. The process enabled Pippa to compartmentalise the different areas of her work.

“The energy of the room, the skill of Helga and Lara and the working with Lynne that allowed me to grow in confidence and self-perception after a period of personal trauma. The Mentoring was the strongest impact in the programme for me it came at the right time. That mentoring relationship will continue - as a freelancer working solo it’s an excellent space to think about my work practise.” Pippa Frith



Fierce Festival 2017, Vivian Chinasa Ezugha *Be The Change*. Photo by Manuel Vason

Map of Mentor Introductions



- Key**
- Cohort 5-10 years
 - Cohort 1-5 years
 - Mentor employed Mentee or created work opportunity for them
 - Mentee employed mentor

Theme 6:
Upgrading and upscaling practice

The four day leadership training had a strong focus on entrepreneurship and the need to value the skills and experience that participants had to offer. In the years immediately following the austerity cuts, a number of freelance practitioners felt that they were in “survival” mode: accepting freelance contracts at lower value or staying in relatively low paid jobs. Following particularly powerful sessions on finance and on confidence where participants created a 10 year timeline of their major achievements, it was noted that there was a wealth of value and expertise in the room. This, together with encouragement and modelling positive behaviour around asking for higher fees, appropriately valuing work and “quitting the day job”, created a culture of valuing achievement and celebrating those who shared their new successes.

Jemima Waltho

“RE:Present has had a significant impact on my career, it has given me the confidence, support and encouragement to make the brave decisions I needed to make, to ensure I was back on the right career path. Most significant for me, was the exercise focusing on barriers and how I was creating them, but could also remove them.

I was the first on the course to hand in their notice. Since then I have re-established my freelance career, which has been very successful, working with organisations I have huge respect for (RSA, Arts Connect, Rural Media, Creative Alliance and BCU) and have taken on a PAYE role with Ormiston Academies Trust, which perfectly suits my career goals of growth through creative learning. Last year was my best financial year too”

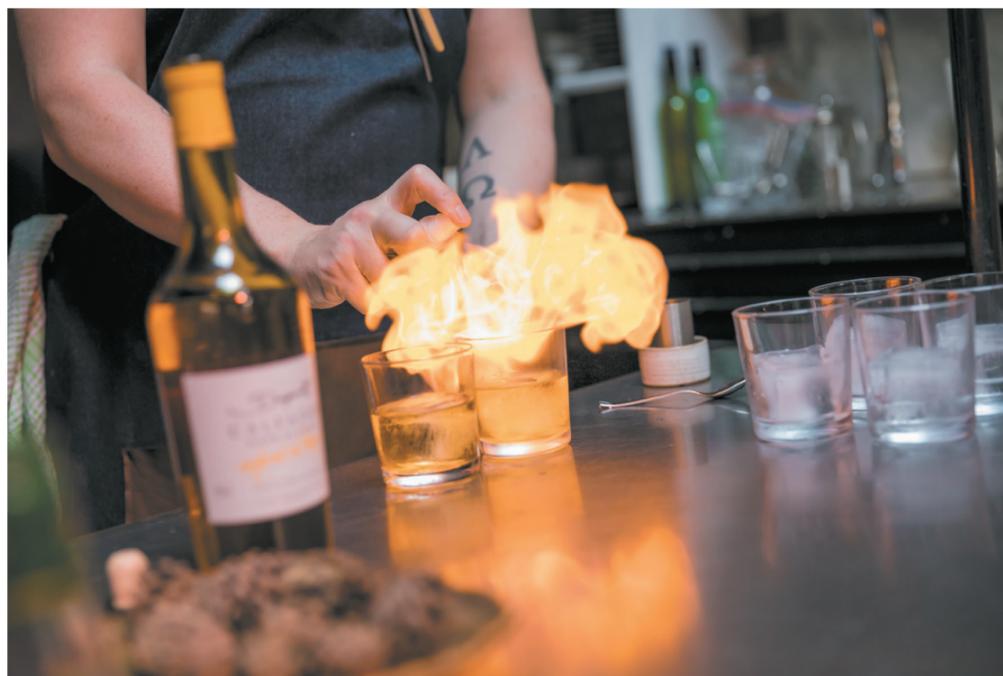
I have been promoted within 2 months of taking on a PAYE role and will be promoted again (to lead the enrichment department) in February 2018.”

Kaye Winwood, www.kayewinwood.com

As a result of the project Kaye Winwood applied for her own studio space something she felt she would not have had the confidence to do a year before. She also applied to STEAMhouse for regional support and development and won a NAWM (New Art West Midlands) curatorial engine bursary. Saying no to some work and increasing her fees were also significant outcomes for Kaye.

“The STEAMhouse initiative was fostered and encouraged by Lara who gave me validation which pushed me forwards. Lara steered me the right person to speak to. Lara and Helga have been supportive as mentors. It feels like they are invested in us which makes a huge difference.”

Conceptually Kaye's work was similar before RE:Present but she went from small commissions on a project by project basis to increasing the scale of the projects. Increased confidence enabled her to be more proactive and to go to commissioners, for example Birmingham Literature Festival had not previously programmed any artistic activity related to food. Kaye was able to have conversation with them about contributing to their programme - a strategic approach to reach a new audience - knowing literature (so rich with metaphors) was ripe material. She is more proactive in securing projects now from a variety of buyers. Rather than trying to do everything herself she now subcontracts people for different specialisms rather than compromising (such as bringing in sound artists or choreographers). RE:Present enabled her to expand her practise in this way.



Backward Running Dinner, commissioned as part of Birmingham's Literature Festival. Photos by Verity Milligan

Rebecca Hemmings, Strawberry words www.strawberrywords.co.uk

Rebecca Hemmings transformed her business through two major commissions as well as two smaller ones. These include a 23K commission from Living Arts Network & Arts Connect for a literary project involving six schools and 15K project with Education Central Multi-Academy Trust Diversity and Arts Connect involving nine schools in the West Midlands. In addition she secured commissions with Big Brum funded by The Paul Hamlyn Foundation and Performing Pedagogies RSA & Arts Connect.

"My working has changed dramatically as a result of being on the RE:Present programme because I have figured out what does and doesn't work for the company. I have been a lot more bold in voicing my concern about the lack of diversity in the arts which led to my blog going viral and being listed as one of the top ten blogs of 2016 by Arts Professional."

Chloe Lund

Chloe completed work as co-editor on 'Portable Studio' publication by Trevor Appleson and developed several projects as Development Officer for BRIHC, University of Birmingham, which bore the stamp of her interests in arts and community. These included events as part of SHOUT Festival, Arts and Science Festival, Being Human Festival, Black History Month, as well as a successful bid through the HLF sharing heritage scheme for a community heritage project exploring Activism in Selly Oak.

"Then I quit my job as Development Officer at University of Birmingham in order to participate in a project called Land in Curiosity, which explored nomadic community living and nature connection. As part of this project I contributed workshops, and am working to put together a short film exploring life in the community!"

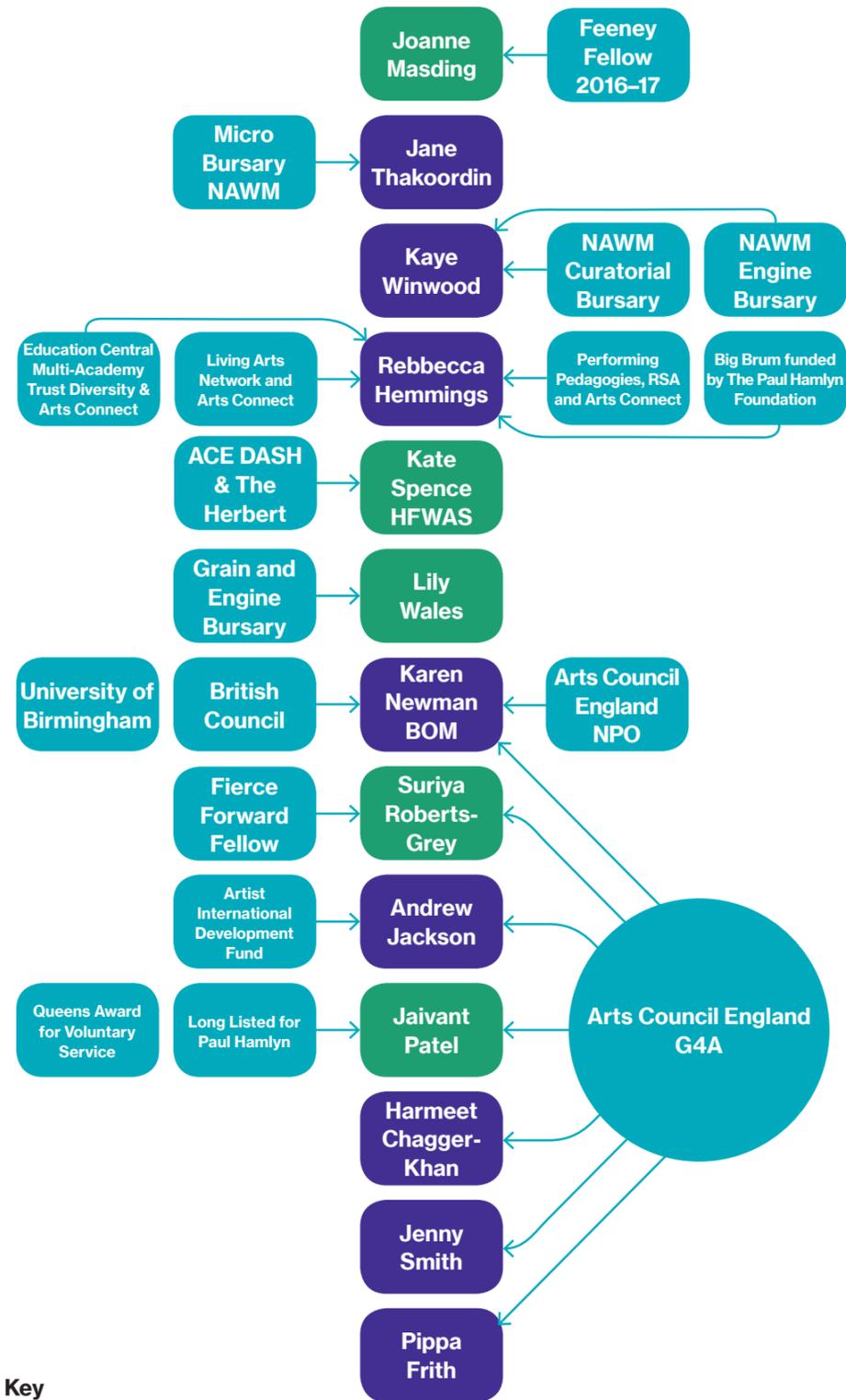
Pippa Frith, www.pippafrith.co.uk / wearefierce.org

Already an award-winning Independent producer based in Birmingham Pippa met **Aaron Wright** through RE:Present and later after the programme finished she was appointed by Aaron as festival producer for Fierce. This was a role Pippa had been looking out for when the opportunity became available.

Aaron Wright describes this as ***"a huge and brilliant development for Fierce that wouldn't have happened without RE:Present."***

"it would never have happened without RE:Present... apart (from anything else it's where I met Aaron Wright,) [making the connections] it was [the cohort] that helped me focus in on what I really wanted to do, what I'm good at, where I can make a difference" Pippa Frith

Funding, Commissions and Awards Received



Key
 ■ Cohort 5-10 years
 ■ Cohort 1-5 years
 → Funding, Commissions and Awards Received

Theme 7: New ways of working

A few participants changed the way that they work as a result of participating in RE:Present. The emphasis on both business and professional values, linked to a strong vision allowed the cohort to think about whether their current approach was working. The space and time for introspection coupled with new input from a range of business experts allowed people to work “on the business” and not in it. Freed from day to day concerns, some had very powerful insights that called them to action. The following section shares the stories of some of the participants whose change of direction was more definitive.

Jaanika Okk, Okk Arts, www.okk-arts.com

Jaanika is a print maker from Estonia and prior to the project had been exhibiting as an individual artist but had always found this model of working unsustainable. She realised she was in the trap of project based work. **“Since 2016 I have changed the way I do business and this has had a lot to do with RE:Present.”** Jaanika describes the impact of this programme as being tremendous, **“RE:Present enabled me to think in a more sustainable way. It made me gain an understanding of how to move forward in a more commercial route, with a formalised approach and defined core values. I started thinking more like a business woman and not just like an artist. I changed my business model into a commercial gallery and started conducting research to analyze the art market in Birmingham and West Midlands from the commercial gallery perspective.”**



Jaanika Okk at an event organised by GEM Media and 4Corners Property on 17th January 2018 at Zen Metro. Photo by GEM Media.

Jaanika felt that there were not many opportunities for local artists to commercialise their work. **“After the course I was able I find corporate venues for the artists to sell or rent art to. The work is filling a gap in Birmingham”** Okk works with selected artists from all over the region including **Antonio Roberts** from the programme.

“The mentoring I received from Nicola Shipley and Rachel Bradley on his project has been very practical towards my art market research and gallery business development.”

Jenny Smith, Curiosity Productions, www.curiosityproductions.co.uk

Jenny Smith explains how RE:Present came a right time for her and how it was pivotal to move her on. RE:Present gave Jenny momentum to leave a less fulfilling project and to take the leap to being a company director of Big Brum for a year. The role of Director was the first senior post she had ever applied for. Jenny reflects that she probably wouldn't have taken that leap had she not been part of the RE:Present process.

“RE:Present has been such a significant part of my personal journey this year. I started to realize how I could reach my potential, and even what my potential might be.”

“The big thing was having the head space and thinking properly about where I was going and what I was doing and having that moment of looking onto the third horizon, rather than always making immediate decisions. It made me it made me take a step back and think more strategically about what I was doing the process made me realise that I could initiate the work I really wanted myself.”

The progression from there was that the work she really wanted to do was not possible as a freelancer. It required an organisation and so this led to her forming her own production company, Curiosity Productions. The First Project for the company was “Adrift” an R & D project for which she secured a 15K Grants for the Arts. This project explored the human experience of being adrift either through refugee or migrant status or through mental health issues. It involved the artist **Dean Melbourne** and **Suriya Roberts Grey** both of whom she met through RE:Present.

Fundamentally Jenny's previous work as a freelancer for other people and organisations involved her realising other people's visions. A lot of it was exciting work but it was not always as creative as she might have liked it to be. Her new production company enables her to realise ambitious site specific or touring site specific work and it involves her doing the projects she is passionate about: site-specific work, Black Country based and in non-traditional theatre spaces.

“I have to give huge thanks to [Helga Henry, Lara Ratnaraja, Dean Melbourne and] the RE:Present process and group, because without it this genuinely wouldn't be happening. When I volunteered to do the stepping out visioning exercise in-front of everyone that was the first time I'd spoken out loud my ambitions [to do large-scale site specific community performance projects,] and now I'm taking the first big step in making that a reality.”

Shekayla Maragh

Shekayla was one of nine participants to leave a full time job at the end of RE:Present and has since been establishing herself as a freelance cultural producer this past year. Her work in 2017 has included working with ASTONish on a fixed term contract throughout 2017, producer of B-side Festival with Birmingham Hippodrome - creative producer of Birmingham Does Bhangra, production lead on TEDxyouth@brum, marketing coordinator for Fierce Festival, being asked to speak at Birmingham City University and University of Birmingham as a visiting lecturer on numerous occasions, plus other mixed freelance work.

“working independently with a variety of people, projects and organisations has certainly helped me to realise my potential thus impacting confidence the visioning exercises on represent helped me to build a plan of action. My RE:Present mentor Andy Inglis has invested in me numerous ways... I'm currently working in Norway because of him.”

Jaivant Patel, www.jaivantpateldance

Helga mentioned that **“You don't know which interventions will make the difference - it's having the range of interventions that will make the difference.”** Jaivant Patel is an excellent example of this for him it was one conversation in the programme that was key to refocusing his ambitions.

At the time Jai Patel started RE:Present he was employed by BT and came into the programme with a plan to develop an agency for Indian dance in the West Midlands. Through a one to one with Lara Ratnaraja he refocused his ambition to focus on developing on own dance practise **“it was that conversation that changed my focus - it's all about that one conversation with Lara.”**

Lara enabled Jaivant to realise he could be a cultural leader and still could develop his own practise. During the programme he left his day job and started to re-formalise the whole structure of what he did. The company loosely existed for experimentation prior to this but he didn't do anything of substance. As a result of his change in focus he rebranded his company and redefined where he wanted to go.

Since then he has been named the first associate artist at Arena Theatre in Wolverhampton, has become artist in residence at mac and joined the board of directors of Dance 4. He has also been named on a power list of 100 most influential people who sit on the UK Indian corridor.

“I couldn't have dreamed of this sort of recognition 12 months ago and now here I am. RE:Present has empowered me in a way I didn't know was even possible!” Jaivant Patel

Conclusion

From the outset in RE:Present we tried to create an atmosphere of trust and confidence, encouraging participants to create a network of their own to continue beyond the programme. We wanted to have a programme that was the start of something and not a single intervention. Sustainability was in-built.

This report shows how the impact of that programme continues to reveal itself. From informal WhatsApp groups between former strangers who now have a virtual water cooler around which to pool ideas and resources, to artistic collaborations between participants who wish to make work around the same issues – the network of RE:Present graduates continues to thrive.

New collaborations, employment and initiatives have regularly unfolded. As we have seen – these have not just been between the cohort. Our mentors (predominantly national leaders in their fields) have been impressed by the talent and commitment of their mentees opening up a host of opportunities for RE:Present-ers.

A fresh perspective on diversity

We sought to model both the partnership approach that we knew participants would need to grow their arts practice and seek contribution from a range of nationally important arts practitioners from diverse backgrounds. Many people lacked the confidence to identify as a leader, some did not feel “diverse enough”, and there was a common conflation of diversity with race. Creating a safe space to explore these issues and presenting (especially in the Masterclasses) a range of hugely influential and inspiring speakers (who identified with a number of the protected characteristics) helped untangle some of the knotty issues around diversity.

“I am generally more aware of cultural issues facing the arts and a need to encourage participation in the arts from Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups. I am trying to ensure more of programmes and events that I plan are more representative of our audiences and colleagues.” Antonio Roberts

“RE:Present has really helped me work with more diverse people is because I have met and worked with a really diverse group of people and they have introduced me to other people. One of the things the project also did was broaden my outlook of what being diverse is because I got to be a part of a much more diverse cohort.” Jenny Smith

Shortly after the end of the RE:Present programme, we wrote an article for Arts Professional which concluded:

“Seeing the cohort develop in this way, and watching them support and grow in ambition and confidence, has been one of the most rewarding experiences of our professional lives.”

This is all the more true nearly 18 months on. The cohort continue to flourish and support one another. They continue to make their mark, by-passing some of the previous glass ceilings and “old boy networks” by working around them, through them, and blazing their own unique trails.

We wish them continued confidence to build relationships, express themselves and create success on their terms. Their talent and generosity demand it.

Helga Henry and Lara Ratnaraja
Birmingham, February 2018



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Katie Banks	www.acquismedia.com
Iris Berz	www.irisbertz.co.uk
Harmeet Chagger-Khan	www.surfinglightbeams.com
Annabel Clarke	www.annabelclarke.co.uk
Inès Elsa Dalal	www.ineselsa.com
Anneka French	www.annekafrench.wordpress.com
Pippa Frith	www.pippafrith.co.uk www.wearefierce.org
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Rebecca Hemmings	www.strawberrywords.co.uk
Indy Hunjan	www.kalaphool.com
Andrew Jackson	www.andrewjackson.photography
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Jaivant Patel	www.jaivantpateldance
Antonio Roberts	www.hellocatfood.com
Suriya Roberts-Grey	www.suriyaisha.com
Nichola Shipley	www.grainphotographyhub.co.uk www.nicolashipley.co.uk
Jenny Smith	www.curiosityproductions.co.uk www.linkedin.com/in/jennysmithproducer
Kate Spence	www.hfwas.co.uk
Jane Thakoordin	www.janethakoordin.com
Cathy Wade	www.cathywade.ac.uk
Lily Wales	www.lilywales.co.uk
Kaye Winwood	www.kayewinwood.com
Aaron Wright	www.wearefierce.org
Maniba Zariat	www.uk.linkedin.com/in/manibazariat

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www.carlyletransformations.com/

