

# UNBOUND

Dynamic artists for public spaces development programme

**OUR YEAR**  
Wakefield District 2024

## Summary Evaluation Report



Credit: Cohort & mentors outside The Hepworth, Wakefield with completion certificates © Nicholas Singleton

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# Contents

1. **Overview**, p.3-4
2. **Key Recommendations**, p.5
3. **Introduction**, p.6-7
4. **Programme Design**, p.8
5. **Recruitment**, p.9
6. **The Cohort**, p.10
7. **The Mentors**, p.11
8. **Set up, Mentoring and Supervision**, p.12
9. **Training Programme**, p.13-14
10. **The Programme in Stats**, p.15
11. **Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Monitoring**, p.16
12. **Access**, p.17
13. **Online Content**, p.18
14. **Budget**, p.19
15. **Mentor/Mentee Reflections**, p.20-21
16. **What happened next?**, p.22-23



Credit: Unbound Programme Group Shot © Michael Godsall

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The UNBOUND programme came at the perfect time for me as I was looking to gain a greater understanding of art in the public art realm and **expand my experience** working as a mural artist.

The programme's training sessions and talks with industry professionals have been extremely inspiring and directly helpful, and my one-to-one learning with my mentor (Harriet Lawson) has been **invaluable in improving my approach to community engagement, public art and mural projects.**

Rebecca Feneley (Cohort member)

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# 1. Overview

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**UNBOUND** was an exciting new artist development programme which was developed to address some of the challenges and barriers that exist for artists seeking to deliver their work in public spaces.

Commissioned by Wakefield Council, it was funded by Wakefield Council, Cultural Development Fund and the West Yorkshire Combined Authority, and was delivered by a partnership of Beam and Yorkshire & Humber Visual Arts Network (YVAN).

A cohort of 12 artists were recruited from Wakefield and the wider West Yorkshire region, with 6 half day workshop sessions delivered.



Credit: Unbound final event © Nicholas Singleton

The cohort praised the artist-led nature of these sessions and the opportunity to hear from high profile and experienced artists. Cohort members were matched with artists delivering live mural art commissions in the Wakefield district. An artist needs survey guided the design of the workshop programme and there was strong attendance for the workshop sessions.

Some of the mentee/mentor relationships were more successful than others, but all mentees felt that they had a positive experience with the programme. Both mentors and mentees valued the wider networking opportunities presented by the programme and wanted to see more of these. In general Artists felt supported with access needs. A series of online quick guides were created as an output on the programme. There was a lot of content to cover within sessions, but artists were signposted to supporting resources for further independent research.



Credit: Unbound final event © Nicholas Singleton

# 2. Key Recommendations

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## For Commissioners

- Paying cohort members a bursary to participate would make the opportunity more accessible
- Embedding an evaluator from the beginning would allow for monitoring of impact over time
- Manage expectations about the potential for delays with public art projects from the beginning - clarify that we are offering cohort members a 'snapshot' of the commissioning process.

## For Project Managers

- Create more opportunities to build social capital throughout the programme - e.g. more in person sessions, mentor/ mentee networking, opportunities for shared creative activities etc.
- Offer more direct support for mentor/ mentee relationships in some instances.
- Acknowledge that mentors can learn from the programme as well and invite them to attend workshop sessions.

## For Mentees and Mentors

- Both mentors and mentees need to be prepared to ring fence clear time to commit to mentoring and take a flexible approach to the opportunities presented through the process, recognising the value of transferable skills across different artforms.
- Mentors and mentees need to be invested in the idea that the process is one of two way learning and skill sharing.

## General recommendation for future programmes - key things to consider

- Delivering the workshop programme over a longer time period and with more shorter sessions, consider more practical workshops and the potential for skills swaps could bring greater richness and depth to the programme, accommodating a broader range of learning styles.

# 3. Introduction

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**UNBOUND** was an exciting new artist development programme which was developed to address some of the challenges and barriers that exist for artists seeking to deliver their work in public spaces. It maximised a key opportunity for creative skills development presented by Wakefield Council's investment in the Our Year 2024 Year of Culture and an associated volume of public art commissioning activity taking place across the district in the same time period.

UNBOUND aimed to support both early career artists, as well as mid career artists who may wish to diversify their practice. The programme linked closely with a series of mural art commissions happening in Wakefield linked to Our Year 2024 and wider opportunities. It aimed to provide Wakefield and West Yorkshire based artists with real world opportunities to grow skills and confidence to deliver creative commissions in public spaces.



Credit: Unbound final event © Nicholas Singleton

A cohort of 12 dynamic Wakefield and West Yorkshire based artists were recruited for this opportunity following an open call out over summer 2024. Spread over 6 months (August 24 - Jan 25), the programme offered the opportunity for the cohort to shadow and be mentored by an experienced artist delivering a real time project in a public space, alongside a mix of in person and virtual workshops and networking opportunities.

Artistic practices within the cohort included light art, installations, sculpture, photography, performance, dance & movement, mural art, and illustration.



Credit: Training session, Wakefield site visit © Beam

# 4. Programme Design

The structure of UNBOUND was designed to include 6 online/ in person workshop sessions and the opportunity for mentees to be matched with a mentor artist who has been commissioned to deliver a live mural art commission in Wakefield as part of the Crossings & Gateways (Our Year 2024) programme or First & Last Mile (Castleford) programme.

Both schemes delivering new artworks in the Wakefield district led by Wakefield Council, with Beam acting as Creative Producer in both instances.



Credit: UNBOUND training session at The Art House © Beam

# 5. Recruitment

An open call recruitment process was undertaken, with the application process (via a short GoogleForms form) including an artist needs survey to help gather information about what artists needed and were interested in about art in the public realm to help shape the programme. 23 eligible applications were received - 6 of these were from candidates with a WF postcode. The selected cohort were drawn from the following postcode areas:

**WF1, WF2, WF2, WF2, HX7, HD9, LS2, LS23, LS7, BD7, BD14, BD4**



Credit: Unbound final event © Nicholas Singleton

# 6. The Cohort

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*(Ordered alphabetically by surname)*

**Ruth Agbolade**

[www.artworksbyruth23.wixsite.com/ruth-agbolade-art](http://www.artworksbyruth23.wixsite.com/ruth-agbolade-art)

**Hafifa Ahmed**

[www.hafifaahmed.com](http://www.hafifaahmed.com)

**Tara Balfour**

[www.dancemovesminds.com](http://www.dancemovesminds.com)

**Zephie Begolo**

[www.cargocollective.com/zephiebegolo](http://www.cargocollective.com/zephiebegolo)

**Rebecca Feneley**

[www.rebeccafeneley.com](http://www.rebeccafeneley.com)

**Holly Rowan Hesson**

[www.hollyrowanhesson.co.uk](http://www.hollyrowanhesson.co.uk)

**Jude Kershaw**

[www.instagram.com/itsjudeokay](http://www.instagram.com/itsjudeokay)

**Alice Kin**

[www.instagram.com/aliceinwoolands](http://www.instagram.com/aliceinwoolands)

**Sam Metz**

[www.sammetz.com](http://www.sammetz.com)

**Cat Scott**

[www.catscott.co.uk](http://www.catscott.co.uk)

**Joanne Tiffany**

[www.joannetiffany.com](http://www.joannetiffany.com)

**Alicia Wallace**

[www.outsidein.org.uk/galleries/alicia-wallace](http://www.outsidein.org.uk/galleries/alicia-wallace)

# 7. The Mentors

*(Ordered alphabetically by surname)*

**Shiraaz Ali**

[www.shiraazali.com](http://www.shiraazali.com)

**Jay Gilleard/ CBLOXX**

[www.cbloxx.co.uk](http://www.cbloxx.co.uk)

**Harriet Lawson**

[www.instagram.com/harrietcolours](https://www.instagram.com/harrietcolours)

**Charlotte (Emmeline) North**

[www.emmelinenorth.online](http://www.emmelinenorth.online)

**Megan Russell/ Peachzz**

[www.peachzz.co.uk](http://www.peachzz.co.uk)

**Douglas Thompson**

[www.dougblack.co.uk](http://www.dougblack.co.uk)

**Ellie Way**

[www.ellieway.co.uk](http://www.ellieway.co.uk)

**Oskar Withak**

[www.oskarwithak.com](http://www.oskarwithak.com)



Credit: Mentee artist (Rebecca Feneley) and Mentor artist (Harriet Lawson) at the launch of Harriet's Normanton mural © Nicholas Singleton

# 8. Set up, Mentoring and Supervision

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- Beam and YVAN were each assigned six mentees to act in a supervisory role to oversee the mentor/ mentee relationship.
- Supervisory 1 hour meetings were held with each Mentee to talk through a framework mentoring plan document to draw out the aims of the mentoring, as well as considering access needs/ support requirements.
- Mentors had an assigned budget of £800 ring fenced within their commission fee to spend time on the mentoring role.
- 5 'contact points' were expected between mentor and mentee over 6 months, the nature of these was left flexible to best meet the requirements of the mentee.
- Although the mentee/ mentor relationships formally ended at the end of the programme (end of January 2025), whilst there was no expectation placed on either mentees or mentors to continue the relationship, if it was mutually agreeable this was suggested. This was important in terms of the fact that many of the lead commissions overran and were due for completion in spring 2025.

# 9. Training Programme

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**Following the application process and the artist needs survey gathered, outcomes were analysed to draw out patterns of what artists felt they needed to progress their career working in the public realm.**

**Key areas of interest from the cohort included - how to pitch for work, developing a concept proposal, scaling up work, community engagement, technical aspects including working with subcontractors, planning permissions, licenses, permissions, risk assessment , and stakeholder engagement.**

- **Session 1**, 11/9/24 (Half day, Zoom): Introducing UNBOUND - this session was led by Beam and YVAN, laying out how the programme was going to work, giving an opportunity for the cohort to introduce themselves and their practice to each other.
- **Session 2 & 3**, 25/9/24 (Full day, In Person, The Art House, Wakefield): How artists are working in public spaces - This full day session gave the artists plenty of time for networking and to explore the ways in which artists work in public spaces. We also heard personal reflections on his career progression working in the public realm from artist Jason Wilsher-Mills, and had an introduction and tour of the Wakefield sculpture trail by Nino Vella, WMDC.

- **Session 4**, 23/10/24 (Half day, Zoom): Getting Technical - Giving an overview of the stages of a commission with guest speakers - Richard Wheeler/ Neon Workshops (about working with fabricators); Emmeline North (about working at heights and Risk assessments); Mark Smith/ Axisweb (about artist insurances).
- **Session 5**, 6/12/24 (Half day, Zoom): Winning Commissions & Engaging with Communities. How to pitch for work successfully with artist speaker Kerry Lemon and working with communities in the development of artwork in public spaces with Rhian Kempadoo Millar focusing on her 'Carnival Reflections' mural in Chapel Town, Leeds.
- **Session 6**, 31/1/25 (Half day with networking lunch/ optional morning gallery visit, In Person, The Hepworth Wakefield): Reflecting on Public art & UNBOUND. Half day wrap up session with all mentors and mentees invited. Guest speaker Jeanine Griffin Associate Curator Invisible Dust/ Lead for the Scarborough Wild Eye programme spoke about the Wild Eye projects and the environmental focus of their work; Mentor artists Q&A panel discussion Chaired by Sharon Gill discussed how the artists established a practice making art work in the public realm; Facilitator Rob Young led an evaluation workshop. The day ended with a celebration and completion certificates presented to all cohort members by Cllr Hannah Appleyard, Cabinet member for Culture, Leisure and Sport at WMDC.



Credit: Training session, Wakefield site visit © Beam

# 10. The Programme in Stats

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- In total **41** people were engaged across the programme - this included mentor and mentee artists and programme speakers.
- The programme had **16** guest speakers/ facilitators in total.
- **6** half day training sessions were delivered (3 hours each).
- There were **215** learning hours across the programme undertaken by the cohort as part of the formal workshop programme (not including mentoring sessions).
- Across the programme there were **53** attendances for workshop sessions by the cohort (out of a potential total of 60). Which equated to an average 88% attendance rate for workshop sessions.
- Learning hours for attending the workshop sessions and 2 x supervisory check in sessions were **239**.

# 11. Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Monitoring

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**While selecting applicants for the programme some consideration was given to the diversity of the cohort but this was not at the detriment of applicants whose work was at a point of potential change and who displayed a greater enthusiasm and commitment to the initiative.**

**EDI information was gathered from the small cohort at the recruitment stage which gave us the following insights.**

- 100% of the cohort identified as female, as opposed to the national average for working age being 50% (ACE- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion 2018-23) .
- 42% of participants identified as bisexual and 42% identified as heterosexual, which is not comparable to the 4% national average. Overall, 4.1% of England's residents who identify as being LGB+ live in West Yorkshire. ( West Yorkshire Combined Authority 2021 census).
- There was a fairly even spread of participants across the age ranges of 20-64, with a slightly increased number of participants in the 20-34 age bracket. This is perhaps not surprising for artists developing their professional careers.
- 17% said that their day-to-day activities were limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months, and considered themselves to have a disability. This is reflective of West Yorkshire, which from the last census indicated 17.6% of residents having a disability.
- In terms of ethnicity 58% identified as WHITE - English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British, with the remainder of the cohort (42%), equally comprising participants who identified as MIXED - Other mixed/multiple ethnic background; BLACK OR BLACK BRITISH - African; MIXED - White and Black African; MIXED - White and Asian; and WHITE - Other white background. The percentage of residents who identify as being from an ethnic minority from the 2021 census for West Yorkshire is 23%.

# 12. Access

- Cohort members were invited to identify any access needs at application stage that would need to be met in order for them to be able to fully participate in the programme.
- The access fund identified by Wakefield Council was not used as adjustments to the programme were able to be made within the existing programme budget. These adjustments included:
  - choice of venues,
  - pacing of programme,
  - format of communications,
  - borrowing an air purifier from another arts organisation
  - providing suitable refreshments
  - timing of meetings and sessions
- It was important to have this access fund available should it have been required.
- We learnt that asking for access information upfront, listening carefully to needs and being flexible and responsive as needs arose, meant that we were able to design the programme to make it accessible for the particular needs of the participants, rather than taking a 'one size fits all' approach. This is in line with best practice for the sector where artists are encouraged to ensure they communicate their access needs without fear of prejudice.



Credit: Unbound final event © Nicholas Singleton

# 13. Online Content

- A series of 9 'quick guides' were created which give an overview of key points in the public art commissioning process, for use by artists and commissioners.
- All resources linked back to the more detailed guidance provided by Wakefield Council on their public art pages - including the Wakefield Public Art Framework and Mural and 2D Art guidance.

[www.wakefield.gov.uk/culture-and-heritage/public-art](http://www.wakefield.gov.uk/culture-and-heritage/public-art)

- A short film about the programme was produced.



Credit: Unbound final event © Nicholas Singleton

# 14. The Budget

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- A fully costed budget for the programme was developed at the design stage of the programme.
- Speakers as part of the programme and mentor artists were properly paid in line with industry day rates (e.g. Artist Union England - range £216 - £387 as of June 2025)
- Project management of the programme was paid following industry day rates and project management resource was procured following an open call process to achieve a balance between quality and best value.
- Venues and refreshment costs were factored into the budget.
- Mentee artists were each given a £100 travel bursary to support their attendance at in person sessions and to meet their mentor on site within the West Yorkshire region as required.
- The programme complemented the mural art commissions which each had their own separate delivery budgets.

# 15. Mentor/Mentee Reflections

At the final UNBOUND session on 31/1/25, an evaluation workshop was held with all mentors and mentees, facilitated by Rob Young. Below is a summary of key points raised.

## What worked well?

- **Skills development** - Demystifying public art and becoming part of an artistic community as new to the area.
- **Social capital** - Have built ongoing relationships
- **The mentor role** - Experience made me appreciate the relevance of my transferable skills - there's lots that is applicable to share with others.
- **Inspiring** - Wanted to shake things up in my practice, so it's great to try something different.
- **Recognition** - To be recognised as part of the West Yorkshire creative community and develop my identity as an artist.
- **Supportive** - the Beam/YVAN team were thoughtful and personable with their approach, happy to answer questions.
- **Diversity** - (access support) follow up with chat to make sure you know you have been heard, was managed really well.



Credit: Unbound final event © Nicholas Singleton

## What could have been done differently?

- **Programme content** - Technical: A resource printed handbook would have been good to accompany the course.
- **Programme Format** - Would be great to have more time to share practice and engage in creative activities together
- **Mentoring relationships** - Instead of just 6 months the programme should have been extended for the life of the live project

## What impact has the UNBOUND programme had?

- **Confidence** - Empowered to apply for future public realm commissions
- **Multi Disciplinary** - You grow through sharing and networking, you remember all the people that help you as you grow up.
- **Career direction** - Enjoyment of research within the commission was a privilege, looking at community and heritage.

## What next?

- **Connections** - Regular network / crit sessions would be useful
- **Future Opportunities** - What about an Associates Programme?



Credit: Unbound final event © Nicholas Singleton

# 16. What happened next?

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(Ordered alphabetically by surname)

Since the end of the UNBOUND programme...

**Ruth Agbolade** has just concluded a mural at MAPA Bradford and is starting another at the new Darley Street Market, commissioned by Bradford 2025, alongside other mural painting projects planned in the city.

**Hafifa Ahmed** has been part of BD Walls learning the skills to deliver mural art and has been commissioned to deliver workshops in Sherburn-in-Elmet, leading to an outdoor festival in August.

**Holly Rowan Hesson** received an a-n Artist Bursary supporting her practice development; has published a collaborative publication featuring her #notsculpture work which will be launched later this year; is completing her AA2A Artist in Residence time at York St John University and is working on an expansive new project entitled My Life in Concrete.

**Jude Kelly** will be starting an MA Creative Practice at Leeds Arts Uni this Autumn.

**Sam Metz** has been shortlisted for the Aesthetica Emerging Prize; is selected UK artist for the 30 Year celebration at the Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo; and is recipient of Big Splash funding for a Practice based PhD at Loughborough University.

**Cat Scott** has been elected as a Fellow of the Royal Society of Sculptors, and has been working with the Sorby Environmental Fluid Dynamics Laboratory, and Leeds Creative Labs: Climate Futures programme with The Cultural Institute/Priestley Centre for Climate Futures (University of Leeds).

**Joanne Tiffany's** first curated exhibition 'Radical Connectedness' was inundated with positive feedback, she has been working towards her BA Fine Art degree show and is looking forward to being able to announce a very exciting new project very soon!

# UNBOUND

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