

**Space for artists**

*For publication*

Client: East Street Arts

DBA Design Effectiveness Awards entry

October 2019

**Thompson**  
Brand Partners



## Executive summary

East Street Arts is a creative social enterprise based in Leeds. The charitable trust was founded in 1993, by artists Jon Wakeman and Karen Watson, to facilitate artistic practice and bring art into the community and the built environment. This artist-led regeneration model is now more familiar in many major cities, but in the early 90s it was a new concept and East Street was a pioneer. It set out to provide studios for artists to work in, deliver artist-led programmes and to use art to both motivate and create urban regeneration by partnering with Local Authorities and property developers. By 2012 though, and coming up to their 20th birthday, East Street had a few growth problems.

There were two major headlines; East Street was falling short of the scale of societal impact they knew was possible, and they were also struggling to be taken seriously enough to secure the funding and support they would need to take a step up. They, and their project work, were simply not visible enough and East Street was perceived to be too small for the larger funding streams. The truth was, they were bigger than people knew and their projects were everywhere. However, they lacked clarity or purpose, appeared inconsistent and the minimal visibility of their brand was definitely holding them back.

What follows is a story of the power of a purpose-led brand. By looking deep within itself and agreeing why East Street Arts exists in the first place, the organisation has been able to re-invent itself. With a new sharp focus, it has been more discerning about what it gets involved in, guided by the beacon of their original purpose, made fresh by their brand.

This focus has had a revolutionary effect on East Street Arts. It is much more resilient and confident in what it does and what it can help achieve. It is taken much more seriously and has used this to significantly improve its hit rate in funding applications. Amazingly, it has managed **to increase annual funding income by over 370% and created 13 new jobs**, helping turn East Street into a strong sustainable player in a sector that has been under serious threat for some time.

Between 2013 and 2019, East Street **attracted an additional £4,842,178** over and above its previous funding levels, every penny of which has been used to the benefit of communities and to make cities better places to live in.

Their flagship public art programme, A City Less Grey, transformed the fabric of the city itself, introduced thousands to art in Leeds **and won the award for best use of arts, culture or sport in placemaking** at The UK Planning Awards 2018.

East Street's Art Hostel gave young people and artists visiting Leeds an affordable place to stay. **Between 2016 and 2018 it hosted 10,170 guests from 117 countries, gave lodgings to 353 artists** and was ranked **#8/33 of places to stay on TripAdvisor** - better than the DoubleTree Hilton!

Giving people opportunities to learn about art has been delivered through adult learning courses – **with learner numbers increasing by 37%** over the period.

Leeds City Council has even asked East Street to develop **an artist-led Neighbourhood Plan for one of the oldest parts of the city**. One of many examples of how East Street is providing space for artists to help improve the places we live in.

Finally, East Street and the Arts Council have also seen an amazing return on their investment in design. **The design fee of £10,250 has been repaid more than 470 times** so far, in terms of additional funding attracted.

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### Annual funding income

**↑ 370%**

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### Learner numbers

**↑ 37%**

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### Design fee repaid

**>470 times**

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### Additional funding since rebrand

**↑ £4,842,178**

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### New jobs created

**↑ 13**

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### Public art views

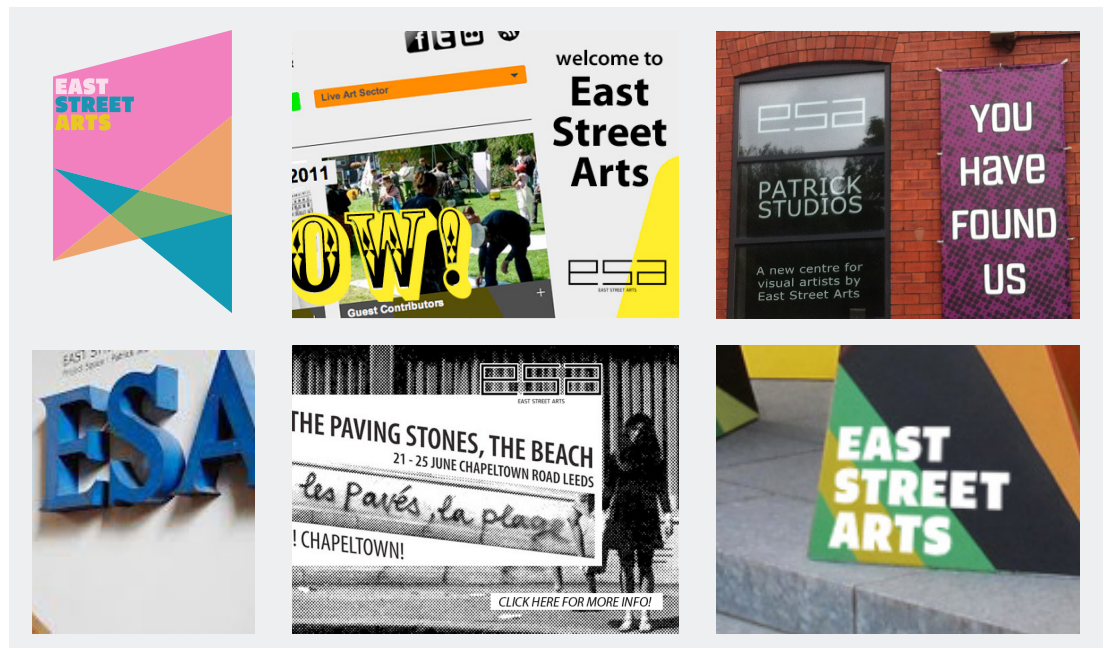
**31,000,000**

## Outline of the project brief

As practising artists, Karen and Jon struggled to find space, both to work in and for their own ceramics kiln. Their only option was to lease a large unit and sub-let 80% to other artists. Overnight East Street Arts was born.

Over the next 20 years, East Street grew and moved across the city and beyond. They diversified and eventually moved into short-term building leases in cities throughout the country, hosted international arts events and ended-up promoting music events, amongst other things. It helped them to become a major player in the UK art scene. However, a strategy of getting involved in almost anything under a banner of 'the arts' came at a cost.

This enthusiastic artistic approach was mirrored in the visual identity of the organisation. There were a number of logos and even different titles - 'East Street Arts' and 'ESA' were running concurrently. Every project, initiative, event and even building had a new name and its own look. East Street Arts was often barely visible in connection to some of the projects and they became more famous than their originator.



The founders were feeling a bit lost. They had spent 20 years working hard to promote artistic practice and intervention, but they were beginning to doubt their impact.

The providers of funding, on which the organisation relied totally, not surprisingly, didn't really know what East Street Arts did or stood for. The organisation's success rate in funding applications was falling, and there were serious concerns for the jobs of the small team they had recruited.

We were originally asked to help them try to regain and formalise their purpose. It became clear though, that regaining their mojo would involve a bit more. We would need to get to grips with turning around stakeholders' perceptions about the organisation.

Recognising this turmoil, the Arts Council awarded East Street Arts a grant as part of its Catalyst programme. This is one of a number of measures put in place to help create a more sustainable and resilient art and culture sector in the UK.

These funds enabled East Street to commission a brand agency to help. The brief was very simple – help us re-discover our purpose and reveal what makes us different. Along the way, we want to remove confusion as to what we do and help the organisation to attract more funds, grow and have more societal impact.

## Objectives

1. Provide a platform for a sustainable organisation with potential to grow.
2. Define our purpose, provide focus and have societal impact.



## **Description of the design solution - a motivating purpose**

Finding the heart and soul of the organisation started with brand/counselling sessions. This project was so much more than a visual re-brand. It required a deep questioning of the reason why East Street Arts exists and opening a window into what mattered most to its founders.

Long conversations, workshops and 1-2-1s with team members and stakeholders uncovered that East Street Arts is, and always will be, an organisation that supports artists. It has artists at its core and exists to help artists bring positive change to the way we live.

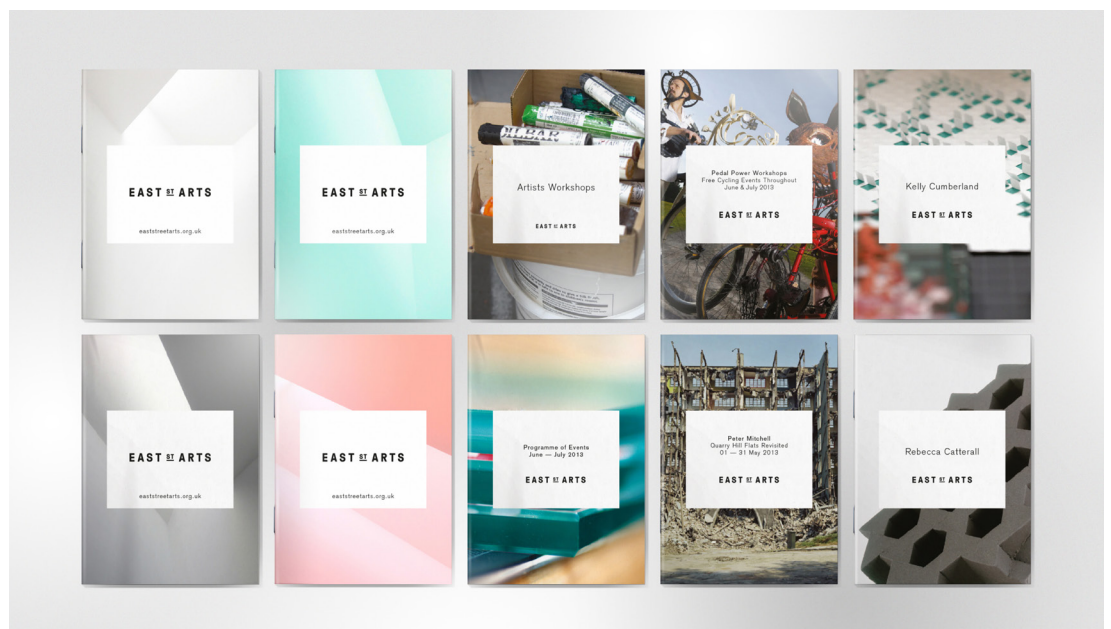
On a simple, practical level, this is still about providing studio space for artists. But space is more than physical. The mental and intellectual space and freedom required to create work of lasting social value means that a whole series of support facilities is required. Artists need someone with experience to broker public and private sector relationships, they need financial support, they need access to opportunities, they sometimes need somewhere to work and even to live. Sometimes they just need someone in their corner, to help them fight systems that prevent them from flourishing.

The East Street Arts brand purpose emerged as:

***To create space for making art, social events and learning opportunities  
to make our cities better places to live and work.***



East Street provides the structures, checks and balances, experience and advice that helps artists fulfil their potential and ultimately get more and more involved in the way we live. This was a big enough idea to get the team excited again, and with renewed vigour, the next phase of East Street Arts began...



## Space for artists

### East Street Arts



#### Key facts

East Street Arts established in 1993.

The rebrand was worked between October 2011 and March 2012.

Total funding in the year to March 2012, i.e. pre-rebrand, was £492,964.

Total funding in the year to March 2018 was £1,824,589.

The new brand was launched in April 2012.

Results are for the period from 2013 to 2019 (latest financials are for 2017/18).

The rebrand and design fee was £10,250.

## Description of the design solution - a new visual identity

We knew almost immediately that clarity and consistency were the two main imperatives. We also knew that East Street Arts had limited financial resources to commission publicity and marketing materials. Often, small design companies would help them out by doing low-fee or pro bono work in return for creative freedom. As artists, Jon and Karen were happy to grant this, but it did contribute to the overall consistency crisis. They later invested in an in-house designer, so it was important we worked with him to facilitate something consistent, without descending into being dull.



Imagery of varying quality was always available. Artists work was always good, but photography came from multiple sources. Also, East Street was often occupying empty buildings on varying timescales, so they needed an easy, cost-effective way to brand the space, sometimes only for a matter of months.

We looked at the notion of 'space' and wondered if a clear space could always be part of the identity. But, we turned this on its head – less of a space for art, like a gallery, more of an internal space – a place where freedom can be found, inhabited by the safe haven of East Street Arts. So, the art/project image/visual became the frame and the space was always in the middle. This allowed us to feature a simple, black East St. Arts logo prominently, removing the temptation to relegate it to the back.

We also created a series of images that simply explored the idea of space, so there would always be an image, even when nothing was supplied.

The strong, black typography allowed East St. Arts to have three different logo formats without loss of consistency and clarity. These were needed because of the huge variety of spaces the logo would need to occupy. It meant that, whatever the shape, there would always be something to fit, ensuring that a logo would always appear.



## Results

The results achieved since the rebrand, against the specific objectives are as follows:

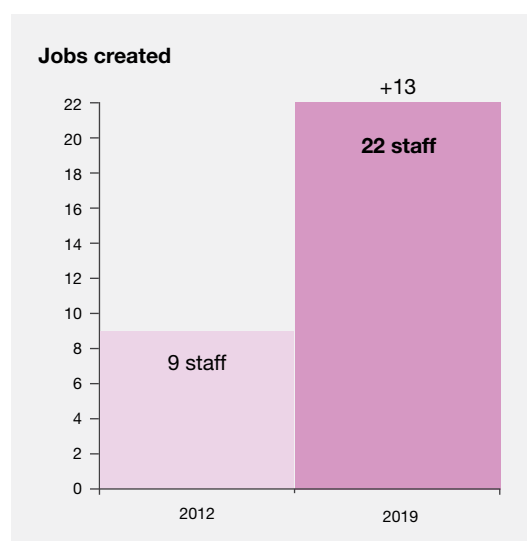
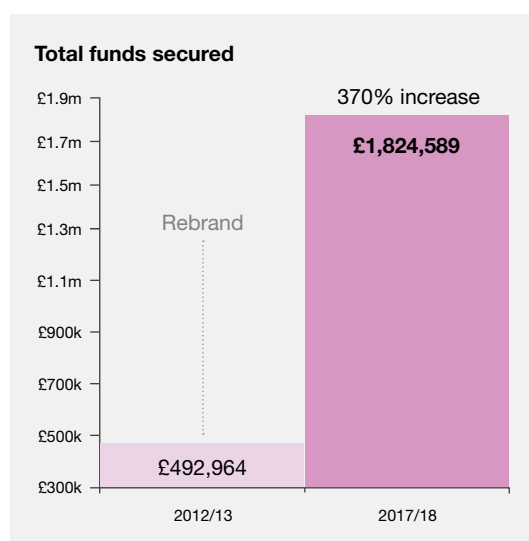
### Objective 1

#### Provide a platform for a sustainable organisation with potential to grow.

As well as being more clearly articulated, the new brand identity contributed massively to the level of trust developed with all types of funders. East Street Arts now looks the part and the increasing success of raising funds has been phenomenal.

Before the rebrand – total income was £492,964 (2012/13) and £338,561 (2010/11).

- ✓ After the rebrand – **income rose every year to £1,824,589 in 2017/18.**
- ✓ **An increase of 370%.**
- ✓ The total additional funds raised since the rebrand (i.e. over and above £492,964 pa each year for 2012/13 to 2017/18) is **£4,842,178, all of which has been spent to help artists.**



*"In the last year, East Street Arts has made an extensive impact in Leeds. Thousands of audience members have been reached through the delivery of major public realm projects such as a A City Less Grey. Leeds City Council values the extensive work that the charity delivers in the city and across all of its communities."*

**Dinah Clark**  
Programme Manager,  
Leeds City Council

- ✓ The design fee of £10,250 was repaid within days. In terms of the additional funding attracted, between 2012/13 and 2017/18, **the design fee has been repaid more than 470 times.**
- ✓ The increase in income has given East Street Arts a sustainable footing, enabling it to create a number of new jobs. Compared to a permanent team of 9 in 2012, East Street has grown to 22 in 2019. **13 new jobs.**
- ✓ The total amount spent helping artists improve communities since the rebrand has been **£7,799,962** to year end 2017/18, compared to £501,480 in 2012.

#### East Street highlights from 2018/19 alone:

- ✓ The organisation's most ambitious public art project, A City Less Grey, has changed the fabric of Leeds and brought new audiences to public art – Athena Rising by Nomad Clan was seen by **31 million passenger entries and exits** into Leeds station between April 2017 and March 2018.
- ✓ East Street is managing more than 300 studios with an estimation of 400 artists nationally. This compares to 100 artists prior to the rebrand, **an increase of 300%.**
- ✓ Secured a **PhD in collaboration with the University of Leeds**, exploring how different business models and managerial structures impact on the financial sustainability of artists spaces, as well as how they impact on local social dynamics and urban planning more generally.



## Objective 2

### Define our purpose, provide focus and have societal impact.

The definition of the new purpose and new identity has provided the organisation with a level of focus it has never had. The organisation is being taken more seriously than before, as it now looks and acts the part. As well as being considerably more successful at fundraising, East Street has completed a number of significant purpose-led programmes which have delivered huge societal impact, and this is only the start of the story. Highlights we have picked out are:

#### Art Hostel

To help fulfil its purpose of creating space, East Street developed its own Art Hostel in 2016. Leeds has a thriving independent grassroots and DIY art scene and Art Hostel contributes to the experience of visiting and staying in Leeds, encouraging visitors to access the city's artistic underground.

*Between 2016 and 2018, Art Hostel:*

- ✓ Transformed the visitor experience in Leeds, **hosting 10,170 guests from 117 countries**.
- ✓ Helped increase young visitors to Leeds (under 25) **by 16%**.
- ✓ **353 artists from 7 countries** hosted at 125 events.
- ✓ **7,649 dorm bookings** have enabled East Street to help young people, artists and musicians to travel.
- ✓ **129 volunteers from 29 countries** have helped run the hostel.
- ✓ **#8/33 places to stay on TripAdvisor**, better than the DoubleTree Hilton.

The original Art Hostel closed its doors at the end of 2018 and East Street is currently developing a brand new, fully-funded, larger-scale permanent hostel in Mabgate, Leeds. Designed and created by a new raft of artistic talent, it's set to be a fantastic spot for unique, affordable accommodation in the city.

#### A City Less Grey

In the autumn of 2016, East Street Arts began the delivery of its most ambitious public art project to date, A City Less Grey. Designed to animate the streets of Leeds, the project has sparked the interest of all kinds of people; from individual artists, universities, business owners and members of the public. It has literally changed the fabric of the city and **drawn in thousands of new advocates to art**.

The project has seen both local and national artists creating art installations and events spread over five sites across Leeds city centre. It has profiled the talent within the region and put Leeds firmly on the map as a city committed to developing a public art voice. A City Less Grey has been a pioneering example of how cross-sector working can benefit artists and contribute to the changing face of the city.

- ✓ Winner of the award for **Best use of arts, culture or sport in placemaking** at The UK Planning Awards 2018.

#### Artist-led Neighbourhood Plan for Mabgate

Recognising East Street's ability to bring an artist-led perspective to neighbourhood planning, the organisation has recently been commissioned to create a new neighbourhood plan for Mabgate, Lincoln Green and Burmantofts, one of the oldest parts of inner-city Leeds.

The plan will consider the role of artists in society, how art impacts on our schools, housing, wellbeing, and how artists can unlock communities in a different way to other approaches, making these parts of the city better places to live.

Between October 2017 and June 2019 the following activities were completed as part of the consultation phase:

- ✓ The art of development – event discussing hidden Mabgate
- ✓ Lincoln Green Great Get Together – **attended by 250**
- ✓ Children and Young people's Day – **attended by 300**
- ✓ Local business forum – seeking commitments to new forum
- ✓ Burmantofts Gala – **attended by 2,000**

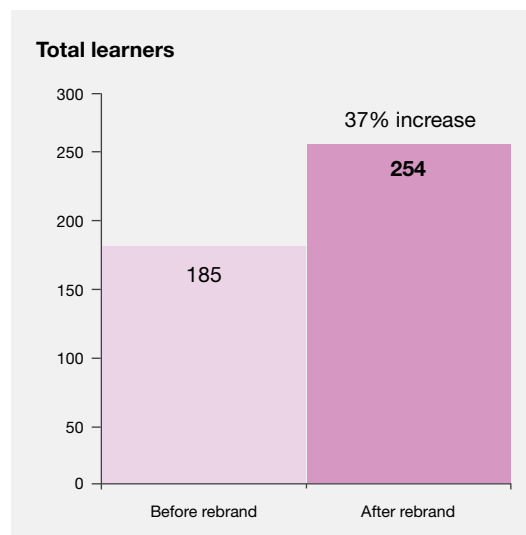
*"This project has vastly enhanced the city's ambience, showcased its personality and welcome, and has now become a best-practice example in placemaking/shaping — as well as putting Leeds on the map as home to the UK's tallest piece of street art."*

**Andrew Cooper**  
Chief Executive,  
Leeds BID

### **Adult Learning**

East Street started to run courses for adults looking to learn more about art prior to the rebrand, but they had not been very visible. The rebrand helped the organisation realise that this type of activity was central to achieving its purpose. The ability to help artists at all levels to make the most of their talent and ideas sits at the heart of what East Street does.

- ✓ **The courses help artists to build their confidence**, explore new activities and have fun while doing it.
- ✓ Prior to the rebrand, the total number of learners was 185. This increased afterwards totalling 254 in 2018/19, **an increase of 37%.**



### **Guild**

**Supporting the development of dedicated arts spaces throughout the UK** is now central to East Street's purpose, and has led to the launch of Guild. The sharing of insight is now helping make other cities better places to live.

Artist spaces face a variety of challenges and are historically self-organised, under-resourced and prone to burnout. Launched in April 2018, Guild is a four-year programme to help these spaces become more self-sufficient and viable in the long term, generating income and reaching new audiences.

- ✓ East Street is working with partners throughout the UK to pool knowledge and skills from across the sectors, working with **20 spaces and positively impacting more than 10,000 artists.**

*The first cohort of artist spaces and organisations includes:*

Abingdon Studios, Blackpool  
Bon Volks, Margate  
Bricks, Bristol  
Dyad Creative, Norwich  
Fish Factory, Penryn, Cornwall  
Navigator North, Middlesbrough  
Ort Gallery, Birmingham  
The Centre for International Women Artists, Manchester  
Two Queens, Leicester

### **Convention House**

Another purpose-led development by East Street was the launch of a new technology hub for Leeds and the city region in 2018.

- ✓ The purchase and subsequent redevelopment has been made possible thanks to **a £550,000 investment from the Leeds Tech Hub Fund** from Leeds City Council.

East Street is dedicated to **promoting Leeds as a unique global location for creative digital projects and linking tech to the city's dynamic international artistic offer.** With this in mind, Convention House will include a mix of studios, labs, co-production workspace, tech facilities and residency spaces, all used to explore the relationships between business, engineering, environment, technology and art.

### **Other recognition**

Stakeholder recognition of the role East Street now plays in Leeds City Region has been transformed by the rebrand. This has come in many ways, including:

- ✓ One of the East Street directors being **appointed to the board of Leeds City Region Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP).**
- ✓ External Relations Director — Nicola Greenan — won the Arts category of the **Sue Ryder Yorkshire Woman of Achievement Awards 2017.**



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**Impact beyond Leeds.**

The impact of East Street Arts now goes way, way beyond Leeds. As well as Guild detailed above, the team is sharing the insight and things it has learnt with arts organisations throughout the UK and Europe.

- ✓ In helping them, it is helping many other places to become better places to live.  
**From Middlesbrough to Penzance, and from Lille to Istanbul.**

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**Have there been other influencing factors?**

East Street Arts has performed very well over a long period of funding cutbacks in the arts and culture sector. This has been achieved with a new brand focus, the drive of the founders and team, and the impact the rebrand has had on the reputation of the organisation amongst funders.

The growth has been totally organic, due only to the more focused approach to fundraising, behaviours and what it does.

Since the recession of 2008, public funding of the arts has been under massive pressure. East Street's performance in attracting funding has been against a backdrop of extremely challenging funding opportunities in this sector.

Local authorities in particular have been cutting back on arts and culture spend. The Arts Council's most recent report on the subject quoted a trend for falling local authority funding of arts and culture in England, **declining from £1.42bn to £1.2bn between 2011 and 2015** (Source: Funding arts and culture in a time of austerity. Adrian Harvey. Published by Arts Council England).

The report goes on to confirm that **74% of arts organisations had been affected by public funding cuts**. Commenting on the report, Sir Nicholas Serota former Director of The Tate, speaking in April 2019 said:

*"It tells you about their commitment and determination in spite of the cuts. It also tells you if they had a bit more money they would do something rather wonderful with it."*

Since 2008, **UK government has deployed a policy of austerity** which has also had a major impact on the arts and culture sector. The only glimmer of hope is the recently released 2019 spending round for 2020-21, which includes a 4.1% increase in the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport budget for the year.

**With uncertainty around Brexit, it remains unclear if this increase will be delivered** and what real impact it will have on the sector. The Arts Council still awaits confirmation of its budget and is expecting an increase in line with inflation (Source: Museums Association News 12 September 2019).