

Talking Takes Off

Places and Dreams art bench commission

Purpose of commission: Luton Council is seeking five illustrators/visual artists to work collaboratively with children and a Creative Facilitator to conceive, design and apply artwork to star-shaped park benches in five locations in Luton. The total fee for each commission is £2000 + £150 materials budget.

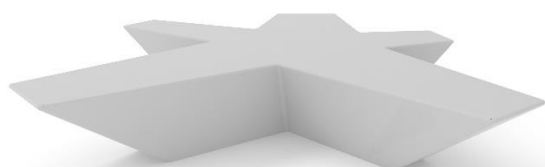
Background

Talking Takes Off is a Luton Council project funded by the Department for Education Early Outcomes Fund. Talking Takes Off focuses on narrowing the word gap for children by improving Speech, Communication and Language skills. Talking Takes Off interventions are offered for families and children across a range partner agencies including health, early years' settings and schools. This project's funds come from the original Talking Takes Off funding received from the Department for Education and is specifically designed to develop communication skills in early years children and to promote communication between children and between children and their families. It has been developed by Luton Council's Talking Takes Off team in collaboration with Flying Start and Luton 2040. The artist commissioning process is coordinated by the Cultural Partnerships Coordinator within the Luton 2040 team. For more information on Talking Takes Off please visit: <https://www.flyingstartluton.com/talkingtakesoff/>.

The current COVID-19 crisis has meant many creative children's engagement projects, ideas and investments have slowed down or stopped. We believe this is an opportunity to engage deeply with children in an innovative and engaging way and deliver colourful and uplifting pieces of street furniture that will brighten our lives as we return to socialising outdoors over the summer. Our intention is that children are able to recognise themselves and their ideas in the artworks, creating a sense of pride in them and their families; improving civic pride and community participation.

Brief

Overview: We are looking for up to five illustrators/visual artists/teams of artists who will conceive and apply designs to five park benches across Luton. The park benches are star-shaped (h x w x d): 420 x 1890 x 1700 mm). See below images and [here](#) for more information.



Marshall's Escofet small Flor bench

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Number of artists and benches: Five benches will be installed in five recreation locations in the town: Wardown Park, Stockwood Park, Runley Road Recreation area, Manor Road by the River Lea and Icknield Recreation area. We are looking to commission one artist per bench, though we may consider awarding more than one bench commission to an artist if their application is particularly strong. As the commission is to both design and apply (paint) the artwork to the benches, we will accept applications from teams of artists with complementary skills. The benches will remain in the parks for as long as the benches and artwork remain in good condition.

Process

A Creative Facilitator has been commissioned to run a series of digital workshops with groups of early years children (aged 2-7 years) which will explore the theme of 'Places and Dreams'. The children will be encouraged to share their dreams and draw the places that they will go when the pandemic is over. They will be supported to have all kinds of ideas about where they will go: it could be to the park to play with their friends, but it could also be to the moon to eat pineapples. The artists commissioned will join these digital sessions and transform the children's ideas into fanciful and high quality designs for the benches. We are particularly interested in artists who:

- can weave together the dreams of the children into one cohesive design for the benches
- can transform children's drawings into high quality illustrations that are still recognisable as the children's original idea. Recognising themselves or their drawings in the final benches will instil a sense of pride in the children and their families.

There will be three half-hour workshops with a group of children (20 children maximum) per bench, and it is expected that the artist will develop work-in-progress designs in between each workshop, so the children can be delighted and motivated by the high-quality interpretations of their ideas as the workshops progress.

Children's engagement

The project team will liaise with five early years' settings in Luton and confirm the days/times they would like the workshops to run. Note that some may prefer one workshop per week over three weeks, others may schedule more than one workshop in a week. The settings selected will be in the vicinity of the five bench locations. The settings' practitioners/teachers will be present in the sessions and the Creative Facilitator will lead the workshops.

Note that the sessions will most likely run digitally, though the children and their practitioner/teacher may join the Zoom together from one space if the children are attending the setting in person by that time. We will constantly monitor the Covid-19 situation and if restrictions and safety allow, move the workshops to live delivery if appropriate.

Design completion and application

Following the workshops, the artist will transform the children's drawings and dreams into a cohesive design for application to the benches. We ask that the designs somehow incorporate:

- a plane to represent Flying Start
- a rainbow for the NHS
- and the Talking Takes Off logo in its cloud (see footer).

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The artist will present the design to the project team for sign off. Following sign-off, the artist will liaise with the team to confirm the dates for application to the benches. Artists will be given a £150 materials budget to purchase the materials required for application. Note that due to the size and weight of the benches, the artist will be required to paint the benches in situ, so unfortunately no power will be available for application tools such as projectors for tracing. The budget proposes three days for application work, but the artist may split their time differently as required. Note that a waterproof/anti-graffiti coating will be supplied and the artist will need to apply this following completion.

Due to the height and size of the benches, artists will be required to kneel and manoeuvre themselves around the bench in order to apply the artwork. We are open to receiving applications from teams of artists which may improve accessibility.

Engagement principles

The artist should consider the following principles for public art in Luton:

1. Harnessing Momentum: projects and ideas should align with and support delivery of the strategy for the Arts, Cultural and Creative Industries in Luton.
2. Local relevance and artistic voice: ensure that the work is locally relevant and locally-delivered where possible.
3. Public engagement: public art will need to seek to engage with the community and to communicate throughout its development and delivery. A participatory approach is recommended.
4. Listen to Young Voices: creating opportunities for children and young people to contribute to the towns' living culture, built and natural environment through their involvement with making, shaping and commissioning of public art and the public realm.
5. Make it accessible: art should break down barriers between communities, cultures and places. It should be at its best, accessible both physically, intellectually and economically.
6. Grow local talent & skills: invest in producing and growing local talent to bring ambitious new public art projects to fruition and to ensure that local knowledge is sustained, with the added benefit of creating new income streams for local arts and creative organisations and initiatives.

7. We also ask that the artist considered the location of the bench in their approach.

Budget: The total fee for each commission is £2000 + £150 materials budget. This has been determined by the time we require the artist to be present in workshops and project meetings and the expected time required for designing the final artwork and the application of the designs onto the benches. Note that applicants must have the right to work in the UK and be self-employed or a registered company.

Outputs required

- Attendance at and participation in:
 - 2 hour inception meeting with the project team, creative facilitator and other artists
 - 1 hour launch event with stakeholders
 - 3 x 30 Mins Zoom 'Places and Dreams' sessions with children
 - 1 hour work-in-progress presentation and feedback meeting with project team

- Final design sign off meeting with project team
- Additional session planning meetings with the Creative Facilitator as required
- Work-in-progress illustrations delivered at Workshops #2 and #3
- Final bench design
- Final design applied to bench and waterproof/anti-graffiti coating applied
- Layout of take-home prints for participating children.

Timeline

- Applications Open: Monday 22 February 2021
- Applications Close: 11.59pm Thursday 11 March 2021
- Informal interviews: Monday 22 March/Tuesday 23 March 2021
- Inception meeting: 3pm – 5pm Wednesday 7 April 2021
- Workshops start: week commencing 16 April 2021

Note that we are in the process of confirming the dates and frequency that each setting would like workshops to take place. If selected for an interview, the project team will discuss the dates of workshops with you.

Access: If there is anything that would be a barrier to your participation please get in touch

Application process

Please email your response to this brief by **11.59pm Thursday 11 March 2021** which must include a statement of a maximum of 500 words that covers

- Why you are interested in the project
- Your relevant experience. We are particularly interested in hearing about your experience in:
 - Delivering projects outdoors such a murals or book benches
 - working with children or young people in a participatory manner to collectively realise artworks or projects (DBS is an advantage but not required)
- Examples of previous relevant work
- At least one testimonial from a client or project partner for relevant work
- Any times on Monday 22/Tuesday 23 March 2021 that you would not be available for an informal interview
- Confirm your availability throughout April – May to complete the project including attendance at the project inception meeting on Wednesday 7 April from 3pm – 7pm.

Please note that we are particularly interested in hearing from artists based in Luton and from artists currently under-represented in the creative industries, including those that are culturally or ethnically diverse, economically disadvantaged or disabled.

Please email your complete proposal documents to peoplepowerpassion@luton.gov.uk. Please ensure you write 'Places and Dreams' in the subject line.

DEADLINE: 11.59pm Thursday 11 March 2021

For further information please email the Cultural Partnerships Coordinator via peoplepowerpassion@luton.gov.uk.

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