

# Fringe Days Out: impact assessment



'We are incredibly proud of the Fringe Days Out project and the good it achieves in Edinburgh's communities, so we're delighted with the overwhelmingly positive feedback that's been captured in this independent research. The report shows that Fringe Days Out makes the Fringe accessible to local people, and that the Fringe Society takes the needs of Edinburgh residents seriously. This strand of work is extremely important to us – we know the Fringe is an amazing, world-class event, and the city's residents should experience the benefit of it happening on their doorstep.

'I'd like to thank Ruthless Research for their work on this report, and Scottish Government for funding it.'

**Tony Lankester, Chief Executive, Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society**

## Background and economic information

Fringe Days Out is the Fringe Society's flagship community engagement project. The Society works long-term with more than 30 local charities and community groups to address barriers faced by community members who wish to attend the festival. These include cost, cultural barriers, or simply thinking that 'the Fringe is not for me'. The Fringe Society works to remove these barriers by providing ticket and transport vouchers, as well as additional bespoke support where required.

- Since its inception in 2017 until 2025 (inclusive), a **total ticket budget of over £300,000** has been allocated to community groups in Edinburgh, with more than £255,000 redeemed – an estimated 20,216 tickets.
- The redemption rate of the vouchers has increased year-on-year to **over 90%** in 2025, an incredible achievement in comparison to other free ticketing schemes.
- Post-Covid, we introduced a support budget to help address additional barriers or secondary costs associated with a Fringe visits – **nearly £16,000** has been allocated to date.
- **12,834 bus tickets** have been distributed in partnership with Lothian transport to help people get to their show – many of these were family tickets, allowing more than one traveller.

In 2025 the Fringe Society commissioned an independent report to assess the development and impact of the project since it started in 2017. The report includes feedback from 109 respondents, and its findings are overwhelmingly positive. What follows are some key findings, with quotes from participants and partner organisations, followed by a copy of the report.

## The Fringe is a force for good in Edinburgh

Fringe Days Out makes the Fringe accessible to local people and takes the needs of Edinburgh residents seriously.

- The project has enabled over **20,000 visits** to the Fringe to date.
- Around **one in six respondents** (17%) were first-time Fringe-goers.
- **1 in 12 respondents** were first-time arts attendees.
- **100%** of the surveyed respondents agreed that the project removes barriers to engagement with the Fringe.
- Following their visit, **95%** of the community members felt welcome at the Fringe.

'Fringe Days Out removes most, if not all, of the barriers to marginalised communities accessing the arts.'



Sikh Sanjog  
David Monteith-Hodge

## The Fringe vision: to give anyone a stage and everyone a seat

Taking part in Fringe Days Out helps local people feel like **active participants in the festival and their city**. It increases their wellbeing, reduces isolation and builds community.

*'I felt, as a resident, I was included in the goings on in the city.'*

*'It breaks down the views that the Fringe is an inconvenient and unaffordable, as through the partnership with the Fringe the young people and families are seeing how much fun they can have and the positives it brings.'*

*'One of our members who is an 80+ wheelchair user said she loved her time at the Fringe. She said she has lived in Edinburgh her whole life and has never gone to a show. She said the experience has been "life changing" as she now feels she has the confidence to go to Fringe shows. She said she will definitely be going every year now.'*

*'We are a family from a disadvantaged area and without these vouchers we just wouldn't even think about going to the Fringe.'*

## The Fringe is a good neighbour

- Fringe Days Out gives agency to the partner organisations to engage with the Fringe in their own way, and on their own terms, to help amplify their own impact and aims.
- A case study shows how **Vintage Vibes** uses Fringe Days Out to tackle loneliness and isolation among elderly in Edinburgh:

*'It gives our [participants] that connection back into the Fringe that they might have lost. Because connection doesn't just have to be between people, it can be that feeling of being connected to something that's happening in the city. Fringe Days Out is not just about access to the arts in its narrowest sense – it's about a connection with Edinburgh experienced by people from across Edinburgh, and I think that's why it's so valuable.'*

## Building long-term relationships in Edinburgh

At first glance Fringe Days Out resembles a ticketing scheme, but underneath it is a lot more than that. The report highlights the strength of the ongoing relationships built between the Fringe Society and its partner organisations, and the ripple effects this causes over the years. Community groups have started taking part in the Fringe in other ways: groups have hosted their own Fringe events; community members have performed at the Fringe Community Stage; groups have worked with each other, independently of the Fringe Society; and a Leith youth centre has become a Fringe venue, hosting sell-out events.

- **24 of the 30+** Fringe Days Out community partners have taken part since the beginning in 2017.
- **52%** of the community partners reported that Fringe Days Out had led to them working together with Fringe Society in other ways.

*'I think it is so much more than a ticketing initiative.'*

*'The partnership with the Fringe Society has made a huge difference to the organisation... it's incredibly positive.'*

*'When we first got involved I was just like "free tickets, grand". But over time I can really see the wider value when I go to the partner meetings and see the breadth of what all of those different community organisations are doing with people across the city.'*



Gig Buddies  
David Monteith-Hodge



Ruthless Research

***Final report:***

# **Fringe Days Out impact assessment**

**October 2025**

*Submitted by:*

**Ruth Stevenson**

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

## Table of contents

Introduction .....	3
Background.....	3
Methodology.....	3
Objective 1: Fringe Society will build relationships in the Edinburgh community.....	4
Objective 2: Fringe Days Out will remove barriers to engagement with the Fringe .....	12
Objective 3: Members of the community will have a life enhancing experience with the Fringe....	20
Objective 4: Members of the community will increase their cultural engagement .....	25
Objective 5: Fringe Days Out will enable community organisations to amplify their impact.....	31
Evaluation objective: To inform the development of the programme .....	36
Concluding remarks .....	42

### **About Ruthless Research**

Ruthless Research is an Edinburgh-based independent research consultancy, through which Ruth Stevenson provides a range of qualitative and quantitative research solutions to organisations who work for the benefit of the community.

### **Contact Ruth Stevenson**

Email: [ruth@ruthlessresearch.co.uk](mailto:ruth@ruthlessresearch.co.uk)

Website: [www.ruthlessresearch.co.uk](http://www.ruthlessresearch.co.uk)

## Introduction

### Background

Fringe Days Out is a large-scale community ticketing programme run by the Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society. Launched in 2017 as part of their 70th anniversary celebrations, the scheme provides Edinburgh-based charities and community groups with free Fringe ticket vouchers and bus passes, with extra support given towards other secondary costs such as volunteer expenses, refreshments or taxis for those unable to travel by public transport.

The objectives of the Fringe Days Out programme are:

1. Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society will build relationships with organisations in the Edinburgh community
2. Fringe Days Out will remove barriers to engagement with the Fringe
3. Members of the community will have a life enhancing experience with the Fringe
4. Members of the community will increase their cultural engagement
5. Fringe Days Out will enable community organisations to amplify their impact

The Fringe Society wished to evaluate Fringe Days Out, with a view to articulating its value and identifying ways to enhance the programme and its impact.

### Methodology

Independent researcher Ruth Stevenson was commissioned to undertake an impact assessment of Fringe Days Out.

The mixed methods methodology involved:

- A short impact survey for recipients of Fringe Days Out tickets in 2025, completed by 109 community members across 13 community partners;
- A reflective impact survey completed by 33 community partners (which is 97% of the 34 current partners) immediately following the 2025 Fringe;
  - Two additional responses to this survey completed by others in the same partner organisations
- Depth interviews conducted with six individuals, to collect anonymised evaluative reflections and create five attributed case studies;
- Participant observation of four 2025 Fringe events related to Fringe Days Out;
- Collation of 138 historic quotes and anecdotes from past Fringe Days Out reports, put into a 'database of quotes and anecdotes' and briefly analysed;
- Analysis of ticketing data;
- Analysis of community partner participation and postcode data.

Findings are summarised in the report that follows.

Please note that all verbatim quotes used in this report were collected in 2025 via this independent research process.

This is an abridged version of the report, shortened for external publishing.

## Objective 1: Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society will build relationships in the Edinburgh community

The partnership has been so positive. (Partner)

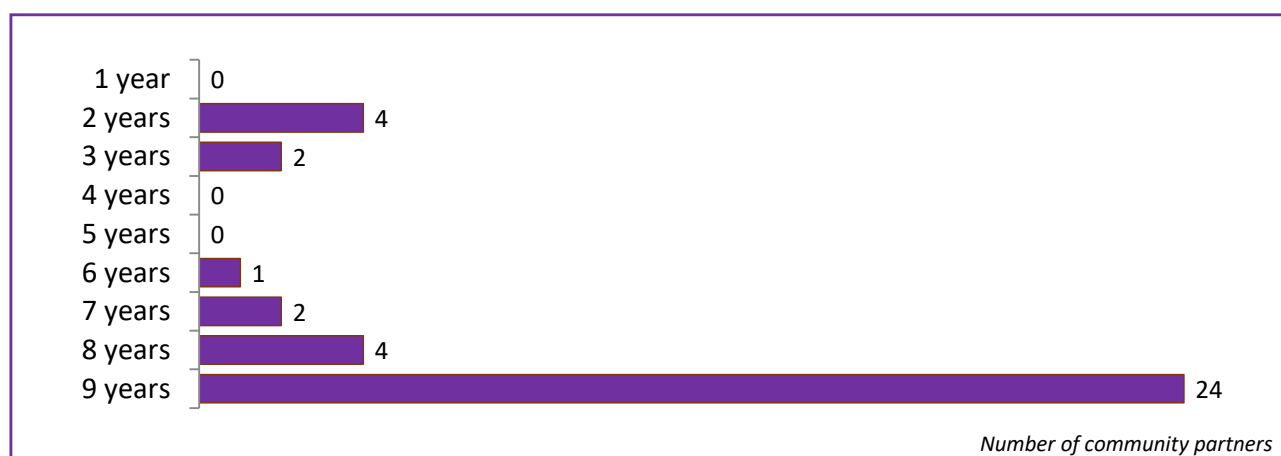
### Community organisations engaged with

The Fringe Society currently engages with 34 Fringe Days Out community partners:

- Artlink Edinburgh & Lothians
- Branch Out Together
- Canongate Youth
- Capability Scotland
- Citadel Youth Centre
- The Cyrenians
- Dads Rock
- Edinburgh Cares
- Edinburgh City Youth Cafe (6VT)
- Edinburgh and Lothians Greenspace Trust
- FetLor Youth Club
- Gig Buddies
- Granton Youth Centre
- Intercultural Youth Scotland
- LGBT Youth Scotland
- Lyra
- Multi-Cultural Family Base
- Merchiston ward / Royal Edinburgh Hospital
- North Edinburgh Arts
- Number 6 (Autism Initiatives)
- Re-Act: Refugee Action Scotland
- Re-engage
- SCOREscotland
- Sikh Sanjog
- SPACE Broomhouse Hub
- Stepping Stones North Edinburgh
- Strange Town Theatre Company
- The Ripple Project
- Valley Park Community Centre
- Vintage Vibes
- WHALE Arts
- The Welcoming Association
- With Kids
- Youth Theatre Arts Scotland

In addition, the following organisations were community partners in the past: Out of the Blue Drill Hall (2017-2023), Pilmeny Youth Centre (2017-2022) and YoungScot (2017-2023).

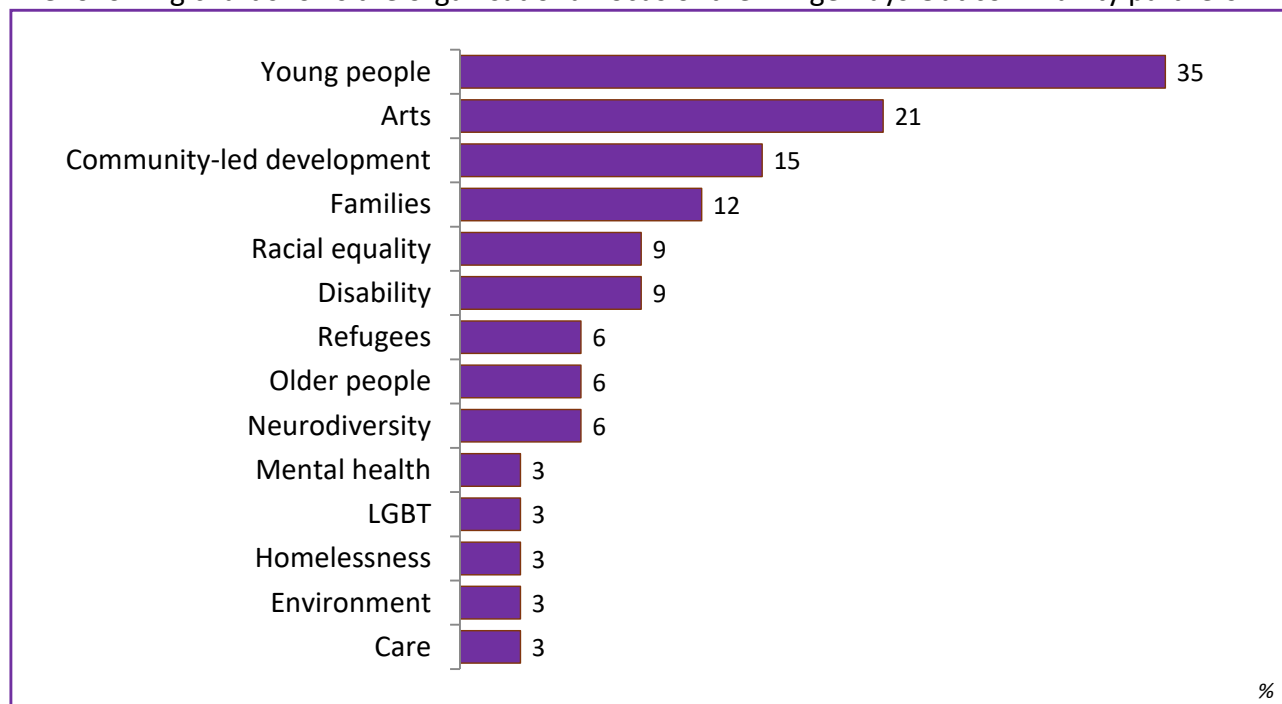
The following chart shows the length of relationships that the community partners have had with Fringe Days Out:



24 of the community partners (71%) have been involved with Fringe Days Out since the project's inception in 2017.

## Focus of community partners

The following chart shows the organisational focus of the Fringe Days Out community partners:



Multiple areas of focus were represented within the cohort of community partners, with some overlap. The greatest proportion of community partners focused on working with young people (35% of the partners), followed by the arts (21%) and community development (15%) and families (12%). Other areas of focus were represented in under 10% of the community partners, adding to the variety within the cohort.

## Distribution of community organisations across Edinburgh

A postcode analysis was undertaken, mapping the postcode of each community partner against the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD). Whilst this analysis is acknowledged to be indicative rather than definitive – being based on the community partner’s HQ rather than the beneficiaries themselves – it broadly illustrates the geographic areas serviced by these organisations.

The map overleaf shows the postcode location of each community partner overlaid onto the SIMD map of Edinburgh, as a visual representation of this distribution.

12 of the current community partners (39%) were located in SIMD deciles 1 and 2, indicating that they work within the 20% most deprived areas of Scotland. These were:

- Canongate Youth
- Granton Youth Centre
- Lyra
- Multi-Cultural Family Base
- North Edinburgh Arts
- SCOREscotland
- SPACE Broomhouse Hub
- Stepping Stones North Edinburgh
- The Ripple Project
- Valley Park Community Centre
- WHALE Arts
- With Kids

The following map shows the postcode location of each community partner overlaid onto the SIMD map of Edinburgh. The most deprived areas are shown in red on the map.



## Strength of relationships

We asked the community partners to tell us the extent to which they had built a strong relationship with the Fringe Society:



Almost all (94%) of the community partners agreed that they had built a strong relationship with the Fringe Society, with more than half (58%) agreeing strongly. As one community partner described:

“The partnership with the Fringe Society has made a huge difference to the organisation and the partnership is incredibly positive.”

Many community partners valued the support that they had received:

“The Fringe team are brilliant and always so patient and efficient.”

“We definitely feel like we can ask them for support if needed!”

Several community partners also reflected that the Fringe Society had welcomed dialogue and feedback, and acted on this over the years:

“They've really tried to listen to what people said, that's been reflected in the changes.”

“The Fringe have always been really supportive in adapting to our needs.”

Community partners also noted that they had appreciated the chance to attend the Fringe Days Out wash-up meetings which are arranged to reflect on Fringe Days Out each year:

“The Fringe do a decent a really decent job of connecting people with other community groups across the city. I see what people have done and I think that's really beneficial.”

“When we first got involved I was just like ‘free tickets, grand’. But over time I can really see the wider value when I go to the partner meetings and see the breadth of what all of those different community organisations are doing with people across the city.”

As well as reflecting on Fringe Days Out these meetings facilitate networking, and 9% of the community partners told us that they were now working with other organisations that they met through Fringe Days Out.

## Ripples around the Fringe in 2025

52% of the community partners told us that Fringe Days Out had led to them working together with Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society in other ways. The strong relationships built between the Fringe Society and the Fringe Days Out community partners has sparked a number of other initiatives, leading to further impact in the Edinburgh community. Some of these ripples around the Fringe in 2025 are summarised in this section.

### 1. Broomhouse Street Party

Date:	7 <sup>th</sup> August 2025
Location:	Space @ the Broomhouse Hub



The annual Broomhouse Street Party brought music, dance, free food, and fun to 1,650 attendees in Southwest Edinburgh. Organised by Fringe Days Out partner Space @ the Broomhouse Hub, the event provided access to 23 local charities, politicians, and other third-sector groups who shared information about local help available those facing various challenges, from social care to cost-of-living. The Fringe Society has supported the event for four years and has worked closely with the community to identify local needs.

This year – for the second year running – the Fringe Society set up a mobile stage at the Broomhouse Street Party and the Fringe team spent time consulting with local people about what sort of things they would like to see on the stage with programming planned in response to that. This year the stage hosted variety of performers including Jonathan Goh, The Land of Beat, the Insane Magic show, Kate Young, Lai Yee, the BIG Project Children’s Choir and the Ukrainian Children’s Choir. The mobile stage enabled local families to have an authentic Fringe experience in their own neighbourhood.

### 2. Fringe Community Stage

Date:	21 <sup>st</sup> and 22 <sup>nd</sup> August 2025
Location:	High Street by the Mercat Cross

The Fringe Society hosted two days of poetry, music and dance performances from community groups and schools including Fringe Days Out partners Intercultural Youth Scotland, Sikh Sanjog, Granton Youth, Canongate Youth and Multicultural Family Base.

The Fringe Community stage gives members of the community the experience of performing live at the Fringe without the administrative or financial burdens of securing a venue and selling tickets. The acts were well supported on a busy sunny Thursday and Friday by passers by, friends and family, and members of their own community groups.



### 3. Punchline on Leith

Date:	6 <sup>th</sup> August 2025
Location:	Citadel Youth Centre



Fringe Days Out community partner Citadel Youth Centre became a Fringe venue for the first time in 2025, bringing the Fringe to the heart of Leith. It is unlikely that Citadel would be a venue this year had the Fringe Society not worked with them since 2017 building up trust and making the Fringe feel relevant.

Citadel hosted Punchline on Leith, a high-energy feel-good night of stand-up with an exciting line up of six comedians: Amy Matthews, Stevie Martin, Tom Mayhew, Johnny White Really-Really, Liam Withnail and headlined by Nish Kumar. A great number of prizes were raffled off on the night to an enthusiastic audience, including exclusive artwork from Joe Lycett and Phill Jupitus. The event brought the Fringe into the Leith community with money raised helping to fund the Citadel's essential work with young people and families in Leith.

### 4. Fringe: Made in Edinburgh

Date:	11 <sup>th</sup> August 2025
Location:	Scottish Storytelling Centre

The Fringe Society chaired a live discussion about the relationship between Edinburgh and the Fringe, featuring a panel of local voices including representatives of Citadel Youth Centre (a Fringe Days Out partner), Scottish Storytelling Centre and Athens of the North.



The key message of the event was that the Fringe is for locals and that the Fringe Society is their partner in this. The event was attended by more than 50 individuals, including members of the public, performers, journalists and representatives of community groups.



## Space @ The Broomhouse Hub: a strong relationship built between the Fringe and a community organisation

Space @ The Broomhouse Hub supports local people in and around Broomhouse, Parkhead and Sighthill offering opportunities for those disadvantaged by poverty or other limiting factors, counselling and befriending, community food initiatives, social groups for isolated older people, and a range of groups designed to support mental health and wellbeing.

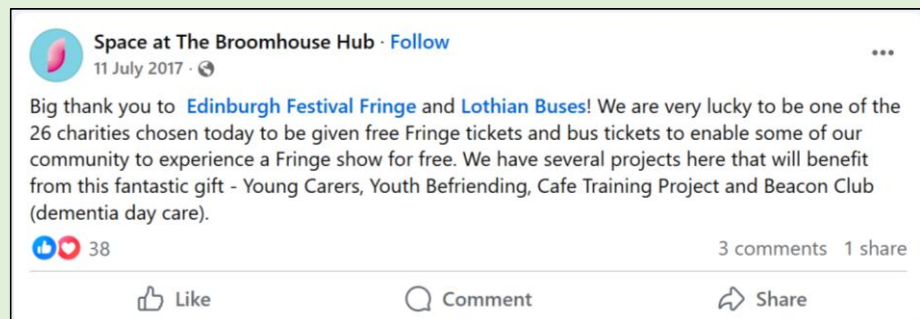
Scott Troup (previously Project Worker at Space @ The Broomhouse Hub) told us:

*“The Fringe has been reaching out to Edinburgh communities for many years, so our relationship with the Fringe goes a way back.*

*The first year of Fringe Days Out was quite rushed! Three days before the festival they told us they’d got these vouchers and asked if we could use them. Well I’m the kind of person that likes a curveball and*

*would never say no so we put it to our families and our staff and we turned it around quite quickly. Our families and young people needed a lot of support so we were a bit unsure how it would go but you know what it worked. We had three weeks of really nice fun from going to see circus, to comedian acts, to seeing shows that were dementia-friendly.*

*The year after was much more organised. We went to meetings as early as May for planning before August came around. And it built up from there! We kept in touch and Fringe Days Out just grew arms and legs. The monetary value of our vouchers became more and more. We were reaching out to lots of people, not just in our group but across the south west of Edinburgh.*



*Everyone who has taken part thinks it's amazing and can't wait til the next time. They love being part of the buzz in the town. They've been to see lots of shows and many of our families would never have had a chance to experience that otherwise. They'd thought the festivals were really expensive, that they couldn't afford to go, that transport would be an issue. Fringe Days Out took care of all of that.”*

Neil Hay (Chief Executive at Space @ The Broomhouse Hub) told us:

*"The Broomhouse Street Party is something that's very unique to our community. It happens once a year and is very popular. It really embodies a lot of our values, respectful, inclusive and creative. As well as a great day out for families, the Street Party offers much more, for example lots of information from all the other third sector stallholders on healthy eating, energy use, where to get advice and support on a wide range of common issues. Instead of hoping people find this information on their own we bring the information to them so it's much easier. Since our early days the Broomhouse Street Party has grown significantly, attracting almost 2,000 local residents each year with the same number of free meals dispensed, drinks given out and ice lollies consumed. Food is provided by Space and other local partners. This year was the first time the local mosque was involved having recently opened. This alongside the other third sector organisations gives the event its true community feel.*



*Since last year we have had a Fringe stage at the Street Party bringing Fringe performers to Broomhouse, and the Fringe Society has a stall there too. Having this stall lets people know that they would be entitled to free tickets and also allows them to choose and book at the same time.*



*We had always been really keen to take the Fringe to the community and now having this on our doorstep in Broomhouse is absolutely brilliant for our community. It's not that we don't want to encourage people to leave their communities and go into town to see the Fringe because that still happens but it means everyone has the chance to experience the Fringe. That's much more inclusive which supports the aims of the Fringe too.*

*The team at the Fringe Society have been amazing, the relationship is brilliant. They are really encouraging and always at the end of the phone. They've helped us with booking, they've helped us with travel, they've helped us with food. These days we gather information from our families about how we can improve things to make that experience more supportive and we take that along to the Fringe Days Out 'wash up' meeting where all the charities who took part come along. We know that the Fringe wants to listen not just to us, but to the members of our community who are experiencing Fringe Days Out. Whatever we've told them, they've responded every time."*

## Objective 2: Fringe Days Out will remove barriers to engagement with the Fringe

FDO removes most, if not all, of the barriers to marginalised communities accessing the arts. (Partner)

The removal of barriers to Fringe attendance is a key impact of the Fringe Days Out programme.

Through our partner survey we learned that 100% of the community partners felt that Fringe Days Out has removed barriers to attending the Fringe for members of their community, and 82% of partners felt that Fringe Days Out has ensured people feel supported when attending the Fringe. In addition 50 out of 138 entries (36%) into the database of quotes and anecdotes related to the removal of barriers, demonstrating that this has been a positive impact across the years.

### How delivery methods remove barriers to engagement

The Fringe Society provides community partners with an agreed budget to spend on Fringe tickets, and these tickets are used by their community members. In some cases the community partner will organise group outings for their community members, and in other cases community members will make independent bookings. Some community partners offer both options to their community members. The benefits of each option are outlined below:

Group outings arranged by community partner:

- Community partners take care of the admin and arrangements;
- Shows are pre-selected as being of likely interest to the community members, minimising overwhelm and maximising potential for enjoyment;
- Community partners arrange a meeting time and place, which is reassuring and ensures no-one misses the show;
- Community partners take the lead in navigating Fringe systems and processes;
- Community partners can provide the bespoke support that their community members need;
- Attending in a group offers moral support and boosts confidence;
- A good opportunity for community members to socialise together;
- A good opportunity for community partner to informally touch base with their community members;
- Activity may be advertised as part of the community partner's broader programme.

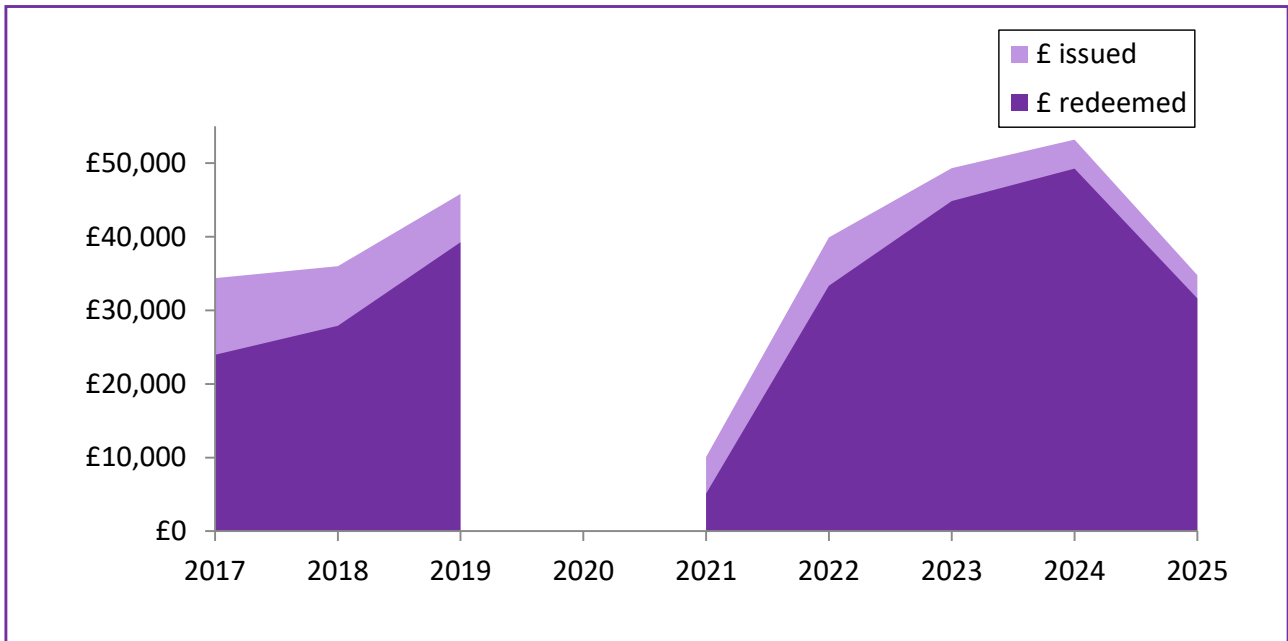
Independent bookings supported by community partner:

- Sometimes preferred by more confident Fringe-goers;
- Specific tastes in shows can be catered to;
- A good way to arrange a memorable family outing;
- A good way to re-visit shows enjoyed in previous years;
- May be the next step after enjoying a group outing.

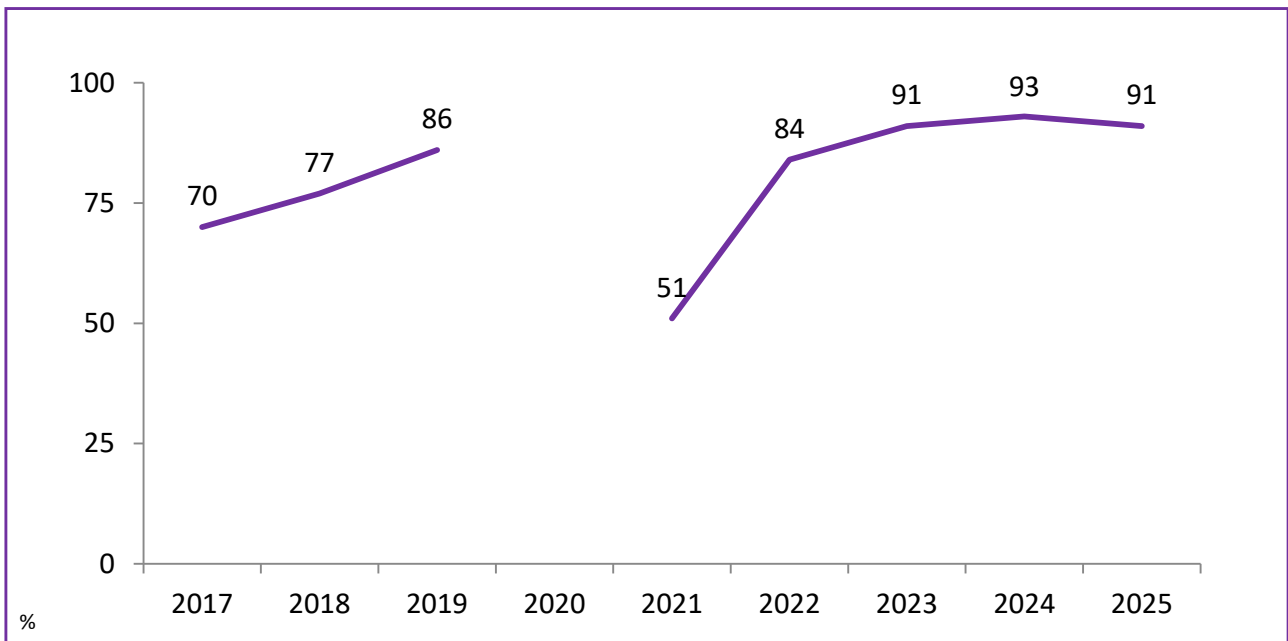
In both cases the financial barrier to Fringe attendance is removed by providing free tickets, and a sliding scale of support is provided to community members based on either individual need or community partner capacity.

## Number of tickets utilised

Since the inception of Fringe Days Out in 2017 a total ticket budget of £303,471.55 has been allocated to community groups in Edinburgh, and £255,291.95 has been redeemed which is an estimated 20,216 tickets. The following chart shows budget and redemptions by year:

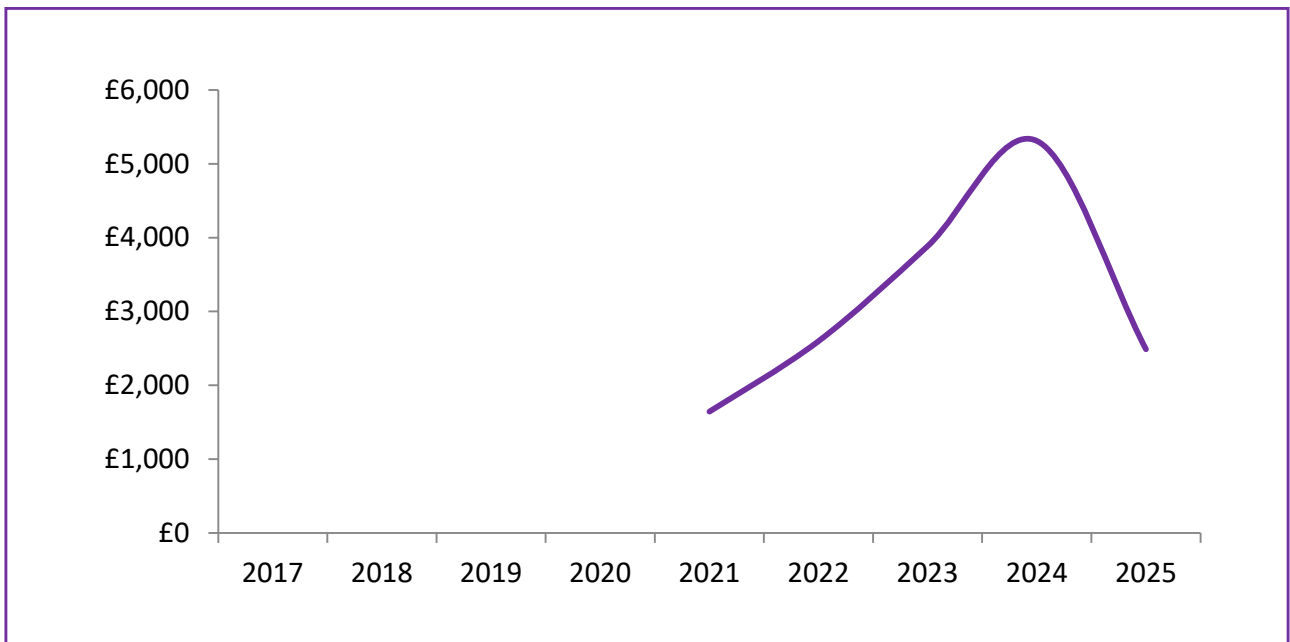


The budget increased steadily between the break for Covid in 2020 and 2024, but was lower again in 2025. The vast majority of the budget has been redeemed each year. The percentage of budget redeemed is shown in the chart below:



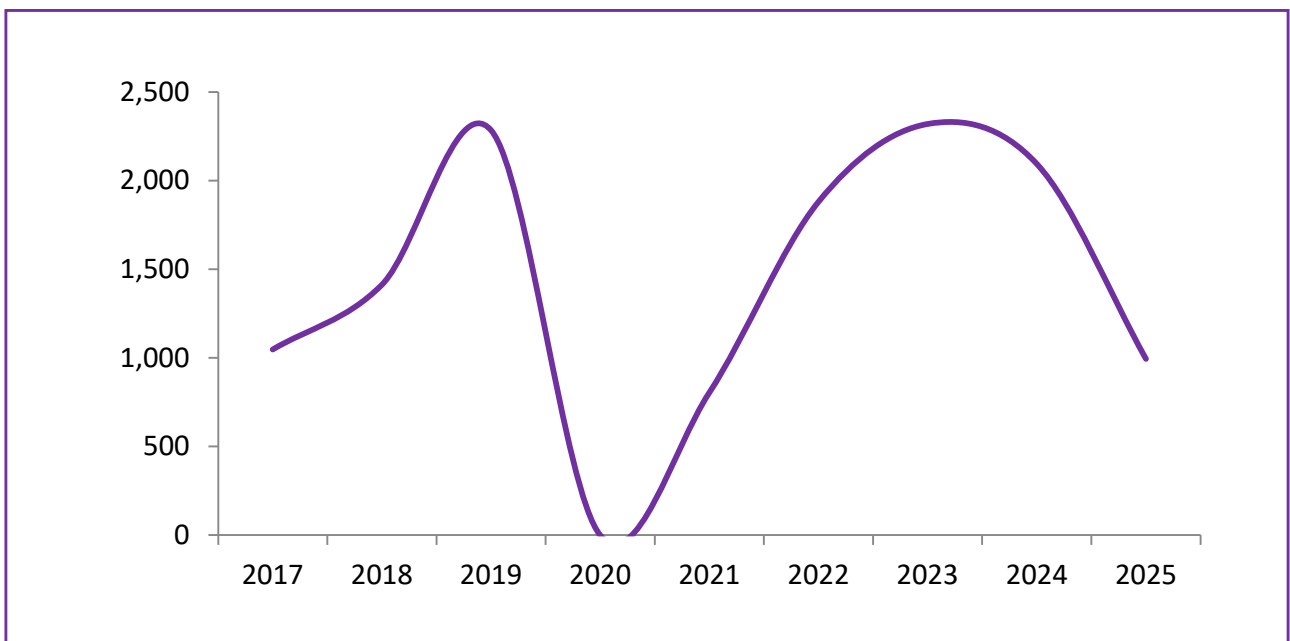
Over the years, levels of redemption have risen to more than 90%, with a high of 93% in 2024. This indicates that the majority of the budget has been utilised by the community partners and their community members.

The Fringe Days Out support budget was proposed at the 2019 wash-up meeting as a way to help address additional barriers or secondary costs associated with a Fringe visit and was introduced in 2021 post-Covid. The allocated support budget rose from £1,646 in 2021 to a high point of £5,310 in 2024:



Utilisation of the support budget was in the range 90-95%.

In addition to this, funded bus tickets were distributed since 2017 as follows:

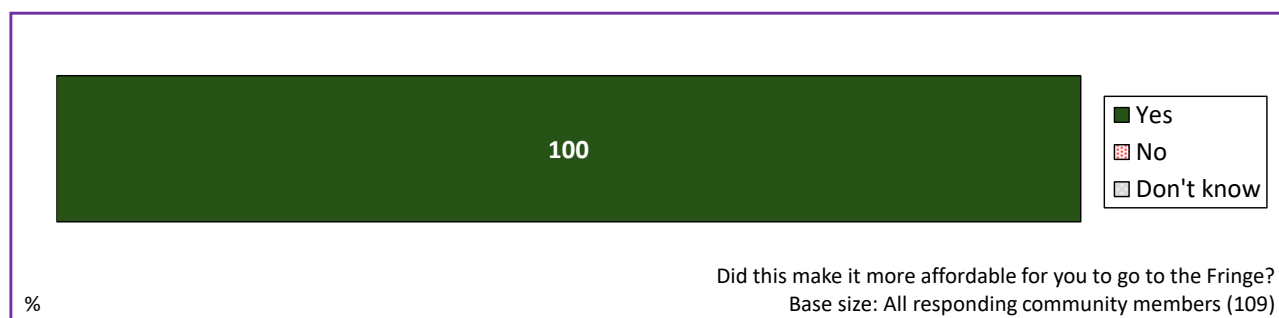


The greatest number of funded bus tickets distributed was 2,319 in 2023.

## Removing financial barriers

I feel very fortunate that I get the chance to experience such a big festival without worrying about costs, as everything is so expensive these days. This makes me feel included. (Community member)

We asked the community members to tell us whether Fringe Days Out made it more affordable for them to go to the Fringe:



All of the community members (100%) said that 'yes', Fringe Days Out made it more affordable for them to go to the Fringe. Community members commented that the free tickets were "a great help" and "made a huge difference" to their ability to attend the Fringe.

This was validated via our partner survey, as 100% of the community partners also felt that Fringe Days Out had made attending the Fringe more affordable for their community members.

Beyond the obvious benefit of reducing costs, we found that utilising free tickets can minimise perceived risks that can prevent community members from booking including:

- Worries that money would be wasted if they were unable to attend on day (i.e. due to illness, fluctuating conditions, anxiety, childcare problems, transport problems)
- Worries that money would be wasted if they selected a show that they didn't enjoy.

Some of the community partners described the benefits of removing these perceived risks:

"The lack of cost attached means families are willing to go see something more out of their comfort zone."

"They get to try things that they might not otherwise try. Last year one of my colleagues picked a show which was a punk rock musical and some of the VIPs loved it! One of the ladies said to me 'maybe we just need to try different things, maybe we don't always need to go for what seems safe'."

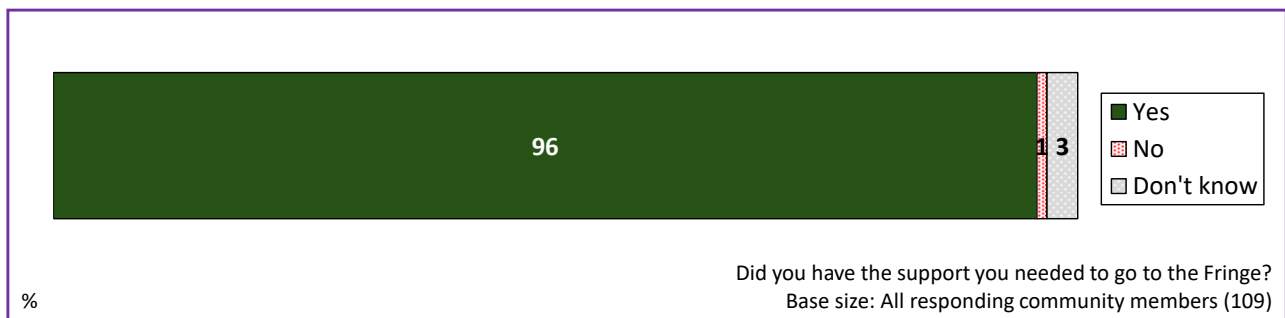
"They have been particularly beneficial for children who are neurodivergent, as families can attend performances at the Fringe without the added pressure of financial loss if their child is unable to remain for the full experience."

Linked to this, 94% of the community partners felt that Fringe Days Out had made it easy for their community members to try something new.

## Supporting accessibility needs

**They were so helpful before and after the event and so welcoming on the day. (Community member)**

We asked the community members to tell us whether they had the support they needed to go to the Fringe:



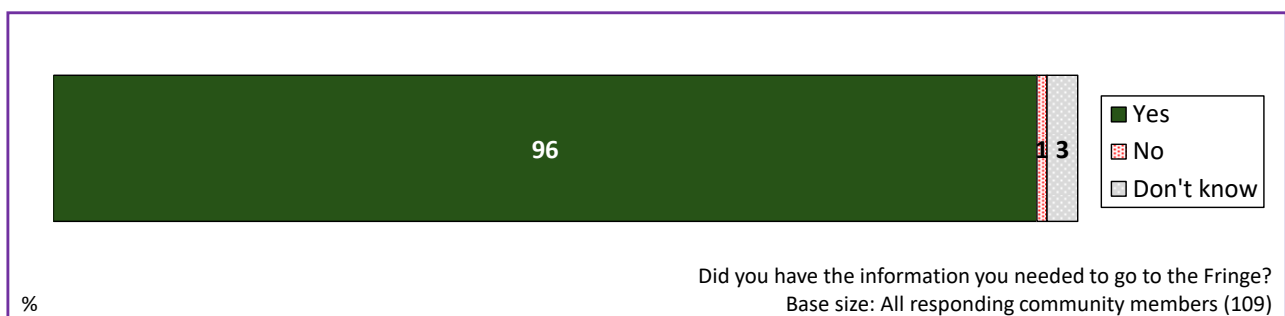
Almost all of the community members (96%) said that 'yes', they had the support they needed to go to the Fringe. Relatively lower, around two thirds of the community partners (64%) felt that Fringe Days Out has ensured people's access requirements were addressed when attending the Fringe. For the remaining third, it may be that:

- They were aware that some access requirements were not met;
- Their community members did not have any specific access requirements;
- Community partners did not provide / were unable to provide access support;
- Community partners attributed access support to themselves rather than Fringe Days Out.

## Being informed about the Fringe

**They don't necessarily know about the Fringe. (Partner)**

We asked the community members to tell us whether they had the information that they needed to go to the Fringe:

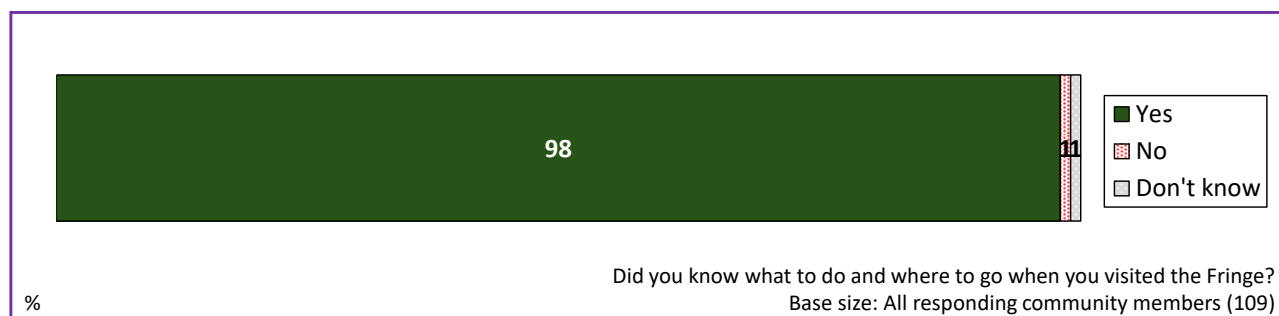


Almost all of the community members (96%) said that 'yes', they had the information that they needed to go to the Fringe. Again relatively lower, 64% of the community partners felt that Fringe Days Out had provided information about the Fringe – perhaps for similar reasons as suggested above.

## Navigating Fringe systems and spaces

The Pleasance was very busy and it felt overwhelming at times especially with so many different locations for the shows. I don't think I would have managed it without the help of the staff who were there to support me. (Community member)

We asked the community members to tell us whether they knew what to do and where to go when they visited the Fringe:



Almost all of the community members (98%) said that 'yes', they knew what to do and where to go when they visited the Fringe.

Again relatively lower, 51% of the community partners felt that Fringe Days Out had helped people navigate Fringe systems and spaces – perhaps for similar reasons as suggested previously. That said, many of the community partners described the role that Fringe Days Out has played in helping their community members to navigate Fringe systems and spaces:

“We usually see a similar story play out with a lot of our clients. They aren't that aware of the Fringe or if they are, they don't think it's for them. They wouldn't know where to start with looking for/booking a show and would struggle to navigate the busy town centre to find often 'pop up' venues, when they are not familiar with the city centre. The cost of tickets and food would make it unachievable. Then they come on a trip with us, funded by the Fringe Days Out and have a great day.”

“A person in our community was struggling to work out how to buy a ticket for a show. These vouchers meant that we could book it for them and take away the stress. They really enjoyed the show and was very grateful.”

“Every year we have people coming along who have never been to the Fringe before, and who are quite anxious about attending, or even being in town during August. So often, this leads to a more positive attitude about the Fringe, and a confidence that they can navigate Edinburgh in August.”

“The Edinburgh Fringe can be an incredibly intimidating festival to navigate and take part in. The involvement and connection we have to the Fringe Society and festival via Fringe Days Out gives our project members an ownership and personal connection to the festival and to their community at a time where the city can often be overwhelming.”



## Gig Buddies: a community organisation who has worked with Fringe Days Out to remove barriers

Gig Buddies supports people with learning disabilities and autistic people to live the lives they choose. Gig Buddies matches people with volunteers who share their interests, so they can go to gigs, evening events, or simply hang out - as equals and as friends.

Sam Maggs (Gig Buddies with Thera Trust Project Manager) told us:

*“At Gig Buddies we facilitate opportunities for people to meet up, meet new people, and develop their confidence at social events, whether that's a gig, festival, or a pub. Fringe Days Out enables us to do more of that throughout August.*

*The Fringe Days Out free tickets take the financial pressure off and solve one issue, but the community of people that we work with have a very broad set of barriers. Just because someone's got a free ticket to something doesn't mean they can or will be*

*confident or able to go to that event. So there's a lot of work that goes on behind the scenes from Gig Buddies to enable the impact to happen. We are the people who know how to achieve that impact, as we regularly do that outside of August, let alone very intensely during August.*

*One of the big barriers to access that many people in the Gig Buddies community face is struggling to find out what is happening in their area. They might not be confident with technology, so when presented with the Fringe website they might not actually get much information out of that. Equally when presented with the Fringe book they can feel overwhelmed. So we create a Gig Buddies Festivals guide, offering tickets to a selected set of events that we will be at as a group. All of the shows in our guide are free to our members, and we select them based on speaking to our*



*members about what they enjoy. We give people a deadline to let us know their choices and the fairest way we've come up with is allocating tickets through a lottery draw. As a group, we very rarely see the same show twice. I strongly feel that Gig Buddies is about introducing people to new opportunities and we do find that people who give things a go one year will do more the next year. We then make Easy Read meet-up guides for every show, and we make sure people know where they need to be and at what time. We meet up an hour before the show so that we get more time to chat to each other, and that also means if you're late to the meet-up you're not late to the show itself. We pick meet-up places that are easily accessible on public transport and have plenty of space around them. If I told people we're going to meet at the Pleasance it'd just be chaos! A favourite for us is outside the National Museum because it's a large open space and people know where it is.*



### August: Edinburgh Festivals

As always, we will be back at the Edinburgh Fringe and International Festivals. Expect to see group events for some world class comedy, theatre, and the hottest gigs in town!

*We are all about facilitating opportunities for people to expand their social networks and we find that happens so much in August. If you come along you will see familiar faces and you will see new faces. Having that safety in numbers around you, in a group that you're confident with, can make attending more possible. Knowing you're with your friends, knowing you've got that support, knowing you've got people to look out for you. We find that truly results in real impact and people coming along to more stuff. We're also fully aware of the access provisions that people are entitled to and we advocate for those. Queue jumps, for example. Fringe shows can be very overwhelming, so you want to get the seats that you feel comfortable having and you want to be with the people you were with.*



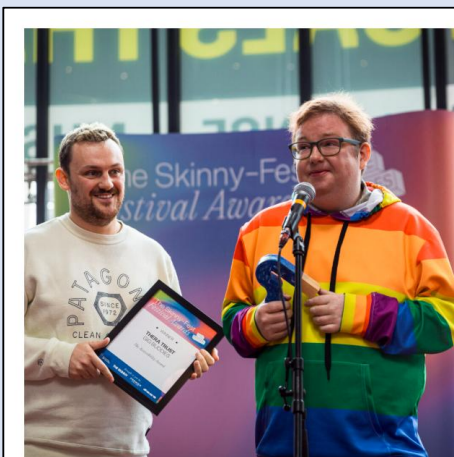
*The major wins for me are when you hear about people just getting up to stuff and enjoying themselves independently. Last year a group of ten Gig Buddies members independently accessed a show. Someone called me up yesterday and told me he'd booked two tickets for him and his mum to see the Ladyboys of Bangkok.*

*Fringe Days Out also gives our members a sense of ownership in their community. A lot of the time access barriers and needing support can mean people feel disconnected from the place they live in. Fringe Days Out means that our members are part of this thing that's on their doorstep."*

Joseph Cox (Gig Buddies member and Access Coach) told us:

*"If other people can have a good time, then people with a disability can have a good time as well. I want to be independent. I want to be part of the Fringe. It's busy in the festival, but I like that. I love being in the heart of Edinburgh I think it's brilliant.*

*Sometimes people that come to Gig Buddies like myself need a bit more help and guidance, so we go together. We go to shows and we sometimes meet up in a pub and have something to eat or have a drink. There's always stress happening at the Fringe when they are running shows so being*



Sam Maggs and Joseph Cox accept the Edinburgh Festival Award for Accessibility.  
Photo Credit: © Eoin Carey

*with Gig Buddies is good because then you know everyone understands you. They make sure you get a queue skip and sit at the front. It's really good, I love it. I have a laugh, it makes me really happy. We even did a day called 'Fringing 9 to 5' where we did lots of shows and then clubbing in the evening. 9am to 5am! I was a little bit merry and I bounced in a bouncy castle. It was really amazing, a brilliant day. I think that just shows what we can do, and we did it well. If Gig Buddies didn't exist, these things wouldn't be possible for me. Gig Buddies has completely changed my life.*

*Last year we won an award from the Skinny and Fest magazine for accessibility. When we won the award I just cried with happiness, it was a proud moment being recognised for our work."*

### Objective 3: Members of the community will have a life enhancing experience with the Fringe

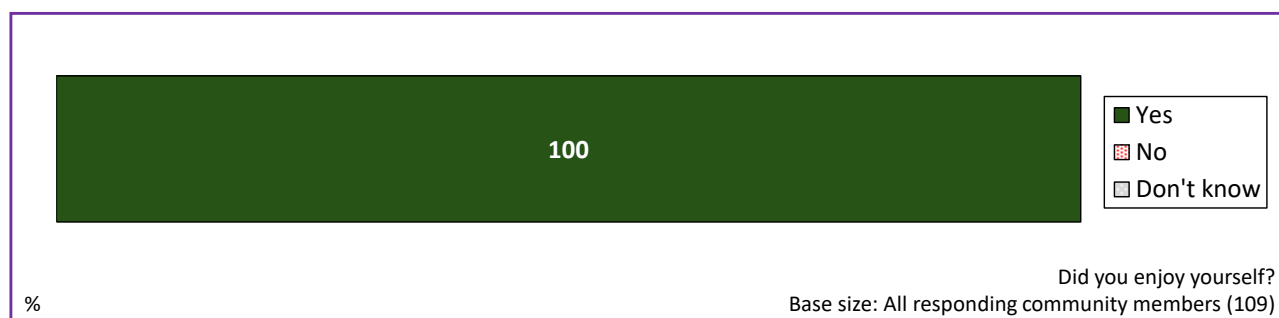
Without the financial help and support of the vouchers they wouldn't experience the enjoyment and diversity of the Fringe. (Partner)

Providing members of the community with a life enhancing experience is a key impact of the Fringe Days Out programme. 83 out of 138 entries (60%) into the database of quotes and anecdotes related to life enhancing experiences, demonstrating that this has been a positive impact across the years.

#### An enjoyable experience

One of the best days of my life! (Community member)

We asked the community members to tell us whether they enjoyed themselves at the Fringe:



All of the community members (100%) said that 'yes', they enjoyed themselves at the Fringe. This was validated via our partner survey, as 100% of the community partners also reported that members of their community talked about enjoying themselves at the Fringe.

As many of the community partners described:

"More than one parent has gotten in touch to say that the free trips via Fringe Days Out have made their child's summer so much better than it otherwise would have been."

"It gives everyone so much joy to share this experience together."

"We took 20 young people to the silent disco where they had the best time."

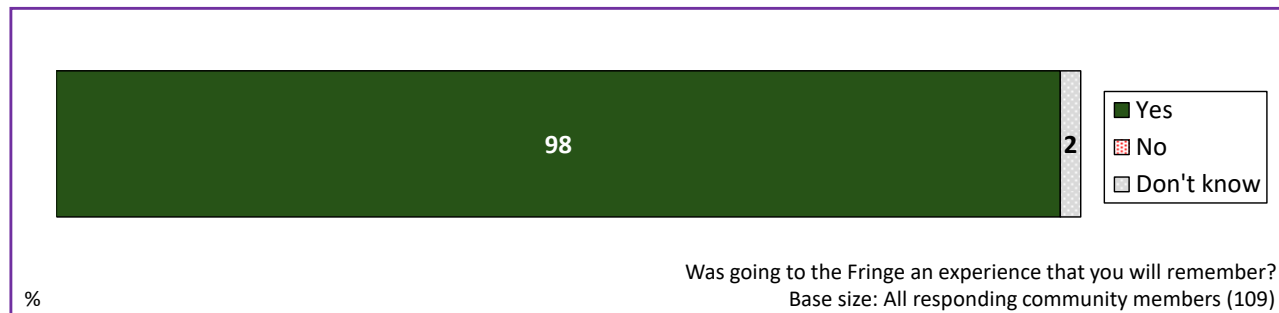
"Young people experiencing poverty and homelessness have been able to attend shows with their friends, enjoyed the local culture and arts, and have some fun experiences that are usually out of their reach."

"Fringe Days Out has allowed us to give tickets to refugee families so they can have a lovely, fun day out with their children."

## A memorable experience

**Great experience! Will remember it forever. (Community member)**

We asked the community members to tell us whether going to the Fringe was an experience that they would remember:



Almost all of the community members (98%) said that ‘yes’, going to the Fringe was an experience that they would remember. This was validated via our partner survey, as 88% of the community partners also reported that members of their community remembered their experience at the Fringe, long after it happened. As two of the community partners told us:

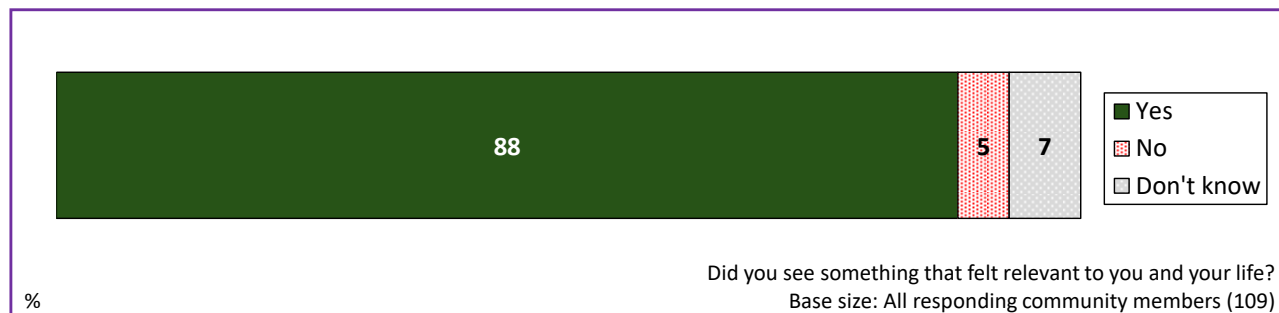
“Fringe Days Out helps our families make awesome memories together.”

“They have memories they will treasure for forever.”

## Exposure to a relevant cultural experience

**I went to see A Drag Is Born and it was the best show! It hit home for me as it empathises LGBT rights. (Community member)**

We asked the community members to tell us whether they saw something that felt relevant to them and their life:

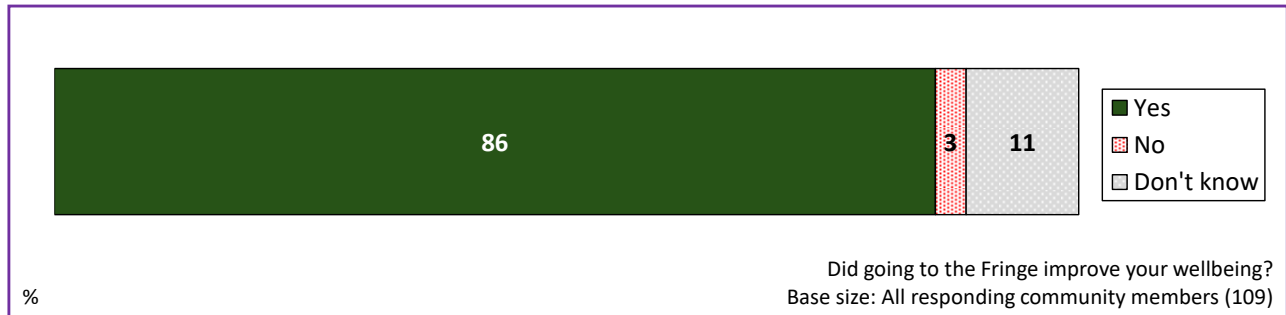


The majority of the community members (88%) said that ‘yes’, they saw something that felt relevant to them and their life. 42% of the community partners also recalled that members of their community talked about Fringe experiences feeling relevant to their own lives.

## Enhanced wellbeing

I laughed more than I had in a long time! It was just what I needed. (Community member)

We asked the community members to tell us whether going to the Fringe improved their wellbeing:



Most of the community members (86%) said that ‘yes’, going to the Fringe improved their wellbeing. A very similar 85% of the community partners also agreed that the wellbeing of members of their community improved as a result of their Fringe Days Out experience. As some of the community partners described:

“It positively influences people's wellbeing and sense of belonging.”

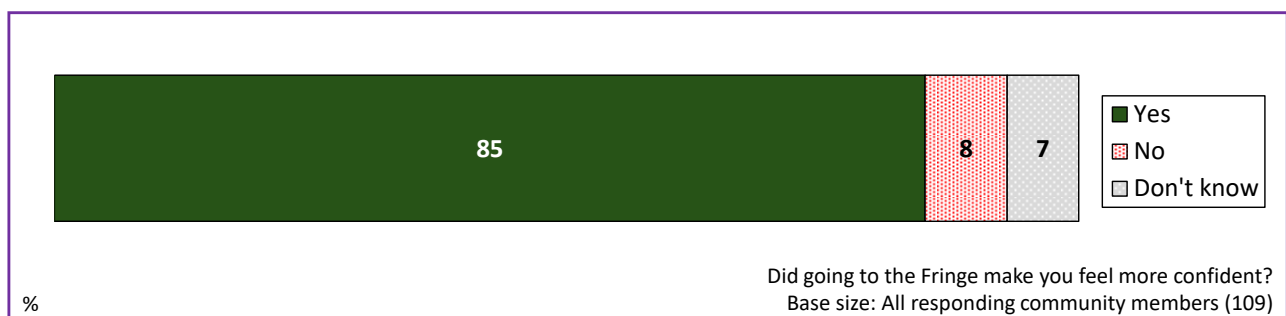
“They have reduced their anxiety over large crowds.”

“The positive impact on their mental health is long lasting.”

## Enhanced confidence

I'm just not one of those people that like to go out every day but the help and encouragement gave me a bit of a boost. (Community member)

We asked the community members to tell us whether going to the Fringe made them feel more confident:



Most of the community members (85%) said that ‘yes’, going to the Fringe made them feel more confident.

91% of the community partners also agreed that members of their community gained confidence as a result of their Fringe Days Out experience. As two of the community partners noted:

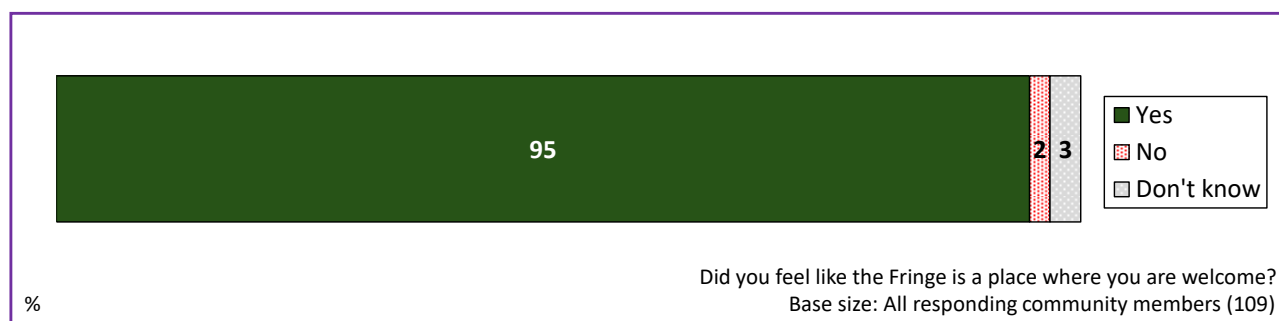
“It makes them more confident in themselves, more likely to be open to new experiences.”

“For many of our young people, this was their first time attending the Fringe, and the excitement and confidence it gave them was clear.”

## Feeling part of the Fringe

**Felt as a resident I was included in the goings on in the city. (Community member)**

We asked the community members to tell us whether they felt like the Fringe is a place where they are welcome:



Almost all of the community members (95%) said that ‘yes’, they felt like the Fringe is a place where they are welcome. 94% of the community partners also agreed that Fringe Days Out helped their community to feel part of the Fringe. Many of the community partners commented on this:

“It has helped people feel that the Fringe is something for them, not just others.”

“For several of our young people the chance to experience the atmosphere of the Fringe was inspiring. They talked about how exciting it was to be part of something so big and creative happening in their own city, and it gave them a sense of pride and connection to the community.”

“It allows refugee families to access the Fringe and feel part of the Festival in August

“It meant autistic people who would otherwise not attend the Fringe, have felt part of it.”

“It has also helped people in our area engage with the Fringe who would usually avoid the Fringe as they felt it was not accessible for people in our community.”

“It breaks down the views that the Fringe is an inconvenient and unaffordable as through the partnership with the Fringe the young people and families are seeing how much fun they can have and the positives it brings.”

## Caroline: a member of the community who now feels part of the Fringe

Caroline (a Citadel community member) told us:

*“Back when I was younger there was the Fringe Festival and there was the Tattoo and I’d be seeing all the floats and everything going by at the beginning of the Festival. But we’d always say that was for the tourists. It was always on my doorstep but I just never had the money to do things like that. Well I moved away then when I came back to Edinburgh I was homeless, I was walking about in the middle of town and I’d be seeing the street performers because I was out there every day. Later when I lived on the Royal Mile I used to hear the performers and I’d be like ‘just shut up, I’ve got the baby here, just be quiet’. So I do get the frustrations why local people just stay away from town in August.*

*Things changed when my community centre – the Citadel – took us to a show. The play we chose was called Ne’er The Twain – storytelling about Leith before it became part of Edinburgh – and it was the furthest venue out there in a church hall. That first show was emotional, it triggered me a bit and brought everything up. But it also did something inside me, a spark. I thought ‘ohh this is actually pretty cool’. I just loved it, I really did. I was just buzzing.*

*So then I got really into it, I thought ‘right, I’m gonna go for all the shows’.*

*These Fringe shows can be like £15, £17 per ticket, and that’s a lot of money plus a lot of the times you’re up there you buy lunch and stuff as well. So the money adds up, and a day out at the Fringe would be a weekend away for us sort of thing, it’s hard to justify it. But I was offered a few free tickets with Fringe Days Out and I used them wisely, then there was a couple of shows that I paid for myself for me and my husband to see just because I wanted to go and see them. Last year we did about eight shows because now I’ve got the bug, I wanted to see other things. I loved the 360 Allstars, that was absolutely amazing. I mean the talent that the people have got is unreal. Then there was the Trash Test Dummies with their venue out in the field. They had everybody doing hula hoops and it was just so relaxed, no hustle and bustle. Then me and my son went up to the community stage and after it my son wanted to see a comedy so I just thought being up there, let’s go for it. My Facebook memories are amazing! I’m someone that suffers really bad from PTSD so to do these things made me feel really good, really confident in myself.*

*It’s been a bit different this year because I’ve moved house in August, but now I’m settled in I’ll be able to just go out and enjoy the Fringe. I’ve set aside a week to basically go and do shows. I’ve been asked if I would choose a show for my community group to go to, which is a very difficult one because everybody’s got different tastes, but it’s decided we’re going to go to the Showstoppers. And I’ve been asking my sister what she’s going to see this year and she’s going to come down to the house we’ll catch up with it.*

*I’d got the idea in my head that the Fringe is for tourists but then when you get there you realise it’s for anybody.”*



## Objective 4: Members of the community will increase their cultural engagement

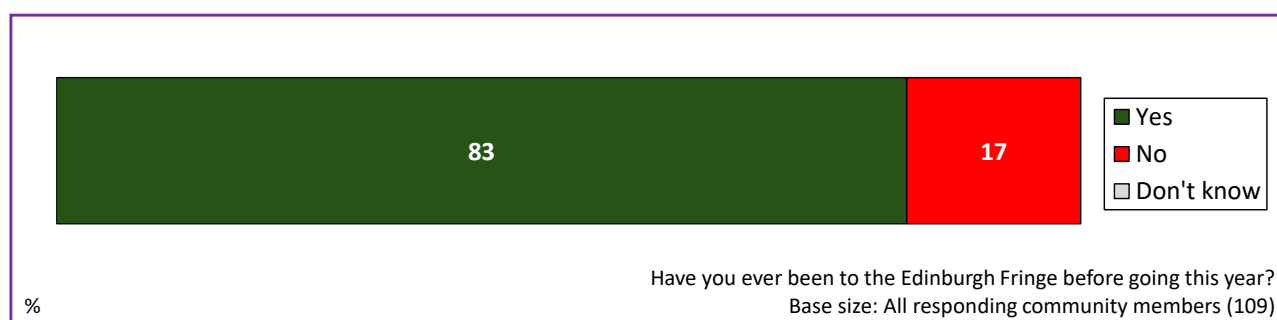
It gives families access to cultural experiences they would otherwise miss. (Partner)

63 out of 138 entries (46%) into the database of quotes and anecdotes related to increasing cultural engagement, demonstrating that this has been a positive impact across the years.

### First time attendance

This is my first time. Thank you. (Community member)

We asked the community members to tell us whether they had been to the Edinburgh Fringe before going this year:



17% of the responding community members (around one in six) were first time Fringe attenders.

Some of the community members highlighted that this was their first time:

“I was able to secure tickets to take my family to a show for the first time ever.”

“Cool first Fringe experience for our son.”

Some of the community partners described individual community members who had been first time attenders with Fringe Days Out:

“One of our members who is an 80+ wheelchair user said she loved her time at the Fringe. She said she has lived in Edinburgh her whole life and has never gone to a show. She said the experience has been 'life changing' as she now feels she has the confidence to go to Fringe shows. She said she will definitely be going every year now.”

“I work with an Edinburgh resident who had never been to the Fringe till last year, with us, as she felt confident to do so as part of the group. This year she has attended shows on her own and this would never have happened without having attended with our group.”

Community partners also described demographics within their community members who were particularly likely to be first time Fringe attenders:

“Many of the young people for a range of reasons haven't accessed the Fringe in the past. This has allowed us to offer new opportunities.”

“For new refugee families / asylum seekers / unaccompanied minors, this might be their first opportunity to see what the Fringe is about.”

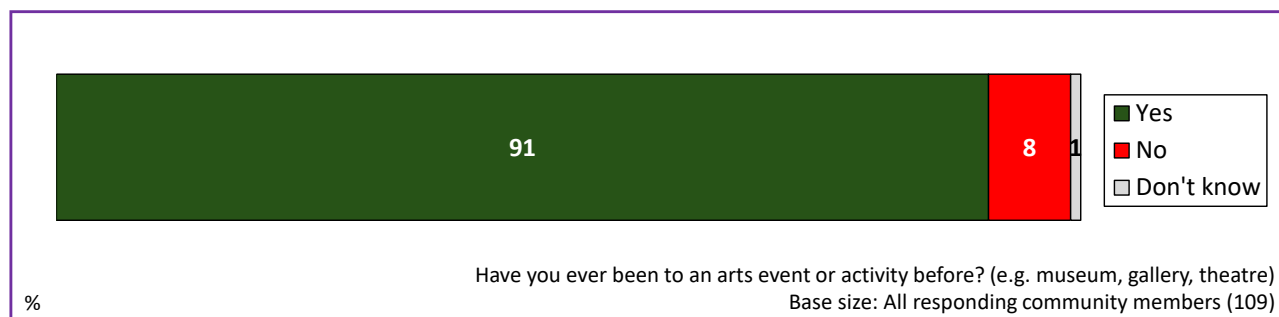
“As a particularly vulnerable group aged between 16-30 experiencing or at risk of homelessness, cultural spaces like the Fringe are often entirely inaccessible. The Fringe Days Out programme opens entire worlds that would otherwise be unavailable.”

Furthermore, community partners emphasised that some of their community members may not have been able to access the arts more generally before:

“We were able to attend multiple live music, comedy, and theatre events and for many of our users these were all first time experiences.”

“Young people have seen theatre and musicals for the first time in their lives.”

We asked the community members to tell us whether they had been to an arts event or activity before:



8% of the responding community members (around one in twelve) were first time arts attenders.

For this reason, Fringe Days Out was appreciated by the community partners as being an opportunity for first time arts attenders to engage with the arts:

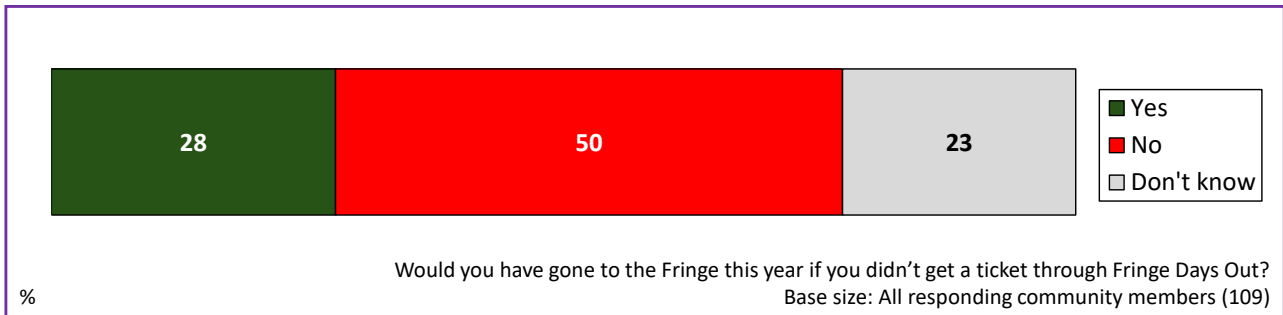
“Fringe Days Out provides young people them with the opportunity to participate and engage with arts and artists.”

“It makes a huge difference by removing financial and accessibility barriers that often prevent our community from experiencing the arts.”

## Fringe attendance when wouldn't have attended otherwise

I am currently unemployed so I would not have been able to go without a complementary ticket. (Community member)

We asked the community members to tell us whether they would have gone to the Fringe this year if they had not been provided with a ticket through Fringe Days Out:



Around three quarters of the ticket recipients were unlikely to have attended without Fringe Days Out. Half of the community members (50%) told us that 'no' they would not have gone to the Fringe if they hadn't been provided with a ticket through Fringe Days Out, and a further 23% said that they didn't know.

Some of the community members highlighted that they would not have been able to attend the Fringe without Fringe Days Out:

"Great opportunity that I wouldn't have been able to afford otherwise."

"We are a family from a disadvantaged area and without these vouchers we just wouldn't even think about going to the Fringe."

"To make a day out for the family costs a lot and we have to rely on places like [community partner] to give us free tickets."

"Thank you so much for the vouchers we were able to go and see two shows my girls and I had an amazing time together. Without the vouchers we would not have gone to see anything!"

"I wouldn't have been able to pay for the tickets myself."

## Aysha: a member of the community for whom Fringe Days Out has increased their engagement with the Fringe

Aysha (a Sikh Sanjog community member) told us:

*"I know the Fringe brings in a lot of tourists but normally I wouldn't really go out my way to go, I would try and stay away even though I've been born and bred in Edinburgh. It's too busy. Prior to this year I've been to the Fringe once or twice, but I'm a mum and I work full time and I've got so many other things going on and I've only got a certain amount of time.*

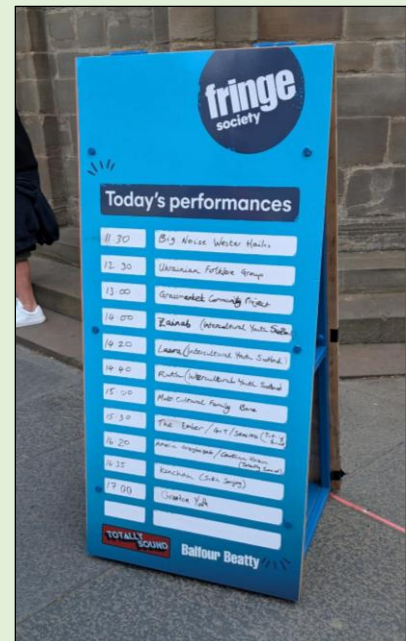
*This year I went to a show for the younger mums and younger ladies from Sikh Sanjog and the tickets were funded by Sikh Sanjog from the vouchers they get from Fringe Days Out.*

*Previously I've never had the Fringe catalogue, but I was able to get a Fringe catalogue from Sikh Sanjog because they got given several of them by the Fringe Society. I actually found that easier going through the catalogue than doing it online because you could see the pictures and read what the show was about. A lot of the things that we were interested in were South Asian so we were really able to relate to it. For me that was quite a massive thing to actually see our own community was taking part in the Fringe. It was easier to find the South Asian performers by using the catalogue, I think if I didn't have a catalogue I wouldn't have been able to find them.*

*I picked four shows out of the catalogue and then I put it out to the group to ask them which one they would prefer to go to, then we did a vote. Twelve of us ended up going to watch Love me like a Chai Tea Latte at the Roxy Boxy. Coming together with a group of women was a really good evening. We even got to meet Sanjay who'd done the show and he's just a normal person who's trying to share a story and share his passion, so that was interesting to know. Having a set plan makes such a difference when you're busy. Someone's organised it, booked the tickets, got a date, got a time. It makes it a lot easier for people. A lot of the ladies that came would never have gone to the Fringe if I hadn't done that. We don't really get out much because we're too busy so going in a group together gives you that confidence, just a bit of moral support.*

*Towards the end of the Fringe Sikh Sanjog had arranged for a dancer to come for the Community Stage. She had a half hour slot where she'd done her dance, and then she also got people up from the crowd to take part in some of the moves. That was really great. I was able to take my eight-year-old daughter. She's actually never been to the Fringe before and if it hadn't been for that Community Stage she probably wouldn't have gone this year because I tend to not take my little ones up town in August as its too busy. She absolutely loved it because there were so many street performers and she got to take pictures with some of them. She was like 'oh mum, this is so cool'.*

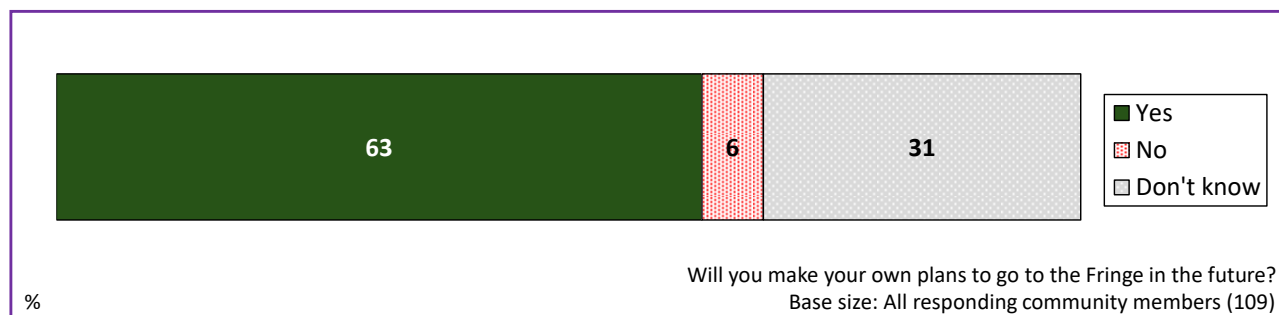
*I'm hoping to see a few more shows next year, now I know how to navigate the catalogue and touch wood I've got like a group of ladies that I can go with. I think next year it will be a lot easier for me."*



## Future Fringe attendance

It was amazing. Had such a lovely time and I would go again. (Community member)

We asked the community members to tell us whether they will make their own plans to go to the Fringe in the future:



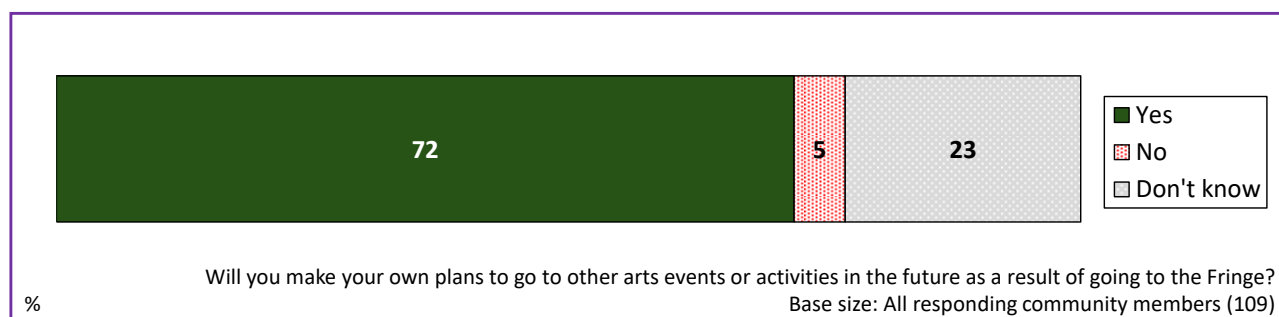
Almost two thirds of the community members (63%) told us that 'yes' they will make their own plans to go to the Fringe in the future, and a further 31% said that they didn't know. Only 6% said that 'no' they would not make their own plans to go to the Fringe again. Of those community members that had never been to the Fringe before, almost half (47%) told us that 'yes' they will make their own plans to go to the Fringe in the future, with the remaining 53% said that they didn't know. None said 'no'.

Reflecting on their past Fringe Days Out experiences, 58% of the community partners recalled that members of their community had independently attended other Fringe activities as a result of Fringe Days Out.

## Future arts attendance

It opened up the possibility of attending other events throughout the year, such as ceilidhs or arts exhibitions. (Community partner)

We also asked the community members to tell us whether they will make their own plans to go to other arts events or activities in the future as a result of going to the Fringe:



72% of the community members told us that 'yes' they will make their own plans to go to arts events or activities in the future, and a further 23% said that they didn't know.

Reflecting on their past Fringe Days Out experiences, 24% of the community partners recalled that members of their community had independently attended other arts or cultural activities as a result of Fringe Days Out.

One community partner felt that Fringe Days Out contributed to their group’s creative ambitions:

“It inspires our groups about what kind of shows they want to make.”

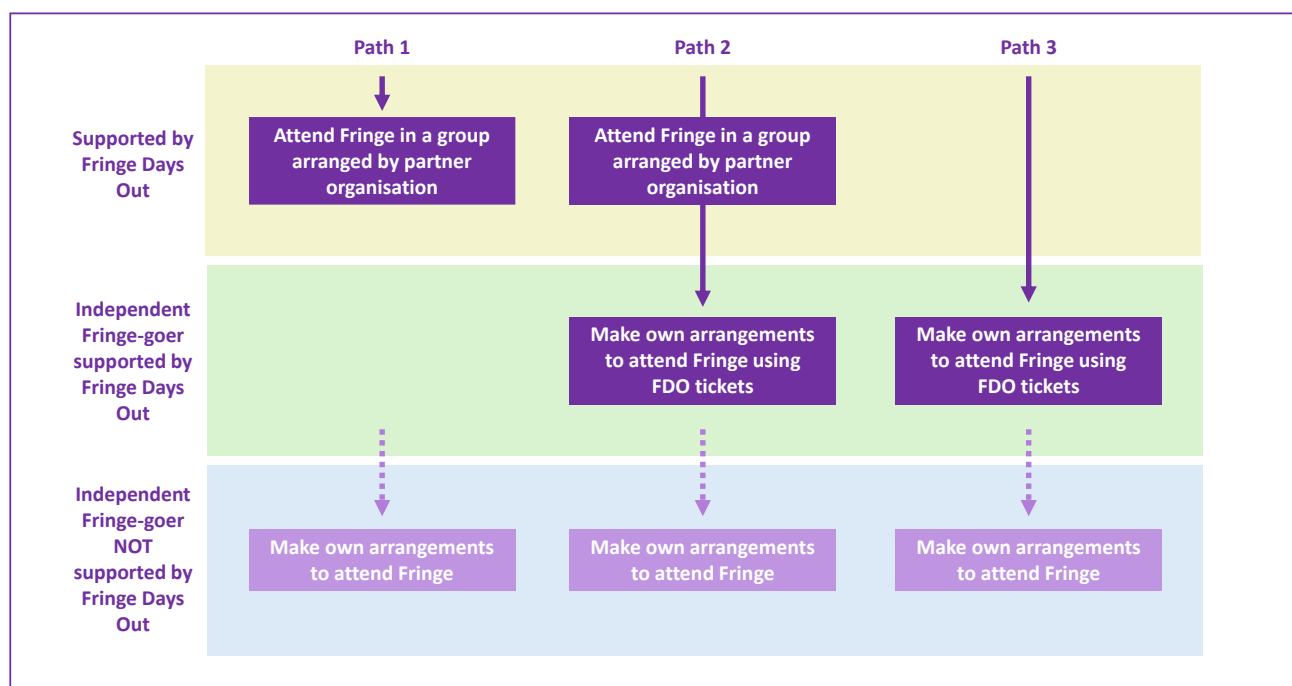
Another community partner described forming a theatre group as a result of Fringe Days Out:

“We now run a theatre group. I'm not sure that we would have had quite the internal appetite unless we had a much more intense version of doing things during the Fringe.”

### Understanding independent Fringe attendance

**They sometimes come over several years before they feel confident to attend on their own. After this, they feel confident to use the vouchers to attend independently. (Community partner)**

The way that the community partners perceive ‘independent Fringe-going’ is notably not necessarily aligned with the Fringe’s definition, as this ‘independent Fringe-going’ may still be supported by Fringe Days Out. For many of the community partners independent Fringe attendance was considered a goal and an achievement for their community members to build up to. Several community partners described their process of introducing their community members to the Fringe via closely supported group attendance, after which those individuals might or might not attend the Fringe independently using Fringe Days Out tickets and some support around planning and booking. As financial barriers to attendance are so prevalent it is absolutely not a given that community members could move beyond this to attending the Fringe without free tickets from Fringe Days Out, although some might.



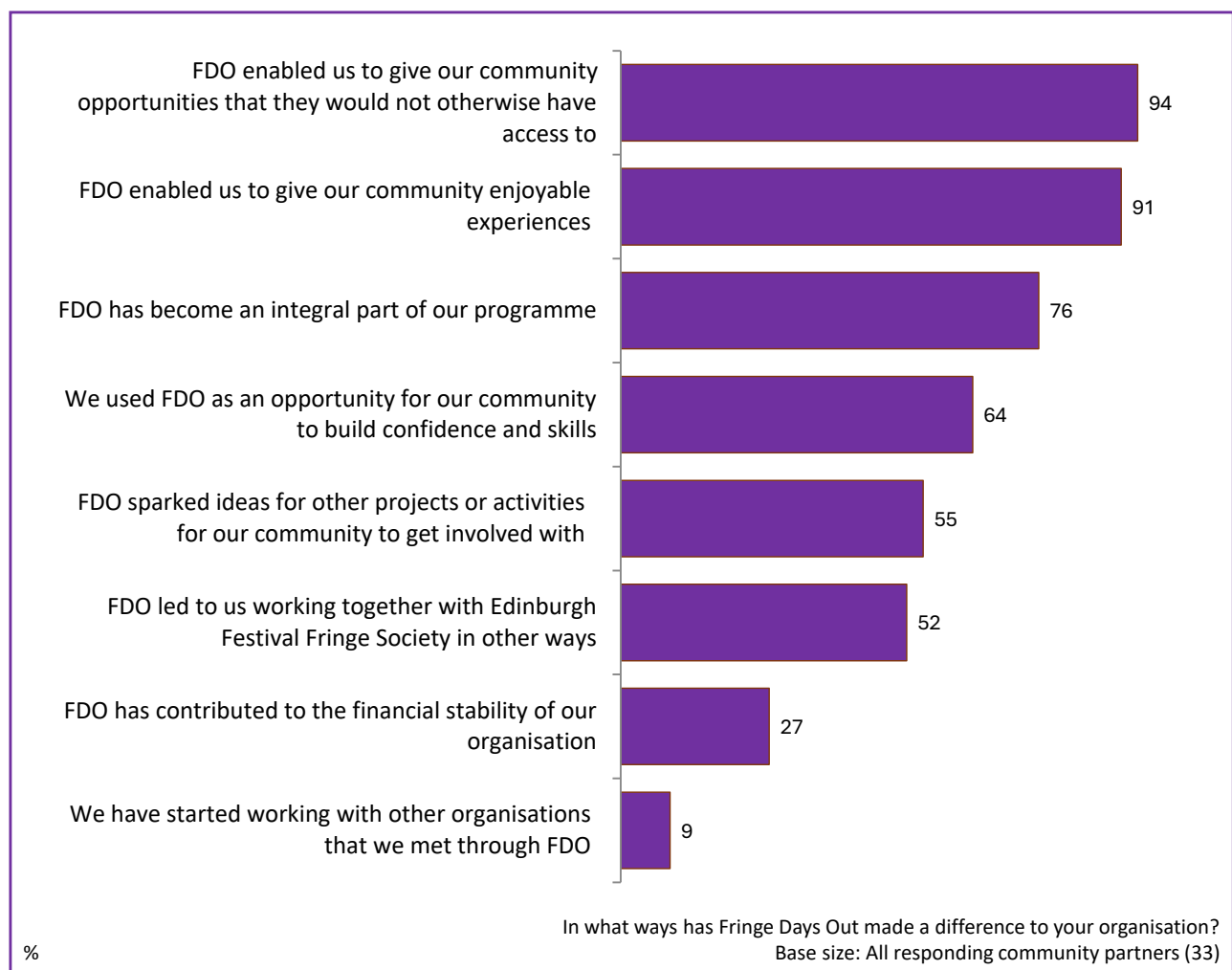
## Objective 5: Fringe Days Out will enable community organisations to amplify their impact

Fringe Days Out directly supports our aims of enabling people to discover more events in their community, and develop their confidence in getting out. It aligns incredibly well with our delivery model. (Partner)

12 out of 138 entries (9%) into the database of quotes and anecdotes related to Fringe Days Out enabling community organisations to amplify their impact. Despite this small number of overt endorsements over the years, we have found that this is a key impact of the Fringe Days Out programme.

### Impact on community partners

We asked the community partners to tell us the ways in which Fringe Days Out had made a difference to their organisation:



The average number of impacts selected from this list was 4.8, indicating that community partners typically experienced multiple positive impacts of participation.

More than nine in ten community partners told us that Fringe Days Out had enabled them to give their community opportunities that they would not otherwise have access to (94%) and Fringe Days Out had enabled them to give their community enjoyable experiences (91%). Additionally, two thirds of the community partners (64%) had used Fringe Days Out as an opportunity for their community to build confidence and skills. It is a highly positive outcome that more than three quarters of the community partners (78%) reported that Fringe Days Out had become an integral part of their programme.

Beyond the direct impacts, community partners had benefitted in the following ways:

- For 55%, Fringe Days Out sparked ideas for other projects or activities for their community to get involved with;
- For 52%, Fringe Days Out led to them working together with Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society in other ways;
- 9% started working with other organisations that they met through Fringe Days Out.

It is also notable that for 27% of the community partners, Fringe Days Out contributed to the financial stability of their organisation.

### An enhanced programme

As mentioned earlier, 78% of the community partners told us that Fringe Days Out has become an integral part of their programme. As several of the community partners described:

“Fringe Days Out is a vital part of our annual calendar.”

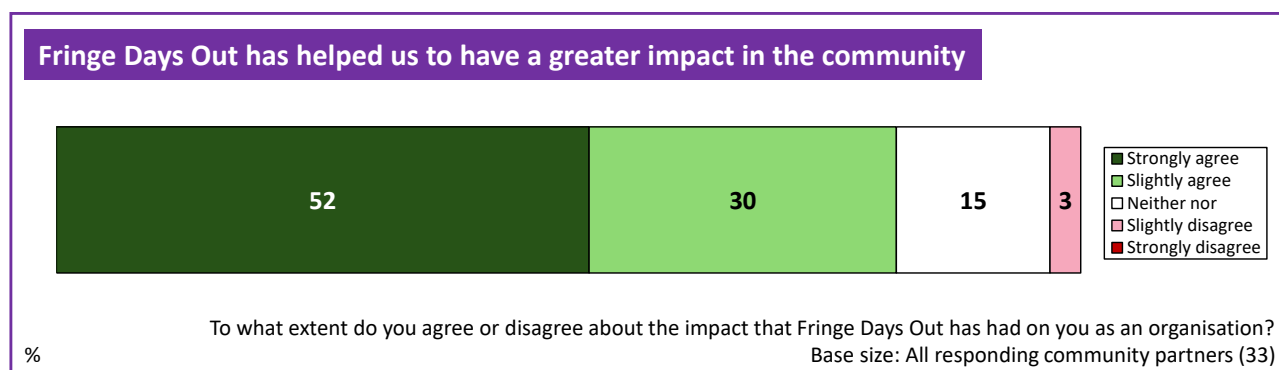
“Fringe Days Out is a core part of our summer programme.”

“It has become a hugely important part of our programme.”

“It's a great part of our calendar every year and the families look forward to it.”

### Amplifying impact

We asked the community partners to tell us the extent to which Fringe Days Out had helped them to have a greater impact in the community:



The vast majority of the community partners (82%) agreed that Fringe Days Out had helped them to have a greater impact in the community, with more than half (52%) agreeing strongly.

Some of the community partners explained that Fringe Days Out complements their own aims:

“It is a wonderful fit for the work we are doing.”

“Being able to offer a Fringe experience complements our work beautifully.”

“We have been able to use Fringe Days Out vouchers to complement a number of projects across our programme. This contributed greatly to the success of the projects.”

For one community partner, this was welcome in a difficult funding climate:

“With being a charity organisation and funding being cut in social care, which has affected ourselves and our service users, having the opportunity to access shows is amazing for us.”

In the course of this research we learned about a great number of extremely varied ways in which Fringe Days Out had been a catalyst for community groups to facilitate positive outcomes for their community members:

“It provides opportunities to go out with their friends, make some new ones, laugh and learn, explore streets and parks they've never been to before, and even going into a University building for the first time.”

“There are 50+ autistic adults who would probably avoid Edinburgh in August without this.”

“One service-user loves art and cultural events. Fringe Days Out gives her some moments of respite, taking her mind off the many challenges in her life. In many small ways, Fringe Days Out plays a positive role in her long road of recovery.”

“New friendships were formed throughout the trips.”

“The groups had food at the venues, some of them won't ever have had the opportunity to eat at a food stall like it.”

“For our young people who are interested in art and music, it is a space for them to look for opportunities and get inspired.”

“It means that people are more likely to attend support appointments in August, as they feel more part of what is going on, as opposed to staying home for the month.”

“Fringe Days Out helps our families to do something different to just going to the park.”

Additionally, the community partners appreciated that Fringe Days Out helped them as an organisation to build relationships with their community members:

“Fringe Days Out helps us build / consolidate / maintain our relationship with our service-users, which in turn facilitates our work.”

“Being able to take young people to the Fringe has helped us build stronger relationships with them, as sharing these experiences outside our usual setting creates space for connection and trust.”

**VINTAGE VIBES**

GOOD COMPANY NEVER GETS OLD

## Vintage Vibes: a community organisation for whom Fringe Days Out has amplified their impact

Vintage Vibes is a charity that tackles isolation and loneliness among over 60s (called VIPs) in Edinburgh. Vintage Vibes creates long lasting one-to-one friendships alongside group meet-ups, giving support, companionship and the opportunity for lonely VIPs to be more socially connected and active in their local community.

Andrew Ainsworth (Vintage Vibes Director) told us:

*“Vintage Vibes first got involved with Fringe Days Out when it began, and it was great to be asked if we wanted some free tickets - 100% yes, we always appreciate anything that’s free! But over the years our relationship with the Fringe has really developed.*

*We’re working with older people so they’ve had a lot of time in their life to try things, and what I’ve noticed is that a lot of our VIPs have got out of the habit of going to the Fringe because it can start to feel difficult for them. So Fringe Days Out allows these people to continue to engage with something that they want to engage with, and that in turn brings something different to their life.*



*I’ll always remember when one of our volunteers took her VIP to a show, and the VIP phoned us and she was really excited because it was something that she would have done in the past but it was something that she had decided was no longer for her. And then having gone, she realised it was still for her and told us “you’ve brought an old lady back to the land of the living!”*

*Generally what we have found works for us is to use our free ticket vouchers to arrange a number of Fringe sessions throughout August for our VIPs to come along to. When people come in a group it’s great as they can interact, they can chat with their pals, but they’ve also got that security of knowing they are safe because they have us there, and they have our volunteers there – they know someone knows where they’re going!*

*We have a big barrier to attendance removed by the Fringe because they give us the free ticket vouchers, and then Vintage Vibes works to remove the other barriers that our VIPs experience.*

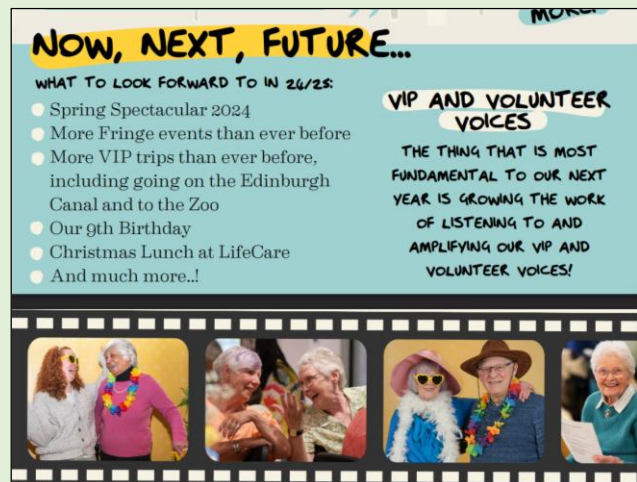
*One of the things that comes up again and again for us is the busyness, as even if you're dead keen to go to the Fringe and even if somebody else has paid for the ticket, negotiating the crowds can still be a barrier. Then there’s having to get to the venue by bus - some of the VIPs that we work with are still very mobile and they are usually happy to get the bus but some are much less confident in August as it is very busy and the reduced mobility seats at the front are often full of people standing. So we organise transport to the shows for people where we can, and over the last few years Fringe Days Out has given us a contribution towards that which we hugely appreciate.*



*For our first show this year 25 of us went to see the Black Blues Brothers. A lot of our VIPs were sitting down the front and they were dead excited. I saw them all reacting to the guys doing flips that landed right at the edge of the stage. I saw everybody leaving with a huge smile on their face, just so exhilarated. Some of the performers gave a wee wave to the ladies, and even came over and were saying thanks for being so engaged. It was brilliant, they absolutely loved that. I know for some of those people that's the only thing that they've got on all week and just seeing it reminded me of what a difference it makes. Whilst they might be alone for a huge portion of their week, this stops them from feeling lonely and isolated and not just when someone's there, but beyond that as it's given people an additional lift.*

*At Vintage Vibes one of the strategic aims that we have in our most recent strategy is about enriching lives and relationships, and Fringe Days Out is definitely contributing to achieving that. It broadens what we can do and is a good addition to our offering, and I think it really does amplify what we're doing.*

*Fringe Days Out has become part of our regular programme and is a really valuable thing for us in that regard. Having that consistency does make a massive difference for us when we plan our year ahead. We try to balance things out through the year and run three or four big events, and the Fringe fits into that every August. We work with our VIPs for as long as they want us to be involved so the fact that Fringe Days Out has become a regular thing means they look forward to it happening and that has been a real benefit for them too.*



*Vintage Vibes impact report*

*When I think about what Fringe Days Out means for us at Vintage Vibes, I think there's real value to it because it does a number of different things. If you think about loneliness and isolation, connection is a huge thing that helps tackle that and Fringe Days Out is a way that we can connect. It's bringing people out who might not otherwise be out and for us it's great to have that opportunity to really engage with the VIPs before or after a show. It gives people the opportunity to meet others within our community who wouldn't otherwise engage with each other, and we've had VIPs become pals and end up meeting for a coffee together or chat on the phone.*

*And it gives our VIPs that connection back into the Fringe that they might have lost. Because connection doesn't just have to be between people, it can be that feeling of being connected to something that's happening in the city. Fringe Days Out is not just about access to the arts in its narrowest sense, it's about a connection with Edinburgh experienced by people from across Edinburgh, and I think that's why it's so valuable."*

## Evaluation objective: To inform the development of the programme

It is one of the best community outreach programmes that we work with. (Partner)

### Understanding the value of Fringe Days Out

All of the community partners strongly valued Fringe Days Out and were keen that it should continue. The following comments provide only a small flavour of their support:

“We would love to see Fringe Days Out continue.”

“Fringe Days Out is a fundamental programme that absolutely must continue.”

“It is very important that this continues.”

“Please do not stop this top notch community outreach programme, it means so much to us and our communities we support.”

When asked about the value of Fringe Days Out the message from community partners was clear:

“The Fringe needs to make itself accessible to marginalised communities in Edinburgh.”

As community partners passionately explained:

“It is important to ensure cultural experiences are not limited to those with the financial ability to access them for the very future of culture itself.”

“Without this, the Festival would become an annual event that pushes young people away from their town and that excludes them from experiencing local and international culture.”

“Fringe Days Out reduces inequalities and provides a sense of joy and belonging - making it an important programme to sustain.”

“It is important because it creates belonging, community and confidence in vulnerable groups of people who have historically experienced extreme exclusion, stigma and isolation. The long-term impact of this cannot be underestimated. Without a programme that is dedicated to community access, the Fringe becomes inaccessible and unwelcoming for an entire swathe of the Edinburgh community.”

“The Fringe is such a big part of Edinburgh, and it’s important that all local people have the opportunity to take part without facing financial barriers.”

“It would effectively mean excluding young people from the local cultural life of their city, and from the city centre during the summer, which would be just for tourists.”

“It’s such an important initiative to support people to access such amazing opportunities right on their doorstep, that they can otherwise be completely isolated from.”

Several of the community partners were concerned that they would not be able to provide this opportunity for their community members without Fringe Days Out:

“I can definitely say we would not be able to afford these experiences for our families.”

“We rely on Fringe Days Out to maintain this aspect of our work.”

“We would not be able to continue supporting young people to access shows during the Festival, and they would miss out on a unique opportunity to access arts and culture.”

“We would not have the opportunity to help our groups to see some of the Fringe. We are a small charity and have no funding for Fringe tickets.”

As one of the community partners summarised:

“I think it is so much more than a ticketing initiative.”

#### → **Without Fringe Days Out...**

û Most of the community partners would be unable to resource Fringe visits for their community members.

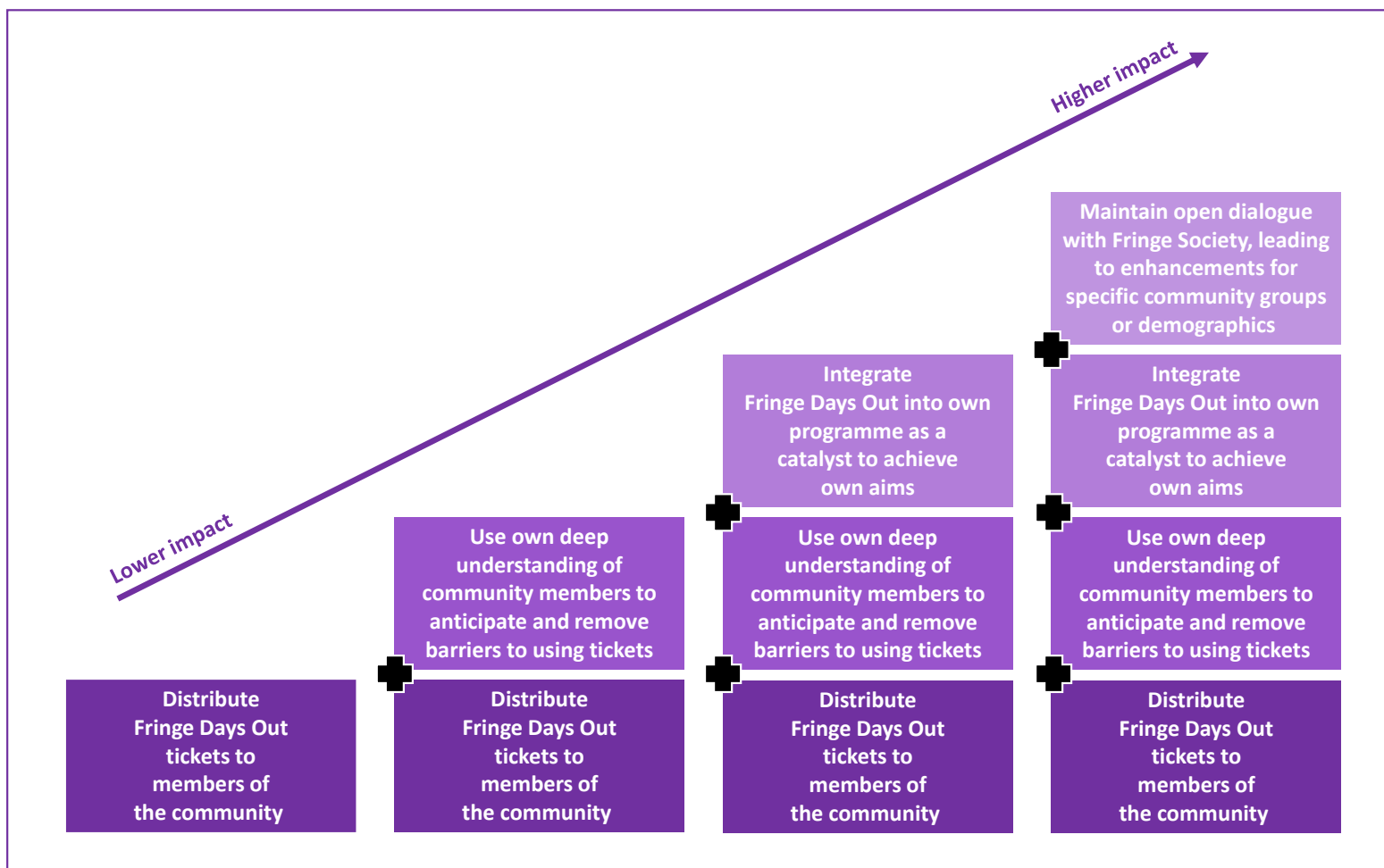
û Many local people and marginalised people would therefore be excluded from attending the Fringe.

û For those individuals, the substantial benefits of Fringe attendance would not be realised (including but not limited to enjoyment, memorable experiences, exposure to relevant cultural experiences, enhanced wellbeing, enhanced confidence and feeling part of the Fringe)

û As a consequence, the Fringe would be less a less diverse and less inclusive environment, and would be disconnected from the city in which it is situated.

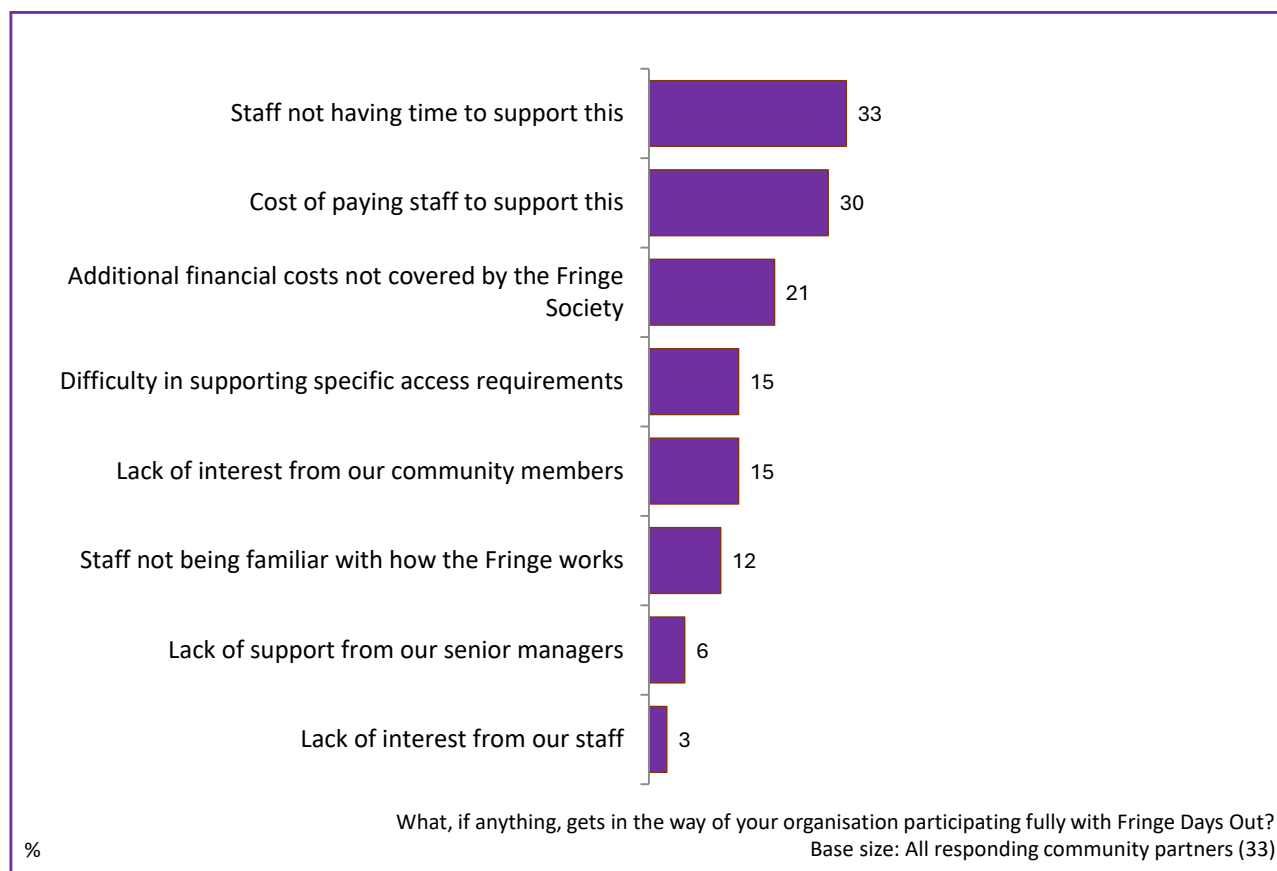
## Achieving impact through Fringe Days Out

Through this impact assessment it has become clear that different community partners utilise the Fringe Days Out programme in different ways, and the depth of impact varies. Some community partners simply distribute free tickets, and this alone has a substantial impact in removing financial barriers to access. However those community partners that supplement the free ticket offer with targeted support achieve a greater impact, and those that use Fringe Days Out to achieve their own charitable aims achieve a greater impact still. Impact is further enhanced where community partners work closely with the Fringe Society to develop the Fringe Days Out programme so that it better meets the needs of their community.



## Understanding barriers to engagement with Fringe Days Out

We asked the community partners to tell us what gets in the way of their organisation participating fully with Fringe Days Out:



Each of the barriers was only experienced by a small number of community partners.

That said, almost half (45%) of the community partners told us that staffing issues within their organisation could be a barrier, indicating that this was an issue for a substantial minority of community partners:

- 33% felt that staff not having time to support Fringe Days Out was a barrier;
- 12% felt that staff not being familiar with how the Fringe works was a barrier;
- 6% felt that lack of support from senior managers was a barrier;
- 3% felt that lack of interest from the organisation's staff was a barrier.

Time and staff capacity was a prominent challenge:

"Lack on time at our side."

"It has always ended up taking a lot more time than anticipated."

"Unfortunately due to capacity on our team we haven't been able to maximise the opportunity to its fullest potential."

"Our organisation is currently going through a staff shortage (due to funding crisis), so things are particularly difficult this year."

Perhaps linked to the time that administering Fringe Days Out can take, three in ten community partners (30%) felt that the cost of paying staff to support Fringe Days Out was a barrier to their organisation participating fully.

In addition to this, 21% of the community partners told us that the additional financial costs of running a Fringe visit prevented their transition from participating fully:

“In the past we also had day bus tickets as well which were helpful.”

“If there was more places to have affordable food.”

“This year the support budget was small, so we did not have the opportunity to go out often for a drink or socialise around town before and after shows. According to some feedbacks we got from young people, it would be nice to be able to go out for tea and cake after a show.”

15% of the community partners told us that difficulty in supporting specific access requirements could be a barrier:

“Appropriate spaces for young people with religious needs would ensure everyone feels comfortable and welcome.”

In many cases access challenges specifically related to navigating the accessibility of different Fringe venues:

“Finding out accessibility of venues.”

“Short term festival staff who answer the phone lines for accessibility bookings etc. not seeming very well trained.”

A small minority of the community partners (15%) told us that lack of interest from community members could be a barrier:

“We find that the people we work with are generally just not that interested in attending Fringe events, even when we promote the opportunity.”

Although not perceived as being a barrier as such, several community partners also described the challenges that they faced in ensuring that their budget was utilised:

“I felt it was a bit manic because we got vouchers but then it was just making sure we didn't lose the money because we only had it for a certain amount of time and obviously I know the Fringe is for a month but that flies past.”

“I'm just making sure that if we get given 50 vouchers, 200 vouchers, whatever it is, that they're going to be used. The main thing I want is people to go to stuff.”

Some community partners also found it difficult to shortlist shows that would be interesting to their community members:

“It can be difficult to find interesting high quality theatre shows for primary age groups.”

“You're trying to book for quite substantial groups of people, it's a lot of people to please.”

Linked to this, some community partners explained that their community members needed a lot of support to book tickets and actually attend their chosen event:

“Getting families to book tickets and then commit to actually attending the trip can be a challenge.”

“Vulnerable families tend to be chaotic, so it takes lots of time and effort to get their attention and make arrangements for them.”

Two of the community partners explained that they experienced difficulties with the booking process:

“Redeeming the vouchers is still an issue as people don't understand that they can only be redeemed online or only at one 'Assembly' ticket office.”

“We have always had significant challenges with the booking system.”

→ It is clear that some of the community partners put a lot of time into planning for Fringe Days Out and supporting their community members to use the tickets, whether this be independently or as part of an arranged group activity. With budgets already under pressure, community partners may not have the resources to cover the costs of the time that it takes to achieve the fullest impact. It may be that the Fringe Society could do more to support the community partners, either administratively or financially.

That said, 36% of the community partners said that nothing gets in the way of their organisation participating fully with Fringe Days Out.

This was supported by a number of comments provided by community partners:

“I think it works perfectly and couldn't fault it!”

“Fringe Days Out already works very well for our community.”

“At this time there is not much that could make the Fringe Days Out work better.”

“I think they do everything they can to give us the chance to access the festival.”

## Concluding remarks

When asked about the value of Fringe Days Out the community partners felt strongly that the Fringe must be accessible to marginalised communities in Edinburgh, otherwise this internationally renowned cultural event is out of reach to people on its own doorstep. Our impact assessment has shown that Fringe Days Out succeeds in achieving this.

### **Fringe Days Out has supported a substantial number of people to access the Fringe that would not have had the opportunity to attend otherwise**

The community partners told us that financial and access barriers typically prevent their community members from attending the Fringe. Fringe Days Out removed these barriers, as 100% of community members told us that Fringe Days Out made it affordable for them to attend the Fringe and 96% of community members told us that Fringe Days Out gave them the support they needed to attend the Fringe.

In 2025 half of the responding community members (50%) told us that they would not have attended the Fringe without Fringe Days Out. Furthermore, around one in six were first time Fringe attenders and around one in twelve were first time arts attenders. Scaling this up based on tickets redeemed over the years, Fringe Days Out has supported approximately 3,437 entirely new Fringe attenders, and 10,108 attenders who would not have attended otherwise.

Following their visit, 95% of the community members felt welcome at the Fringe and only 6% said that 'no' they would not make their own plans to go to the Fringe again.

### **Fringe Days Out has provided a life-enhancing experience**

The experience of attending the Fringe was highly positive for community members:

- 100% of the community members enjoyed themselves at the Fringe;
- 86% of the community members said that going to the Fringe improved their wellbeing;
- 85% of the community members said going to the Fringe made them feel more confident.

### **Fringe Days Out has succeeded in building relationships across the Edinburgh community**

Almost all (94%) of the community partners agreed that they had built a strong relationship with the Fringe Society. Community partners appreciated the opportunity to be part of Fringe Days Out and spoke highly of the support that they had received from the Fringe Society team.

### **Fringe Days Out and community partners work together to achieve the greatest impacts**

We have learned from this impact assessment that the greatest impacts have been achieved where Fringe Days Out has been fully embraced by community partners – using their own deep understanding of their community members to anticipate and remove barriers to using tickets, and integrating Fringe Days Out into their own programme as a catalyst to achieve their own aims. It is acknowledged, however, that this places a substantial administrative and staff-time burden on the partners and their already-stretched organisations.