

Traditional Arts Mentoring Annual Report



*Jo Miller
2022*

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Traditional Arts Mentoring

Programme report 2022

The Traditional Arts Mentoring programme ran its second cycle during June-November 2022. This was facilitated by Traditional Arts and Culture Scotland (TRACS), supported by funding from Creative Scotland. A mentoring coordinator organised training and support for mentoring partnerships as well as monitoring and evaluating the programme.

Aims

Traditional Arts Mentoring aims to provide structured and confidential support to early or mid-career traditional arts practitioners of music, storytelling, song, dance and language who are based in Scotland.

Outcomes

The programme sets out to encourage reflective practice, through which traditional artists can better manage choices, challenges and changes in their careers. Mentors encourage mentees to identify goals and to take their plans forward. This may include developing new skills or identifying further training needs.

Outputs

Managing the programme

TRACS recruits mentees and matches them with mentors.

Induction to the programme

All mentors and mentees attend an induction event at which they learn how the programme works and meet their mentoring partners.

Mentoring partnerships Mentees and mentors are supported by the coordinator to meet 6-8 times over around 6 months.

Training

All mentors receive training from the programme coordinator and the Scottish Mentoring Network (SMN).

End-of-programme gathering

Mentees and mentors attend an informal event to gather feedback, share work and celebrate achievements.

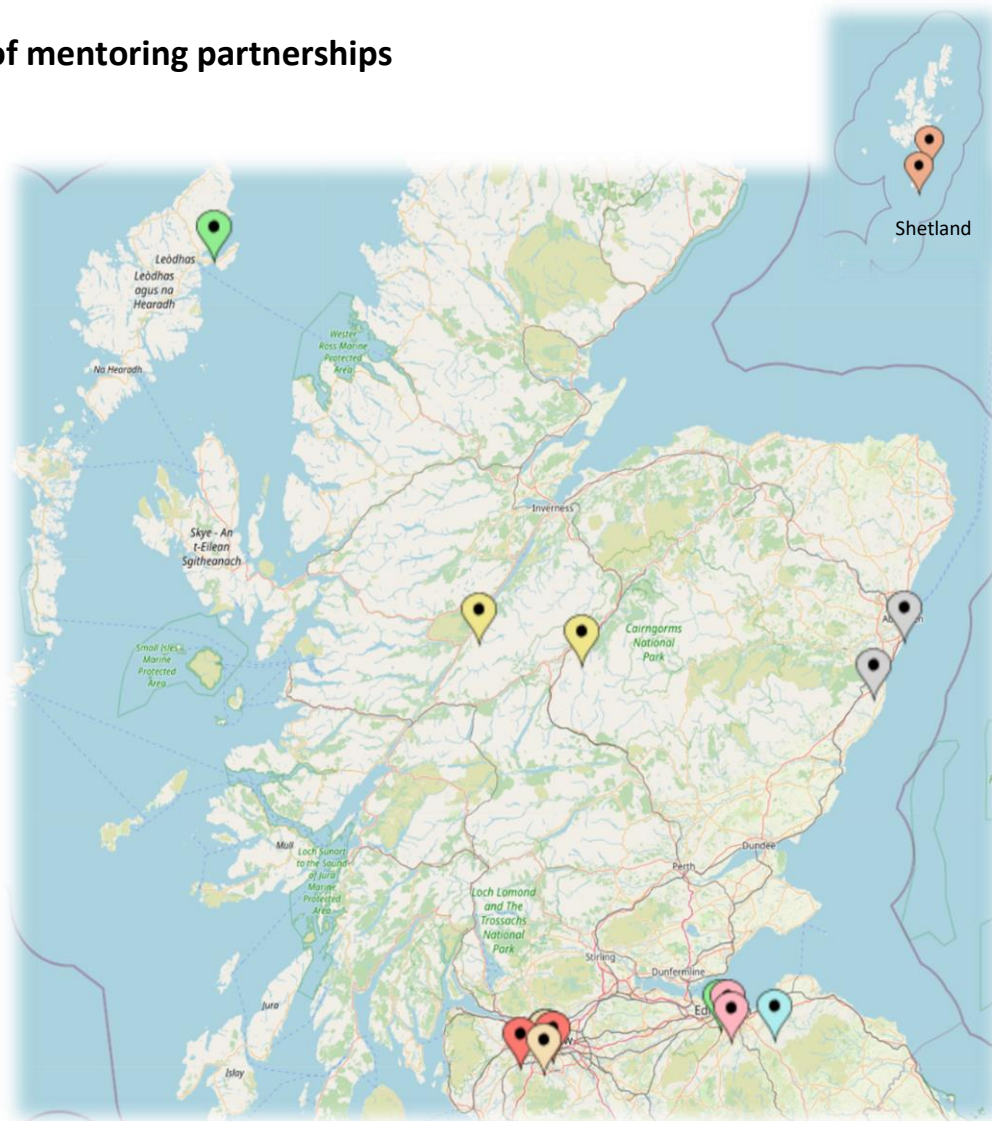


*I have expanded my
professional circle*

Headline Achievements

- Continued to deliver programme during challenges of COVID-19 and its aftermath.
- 8 mentees, 8 mentors and 2 peer-to-peer mentors took part from across Scotland.
- All partnerships sustained contact for the full cycle of the programme.
- Recruited 3 new mentors.
- Training for mentors through the 'Mentor knowledge and understanding' online course.
- Mentees were recruited from specialisms in storytelling, music, song, dance and Scots and Gaelic language.
- Notable improvements for mentees were increased confidence, and the ability to deal more effectively with challenges and changes in relation to their work.
- The coordinator was supported by TRACS and the Scottish Mentoring Network.
- Built on the 2021 pilot of the TRACS programme.

Map of mentoring partnerships



(same colour marker indicates mentor-mentee pair)

What did we achieve?

Support for mentees

Mentees received support from their mentors, the coordinator, and other programme participants. Some used the opportunity to progress particular projects, while for others it was a 'safe space' to reflect and plan. Contact with other mentees allowed individuals to share their experiences. A 'Trad Arts Mentoring' Facebook group created another means of sharing information of mutual interest.

Online and in-person mentoring meetings

Since COVID-19, online mentoring meetings have become the norm. 2022 allowed for a degree in-person contact between mentees and mentors. Most partnerships had a mix of face-to-face and online contact, offering flexibility regarding availability for meetings, and for matching mentoring partners from across Scotland. However, several participants said they would have liked more in-person contact.

A supportive framework

The coordinator provided a handbook and delivered an induction session to all participants. This prepares mentors and mentees to:

- understand the role of mentoring for trad arts practitioners
- learn and try out key mentoring skills
- undertake a mentoring relationship
- employ a range of mentoring tools
- keep records
- provide feedback

The coordinator liaised with mentoring partnerships throughout the programme, organised group meetings and gave regular updates to TRACS.

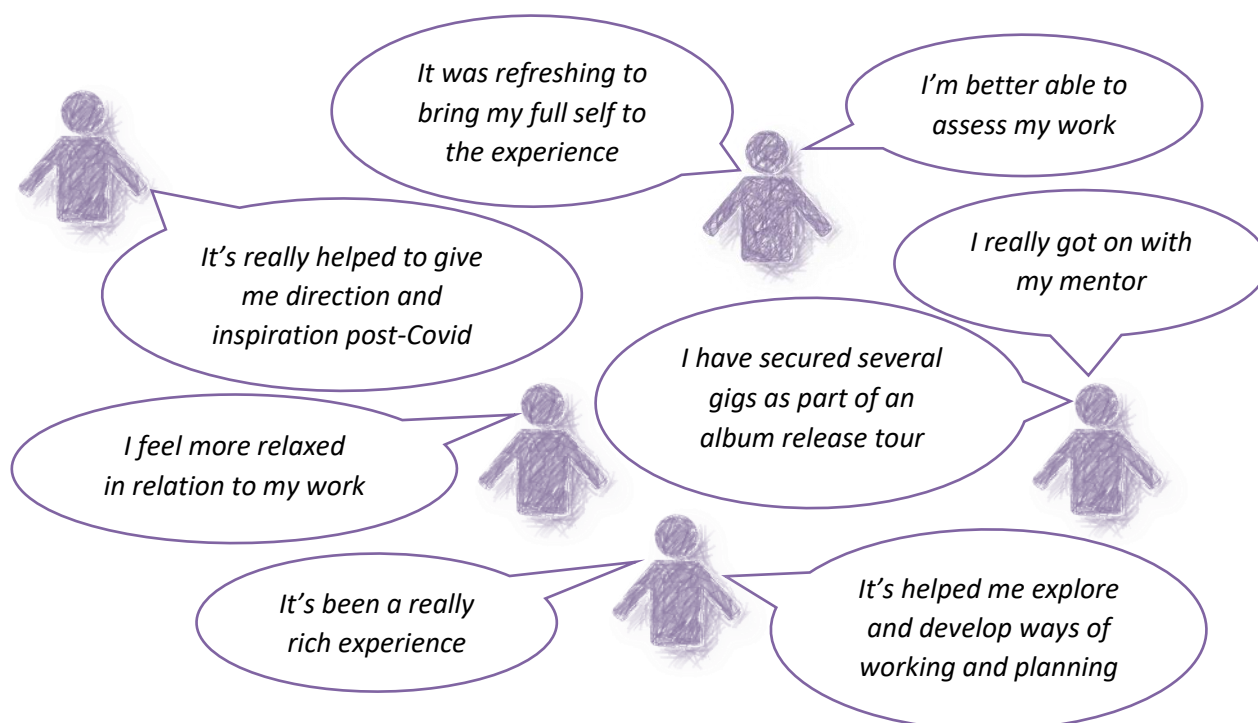
Spreading the word

Building on the recommendation in last year's report to consult more widely on the future of trad arts mentoring, the coordinator led exploratory discussions on mentoring at the following events: Comfort of Voices, Traditional Arts Working Group - Creative Scotland, and Grampian Association of Storytellers. Further recommendations are given below on how the TRACS programme could be a resource for future developments.

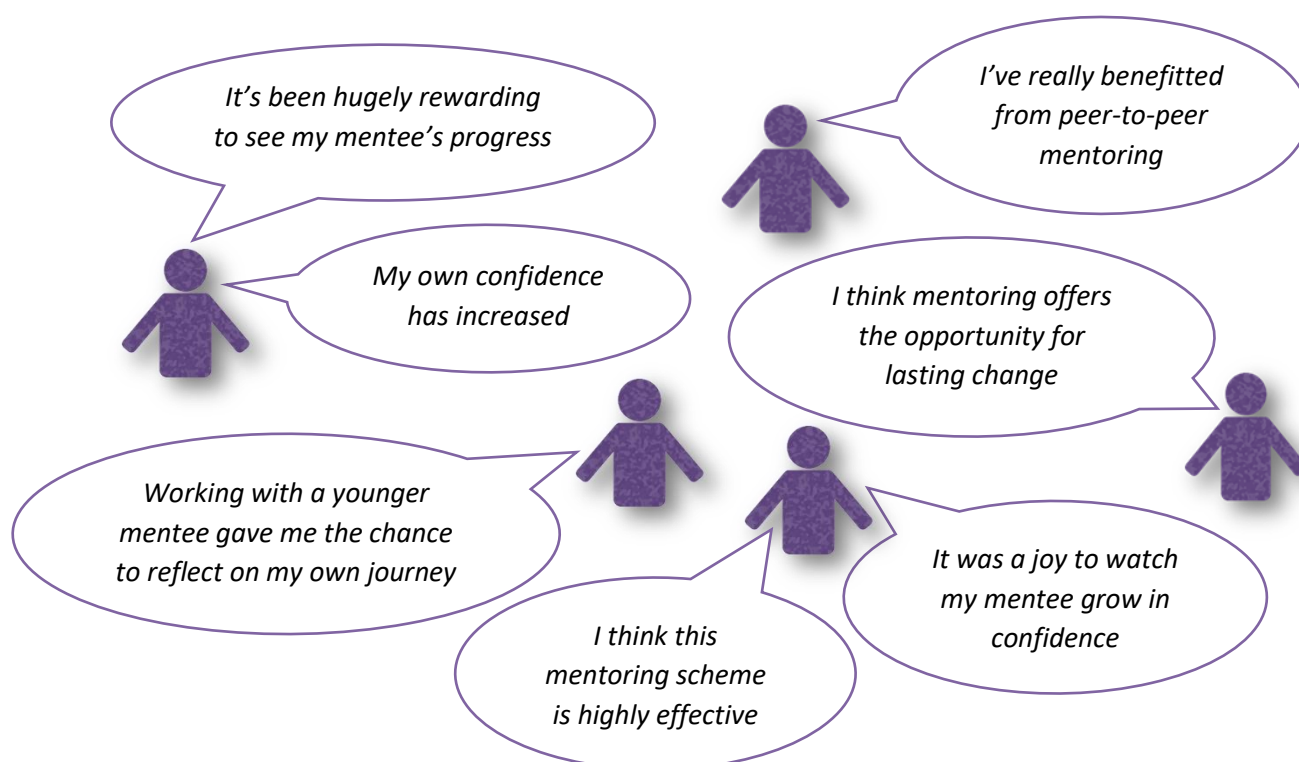
Evaluating the programme

Baseline information was collected via a start-of-programme questionnaire and at the induction event. Monitoring took place via coordinator phone calls to mentees, and a mentor support meeting at the halfway point, as well as 1-1 conversations with both mentees and mentors. End-of-programme data was collected via an end-of-programme questionnaire and an online meeting with mentees, mentors, coordinator and TRACS staff.

Impact for mentees (see Appendix 1):



Impact for mentors (see Appendix 2):



Recommendations

Framework of the traditional arts mentoring programme

- If possible, hold at least one in-person gathering of all participants.
- Highlight importance of attending mid-cycle meetings for mentees and mentors. Confirm dates of these at induction.

Mentee recruitment and support

- TRACS should create a generic 'trad arts mentoring' video for publicity and recruitment.
- Highlight opportunities for mentees to communicate in an agreed format e.g. closed Facebook page.

Mentor recruitment and training

- Prioritise retaining and employing current mentors to maximise existing training and experience, including *TradMentor* personnel. This provides a resource of **18 mentors**, 7 of whom have already achieved a *Professional Practice Award in Mentoring*, and 5 of whom have completed the online 'Mentoring Knowledge & Understanding' (MK&U) module.
- Review MK&U module in light of feedback from mentors.
- Further CPD for mentors could include:
 - mentors 'buddying' each other
 - mentors acting as peer-to-peer mentors for each other within the framework of the programme
 - undertaking training with the Scottish Mentoring Network leading to a *Professional Practice Award in Mentoring*
 - informal 1-1 support from programme coordinator
 - tailored resources for trad arts mentoring
- TRACS should continue their membership of the Scottish Mentoring Network.
- Mentors should be encouraged to access SMN's resources and possibly attend their annual national event.

Monitoring and Evaluation

- Continue to contact former mentees a year after their participation to follow up on the longer-term impact of the programme.

Future development of trad arts mentoring

- Encourage locally-based mentoring via other organisations and consider how TRACS could help, e.g. supporting, training, coordinating, advising, providing mentors...
- TRACS should host open mentoring event for members and others to bring together past participants, celebrate achievements and discuss ideas for development.
- Offer pop-up mentoring at events
- Facilitate more peer-to-peer mentoring

Appendix 1: Summary of findings from mentee questionnaires

Changes from start of programme.

Your general self confidence	++
Your ability to manage your work	+
Your level of confidence when dealing with colleagues	++
Your level of confidence when promoting or publicising your work	++
Your confidence in your skills as a teacher/tutor	+
Your level of satisfaction with your work at this stage in your career	+
Your ability to make time to reflect on your work	+
Your ability to talk about challenges and choices in your work	+++
Your ability to be proactive in making changes	+++

What has been your experience of being a mentee?

- It has been an extremely beneficial experience.
- Being a mentee has been a really valuable experience in taking my first serious steps towards making traditional music and song a more embedded and serious part of my life.
- It has particularly helped in allowing me to work through my own feelings and wishes with regards to making music, as well as identifying practical steps and pathways forward.
- I have been given the guidance I required to really look at where I am and where I am going.
- [It has] given me the tools and confidence to move forward with confidence, the ability to address setbacks.
- I would now call myself a storyteller rather than a competent amateur.
- My mentor enabled me to acknowledge success in current projects and helped me to identify areas for growth.
- It was good to be mentored by a younger mentor with a fresh outlook on life.
- I've found it really useful to discuss elements of my work with another person who also works in the arts.
- I was able to express my thoughts on my practice without fear of judgement.
- My mentor ... seemed genuinely interested in what I was doing.
- My mentor would very quickly get back to me with notes from the meeting and action points to target for the next meeting.

Describe one thing which has changed for you as a result of mentoring

- I've sought out oral recordings and archive sources, rather than relying mainly on hearing stories from my peers and contemporary storytellers or finding stories retold in printed books.
- I have secured several gigs as part of an album release tour including a sold out Celtic Connections launch gig.
- Purchasing some essential equipment (a microphone and amp)
- I have made connections with more musicians which I don't think would necessarily have happened if I'd not had a confidence boost from the mentoring process.
- Keep the work up and I can achieve my goals!
- I'm better able to assess my work and milestones/achievements/difficulties by taking time to reflect on my progress with different projects.

- I have focused more on my long term aims and deepening my relationship with the heritage of stories and storytelling.
- The mentoring has given me more confidence to try impromptu sessions and work with stories as a co-creative experience.
- I feel an ability to action my ideas and respect them as legitimate.
- I have set specific timeline goals when creating choreographies and preparing for concerts, as well as setting aside specific time to practise on a regular basis and time to review my work and make changes.

Were there any unexpected outcomes?

- I was extremely grateful for the level of dedication my mentor showed to me and my project, which I didn't expect.
- It was nice to feel like we ... could have a genuinely nice chat and catch up as well as going through the official mentoring process.
- [I've changed] my attitude to what success looks like within the contemporary TRAD world.
- My mentor offered to help with seeing out the project I've been working on (as yet incomplete), and we've been discussing other parts of our practices which are common to us both, so it's nice to know that now the programme's ended we can stay in touch.
- I was able to use some old dance steps to form the basis of choreographies for current projects, which was wonderful.

What would improve the Trad Arts Mentoring programme?

- I would have appreciated more face-to-face contact.
- It would be great if all the mentors and mentees could come together in person.

Give us some examples of how you used the mentee bursary

- I purchased a number of books which were mentioned and discussed during the mentoring sessions.
- I had to take time off work to attend the sessions, so the bursary has helped with this.
- The mentee bursary has contributed to the costs of recording live videos and digital assets to support my album release.
- Purchasing equipment for performing and making music (microphone, cable, amp, audio interface, and new song books).
- stationary, (Bullet Planning Journals), storytelling outfits, books, travelling expenses
- I used the mentee bursary to buy several books and sign up for some online sessions with different storytellers. I also used it to support travel to visit my mentor and work with others.
- To cover costs of the project that was the focus of our meetings.
- I used the bursary to pay for hall rental and travel (a 50mile round trip each time). It was great to have this space for my mentor and I to come together.

Other comments

- It's really helped to give me direction and inspiration post-Covid.
- Thanks so much for what has been a really enriching, challenging and ultimately clarifying opportunity.
- Hopefully one day I will be able to offer support to others.
- Thank you so much for this incredible opportunity!

Appendix 2: Summary of findings from mentor questionnaires

How do you feel you have benefited from being in a mentoring partnership:

a) Personally?

- Taking time to reflect on and articulate my own practice and experience
- Uplifting feeling from being able to share in another person's development.
- It has built up my confidence as a mentor and given me further experience in using those skills.
- Mentoring gives me ... a deeper understanding of the "art".

b) Professionally?

- Undertaking the training and qualification
- The opportunity to allow a creative relationship grow and mature over time
- Training around being an 'active' listener has been hugely beneficial
- [Mentoring] has given me an insight in to another area of the traditional music sector and it has been really interesting to hear from/work with a musician who is well-respected in their field.
- Helping [my mentee] to plan/map out ideas for the future has directly impacted my own approach to planning.
- Further interaction with TRACS network.
- Hearing some great stories from mentee!
- My own confidence has increased, and this encouraged me to take on a project which I might have been a bit reticent to agree to previously.
- Approaching someone else's world makes you reappraise and re-analyse your own.

Describe one thing which has changed for you as a result of mentoring.

- I am exploring ways of adding a mentoring element to community programmes that I am running.
- Increased confidence in the usefulness and power of active listening.
- Learning how to listen actively without judgement or thinking about what to say in response.
- This was a very holistic, overarching and all-encompassing mentorship, so I feel my approach to structure and progression have been significantly stress tested and honed, with very positive outcomes.

Did you complete the 'Mentoring knowledge & understanding' training course? Do you have any feedback on the materials?

- The materials were really accessible, and a useful reminder of what we had covered in brief at the start of the mentorship.
- All useful and helpful framework. Slightly formulaic. Maybe some practical examples, scenarios would help further.
- As a dyslexic I found the formulation of the questions very difficult. This made the course a real challenge and not one that I enjoyed. I think they should consider their questions in this regard as many creatives are neurodiverse.
- I found it difficult to take in all the information in the course because of the way it was laid out. I learn better by listening rather than reading so found the course quite un-engaging.
- There was some useful ideas and as it could be completed quickly (if you were short of time) it wasn't too onerous.

- I found it very useful as a way of revising and consolidating all the advice given previously.

Other comments

- I think mentoring offers ... the opportunity for lasting change for mentees and mentors.
- It has been a privilege to be a mentor on the scheme again this year.
- This has been a very positive experience.
- I've really benefitted from peer-to-peer mentoring. I have learned new skills as a mentor and also benefitted from the chance to be mentored. It's been so valuable having time to voice and discuss different elements of working in the arts.
- I really enjoyed the experience and got a lot out of it.
- This was an intense mentorship that has shown very tangible, immediate results.

List of TRACS Trad Arts Mentors

Music	Dance	Storytelling
Anne Martin *	Mats Melin	Dougie MacKay
Dan Thorpe *	Sandra Robertson +	Ian Stephen
Gica Loening *	Wendy Timmons	Jackie Ross +
Gillian Stevenson *		Jan Bee Brown +
Grant McFarlane *		
Jenny Sturgeon		
Jo Miller *		
Marie Fielding *		
Rachel Newton +		
Siobhan Miller		
Simon Thacker +		

Professional Practice Award in Mentoring(*) and Mentoring Knowledge & Understanding(+) (delivered and assessed by Scottish Mentoring Network)

Jo Miller for TRACS, January 2023.