

TRACS Traditional Arts Mentoring 2025

Annual Report



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Traditional Arts Mentoring

Programme report 2025

The TRACS Traditional Arts Mentoring programme 2025 ran during May-October, facilitated by Traditional Arts and Culture Scotland (TRACS) and supported by Creative Scotland. The 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 trad arts practitioners of music, storytelling, song, dance and language who are based in Scotland.

Outcomes

The programme encourages reflective practice through which traditional artists can better manage choices, challenges and changes in their careers. Mentors help mentees to identify goals and take their plans forward, including developing new skills or identifying training needs. The programme also strengthens the wider traditional arts community across Scotland.

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

Mentoring partners are supported by the coordinator to meet 6 times over about 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 in-person event to gather feedback, share experience and celebrate achievements.

Headline Achievements in 2025

- We delivered **year 6 of the programme** (including 2 years via the Traditional Music Forum).
- We worked with **12 mentees** and **12 mentors** from across Scotland.
- **3 peer-to-peer mentoring partnerships** operated amongst our mentors. **2 new peer-to-peer** pairs of storytellers were also supported.
- All partnerships sustained contact for the full cycle of the programme.
- Mentees were recruited from specialisms in storytelling, music, song and Scots and Gaelic language.
- In March 2025 we hosted a well-received **mentoring gathering** in the Scottish Storytelling Centre, with past and present participants from the programme. This also provided a great opportunity to record **audio-visual content** for future use.
- We held our end-of-programme gathering in October 2025 **in person** for the first time since 2019. TRACS staff also attended.

Map of mentoring partnerships 2025



(same colour marker indicates mentor-mentee pair)

What did we achieve?

Support for mentees

Mentees received support from their mentors, the coordinator and other participants. Mentees were encouraged to share their experiences at any stage, and specifically at the midpoint and the end of the programme.

Online *and* in-person mentoring meetings

Online mentoring meetings have become the norm. But all participants value meeting in-person. Most had a mix of in-person and online contact. This blended approach offered flexibility both in arranging meetings and in matching partners from across Scotland.

A supportive framework

The coordinator provided a handbook and other tools, and delivered an induction session on key topics including:

- the role of mentoring for trad arts practitioners
- learning and trying out key mentoring skills
- managing a mentoring relationship
- employing a range of mentoring tools
- keeping records

The coordinator liaised with mentoring partners throughout the programme, monitored mentors' progress, and organised group meetings.



Spreading the word

The coordinator continued to share experience from the programme with TRACS members and staff as well as other arts organisations and individuals.

Evaluating the programme

Baseline information was collected via a start-of-programme survey. Monitoring took place via coordinator phone calls with both mentees and mentors, and a support meeting at the halfway point. End-of-programme data was collected via a survey, informal conversations with the coordinator, and participation at an in-person gathering.

Uses of mentee bursary

Mentees are provided with a bursary to support their development during the mentoring programme. This was used for a range of purposes including travel, lessons, subscriptions, courses, equipment, books, tickets and photography.

Impact for mentees

It has helped me feel less isolated as a self-employed person working in the arts.

It has been the perfect amount of challenging and uplifting.

Regular meetings made me focus on specific goals and targets.



I have a clear idea of what my next steps are.

I've set up a regular kitchen table storytelling session with pals - that was born out of conversations with my mentor.

I felt the difference in confidence in the next class that I taught.

Breaking time down into chunks so I can see what I've done has been very helpful.

Most significant changes:

Valuing the work I do more.

Being mindful to make room for creating.

It has made me more self-assured.

I feel like I'm part of a community rather than on my own.



Impact for mentors:

The process has taught me how to listen.

I have taken on work that I wouldn't have considered doing before mentoring.



Being able to use the skills and knowledge I have developed to support someone else on their journey.

It is really rewarding to watch an individual grow and become more confident.

Being a Mentor has given me a new purpose and perspective in life.

Recommendations

- Put in place key dates and timeline for whole programme when launching new cycle.
- Emphasise importance of regular meetings.
- Continue to hold end-of-programme gathering (half day) in person.
- Submit application for SMN 'Quality Award' for the programme.
- Offer pop-up mentoring at trad arts events.
- Continue to encourage and facilitate peer-to-peer mentoring

Mentee recruitment and support

- TRACS should continue to publicise the mentoring programme widely.
- Prioritise recruitment of mentees from the traditional dance community.
- Highlight opportunities for mentees to communicate with each other.
- Consider selecting a mentee rep to take the lead with messaging the group and steering (mentee) meetings.

Mentor recruitment and training

- Coordinator should review development/training needs of Mentors before each new cycle.
- CPD for mentors can include:
 - mentors 'buddying' each other.
 - mentors acting as peer-to-peer mentors for each other within the framework of the programme.
 - tailored support from the programme coordinator.
 - undertaking further formal training.
- Consider subsidising Mentors to complete further training, for example the Professional Practice Award in Mentoring
- TRACS should continue their membership of the Scottish Mentoring Network.
- Mentors should be made aware of SMN's resources and their annual national event.

Monitoring and Evaluation

- Continue to contact former participants to monitor the long-term impact of the programme.

List of TRACS Trad Arts Mentors

*Professional Practice Award in Mentoring

+Mentoring Knowledge & Understanding (delivered and assessed by SMN)

Music

Anne Martin *
Dan Thorpe *
Dougie Pincock +
Gica Loening *
Gillian Stevenson *
Grant McFarlane *
Jenny Sturgeon +
Jo Miller *
Mairi Campbell +
Marie Fielding *
Mary Ann Kennedy +
Rachel Newton +
Simon Thacker +
Siobhan Miller

Storytelling

Ian Stephen +
Jackie Ross +
Jan Bee Brown +
Janis MacKay +
Magaidh Smith +

Dance

Sandra Robertson +