

TRACS Traditional Arts Mentoring 2026

Annual Report



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Traditional Arts Mentoring

Programme report 2026

The TRACS Traditional Arts Mentoring programme 2026 ran during January-June, facilitated by Traditional Arts and Culture Scotland (TRACS) and supported by Creative Scotland Multi-Year Funding. 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 2026

- We delivered **year 7** of the programme which has now engaged with **over 100** participants, including mentors.
- We worked with **13 mentees** and **13 mentors** from across Scotland.
- The programme became **more inclusive**, working with a Deaf mentee for whom we provided BSL support, and an aspiring musician with Down's Syndrome who was supported by a family member.
- **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, dance and Scots and Gaelic language.
- In June 2026 we held our end-of-programme gathering at the Tolbooth in Stirling. Staff from TRACS and the Scottish Mentoring Network also attended.
- TRACS traditional arts mentoring programme received the **SMN Quality Award**, valid for 3 years, when we can reapply for renewal.

Map of mentoring partnerships 2026



(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. They 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

The programme offers a blended approach: a mix of online and in-person contact offers flexibility in arranging meetings and in matching partners across Scotland. All particularly value the in-person end-of-programme gathering.

A supportive framework

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

- 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



Throughout the programme the coordinator liaised with mentoring partners, monitored progress and organised group meetings.

Spreading the word

The coordinator continued to share experience from our programme with other organisations. She contributed a presentation on 'A positive difference for mentors' at SMN's national event in October 2025. With one of our mentors, she also provided 'taster' mentoring conversations at a development day for singing leaders in March 2026.

Evaluating the programme

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

Uses of mentee bursary

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

Impact for mentees

Most progress

Mentees felt they made most progress in improved confidence, publicising their work, general satisfaction at this stage in their career, making time to reflect, and in handling challenges and choices.

I feel a positive shift in my confidence of my creative potential and abilities.

Formalising goals on paper felt achievable and with right amount of challenge.

I feel more attached to the wider sector due to the expertise and experience of my mentor.

I have felt heard, supported and have been given the tools to reflect on and improve multiple aspects of my work.

It's helped me to take myself more seriously as a potential solo performer.

Most significant changes:

I now have a sense that my national traditional music industry is taking me seriously.

Learning to prioritise my creativity and musical endeavours.

The programme has encouraged me to reflect more deeply on my practice and take greater ownership of my development as a storyteller.

Redoing my website!

Ongoing challenges

Most mentees felt less effective than they'd like to be in managing their work, and in their ability to be proactive in making changes.

Impact for mentors:

Mentoring allows me to draw on and pass on a wealth of experience and knowledge that there isn't much of an outlet for in my other work.

It's helped me reflect on my personal situation and make some significant life decisions.

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

I have produced some of my best and most successful work since becoming a mentor.

Recommendations

- Put in place key dates and timeline for whole programme when launching new cycle.
- Emphasise importance of regular meetings.
- Continue to offer 'taster' mentoring sessions at trad arts events.
- Continue to encourage and facilitate peer-to-peer mentoring amongst mentors, former mentees, and other trad arts practitioners

Mentee recruitment and support

- TRACS should continue to publicise the mentoring programme widely.
- Prioritise recruitment of mentees from the traditional dance community.
- Consider needs of mentees who may require support to participate in the programme, e.g. BSL or other help with communication or advocacy.
- 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

- Continue to review mentor training and development needs.
- Provide mentoring skills 'refresher' before each cycle of programme.
- Mentors should be encouraged to undertake SMN's Professional Practice Award in Mentoring course. TRACS is subsidising 3 mentors to complete this training in 2026.
- TRACS should continue their membership of SMN.

Monitoring and Evaluation

- Contact former participants to monitor the long-term impact of the programme.
- Consider hosting support meeting for former mentees.
- Review monitoring and evaluation process for the programme.



List of TRACS Trad Arts Mentors

* Professional Practice Award in Mentoring

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

Music

Amy Geddes *
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

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

Dance

Sandra Robertson +