arts connect

# ARTS CONNECT
# STORIES OF IMPACT
## Leading Change with and for Children and Young People

*I feel like **Arts Connect** is the ally everybody working in the arts should have - an organisation which encourages change and growth and creativity and underpins it all with an absolute expectation that children and young people deserve to have arts and culture in their lives and strives relentlessly to make this happen whenever and wherever they can.*

**Adrienne Frances, Freelance Artist**

UNIVERSITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON

LOTTERY FUNDED

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# Welcome

## The vision of **Arts Connect** is that all children and young people in the region have access to high quality arts and cultural activities and through our work more young people are engaging with these opportunities, especially those who are disadvantaged and furthest away from opportunity.

Our mission is to lead change towards that vision and in the pages that follow we hope you enjoy reading about our stories of impact and how far that ambition has taken us.

Our story is really the collective story of the thousands of people working in the arts, culture, education, local government, funding bodies and charities who have been our partners, and the hundreds of thousands of children and young people who have had new creative opportunities as a result. It is a story of remarkable regional collaboration and innovation. Our role has been to provide the leadership for change at a time of social, political, and economic instability that has impacted most on those with least. In 2015 we set out to work at a scale that could make a demonstrative impact and that is reflected in the statistics of the reach we have achieved:

— **41,698 young people gained an Arts Award.**
— **534 schools supported to embed the arts in their curriculum through Artsmark.**
— **1,175 Young Arts Ambassadors trained.**
— **£2m secured as levered investment for innovative partnership programmes.**
— **5,224 packs of arts and craft materials distributed to children in need during lockdown.**
— **The growth in skills, leadership ambition and confidence of 162 creative and cultural leaders from 95 organisations who have taken part in our Leadership Programmes.**
— **Supported staff from over 900 schools in connecting with our opportunities.**
— **14 Local Cultural Education Partnerships established as new spaces for local collaboration.**

We've also been excited to contribute to the success of the blockbuster cultural events in 2022: leading the *Inspired by British Art Show 9* Arts Connect Learning Programme with 56 Black Country schools, co-investing with Coventry City Council in the Coventry Cultural Education Partnership to support school engagement in City of Culture and working with the Commonwealth Games Birmingham 2022 Festival team to grow young people's engagement in the cultural programme.

To get to this point is the product of sustained work over time where we have needed to:

- **Earn the trust of partners and collaborators to work with us by striving to live our values of being informed, approachable, provocative, and collaborative.**
- **Be an early investor to support risk taking and believing in the talent of those across the region who do the work with children and young people.**
- **Bring people together to work through long term programmes.**
- **Invest time to understand the needs of our partners and relationships.**
- **Build a team of staff and collaborators with the capability to be audacious, to deliver and to stay the course over the long term.**

More than anything we have learned that Arts Connect is only as strong as the level of trust that partners place in us; we know how precious this is and we are grateful to everyone that has joined with us. Of course, none of this would have been possible without the core support of The University of Wolverhampton and the long-term investment of Arts Council England (ACE) and their deep commitment to children and young people, and we thank them for their partnership.

**Rob Elkington, Director, Arts Connect, 2022**

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# SPOTLIGHT ON... Luke Bendall

As part of the *Inspired by British Art Show 9* Arts Connect Partner Schools programme, we developed a series of professional artistic development placements for University of Wolverhampton students.

Luke was commissioned to work with artist Sophie Huckfield who was leading on an *Inspired by British Art Show 9* programme with five Black Country schools and colleges. He worked with artist Sahjan Kooner on a soundscape-making project with Wolverhampton Arts and Culture and five young people. Luke has supported Sahjan in the production and editing of a soundscape to be exhibited in an installation artwork in the City of Wolverhampton Archives.

*My name is Luke Bendall. I'm a composer, drummer, and postgraduate student from the University of Wolverhampton. I've been an independent musician/artist for over 2 years now, with a strong passion for making music, soundscapes, and soundtracks.*

*I had just finished my three years at university and was eager to prove myself. I'd seen that contemporary artist Sophie Huckfield was looking for composers to make several soundscapes, so I thought "This is my chance to make a start". I wanted to gain experience in working on projects with more people and show my talents outside of my own personal work.*

*Sophie's project involved creating music and editing sounds together to create powerful meanings behind the stories in the project.*

*For this commission, I made several different pieces of music that lasted around three minutes, along with editing sounds she had sent for each part. The project had a different message across multiple stories that spread awareness about different issues like food insecurity and care work. The timeframe was spread over a few months, so I had time to really make sure each piece conveyed what Sophie wanted. It was a new experience for me to work on a project that involved different elements and with other people, since I was used to mostly working on my own projects. It was also interesting to hear feedback from others and make changes accordingly.*

Photos © Luke Bendall

*My favourite part was working on the first track "Hands", which required incorporating the sound of tin cans being hit into a rhythmic pattern. I'd started to mess around with noise gates until I got a really catchy rhythm. From there the track started to evolve quite quickly, so it was fun to see how the track had started from tin cans to the final piece.*

*Being a part of this project has helped me open up to working with more people, along with taking advantage of opportunities and different areas of work to be a part of in the future.*

*On top of this, the positive feedback I had received for my contributions for this project helped solidify my confidence in my skills and abilities as a composer. When I had seen the results of the full projects, I was proud to see that it had conveyed the messages clearly.*

*I'm now working with Sahjan Kooner on another soundscape project which I'm super excited about and hopefully I can continue to work on more projects like this.*

*Arts Connect have enabled me to be a part of professional projects that have helped me gain collaborative experience and skills I can use in the future.*

# SPOTLIGHT ON... British Ceramics Biennial (BCB)

**BCB and Arts Connect have enjoyed a strong working relationship and we have seen the impact this has had on our programmes and with the children and young people we work with.**

**BCB is located in Stoke-on-Trent, often cited as an area of social and economic deprivation. Aspirations among young people in the city are limited by a faded ceramics industry which has impacted on the prospects of local communities over the previous decades. The BCB programme seeks to address this through the use of clay and creative programming to inspire young people and the wider community, to help them believe that there is value in their local area, in its history and heritage, as well as its future.**

Photos © BCB

## Partnership Investment

In 2017, Arts Connect awarded BCB a Partnership Investment of £50,000 for a new programme that would see more students in the city using clay in the classroom to improve their learning outcomes. The CLAY School Programme was developed to take a cross-curricular approach, with artists running workshops and CPD sessions for teachers so that they could implement these skills on a daily basis with their children. With a heavy emphasis on 'STEM' subjects at the time, CLAY School aimed to add that very much needed 'A' (art) to create 'STEAM' and we have now worked with over 30 local schools across our education programming.

Arts Connect were not just key investors in the CLAY School Programme, but also champions and supporters along the way. The benefits of partnership working were clearly demonstrated in their involvement at all stages of the programme's development and delivery, including being proactive in sharing information about BCB and our work. This allowed not just for increased networking and the visibility of BCB, but also for more people and organisations to learn about Arts Connect and benefit from the programmes and support that they can offer – helping to build a healthy cultural ecology.

We aim to further grow and develop CLAY School, based upon what we learnt in the earlier stages of the programme, this has been made possible through Arts Connect's initial support.

## Arts Award

Working with children and young people is a key part of the BCB programming and through start up support from Arts Connect we added further value to that offer through Arts Award. For instance, between 2015-21, 750 Arts Awards were gained by students from local schools through visits to the six-week BCB Festival and we have maintained that provision.

## CEP (Stoke Creates)

BCB has also had a role within the Stoke and North Staffordshire Cultural Education Partnership (CEP), from its inception in 2016. The ambitions and values of the CEP align well with BCB's focus on place, creativity, and community and in early 2020, BCB's Education Programme Manager, Natalie Armitage, took on the role of **Chair of Stoke and North Staffordshire Cultural Education Partnership**.

## Leadership

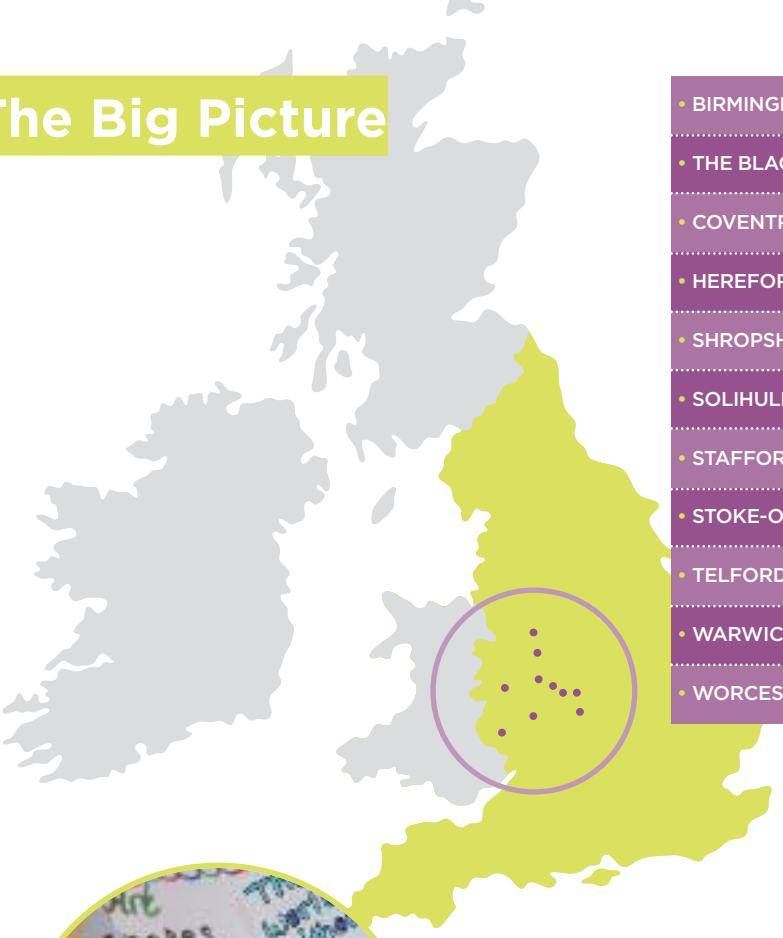
BCB's development has been further enhanced through our staff accessing leadership events and training opportunities. Natalie has recently started on the Arts Connect Senior Leadership Programme that will lead to an MBA.
This continued delivery of professional development opportunities for leaders in the arts and cultural sector who work with and for young people has been invaluable in ensuring stronger skillsets and greater confidence of the workforce in the region.

> *My role within BCB had been at a tangent to my previous career path in academia, so I came with the ideas and the passion, but not always the practical knowledge of how to implement and make a success of them. The Senior Leadership Programme and other training and support from Arts Connect have been invaluable for my progression within BCB and the CEP, helping me to expand and grow my knowledge and skillset.* **Natalie Armitage, BCB's Education Programme Manager**

# ARTS CONNECT: The Big Picture

## Leading Change with and for Children and Young People

Since 2015 we have worked across the West Midlands including the local authorities of Birmingham, the Black Country (Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall, Wolverhampton), Coventry, Solihull, Stoke-on-Trent and Telford & Wrekin as well as the shire counties of Herefordshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Worcestershire and Warwickshire with:



- BIRMINGHAM
- THE BLACK COUNTRY
- COVENTRY
- HEREFORDSHIRE
- SHROPSHIRE
- SOLIHULL
- STAFFORDSHIRE
- STOKE-ON-TRENT
- TELFORD & WREKIN
- WARWICKSHIRE
- WORCESTERSHIRE

**923** schools

**650** artists, creative, cultural and heritage organisations and local government

We have worked with 5 local authority districts with the highest proportion of children in income deprivation in the UK*:

**397** schools & arts & cultural organisations in **Birmingham**

**92** schools & arts & cultural organisations in **Sandwell**

**98** schools & arts & cultural organisations in **Stoke-on-Trent**

**81** schools & arts & cultural organisations in **Walsall**

**55** schools & arts & cultural organisations in **Wolverhampton**

*The English Indices of Deprivation 2019

# Transforming Leadership and Ambition

## In designing our programme, we focussed on how we could make a long-term impact that would resonate down the years.

This lies in the hearts, minds and ambitions of the professionals working with children and young people and is evidenced in the behaviours and programmes of the organisations they work in. Our answer was to focus on the leadership capacity within the system. We noticed that there was a need to elevate the leadership confidence and skills of the critical agents – the creators, producers and managers of participation and engagement, the education and learning staff in schools, youth leaders, children, and young people - and create new platforms for them to exercise and flex their leadership.

These people have typically been last in the queue for recognition and development, so we aimed to grow their professional identities and self-concept as leaders of change: to be skilled and confident to lead the process of constant renewal and adaptation in response to a changing environment, shifting expectations and the needs of the children and young people themselves.

### What did we do?

We started talking about leadership as a practice, not a position, and raising the expectations of 'our community' in this way.

We looked across our activities to identify where there was potential to build leadership growth as well as creating bespoke interventions such as:

**• A programme of extensive leadership development for creative and cultural professionals that has a progression route, leading to postgraduate qualifications and establishing a creative and cultural leadership community.**

**• Art form networks where creative and cultural sector engagement and participation professionals lead innovative programmes to develop practice.**

**• Arts Ambassador School Networks that embed leadership development for education staff and children, providing formal training for children and giving status and mentoring for teachers to lead networks, many of whom were in the early stages of their career.**

**• Extensive support for the many early career and experienced leaders guiding their schools through the Artsmark programme.**

**• Moonbeams, our early years programme, bringing together artists, early years practitioners and researchers to build pedagogical leadership across settings and disciplines.**

An outcome of this approach has seen an increasingly connected group of professional colleagues seeking to model a style of inclusive, democratic, collaborative, and dispersed leadership that is now reshaping engagement and participatory practice.

In legitimising them as leaders they are better equipped and ready for the challenge of shaping their visions of a fairer future. This is also demonstrated throughout our programme by children and young people as well as professionals becoming confident to use their voice and exercise their influence.

# THE ARTS CONNECT EFFECT

## In Transforming Leadership & Ambition, we have:

### CREATIVE & CULTURAL LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

- Nurtured 9 leadership cohorts
- Developed 162 leaders, 51 from National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs), 33 freelancers & 78 other arts organisations
- Run 6 Conventions with 162 delegates
- Run 7 Open Space leadership sessions with over 70 delegates
- Developed the Centre for Creative & Cultural Leadership, University of Wolverhampton
- Conducted ground-breaking research with **Young People's Cultural Journeys*

### ARTS AMBASSADORS

- Partnered with 14 school networks
- Involving 101 schools, 755 teachers & senior leaders
- Led CPD sessions with 3,000 teachers & school staff
- Worked with 66 artists
- Supported 4 Young Assistant Artists, aged 19-25
- Developed 130+ Arts Ambassador Lead Teachers
- Trained 1,175 Young Arts Ambassadors
- Engaged 6,000 teachers, school staff, parents, carers & 30,000 children
- Delivered to 11,200 children

### MOONBEAMS IN EARLY YEARS

- Run CPD for 500 educators, 70 artists & 45 academics
- Run 1 international Conference, for 100+ delegates
- Worked with 58 EY settings
- Action research in 12 education settings, 300 staff, 12 artists & 4 academics

### ARTSMARK

- Signed up 20% of West Midlands schools to Artsmark
- Delivered 156 Artsmark training sessions to 1,311 teachers & senior leaders
- Run 72 Development Days for 886 teaching staff & senior leaders
- Run 44 Impact Sessions for 231 teachers & senior leaders
- Run 11 Artsmark Partnership Programme sessions with 70 arts organisations & artists registered as Artsmark Partners

**Young People's Cultural Journeys research carried out in partnership with Morris Hargreaves McIntyre & We Are Frilly*

# CREATIVE & CULTURAL LEADERSHIP PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

**In 2015, a needs analysis of arts and cultural organisations for whom engagement and participation is essential highlighted that this group face significant leadership challenges. They are responsible for:**

- Public relations, working with schools, families, and communities.
- Earning income from their programmes.
- Delivery of educational and charitable activities.
- Managing the impact of organisational change.

Learning and engagement professionals were then and still are delivering with little or no leadership development support. The analysis showed a strong need to have greater influence within their organisations and the wider sector. Building their confidence and skills to influence became key to supporting them to maximise potential.

Creating a leadership programme around the theme of *leading through influence* with personal development, working in partnership and leading and managing change at its core, became a priority for us and was developed in partnership with industry support.

Six years later we have a leadership community which is confidently building partnerships and delivering projects of greater impact.

*Other areas of CPD:*

Strategic Evaluation for Cultural Leadership, Creative Digital Leadership, and courses to support the creative and cultural sector to work with schools.

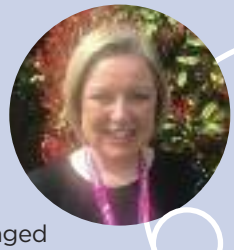
Read Rachel's story of her leadership journey.

# STORIES OF IMPACT: Rachel Sharpe, RSC Creative Placemaking and Public Programmes Manager

**In 2016 I took part in the *Leadership Through Influence* programme and what I learned totally changed my view of who and what a leader is. Having the opportunity to discover new practices, and test ideas in a safe space was a breath of fresh air. The realisation that we all lead for something, no matter what our title, gave me a new perspective on my practice and deeper understanding of what I lead for.**

As a grass roots engagement practitioner, these insights changed my view of how creative co-produced project design, rooted in lived experience, might shift the nature of cultural organisations for and by the communities they serve. I tested these ideas whilst working for the National Trust as Visitor Experience Manager of Roundhouse, building a creative programme for city exploration and as Creative Partnerships Manager for South Worcestershire as part of the flagship Croome Redefined project.

I will be forever grateful to the National Trust for encouraging my leadership studies by supporting my application for the Senior Leaders Master's Degree Apprenticeship (Arts and Culture) with Arts Connect.



During that time, I had the opportunity to be mentored by Deb Kermode, Chief Executive and Creative Director of Midlands Arts Centre. In those sessions Deb inspired me to trial new ways of leading, step way out of my comfort zone, recognise the value of an interpersonal leadership style and challenged my understanding of impact and scope. I took these ideas into my business research project where I examined the effectiveness of transformational leadership on co-produced projects within the National Trust through an ethnographic approach. This process allowed new understandings of how to motivate teams to shape creative projects directly with participants, and how this work could positively affect the connection between organisations and communities. Since completing my apprenticeship I have left the National Trust and I am now working for the Royal Shakespeare Company, where I am being inspired to further test these leadership understandings, to continue the organisation's ambition to put people at the heart of what they do.

> *You are one of the reasons I stayed in my roles. I had few allies before you and you changed that for me - it's massively impacted South Asian communities in Coventry! I have created brand new platforms for South Asians and formed new talent pipelines because of the emotional investment by you to me!*
> **Navkiran Mann, Leadership Alumni, Producer North East, Coventry City of Culture Trust, Freelance Writer and Poet**

# THE ARTS AMBASSADOR PROGRAMME

**Since 2015, we've created Arts Ambassador partnerships with 14 school networks with a minimum of five schools in each network. The multi-year partnership supports the development of strategic arts leadership, curriculum development, CPD for teachers, and artists working with children in the school. Schools contribute to a budget that we match to commission arts and cultural organisations to run a programme of activity with a year group or target group. Children and young people are also trained by Arts Connect as Young Arts Ambassadors.**

We develop skills and expertise within the network to enable them to become sustainable, creating a supportive and developmental community of school leaders that will continue after the partnership with us ends.

Evaluation of the programme concluded that it leads to schools offering high quality art experiences to their pupils, improving their understanding of the arts, and increasing their skills in critical engagement, as well as supporting wellbeing. The benefits to staff are significant with Network Leads developed as champions of the arts and new relationships built between schools and the cultural sector. Achieving Artsmark is key for many schools and the programme with support from Arts Connect directly contributes to success.

**Arts Ambassador Lead Teachers**
As part of our organisational approach to leadership, we've developed teachers' leadership.

In each network a Lead Teacher becomes the coordinator for the whole network, each school appoints an Arts Ambassador Lead Teacher supported by a member of the school's leadership team.

Arts Ambassador Lead Teachers develop strategic arts leadership in their school and across their networks, co-planning and evaluating the Arts Ambassador programme as a team of arts specialists. They develop the school curriculum through Artsmark and take part in and lead CPD for all staff. They also develop and support students as Young Arts Ambassadors and where appropriate deliver Arts Awards. The Lead Teachers manage the commissioned artists and cultural organisations across the network and contribute to and take shared responsibility for celebrating the work created.

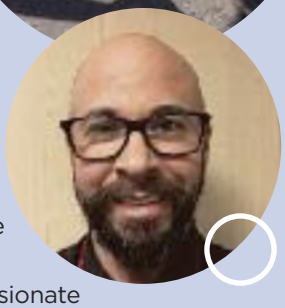
Read Will's story of the school's development of leadership in the arts as a result of the Arts Ambassador programme.

# STORIES OF IMPACT: Fibbersley Park Academy, Willenhall, Walsall

**The arts thrive within communities and across arts organisations, so when leading an immersive and engaging arts programme for your school, it is vital to build creative networks across sectors. At Victoria Academies Trust, we have been part of the Arts Ambassador School Network and have forged strong connections with Arts Connect.**

Through the programme we connected with The National Theatre's *Let's Play* and our children and staff have had the opportunity to work directly with professional artists and poets. By delivering quality CPD and artistic support to staff, as a leader, you are empowering colleagues who may not have the confidence or subject knowledge to teach the arts.

Our schools performed a poetry showcase at The Old Rep Theatre, supported by Arts Connect and coordinated by our Trust's arts network (creative Arts Ambassador teachers as leaders working across the multi-academy trust). Linking our poetry with curriculum topics enabled staff and children to create purposeful performance art with strong themes and imagery. Children received Arts Ambassador training, conducted interviews with prospective artists, participated in workshops and worked together to pitch various creative ideas to staff. The Lead Teachers then supported the Young Arts Ambassadors to deliver their action plan.



I have developed my leadership role within my school and across the MAT and this has created lots more opportunities for our school. Be passionate about the arts, explore artistic opportunities and take creative risks – our children deserve it!

**Will Dewar, Teacher**

*Photo © Will Dewar Photos © Shireland Hall School thanks to Infuse Dance*

> *The programme has enabled the school and myself to be more ambitious and confident in our arts provision.* **Arts Ambassador Survey**

# YOUNG ARTS AMBASSADORS

As part of our Arts Ambassador programme, children and young people are trained as Young Arts Ambassadors giving them an active voice and a leadership role in developing the creative and cultural learning taking place within their school, as well as growing their own confidence, creative skills and talents.

Students have formal training sessions and then create a SMART action plan which they then deliver in their schools and communities. Read Nadeem's story as Headteacher, of the impact of the Young Arts Ambassadors in his school.

Photo © Shirestone Primary Academy

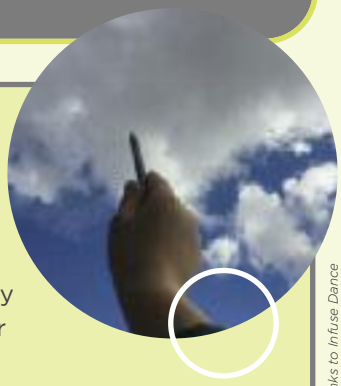


Photo © Shireland Hall School thanks to Infuse Dance

# STORIES OF IMPACT: Shirestone Primary Academy, Birmingham

**"...We want to empower young people and get them fully immersed in the arts, we want to really develop their leadership skills and give them a platform...**

The Arts Ambassador programme is managed firstly when the children come and sit down with me with some hot chocolate and biscuits and they discuss with me how they would like art to be within the school. They come up with some very good ideas and we feed that into our curriculum...

We do various forms of art with the children. Some of the children really enjoy drawing, some love acting and of course some like dancing like myself... but we get them involved in those conversations very early on.

We've asked children to interview (the) artists that come into the school because it's only fair for them to pick the artists they need and that really develops their leadership skills as well...

...What's next for us is building on what we're doing already... I want to develop the young people into really confident young people...able to express themselves as much as they want to (&) get other children passionate about arts... I want them to excel in everything they're doing... I want to continue working with lots of different schools.... And of course, what I really want to see is more young people out there working as artists, working as producers, dancers, and actors..."

**Nadeem Bashir, Headteacher - taken from the Amplify film, www.amplify-voice.uk**

*I wanted to be an Arts Ambassador because I liked to draw, write and sing, and I wanted to inspire younger children to love art as much as I do. You get to deliver assemblies to the school; you can help younger children with their arts and help younger children have more confidence. The Headteacher told us his story about when he went to drama school, and he inspired me and helped me develop more confidence.* **Mark, Young Arts Ambassador, Shirestone Primary Academy**

*Being an Arts Ambassador has made me confident and given me good communication skills. I helped the younger ones at school with their artwork and encouraged them to have their own ideas. I've been a big part of the Artsmark project. I have been involved in supporting lots of arts events and activities. I did my work experience at the Belgrade Theatre in Coventry. Drama has given me confidence to engage with different age groups and meet new people.* **Holly, Young Arts Ambassador 2017, Sherbourne Fields School, Coventry Special Schools Arts Ambassador Network**

*The Young Arts Ambassador programme is all about developing young children's leadership skills as part of youth voice, and it's also about giving children the opportunity to play an active role in the development of art curriculum...(the) programme has been running for over four years now, and as a school and as a multi-academy trust we embrace the arts...* **Aisha, Arts Ambassador Lead Teacher at Shirestone Primary Academy**

# MOONBEAMS IN EARLY YEARS

Moonbeams is our programme for 0-5 years. It raises the profile of early years creativity and develops new sustainable practice by building the leadership and professional skills of artists and educators. Through active learning networks they address issues of quality and access of provision, particularly for young children experiencing significant challenges.

At the heart of our Moonbeams programme is the belief in child-led learning, in and through creativity that is enabled by skilled adults, such as educators and artists, through considered interventions and provocations. We believe that creativity can be transformative and plays an essential part in the development of all children from birth.

Our key focus is on the critical role of arts, culture, and creativity in the development of creativity, language and communication, playfulness, and resilience in early years.

The Moonbeams programme is developed in partnership with organisations and individuals from the early years and arts and cultural sectors in the West Midlands, such as the Centre for Research in Early Childhood (CREC), arts and cultural organisations, individual expert educators and practitioners, academics, artists, and pedagogues and is continually developed to take into account the changes that happen across communities and sectors.

## Pedagogy

Moonbeams is influenced by the creative approach to child-led development linked to the educational philosophy of Reggio Emilia, a belief that babies and children express themselves in *'a hundred different ways'* and that adults have a key role in enabling children to develop their capabilities and potential through arts and creativity. Young children's creative learning is complex and evolving and just like a moonbeam can be challenging *'to catch and pin it down'.* Our Moonbeams programme brings people together to share ways of capturing, reflecting, and understanding the complexities of creative learning through the arts. In doing so we demonstrate and illustrate our experiences to create our own reflective 'Moonbeams Moments' that challenge and develop practice.

Moonbeams provides a programme of action research, training and professional development, conferences and seminars, themed social gatherings, resources, interactive social networks including a Facebook community, and podcasts to support leadership and creative and reflective practice in early years arts and creativity.

*Photos © Gossey Lane*

> *With the Reception teacher, we attended the Moonbeams seminar earlier in the week. I just wanted to say how fantastic it was, and we gained so much from it. As a Reggio inspired school it re-energised and focussed us on our practice in Reception and the whole school.* **Participant, Moonbeams Seminar**

> *The training gave us the backing and confidence to follow the child-led approach and gave importance to this within the project. It gave our actions and teaching credibility through research, theoretical underpinning, and reflection time. It also gave us the chance to put our journey in the context of others.* **Feedback from the Action Research Programme**

> *The training reignited the practice of learning again and refreshed existing pedagogy. It also cemented relationships as a setting and as a Moonbeams collective which resulted in a massive shift to 'in the moment' practice.* **Feedback from the Action Research Programme**

# ARTSMARK

**Artsmark is a framework for school change, designed to help settings embed arts, culture and creativity across the curriculum accredited by Arts Council England.**

**We have provided workshops, resources and 1.2.1 support to guide and support schools to achieve the maximum impact from their journey.**

At Allens Croft Primary School they used the flexibility of Artsmark to bring everyone in the school together to audit and improve all aspects of their provision from strategy through to activity, elevating the role and purpose of creativity in the school's ambitions. They show how strong and supportive leadership and innovative approaches to creativity, arts and culture adds to the joy of school life.

Photos © Allens Croft Primary School

## STORIES OF IMPACT: Allens Croft Primary School, Birmingham. A Platinum Artsmark School

Artsmark has been the key driver of our success with the arts in school since we started our journey five years ago.

Artsmark gives permission as leaders to try new things, to raise the profile of the arts in different ways, it requires backing from senior leaders and governors, ensuring that everything we do has a level of prestige across school. Most importantly, the children love it because they make most of the decisions, wherever possible.

The whole process has had an impact in every area of arts learning imaginable. Most significant was in the development of our 'Arts Council' of pupil ambassadors, who make decisions and advocate for the arts. The 'Arts Council' has made talent shows an annual event, developed the dance strand of our curriculum, and gained permission for an outdoor stage to be built! Children have to apply to be on the 'Arts Council' and in the first year I had 18 applications and by year three over 80.

We have restructured how the arts are taught within curriculum time. We moved away from the model whereby class teachers are expected to impart expert knowledge in every area of the curriculum. Now we have key staff members and cultural partners providing high quality learning experiences across as much of the school as possible. Our Creative Arts Lead covers teachers' PPA time, teaching music and drama in a structured sequence of opportunities that enable the children to learn with a specialist in those subjects. Our Dance Lead has responsibility for the dance units that are under the PE umbrella, and they collaborate with local dance companies to develop our children's skills.

A tangible effect of our Artsmark involvement is our use of partnerships to improve our provision. We are a Shakespeare Birthplace Trust hub school and celebrate Shakespeare week every year, we work closely with the Birmingham Hippodrome Education Network and have an artist in school every week, visiting a different year group each half term. The children look forward to these sessions because they enable them to learn differently and to expand their creativity and expression.

My leadership of Artsmark has benefitted my career development too, for instance, the school contributed financially towards my postgraduate study which probably wouldn't have happened without the impact of the programme.

Artsmark inspires confidence. First, the audit of provision was essential - we couldn't have made changes had it not been for a clear set of criteria to judge ourselves against and work towards. Second, support from Arts Connect is amazing. Attending Development Days alongside other schools, hearing how things happen in other places and 'magpieing' the ideas that might work for us is great. There's always a list of ideas to bring back to the arts team and our children's 'Arts Council'!

**Dan Jones, Teacher, Creative Arts Lead**

*We discuss what art forms to learn about. It's really exciting to help Mr Jones improve the arts.*
**Alex, Y6 Arts Councillor**

# Building Cultural Communities

## Children and young people's opportunities to engage with publicly funded arts and culture are largely shaped by the places they live, the schools they go to, their ability to travel, their visibility and the relevance to their lives.

In many communities there are opportunities offered by private and voluntary organisations, like youth theatre, dance schools or singing in a religious setting, as well as the personal 'homemade' cultural activity of young people. Together these make a 'cultural ecology' in which young people grow up.

We saw evidence that once strong local networks were weaker than they had been, and there was reduced capacity to connect, share and build on opportunities for children and young people. One significant response was to lead the development of Local Cultural Education Partnerships (LCEPs) across the region to convene people with local knowledge and a stake in the future of their community to make a difference together and cohere and expand activities for young people. We have supported their set up and ongoing development, connecting them across the region and nationally to share knowledge, and co-investing with them in innovative new activity through our £2m Partnership Investment programme. These community partnerships proved invaluable during the lockdowns in providing support and galvanising a local response to the needs of young people. We worked with many of them to distribute packs of arts and craft materials, books, and resources to over 5,000 Children in Care, to children in the early years and those in need.

We have also expanded cultural communities through the regional leadership networks of professionals working with young people in dance, heritage, digital and film. They started as a way to connect those with similar challenges and evolved to set new ambitions for audiences, participants, and their practice. We have seen the Dance Development Leaders Group become integral to the Commonwealth Games Birmingham 2022 Festival and the heritage group tackling together the issue of presenting the challenging parts of their collections. Leading the *Inspired by British Art Show 9* Arts Connect Learning Programme, offering our expert staff to engage young people with the Commonwealth Games Birmingham 2022 Festival and partnering with the regional Music Hubs to support their collective ambition has deepened our community reach in ways we couldn't have imagined in 2015.

The connections of young people to place and the strength of the cultural ecology they live in are central to the government's policy of 'Levelling Up' where greater pride of place and improved wellbeing are key measures of success. We want that for every place and the case studies in this section tell the story of how we have contributed to that change.

Photo © Simon Hadley 2017

# THE ARTS CONNECT EFFECT

## In Building Cultural Communities, we have:

### LOCAL CULTURAL EDUCATION PARTNERSHIPS

- 14 LCEPs with 2,598 members
- Awarded 14 PI's
- **LCEPs have:**
- 7,834 social media followers
- Published 17 Arts & Cultural Directories
- Engaged 41,823 children & young people
- Run CPD for 4,827 teachers
- Delivered 812 events
- Created 276 commissions

### PARTNERSHIP INVESTMENT

- Co-invested in 32 programmes
- Invested £1,750,264
- Matched £2,000,000+
- **Engaged:**
- 65,855 children & young people
- 1,075 artists, arts & cultural organisations
- 5,536 educators
- 25,550 parents & carers
- 870 personnel cross sector
- 250,000 audiences

### DANCE DEVELOPMENT LEADERS GROUP

- **Engaged:**
- 70+ members
- 4,929 audiences
- 35 regional dance professionals
- 1,132 young people

### HERITAGE EDUCATION LEADERS GROUP

- 15 members from heritage venues & sites cross-region
- Produced: *Challenging Conversations: teaching challenging & difficult subjects to children & young people in Galleries, Museums & Heritage Sites*

### THE CREATIVE DIGITAL PROGRAMME

- Run 6 Digital Conferences
- Worked with 81 artists & organisations
- Awarded £98,000 of bursaries to 25 recipients
- Supported 18 Creative Digital Leadership students
- Led the West Midlands Digital Network

### THE CREATIVE FILM NETWORK

- Awarded £9,000 of bursaries to 4 recipients
- Provided 2 school Film & TV Careers Fairs
- Led the Film Network with 20+ organisations
- Worked with 56 schools, FE, HE, art organisations & artists

### *BRITISH ART SHOW 9*

- **Worked with:**
- 56 schools
- 108 teachers
- 2,500 children & young people
- 19 freelance creative practitioners
- 18 University students & emerging artists
- 10 local organisations
- Invested £50,000 in local commissions

### LET'S CREATE/CRAFT

- Delivered 5,224 Let's Create packs
- To 15 locations

### MUSIC HUBS

- **Worked with:**
- 12 Music Hubs
- 14 Music Services

# LOCAL CULTURAL EDUCATION PARTNERSHIPS

**In 2015, Arts Council England launched the Cultural Education Challenge, asking arts, cultural, heritage and education sectors, including Local Authorities and others, to unite to develop a placed based offer for children and young people. One of the means for achieving this was to create collaborative partnerships called Local Cultural Education Partnerships (LCEPs). LCEPs focus on sharing resources and skills across sectors, bringing about coherent and high quality creative and cultural education provision in their locality.**

Discover Aaron's journey as a young person becoming a CEP (Cultural Education Partnership) Steering Group member.

## STORIES OF IMPACT: Worcestershire CEP

Photo © Aaron Corbett

**When nearing the end of university, I didn't know how to take my next step into the arts. I was advised to join a Facebook group called 'Worcestershire Young Producers Group', which was part funded by the CEP. Our time in the group was cut short due to Covid, however it was enriching for me. It introduced me to the idea of a CEP, and I now understand how much work CEPs do to bring arts to young people. The CEP sent me on training to see if editing software was right for the organisation and that software is now used by the CEP and it is integral to all marketing material. The group put me in contact with other creative professionals who I have worked with and for, an example being performing in *Tales from the Old Palace* for the Arches Festivals *Light Night* and the CEP's *Creativity Exchange 2020.***

For *Creativity Exchange 2020* I presented a TED style talk about how the arts helped mould me into who I am. I expressed that I didn't have much access to arts and my love for theatrics came from rap music. After my talk I was met with a swarm of teachers, saying it was eye-opening and inspiring. I then realised how important the relationship between teachers and local artists is for the next generation of creatives. I am part of the Worcestershire CEP Steering Group, giving my perspective as a young local artist. I'm proud that I can aid the coming together of teachers and artists and help facilitate arts programmes that bring arts to young people like young me.

**Aaron Corbett, Writer and Performer**

> *The vision of Birmingham Creates is for a world-class cultural education for every child and young person in the city. As part of our new action plan, we are delivering Birmingham Arts School and are working with Arts Connect on a work experience pilot, researching how the creative sector can give access to those students that have least opportunity. The Birmingham Creates Learning Group will bring together teacher networks to provide a joined-up approach to CPD and create new connections. The Birmingham Arts School is also co-delivering 3 ambitious city-wide projects, Commonwealth Connections, Civic Histories and Flow.* **Birmingham Creates**

> *By working in partnership, in our City of Culture year, we have been connecting locally and nationally, inviting cultural leaders from around the UK to come and be part of our Coventry Cultural Education offer. The PI Fund has supported Coventry's cultural organisations, schools, and youth services to share our skills and learn together with national organisations.* **Coventry CEP**

> *Children and young people aged 3-19 from Sandwell will benefit from a unique three-year arts education programme: INside OUTside: A Hospital of the Future, developed in partnership with us, Sandwell Cultural Education Partnership (SCEP), Arts Connect, Your Trust Charity and the new Midland Metropolitan University Hospital (MMUH).* **Sandwell CEP**

> *In response to research from Shropshire Council we are running an innovative three-year research and development programme to enable children and young people aged 0 to 19 with special educational needs, and their families, to participate in more and better arts and culture activities in Shropshire.* **Culture Consortium Shropshire**

# LOCAL CULTURAL EDUCATION PARTNERSHIPS

**Louise discusses her role as the current Chair of Cannock Chase CEP and their journey so far.**

Photo © Cannock Chase CEP

## STORIES OF IMPACT: Cannock Chase CEP

**Cannock Chase CEP was formed in 2017. It's developed into a partnership that provides a voice for children and young people on their engagement in creative opportunities. One of our first steps was to talk and listen to children and young people through our *Shout Out!* consultation, taking place with various groups, including schools, Pupil Referral Units, Looked After Children and the Princes Trust. This work enabled partners to understand local need, perceptions, barriers and instruct future planning. Coming together as partners gave us time to reflect and address where we can support the findings as a CEP, as well as individually.**

Our CEP has sought funding from other areas, giving children and young people a platform to share their ideas for their town centres, through the *Creative Corners* project. An animation has been created that shows how our children and young people value creativity and culture on our high streets, highlighting the importance of how the CEP can engage with children in wider local agendas.

Through Arts Connect support, as individuals we have benefited from the regional platform and access to wider networks that support our own roles and organisations. Such networks have also assisted in advocating Cannock Chase to a wider audience and reaching new partners.

We've been successful in using the award of Partnership Investment (PI) funds and their development support to attract matched investment of over £100,000 towards the *'Local Place Makers, Global Change Makers Programme',* that includes investment partners *Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Special Area of Conservation Partnership, Cannock Chase Council,* and *Inspiring Healthy Lifestyles.* With many deprived wards in the district, the programme will enable children with limited access to participation, the chance to become leaders and local champions. As we welcome the Commonwealth Games onto the Chase and our local priorities address the climate agenda, our programme is timely in bringing together non-arts and environmental partners to support young people to take ownership of their environment and contribute to their sense of place.

*'Our LA is working with the CEP to support the delivery of our key priorities such as the environment and climate agenda. Through creative engagement with children and young people, the partnership is allowing us to address serious topics as well as providing a platform to directly engage and listen to our future'* **Cannock Chase Council.**

**Louise Rose, Creative Development Officer, Inspiring Healthy Lifestyles**

> *We worked with British Ceramics Biennial (BCB) and Haywood Academy to develop a pilot work experience programme. Year 8 students took part in the selection of work for the Fresh Exhibition at BCB 2021 Festival. Their contributions became integral to the work chosen. We are working with other organisations to trial this model so students in the city can learn about creative career options.* **Stoke-on-Trent & North Staffordshire CEP**

> *Walsall Arts for All is supported by Arts Connect's PI programme, bringing together schools and professional artists to celebrate Walsall's diverse cultures and communities. The CEP will also be placing young people at the heart of its work and involve them in shaping Walsall's cultural future by creating a Cultural Manifesto for Walsall.* **Walsall CEP**

> *We're the first youth led CEP in the country. Over this past year we have created our name and logo with the assistance of the Royal Shakespeare Company's Visual Communications team and started our first project looking at transforming arts access for children and young people across Warwickshire.* **Shout Out for the Arts Warwickshire**

> *We have secured £65,000 PI from Arts Connect to support a two-year programme. We will be working on developing a young person's Festival, building on the legacy of British Art Show 9, and providing opportunities for CEP members to deliver funded activity.* **Wolverhampton CEP**

# PARTNERSHIP INVESTMENT

Our Partnership Investment (PI) programme seeks to secure, through co-investment, high quality arts and cultural activity for children and young people. We have invested in opportunities that represent a significant strategic development, enabling current activities to become more sustainable and through them encouraging new investment in arts and cultural activity for children and young people. We also hope to increase the arts and cultural learning taking place in the settings we invest in through programmes such as Arts Award and Artsmark.

Our PI fund from 2015-2018 was open across sectors and funded programmes that supported partnerships and networks that were creating significant new opportunities and were strategically placed to attract other investment. From 2018 we invested through the LCEPs, enabling them to build their capacity and delivery by securing new investment to improve the cultural lives of children and young people in response to local needs.

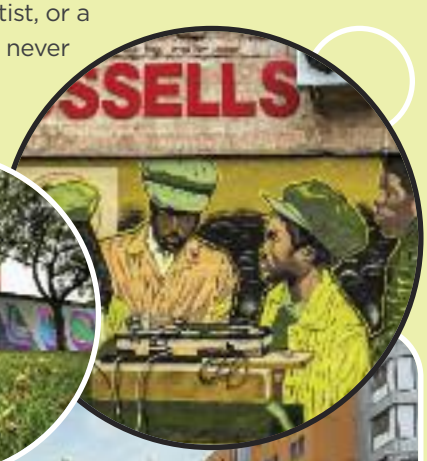
Read the story of Gallery 37 and how Punch Records developed new ways of working through PI.

# STORIES OF IMPACT: Gallery 37, Punch Records

**Punch developed an annual arts training programme for emerging artists aged 16-25 in a six-month programme, which included a showcase of their work, an arts fair, volunteering opportunities and mentoring. The programme offered paid work for professional artists and companies across artforms to support the young people and a programme of networking with groups of stakeholders who also mentored participants, enabling emerging partnerships to develop into long term relationships.**

**Ammo Talwar, CEO Punch Records**
Gallery 37 is Birmingham's only multi-art form, training and talent development programme and works across the city of Birmingham with over sixty young artists to take them through a serious six-month process around their needs, their talents and moving them forward. I heard about Partnership Investment via Arts Connect and it felt as if it was the right way to look at investment as it was about new partnerships. It felt like a new way of working, it felt like you really had to work differently, talk to new people, work with different agencies, so it sat perfectly with the types of art forms we wanted to work with, with Gallery 37 and really pushed us as an organisation. Partnership Investment really helped us to amplify Gallery 37, it wouldn't have taken place without that investment. We had some partners in place, we had some investment, but this ultimately was the catalyst.

**Shauna Latty, Young Artist**
Without Gallery 37 I don't think I'd be doing so much dance performance. I'd probably still just be doing teaching all the time and I never considered myself as an artist before this course. Now when people say what are you, I say a dance artist, or a choreographer and I never used to think about that.



*Photos © Punch Records*

# DANCE DEVELOPMENT LEADERS GROUP (DDLG)

Established in 2017, DDLG is one of our artform networks led in partnership with a Steering Group of NPO dance organisations, and in consultation with the wider membership. This comprises 70 plus dance professionals from core funded and project funded organisations as well as independents, working in all parts of the region and eighteen of the participants are Arts Connect's leadership alumni. This informal network meets to explore potential for collaboration and mutual support, articulating shared ambitions and embracing exciting possibilities.

We support the leadership and facilitation of the network, with Birmingham Royal Ballet, FABRIC and the many other organisations and individuals who have given their time to steer activity. DDLG pioneered a creative enquiry action research approach to learning and development, beginning with an Experiential Learning Exchange Sequence in which dance participation professionals were paired across the region and across different sizes and types of organisations to exchange practice.

#DanceConnect R&D evolved in response to the first Covid lockdown in 2020, setting the scene for the Steering Group to secure additional funding for Beyond Borders 2021 and to negotiate an exceptional partnership with the Birmingham 2022 Festival team to deliver Critical Mass, as a high-profile signature of the Commonwealth Games.

As a result of the DDLG young people of all backgrounds and abilities from across the region have a substantial role in the Festival. Young people engaged in these projects are now also beginning to lead and have ambitions of their own, setting up a Youth Dance Company for the West Midlands.

DDLG is a unique, responsive, ambitious approach to regionwide strategic development, connectivity and growth and represents a model of culturally democratic innovation which is unique to the region and envied in other parts of the country.

# ARTS CONNECT'S PARTNERSHIP with ASCEL LIBRARY NETWORK

In partnership with the Library Network, we devised and delivered the innovative digital Arts Council England funded project *A Place Free of Judgement* with Blast Theory and we supported the ground-breaking project for early years children, *Early Hurley Burley.* Learning from each project was shared across the network. The impact of engaging in this partnership for librarians, their communities and the artists involved can be heard below:

# STORIES OF IMPACT: Sue Ball, Staffordshire Libraries and ASCEL

As a senior manager within my organisation with responsibility for the implementation of service policy and development, engaging with Arts Connect has enabled me to think bigger, be bolder and more ambitious. I feel more confident in working with colleagues as a region as opposed to colleagues just within my library service to reach shared priority outcomes. I also feel more confident in working with arts organisations across the region and being actively involved in the establishment of a new CEP.

> *...working with Arts Connect and the library sector of the West Midlands made us all realise the challenges of ongoing participation with people who aren't necessarily engaged in culture and who have huge challenges in their own lives. Our organisation is increasingly committed to these groups of people who we first worked with because of A Place Free of Judgement and as well as policy developments, we are working always to improve how we work in innovative and ambitious ways to reflect this.* **Ju Row Farr, Director, Blast Theory**

> *...The schools strategy course de-mystified strategy writing for me. I have gone on to co-author a CYP strategy for the library service which has had really good feedback. It alerted me to a strength in strategic thinking which I didn't know I possessed before starting the course.* **Hayley Reynolds, Shropshire Libraries**

# HERITAGE EDUCATION LEADERS GROUP (HELG)

Arts Connect convenes and leads a group of Heritage Education Leaders in the West Midlands comprised of senior education managers from a range of museums and heritage sites. We provide a strategic lead for the region on heritage education. The network was set up in 2015 and since then has galvanised these leaders to work together, taking innovative and creative approaches to tackling pressing issues within the heritage sector.

In 2017 the group identified that teaching difficult and challenging subjects to children and young people at heritage venues was an area that affected all group members. They commissioned a twelve-month research project **Challenging Conversations: teaching challenging and difficult subjects to children and young people in Galleries, Museums and Heritage Sites,* that used their real heritage examples and experiences to deliver a comprehensive report and practical guidelines. The findings of this report formed the basis for the development of guidance notes for creative and cultural sector professionals. *'Challenging Conversations – how to have a conversation about a difficult subject well',* a starting point for creative and cultural professionals to be bold and provocative in telling unsafe stories. This has been used to support over 600 staff and volunteers in heritage venues across the West Midlands.

As part of this research, we were able to support the *What is Home?* exhibition at National Trust property Croome Court by Artist Kashif Nadim Chaudry, inspired by a period in Croome's history 1948 – 1978 when it housed a residential school, St Joseph's School for Boys.

**Christopher Ansell Head of Participation and Learning for the National Memorial Arboretum** spoke about the importance of the research:

*"Challenging Conversations allowed us to explore in depth the challenges we face engaging people in learning and discussion about many controversial subjects, specifically the history of the British Empire and Commonwealth of Nations. The subject prompts strong opinions and emotions, yet it is important that we enable young people to learn about an important part of our history which has shaped their lives today. Working with Arts Connect and the project team allowed us to explore how we can approach the subject in a sensitive and inclusive way by working with creative practitioners and using creative practice as a means to prompt exploration and discussion. It has been particularly relevant this year as we develop, design, and produce our large-scale programme of activity aligned with the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games and an aligned youth education festival."*

The latest challenge that the Heritage Education Leaders Group has identified is how to strategically respond to digital learning in a post pandemic world. This timely research will increase understanding of which digital activities and strategies work better for the arts/heritage sector and schools, by identifying digital good practice, challenges, and solutions.

Through a mixture of research and case studies the aim of the research is to gain a more nuanced understanding of how schools and arts/heritage organisations can maximise the benefits stemming from digital activities, including via a mix of in-person, digital and hybrid activities.

*Researched and written by A Merrie Noyse Music and Heritage Consultants on behalf of Arts Connect and Heritage Education Leaders Group, West Midlands. Edited by Susan Goodwin – Associate Director: Cultural Sector Partnerships, Arts Connect.

# THE CREATIVE DIGITAL PROGRAMME

**Since 2016, we've delivered a Creative Digital Programme seeking to nurture and innovate artistic digital practice and learning across the creative and cultural sectors in the West Midlands.**

We launched the Digital Pick and Mix brand, beginning with a conference exploring creative and technological practices.

The Digital Research and Development bursary was created. It has now been awarded to 25 organisations across the Digital and Thrive bursaries, enabling the sector to explore new ways of developing their creative practice or approaches in relation to their work with children and young people either through developing audiences, engagement, or participation.

In 2020 we launched our Creative Digital Leadership Programme, supporting the creative and cultural sector in developing a leadership role in their digital practice.

Read Deaf Explorer's story of how Arts Connect's Thrive Bursary helped them to develop their practice and their arts offer to Deaf children and linked them up with new school audiences.

# STORIES OF IMPACT: Deaf Explorer

**We were recipients of Arts Connect's Thrive Fund and alongside funding from Deaf Sport, this enabled us to test if we could reach more schools and expose more Deaf young people in mainstream settings to Deaf role models, using online platforms. Billy Read, a Deaf performing artist who specialises in Hip Hop theatre and street dance, created a series of street dance tutorial videos on YouTube in BSL for Deaf children to enjoy, be inspired by and learn new skills during lockdown. Schools requested that Billy present a live thirty-minute dance workshop online and run a workshop for the children in class. The live stream was fully accessible with communication support and voice over by us. We involved 24 schools with a Deaf Resource Base. Cycle 1 reached 150 primary school pupils and 36 secondary school pupils, Cycle 2 involved 149 pupils, and Cycle 3 delivered more sessions, and the number increased to 185.**

Billy Read demonstrated Deaf leadership amongst hearing peers. He was a Deaf role model, improving the self-esteem of Deaf children. The project allowed us to build strong connections in schools with Deaf children.

We learnt that live streaming workshops with Deaf artists was better for schools with hearing impairment support, rather than pre-recorded activity. For our outreach work in schools with projects by Deaf artists, we will now do online and face-to-face workshops.

Our research will be used to show the importance of employing Deaf creatives, when working with Deaf young people within groups of mixed ability, so that Deaf young people in mainstream schools have access to Deaf artists and feel inspired to have a career in the arts. We now feel able to approach a university to develop research into the impact of working with Deaf artists on young Deaf people's learning and feel that there is scope to develop this work further under the Arts Council England's Let's Create policy.

The project inspired a Deaf child to contact Blue Peter requesting that Billy receive a Blue Peter Badge.

What was amazing was that with this project we made many connections with schools. We used these to deliver a live stream of a large-scale Deaf music project with Ruth Montgomery and Evelyn Glennie.

**Alan McLean,**
**Deaf Explorer**

*Photos © Deaf Explorer*

> *We work non-verbally, which inspired me to create a non-verbal project during the programme... I had always been interested in the idea of making our online content more accessible... but hadn't had the opportunity... I decided to create a film describing what our company does. This film would be non-verbal... Working in this way forced me to rethink ways I usually do things... consulting with our young people at the very start of a project - as there is no one else that knows our work better than they do!*
> **Grace Smith, Open Theatre Company, Creative Digital Leadership Programme**

# THE CREATIVE FILM NETWORK

**In 2015, the Arts Connect Creative Film Network was launched, encompassing film-based companies who work with and support children and young people.**

**The Film Network is designed to share intelligence and good practice from across the region, developing partnerships, providing opportunities to engage children and young people in film-based activity and enabling innovative and future thinking practice centred around children and young people.**

Activities have included a cinema film ambassador programme, careers fairs, masterclasses, industry panels and Q&A events, R&D pilot projects and bespoke events alongside the Flatpack Festival and Into Film Festival.

Over the years the network has supported thousands of young people.

Read the stories of Flatpack, MediaActive and The Company who used R&D funding from us to work with local communities.

Photo © Flatpack

Photo © MediaActive & The Company

## STORIES OF IMPACT: Colour Box, Flatpack Projects

In 2020, after the pandemic shifted our Colour Box programme into the digital realm, we wanted to still provide valuable and inspiring experiences for our family audiences. Following R&D funding from Arts Connect, we developed an experimental, specialised, and alternative film project to engage young people, developing an interactive learning environment through 'event screenings' which took place online, with physical packs sent to children's homes.

The project was designed to offer young people from 3-6, and 7-11 a greater and more thoughtful experience when viewing films at home.

The pack itself was comprised of a range of activities that responded to the various films in Flatpack's short film programme. It contained sensory elements such as scratch and sniff cards, natural objects, and textured materials for 'feel-along' experiences. This was designed and developed in partnership with Sense to provide access to a range of audiences including those with complex disabilities.

**Sam Groves, Head of Programme, Flatpack**

## STORIES OF IMPACT: MediaActive and The Company

In 2021, during lockdowns, MediaActive in Shropshire, and The Company in Birmingham after receiving R&D support from Arts Connect, collaborated on a roll-out of MediaActive's *Adventures with Archives* programme. The development sought to widen involvement by increasing the diversity of the participants and geographic reach of the project, sharing skills across the region.

Thirty-five young people from Shropshire, Stoke and Birmingham, worked with archive film and with the support of poets, musicians, writers, curators, and filmmakers, to produce a new programme of vintage film aimed at contemporary audiences. The project built on previous work led by MediaActive and supported by BFI through Film Hub Midlands.

Young people worked together in small groups, either through managed sessions spending over 60 hours working over Zoom, or together between sessions. The diverse group of young curators and creators brought their differing perspectives when responding to the archive films. They curated work with audiences in mind, but their choices reflected their personal and cultural responses to the material.

The final programme created consisted of seven films, offering poignant, reflective, and illuminating works that spoke to audiences of all ages.

The young people are VERY proud of their programme. They are delighted that it has been screened at Film Festivals, installed in public spaces, and screened at cinema events.

They have all significantly extended their knowledge of film and understanding of programming for new and young audiences.

None of them knew that film archives existed before. The Media Archive for Central England input on how to effectively work with and source archive film content was a great addition to the knowledge that MediaActive could share.

**Sue Gainsborough, Director, MediaActive**

# BRITISH ART SHOW 9

The *British Art Show 9 (BAS9)* exhibition in Wolverhampton during spring 2022 created an 'ignition' moment for us to lead on a dynamic contemporary arts programme working with the University of Wolverhampton, local teachers, young people, and artists. The *Inspired by British Art Show 9* Arts Connect Learning Programme was developed to engage young people and inspire teachers. It has provided a springboard for new relationships, motivating new ways of working and encouraging young people and teachers to immerse themselves in local cultural opportunities.

Read the story of our *Inspired by British Art Show 9* Arts Connect Learning Programme in action in special schools.

BRITISH ART SHOW 9

Photos © Shepwell School

Photos © The Arc School

## STORIES OF IMPACT: The Arc School and Shepwell School

**Mark Riley a contemporary artist, and creative practitioner, worked with five Special Educational Needs and Disabilities settings in the West Midlands as part of the *Inspired by British Art Show 9* Arts Connect Partner Schools Programme.**

The schools involved included The Shepwell School, Arc School (Old Arley), The Westminster School, Merstone School and Lindsworth School.

These schools cater for young people with a range of complex needs and Mark supported teachers and students from each school to create exciting and accessible art projects.

Mark chose to be part of the programme as he felt it was *"a great opportunity to work with young people from complex backgrounds and to engage them with the best of contemporary art. I want them to be inspired by the themes of the exhibition and enable them to have the agency to show what life is like for them and what they want for the future."*

He worked with the Arc School, Old Arley, a specialist day school near Nuneaton, Warwickshire, for children aged 7-16 with anxiety, trauma, and related mental health needs. The project began with 'Ourselves in 3 Objects' inspired by Margaret Salmon's photographs of everyday objects. Young people brought in three objects that they felt represented themselves so that they could explore ideas about identity. They photographed these objects and then used clay to re-create a simplified version, finally setting the clay object into crystal resin. The aim of the work was to give students the feeling that these ordinary objects, that represented themselves, had become something special and important.

The final phase of the project draws on the work of Grace Ndiritu one of the *BAS9* showcased artists.

Hazel Wills - Art and Design teacher at Arc School said: *"Pupils at our school find it very challenging to investigate (the) identity of others and themselves...Visiting the BAS9 show really opened their eyes to (the) possibilities of communicating this through art."*

Mark also worked with The Shepwell School, a Short Stay School in Willenhall.

> *We are thoroughly enjoying working with Mark Riley, and the art project has been a huge success with our usually reluctant students engaging, participating and being proud of their achievements.*
> **Victoria Rudd, Lead Practitioner for LAC and PP Shepwell School**

> *I loved this project; I am more confident in myself and it has helped me to learn new skills.*
> **Student from Shepwell School**

> *The experience (of BAS9) has supported both my professional and personal development... My confidence has soared and a lot of the anxieties I had about my skills and abilities have been quietened – I can now be proud of who I am as an artist and the unique talents I have!*
> **Natalie Haslam, emerging Choreographer and Workshop Facilitator, working with Flexus Dance**

# THE COMMONWEALTH GAMES

**The 2022 Commonwealth Games in Birmingham represents the largest multi-sport event to be held in England in 10 years, involving over 6,500 athletes and team officials from 72 nations and territories across the Commonwealth and entertaining more than one million ticketed spectators, reaching a global broadcast audience of more than one billion.**

Developed in parallel with the sporting games there is a 6-month arts festival for the city, the Birmingham 2022 Festival, and a supporting national youth programme called *Bring the Power.*

Birmingham 2022 Festival - ambitious, collaborative, and inclusive, harnesses the once in a lifetime opportunity of the Games to engage c2.5million people and set the region in a new creative light. The Festival is committed to 'inspiring, and to being inspired by' the youth programme across artistic commissions and creative projects with opportunities for school pupils and students, families, youth groups, and young creatives and heritage enthusiasts.

We seconded a member of staff to work as the **Cultural Education and Engagement Manager** to support Birmingham 2022's ambition of a 'Games for All'. By working across both the Birmingham 2022 Festival and the *Bring the Power* programme, underserved and easily overlooked areas of the region have been given the opportunity to join in the celebrations. Our strategic connections with schools and community youth provision and leveraging our networks has enabled groups such as the Virtual Schools who work with Children in Care and Special Educational Needs schools to access the *Bring the Power* youth programme and Birmingham 2022 Festival in a way that meets their needs. Teachers can meet artists from the Festival in person. Schools can visit the very best of contemporary arts and have opportunities to creatively respond to themes of the Commonwealth and artworks within the Festival. We have also supported community groups in the Creative City Grants programme, many of whom are working with children and young people for the first time.

# LET'S CREATE/CRAFT

During the lockdowns Arts Council England, The Art Fund, and The Crafts Council supported the ten Bridge organisation in England with funding to distribute arts and crafts packs for children and young people most impacted and lacking resources. We prioritised the distribution of 5,224 of these packs to Children in Care, through our partnership with the region's Virtual Schools, to children 0-5 years through our Moonbeams programme with our Nursery School partners, and with our Local Cultural Education Partnerships. Our partners told us about the difference these resources have made to the wellbeing of children and their parents and carers:

**Sally Appadu, Deputy Headteacher, Lillian de Lissa Nursery School** *"The art packs had a huge impact on all our families at Lillian de Lissa Nursery School. Everyone was so excited when we told them... Our families said it helped give them something meaningful to do and it meant they could do creative activities together as a family. It enabled all our families to develop their creativity and open-ended thinking."*

# MUSIC HUBS

We developed a unique partnership with the region's 12 Music Hubs and the Music Services that underpin them which make up the most significant regional cultural learning workforce. We have worked with the Hubs to transform their network into a powerful partnership called West Midlands Music, that has the capacity to work strategically. Action on key issues has flowed as a result, such as on greater collective visibility and marketing, work force development, provision for Children in Care and expanding diversity and better engaging youth voice. Their outstanding mutual support during the pandemic meant they recovered quickly to continue to provide ongoing music education for the nearly 85% of children and young people they reach across the region.

Photo © The Oakes

# Arts and Cultural Learning

**The findings from our *Young People's Cultural Journeys* research showed that after family, experiences in school are the most significant determining factor on whether a child engages in arts and culture and fundamental to validating their interest and expanding their horizons.**

However, we know that inequality of provision in school is not determined by the socio-economics of the area a school is in (in contrast to out of school provision) but is driven more by the value that the Headteacher and senior staff see in the arts, and this is reflected in the curriculum, the allocation of time, resource, and staffing.

We built a programme of promoting cultural education in schools at a time of great structural and curriculum reform that de-prioritised the arts and we could see the pressure this was creating for arts teachers in particular. Our strategy was to vigorously argue for the value of arts in school, create programmes which would provide individual support to isolated teachers or enable working at scale on deeper, school wide improvement and innovation. The way we approached this was to:

- **Engage with the regional Virtual Schools who support 12,000 Children in Care, to co-invest in creating new arts and progression opportunities and developing an entitlement framework.**
- **Run the training and support to schools and other settings using the Artsmark framework to embed arts into the curriculum and beyond schools, for example with Youth Offending Services.**
- **Create the Arts Ambassador School Networks and professional development networks discussed elsewhere in this publication.**
- **Increasing the provision and quality of the Arts Award qualification that offers personal progression and leadership growth for children from 6 – 25.**

Building relationships with schools has been a consistent priority of our cultural sector partners and we know that schools are always seeking ways to bring in new inspiration and high-quality provision. We have built many new routes and avenues to enable this to happen more systematically and our school partnerships have been fundamental to our impact.

# THE ARTS CONNECT EFFECT

## In Developing Arts & Cultural Learning, we have:

### EDUCATION & LEARNING

**Run:**

- Over 125 CPD, network events, meetings & activities
- 4 West Midlands Tea Parties, introducing over 240 teachers to over 60 local arts & cultural organisations

**Supported across all of our programmes:**

- 2,300 teachers & educators
- 185 arts & cultural organisations

### VIRTUAL SCHOOLS

- Worked with all 14 Virtual Schools
- Every Virtual School in the West Midlands has an Arts Awards Advisor
- Created an arts website for Children in Care

**Invested:**

- £15,000 for R&D
- £105,000 through PI, securing a £130,000 match
- £7,500 in *My Creative Track* an entitlement framework to the arts

**Distributed:**

- 4,000 Lets Create/Craft packs to Children in Care
- 1,000 *My Creative Track* booklets to Children in Care

**Engaged with:**

- Approx. 2,000 Children in Care
- 700 foster carers & their birth families
- 1,000 designated teachers
- 100 social workers
- 14 Arts Ambassador Lead Teachers
- 225 artists, arts & cultural leads

### ARTS AWARD

**Supported:**

- 41,698 young people with Arts Award
- 10,352 young people with Bronze Arts Award
- 27,529 young people with Discover Arts Award
- 303 young people with Gold Arts Award = 45,450 learning hours

**Developed:**

- 2,800 Arts Award Advisers
- 280 Arts Award centres
- Invested £111,500 in 152 organisations, schools & artists

**Supported:**

- 500+ young people with Arts Award through *BAS9*

### ARTSMARK

- 212 settings awarded Artsmark
- 97 Silver; 95 Gold & 20 Platinum
- Involving over 94,295 pupils
- Supporting a further 339 settings

# EDUCATION AND LEARNING PROGRAMME

**Since 2015, our continuing professional development courses bring together professionals from both education and the creative and cultural sectors to support the educational community in developing their confidence and ambition, as well as igniting their inspiration and helping them to feel part of a community of like-minded educators.**

Our programme offers continuing professional development learning activities to bring together teachers and arts, cultural and heritage organisations, providing networking opportunities to develop a sense of community and camaraderie, the sharing of good practice and the exploration of key curriculum themes and issues. The programme also provides the opportunity to learn new approaches and practice from skilled professionals and gives access to developments and regional and national opportunities such as Artsmark, Arts Award and other arts programmes.

We also fund and work in partnership with our LCEPs to provide CPD Teacher Networks across the region. These include Birmingham; Stoke, North Staffordshire and Cannock Chase; Coventry and Warwickshire; Herefordshire and Worcestershire; and the Black Country. The Teacher Networks focus on specialist areas of arts provision and cover: Secondary Dance, Secondary Drama, Secondary Visual Arts & Design and Primary.

Each CPD Teacher Network shares the key developments taking place in their local LCEP, followed by high quality practical CPD delivered by an expert either from education or an arts organisation or artist. These networks offer a supportive group of professionals who can share issues and opportunities as well as increasing the skills and knowledge of the sector in key art form areas.

Additionally, we have delivered CPD training sessions each year specifically for Primary Arts Coordinators. This course provides input from experienced Primary Arts Coordinators and from arts organisations, Birmingham Education Partnership, and us. The course covers curriculum progression, monitoring and assessment, strategy, policy, CPD for staff, working with artists, cultural capital, Artsmark and Arts Award, as well as sharing good practice and networking opportunities.

Photo © Sarah Portlock

*Artslink* enabled me to network with teachers, specialists and the Artslink team. At meetings I discussed my ideas and school needs. Each meeting had a high quality CPD element. I employed a dance specialist, become an Arts Award accredited centre, trained six members of staff, and set up an 'Arts Council' at the school to increase pupil voice. These have contributed to our application for an Artsmark...*
**Sarah Portlock, then Deputy Head, Starbank School, Birmingham**

*Artslink is the CPD Teacher Network for primary school teachers in Birmingham.

# VIRTUAL SCHOOLS

**Following a regional research and development programme in 2015, we developed a strategic partnership with the 14 Virtual Schools in the West Midlands to make a difference to the cultural experiences and opportunities for the 12,000 Children in Care/care experienced young people. We are committed to ensuring that these children can engage in high quality arts and cultural activities, both in live and online opportunities, accessed through schools, at home with families and carers, and in cultural spaces and places.**

We developed the Artslink programme, underpinned by a model of a progression pathway, which provides a range of experiences and opportunities that enable Children in Care to develop their interests and talents. Artslink is managed by the West Midlands' Virtual Schools Children in Care Foundation, funded by the Virtual Schools with matched Partnership Investment from us.

Artslink involves each of the Virtual Schools having a trained Arts Ambassador Lead as part of their staff. All the Virtual Schools work in collective geographical hubs to co-produce and deliver cultural opportunities for Children in Care and their carers in their local places as well as participating in a region wide programme with children and young people from across the West Midlands.

We have also collaborated with The Mighty Creatives, the Bridge organisation in the East Midlands, to research and produce *My Creative Track* an entitlement framework to the arts for all children and young people in care aged 0-25 years, which was launched nationally in 2022.

Read the story of the Virtual Schools development of a cultural offer for Children in Care in the West Midlands.

# STORIES OF IMPACT: West Midlands Region of Virtual Schools

**The decision for all Children in Care to access a cultural entitlement and for the implementation of this required system leadership that not only engaged a range of stakeholders but also established sustainable opportunities and pathways. The process started with the identification of arts and cultural experiences and their key providers – the right people to meet the needs of the young people, delivered in the right facility at the right time to ensure that any barriers to engagement and participation were removed or minimised. These experiences developed further into a programme branded as Artslink. Arts Ambassadors in each Virtual School were appointed to guide this programme. This was an essential part of distributed leadership across the Virtual Schools ensuring that planning, promoting, delivery, monitoring, and reporting were integrated into a quality assurance model.**

A major challenge for all the Virtual Schools is that a number of the Children in Care reside in other local authorities and cannot access opportunities in their 'home' or 'host' authority. A collaborative application for Partnership Investment, pulled all 14 Virtual Schools in the West Midlands together on the Artslink Programme. This provides an arts and cultural offer for Children in Care regardless of where they reside. An Artslink Management Board provides strategic leadership, the appointment of Arts Coordinators provides operational leadership, and the establishment and training of Arts Ambassadors in each Virtual School provides the operational management at a local level.

**Andrew Wright, Headteacher (previously in Birmingham and currently in Dudley) Virtual School, Chair of West Midlands Virtual Schools Network**

> *Thank you for the arts pack. Awesome! I can make a thank you card... I love everyone in that big building in Telford, 'cause they really do care about all of us. We have not been forgotten during that Covid thing! Social workers face time us. Virtual School send us presents and video call us loads and the delivery people made it happen! Awesome!* **Young person in care on receiving the Let's Create/Craft pack**

# ARTS AWARD

Arts Award provides young people aged 5-25 years with the opportunity to grow creative skills and gain real world experience of the arts. We offer targeted support and investment programmes, breaking down barriers that many young people face to accessing arts and cultural opportunities. We've provided support, training and financial investment that has equipped creative educators and youth leaders with the tools to embed Arts Award within activities, enabling young people to realise their creative potential and progress on to creative study and career pathways.

Read Kettlebrook's story of how integral Arts Award has been in the development of their arts and cultural learning offer.

## STORIES OF IMPACT: Kettlebrook Short Stay School PRU, Tamworth

We are an 11-16 Pupil Referral Unit and Arts Award has truly been pivotal to our setting.

Students are referred to us from mainstream schools via the LA or they are permanently excluded, and we become their educational provision. All too often our students live with challenge and disruption, school can be a sanctuary.

There was little evidence of art as a specialist subject when I joined. Students were resistant and had a view that art is drawing and painting something compulsory. Discovering Arts Award was so exciting, offering flexible and 'real' opportunities for students to explore and understand visual art, without constraints dictated by other qualifications and without pressures of examination.

We offer GCSE Art, but Arts Award enables the arts to be inclusive, giving all students the opportunity to enjoy and achieve qualifications. Assessment is so supportive with advice every step of the way.
Art has grown at Kettlebrook, enriched by support from local arts organisations and artists who have created vibrant and engaging works with our learners.
It's important that students make their own choices, so they are more invested. Arts Award totally supports this thinking.

We get involved in local projects, we have had the opportunity to turn a bus stop into an art gallery, create artwork for remembrance exhibitions and make art to cheer Tamworth up during Covid. All learners can work with practicing artists. Projects include wood carving, spray painting murals, creating an art garden, and upcycling plastics, resulting in a fish sculpture which went on exhibition to Nottingham.

Currently students are creating an interactive artwork which will be used as a school-wide resource to support young people to manage their mental health. Our environment is full of amazing artwork; young people feel proud of their school and their achievements and new students are inspired and want to engage. This is priceless.

Art can be such a wonderful escape from difficult feelings...To be able to use art to help and support young people on their journey in life is the biggest privilege.

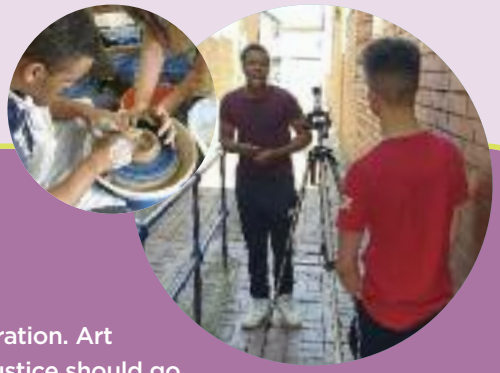
**Jo Potter,**
**Art Coordinator**

Photos © Kettlebrook

*Our Arts Award journey began... when we were invited (by Arts Connect) to participate in a...festival called Emerge... As a secondary academy within the 8% most deprived districts in the country, we welcomed this...All young people involved in the programme achieved Bronze Awards with some KS5 achieving Silver. Having an open door to arts organisations has enabled us to deliver Arts Award across the whole of Year 9...Our curriculum enrichment offer is much broader, and our creative subjects have had better take-up than ever before.... More now than ever, the importance of creativity for young people is vital in promoting both a better mindset and opening new doors for their future. Offering creative opportunities in a deprived Midlands school may seem like a hopeless task to some but to me, being witness to the lightbulb moments, smiles, and joy in the young people I serve is the best feeling ever.*
**Lisa Habberley, Teacher of Media, Student Leadership Coordinator, Ormiston Shelfield Community Academy. Walsall CEP Chair**

# ARTSMARK

Artsmark is not only for schools. At Sandwell YOS they identified they needed creativity embedded within their offer and they would need to work with partners to achieve this.



Photos © Sandwell Youth Offending Service

## STORIES OF IMPACT: Sandwell Youth Offending Service (YOS)

Sandwell YOS's Artsmark journey began in 2017 with an idea that we would like to do something different, that different was using creative arts to engage our young people. We wanted methods that offered them new opportunities to express themselves. We hoped this would impact positively on engagement, aspiration and improve family relationships.

We aimed to deliver an arts offer that had such breadth it was part of the day-to-day.

Using Artsmark as a mechanism to achieve this provided a benchmark of standards and ideas that aligned with our aspirations.

We identified staff who had art skills or the passion to drive our Artsmark journey. A group of young people created a drama piece, and this was performed to staff. The success of this provided our platform to build on.

We offered a range of activities for young people, as one-off programmes or sessions that formed part of their intervention plan. A key part of what we wanted to achieve was to expose young people to new career ideas, so we ran a 'creative careers' week.

Wherever possible we tried to utilise local artists to connect our young people to the community.

In 2018 we delivered our first Summer Arts College and continued to run them virtually during Covid, ensuring that young people had a laptop and the internet.

We started Arts Award. For our young people this is sometimes the only accreditation they have achieved.

Looking back on our Artsmark journey made me realise how our service has transformed. Working with young people without a creative approach now seems impossible. Without Artsmark we would not be where we are.

We used Artsmark as a foundation to shape our arts offer and aspiration. Art and criminal justice should go hand in hand but rarely do, so it was important to have a reference point and Artsmark gave that.

Our journey initially felt lonely, but Artsmark provided a network of creative people, sharing good ideas and good practice.

Whilst it feels like we have embedded the arts into our service, we are very much in our infancy and like art it's organic. The pandemic made us redesign our offer, but didn't stop us, we've created a website that hosts intervention programmes and can be accessed by young people any time of the day. We've increased our use of digital arts.

Our biggest achievement is our 'Getting to know' induction. We adapted work that was completed by using interviews and transformed them into creative pieces of work.

Case Managers trained with artists to increase confidence in using creative methods with young people, they've been given arts kit. This has increased the amount of creative led interventions.

The work that has been produced by young people has been mind blowing, from live theatre to photography along with everything in between.

I'm proud to be the only permanent Arts Lead employed by a Youth Justice Service (I think), this speaks volumes about our service's commitment to the arts.

**Chad Smith, Arts Lead, Sandwell Youth Offending Service**

> *This could genuinely change a lot of kids lives....it made me feel like, I had an actual talent. It actually made me feel like I was getting something, like is this the one? Is this something I actually want to take on. Which I do.* **Dan, young person, Summer Arts College 2019, permanently excluded from school, upon finishing the college he re-engaged with education and is at Halesowen College studying Performing Arts**

Running from myself
mirrors in my way
my thoughts, my feelings
set my mind astray
from the real task
to fill up the flask
of my confidence
from beginning to last
it's time to amend
let's not pretend
everything's alright
I need to fight
my conscience
ignore the nonsense
it tends to
affect me and you

**By Harry – Child in Care**

## Get Involved with Your Local Cultural Education Partnership

**Birmingham**
www.birminghamcreates.co.uk

**Cannock Chase**
www.cannockchasecep.co.uk

**Coventry**
Coventrycep@gmail.com

**Dudley**
www.dcep.co.uk

**Herefordshire**
www.creativeconnectionsh.co.uk

**Sandwell**
www.sandwellcep.co.uk

**Shropshire**
www.cultureconsortiumshropshire.com

**Stoke-on-Trent & North Staffordshire**
www.stokecep.co.uk

**Telford**
www.severnteachingschool.co.uk/creative-connections-telford/

**Walsall**
www.walsallcep.co.uk

**Warwickshire**
wcep@rsc.org.uk

**Wolverhampton**
www.wolverhamptoncep.org

**Worcestershire**
www.wcep.co.uk


## Acknowledgments

We recognise the contribution of and extend our grateful thanks to our freelance staff, voluntary board and steering group members; we could not have delivered our programme without their skills, dedication and inspiration.



## Arts Connect Staff

Lucy Carlton-Walker, Gemma Corden, Rob Elkington, Helen Frost, Susan Goodwin, Pepita Hanna, Shannel James, Jane Jarman, Felicity Martin, Clare Mitchell, Eleanor Rattenbury, Johannah Sangster and Becky Thompson.

*Since engaging with **Arts Connect** our families programme and work with young people and schools has increased so much that we have had to take on more staff. We have now worked with 95% of all the schools in the county through drama provision and have a thriving youth theatre of over 350 young people (and growing). We have managed to hold a family event every Saturday and increase our family audience. As part of this programme of work we have started to hold a family festival which has brought the city together working with numerous stake holders to increase cultural impact for the people of Hereford. Without the encouragement and training from **Arts Connect** none of this would have happened.*

**David Durant, Associate Director, The Courtyard, Hereford**


Read more about Arts Connect & stories of impact on our website **www.artsconnect.co.uk**

**Arts Connect, Midlands Arts Centre, Cannon Hill Park, Birmingham B12 9QH**

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