

Cultural services supporting NEET

Cultural services have a long track record of playing a key role in the physical, social and personal development of young people. Through a diverse range of programmes and opportunities, culture can help reach the most marginalised young people, offering challenges, skills and new horizons to those most in need of help.

Young people not in employment, education or training (NEET) present some of the most pressing challenges to children's services. According to May 2010 figures, on average 4.8% of young people in London are NEET, but this rises to as high as 9.7% in some London boroughs. NEET young people are more likely to remain economically inactive or be at risk of offending. Research conducted by the Centre for Economic Performance at the London School of Economics suggests that while youth crime is costing the UK economy £1 billion every year, educational non-participation and underachievement costs £18 billion in lost earnings.

Working with children's services, public and third sector providers and other partners, cultural services can make a profound, lasting and cost-effective contribution to the delivery of positive opportunities and outcomes for young people at risk.

Contribution to wider aims & objectives:

Culture, arts and sport can meet a wide range of key local authority impacts, including:

- NEET
- Educational attainment and progression
- Participation in learning, including diplomas and apprenticeships
- Participation & achievement gaps for young people from low income backgrounds
- Participation in positive activities
- Skills gaps in the workforce
- Emotional health and well-being of young people
- Youth offending, crime and anti-social behaviour
- Child poverty

Case Study 1 – 90% completion and 82% progression

Akademi has a 30-year track record of achievements in training, education and community work. Its ReAct programme is a creative learning performance programme for young people at risk of NEET across the boroughs of Brent, Hammer-smith and Fulham, Camden and Islington.

ReAct provides young people with an introduction to dance together with professional information, guidance and advice. Young people work on individual learning plans within the context of a creative production and accreditation is available for Arts Award Levels 1 and 2. As well as developing personal skills, the programme provides advice and guidance on employment in the creative industries, along with practical skills and a creative portfolio. Work-related training opportunities are available in established venues across London.

A recent ReAct programme involved 90 learners taking part in a 12-week programme. All were NEET or at risk of NEET, 72% were BME and 58% were female. 94% of learners completed a non-accredited learning programme and 74% completed an accredited learning programme, the Bronze Arts Award Level 1; 82% of learners have progressed into education and training.



"We are trying to re-engage young people but also to bring them into contact with professionals close to their own age who are successful in a creative industry and show that [creativity] could be a potential way forward for them too."

Christina Christou
Education Director, Akademi

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Case Study 2 – Cultural partnerships for skills & employment

Route into Work equips young people aged between 16 and 18 with the skills to become apprentices and find sustained employment. Based at the London Transport Museum, the initiative provides an engaging venue, experienced trainers and the real prospect of a job through opportunities provided by companies involved in the scheme.

Over six weeks 61 young people took part in a three-day programme to explore different work styles, the range of career opportunities within the transport sector, interview preparation and presentation skills.

Trainers offered one-to-one support to help each participant develop their own skills and career goals.

The London Apprenticeship Company demonstrated apprenticeship availability across a range of sectors, whilst Serco showcased their new London bike hire scheme and VInspired promoted cross-sector voluntary opportunities.



13 young people obtained positions on paid apprenticeship schemes directly after the programme, and the majority of others have now found work, training or volunteering placements as a result of attending.

Comments from participants were positive. "Overall [this] was the most effective three days of my student life," said one. "Now I have a clear idea of where I am going or willing to go in the future." Another participant, Naziya Sultanmia, said, "When I didn't book my space on this programme they kept emailing me that there were still some places. That was really excellent. I got a lot from this course. Every teenager who is out of work or education should come here."

Brendan Loughran, Group Director of Learning and Skills at the London Development Agency, is positive about the project's achievements: "Many of the young people on this programme are now on course to becoming apprentices. It is so encouraging to know that they are now getting the assistance they need, are meeting employers and attending interviews. This programme is already delivering some great results and we are certain that it will set many more young people on a path to apprenticeships and long-term employment."

Recommendations for taking this work forward in your borough

Share local knowledge – conversations between Children's Services, Connexions, Preventative Engagement Teams and Cultural Services will help establish which local cultural partners have experience of working with young people who are NEET, or at risk of becoming so. The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council and Arts Council England can also provide such information.

Think differently – cultural partners are well positioned to offer innovative approaches and design services to help Local Authorities address their priorities in supporting at risk young people who have struggled in formal learning, reducing participation barriers by providing a safe environment to find new confidence, interests, talents and skills, and activities and opportunities to flourish and progress.

Take the long view – projects for vulnerable young people always meet challenges along the way, but flexible, resilient partnerships with shared goals and a long-term vision can reap enormous benefits. Providing young people with a platform to re-engage with work or training can save many from a heightened risk of long-term worklessness, offending behaviour, teen pregnancy and ill-health, with the potential to alleviate pressure on associated long-term Local Authority and central government budgets.

Celebrate - and build upon - success – learners and communities alike are inspired, brought together and encouraged to participate further by the achievements of such activity, whilst the successes of initial partnerships can provide a platform for collaborations between multiple boroughs, cultural organisations, education institutions and the third sector.

Working with Children's Services is a strand of the London Cultural Improvement Programme. For additional case-studies, references for figures and a range of supplementary materials to accompany this document, visit: www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/networks/lcip/wwcs.htm or contact project manager John McMahon: john.mcmahon@mla.gov.uk / 0207 273 1404

The Audit Commission have published guidance for Local Authorities on targeting NEET and associated groups. These can be found at: www.audit-commission.gov.uk/health/nationalstudies/againsttheodds/Pages/targeted-briefingsforpractitioners_copy.aspx