

Cultural services & youth offending

Youth offending is one of the most common, most enduring and most challenging problems facing communities, local councils and national government. Dealing with the consequences of youth offending is expensive for the authorities, alienating for victims and offenders, and divisive for communities. It costs significant public resources, and wastes opportunities and talent.

In 2008/09 the average cost per place in a young offender institution was £50,000. Two thirds of young adult offenders (age 18-20) reoffend within two years, a figure that rises to 82% in the case of young men, with 40% returning to prison. 40% of juvenile offenders (age 15-17) will reoffend within 12 months. However, 97% of young offenders do not receive a custodial sentence and can be engaged and supported in the community by a range of activities and interventions.

Cultural services have long been key partners in youth engagement, with an extensive track record in reaching individuals, families and communities through partnerships with core provision, positive activities and supplementary support. Whether through the arts, sport or the huge variety of cultural activities available (including museums, libraries, heritage, parks and play), cultural services have been shown to be an efficient and cost-effective way of creating opportunities, changing perspectives and transforming lives. Why cultural services? Because they work.

Contribution to wider aims and objectives:

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

- Reoffending by young offenders
- Young offenders progressing to education/employment
- Reduction in crime
- Violent crime, knife crime & gun crime
- Anti-social behaviour
- Community cohesion
- Participation of young people in education or training
- General educational attainment and progression
- Educational attainment for BME ethnic groups
- Young people's emotional health and well-being
- Participation in positive activities

Case study 1 – Sport and art: cutting youth crime by 50%

The Westminster Positive Futures project uses sport and art activities to engage young people from the most deprived wards of the borough and provide them with opportunities for personal development. Parkour has been a key element of the project, proving highly popular with some of the most difficult to reach individuals. Parkour is the art of movement in an urban environment, combining running, jumping, climbing, dropping and balance to teach self-control, co-ordination and self-discipline. The scheme has been supported by the local police, who recognise the need to provide diversionary activities for young people.

Parkour classes have been delivered via a weekly youth academy and a number of schools in Westminster which have included parkour within their physical education curriculum; specialist parkour parks are also being developed to provide safe practice areas. Instructors train young people to master the skills and the management of risk that parkour requires. Basic techniques are taught indoors before moving outdoors under careful supervision and the only thing you need to be able to take part is a pair of trainers.

By encouraging young people to get involved with

parkour and a whole range of other sports and activities over the course of one summer the Positive Futures project reduced youth crime in Westminster by over 50%.

"It is fantastic that it has proved so popular with a section of Muslim girls who typically are very difficult to engage in physical activity. They love the classes and enjoy keeping themselves fit and active too. We think the reason parkour is so successful has a lot to do with the fact that it is non-competitive, easy to pick up and can be done anywhere."

Eugene Minoque, Westminster Sports Development Manager



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Case study 2– Summer Arts College: 90% of participants achieving of qualifications

Summer Arts College schemes have been delivered by youth offending teams (YOT) across London as part of the strategic partnership between the Youth Justice Board and Arts Council England. These arts-focused projects have been running since 2005, providing 25 hours per week of arts-based activity over the six weeks of the summer holidays.

The objectives of the Summer Arts College programme are: to provide full-time arts enrichment and appreciation activities while exploring routes into careers within the arts and creative industries; to increase engagement with and transition to mainstream education; reduce levels of offending and reoffending among participants; and improve literacy and numeracy skills with a view to a qualification. The Summer Arts College initiative is integrated with the Arts Award, providing participants with UCAS points.

Outcomes from the programme have been outstanding: a 75% reduction in offending among those accessing the scheme; a 90% achievement rate at Level 1; an increase in overall literacy and

numeracy scores; and a significant increase in educational engagement following participation. Summer Arts Colleges provide YOTs with 25 hours of education, training and employment that must be arranged for young people subject to intensive supervision and surveillance programme (ISSP) interventions or detention and training orders.

Summer Arts Colleges also operate at times of year when schools and colleges may be closed. The London Borough of Ealing YOT has run Summer Arts College programmes for three years, and has now expanded the scheme to other times of year.



Recommendations for taking this work forward in your borough

Share local knowledge – conversations between Children’s Services, Youth Offending and Preventative Engagement Teams and Cultural Services will help establish which local cultural partners have experience of working with young offenders and those at risk of offending. The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, Arts Council England and Sport 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 Local Authority and wider 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 designed to improve joint working between Children’s Services, Cultural Services and the wider cultural sector. 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/targetedbriefingsforpractitioners_copy.aspx