



Arts Award & Looked After Children

Centre: Derbyshire Eco Centre at Derbyshire County Council

Adviser: Christine Haywood

Level: Bronze

Context

Derbyshire County Council (DCC) trained a large number of Residential Children's Workers as Arts Award advisers, as part of their Uni-Fi initiative raising the ambition of children in care to achieve their potential. Children and young people are looked after in residential children's homes, with foster carers, and in respite care.



Initially they found it challenging to get going, so worked with DCC Arts Education consultant Kim Johnson and the Arts Award Reaching Out programme to identify barriers and find solutions. Key difficulties identified were the realities of care placements changing, and the disruption caused by moves across the county and beyond, attachment difficulties, and some young people lacking the confidence to engage in anything that looked or sounded like education. Added to this the time needed to reflect on activity and skills needed to lead in, or signpost young people to arts activities is not within the formal role of residential children's workers – and staff needed to both build their confidence and find how they could incorporate Arts Award adviser role within their day to day work.

Approach

Experienced artist and Arts Award adviser Christine Haywood was identified as a peripatetic Arts Award "buddy" – both able to ensure that support travelled with young people when they moved, and to work alongside residential children's workers. The artist was also able to find and broker arts and cultural partnerships. The managers at each participating children's home and DCC's Residential Services Managers and the Deputy Director of Children and Younger Adults Service committed to prioritise and support Arts Award.

Refresher adviser training was delivered to the care workers, and a very personalised approach was designed specifically to actively build positive

relationships, aligned to Derbyshire's commitment to social pedagogy. Care workers supported highly personalised activity driven by young people's interests, and shared activity was scheduled for the benefit of all participating children's homes. This meant that young people and care workers could "dip in" to shared opportunities which included events and workshops. Shared activities were delivered by Derbyshire Eco Centre and Baby People, with artists from New South Wales delivering workshops as part of The Australian Pavilion weekend during Wirksworth Festival. These events were then opened up to young people in other homes and foster carers, and as a consequence several other young people joined the programme.

'The arts set up a creative bond between young people and staff. For example a member of staff began teaching one of the young people guitar, which they had never done before in their role as a residential children's worker, this was a chance to bring something personal into their work.' Kim Johnson, Arts Education consultant, Derbyshire County Council

Staff found Arts Award an effective tool to help children and young people learn through their own interests and passions, and linked the process of gathering evidence to Personal Education Plans and education targets.

Impact

Despite the fact that the staff team were constantly challenged by the transient nature of the group (for example one young person moved out of the county, and then returned six months later but had lost his Arts Award portfolio, meaning starting again from scratch) they recognised how Arts Award made the case for personalised learning and saw how individuals can progress through creativity.

'We took a group of young people with very complex needs to the library to look up [their arts inspiration]. It was their first time in a library and they loved it. We tapped into their individual interests. We let the young people decide what they were interested in looking at. M loves maps so now his portfolio is covered in photocopied maps. Also when we went on our big trip to Bridlington to make beach art, M navigated!' Residential Care worker

The new Derbyshire County Council Virtual School launched in September 2014, with responsibility for ensuring high quality education for around 700 children in care in Derbyshire, deploying Pupil Premium Plus as a resource to support attainment including through Arts Award.

Arts Award is now delivered in Derbyshire as part of a range of Additional and/or Alternative Provision for children in care, care leavers, vulnerable young people, and those at risk of being NEET (not in employment, education or training).

Arts Award has been aligned to Derbyshire's development of Social Pedagogy as an underpinning set of child-centred, whole person principles and theory to inform practice with children and young people – and through this work Arts Award has been evidenced as an effective tool for staff to build relationships with children and young people and help them learn through their own interests and passions.

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