

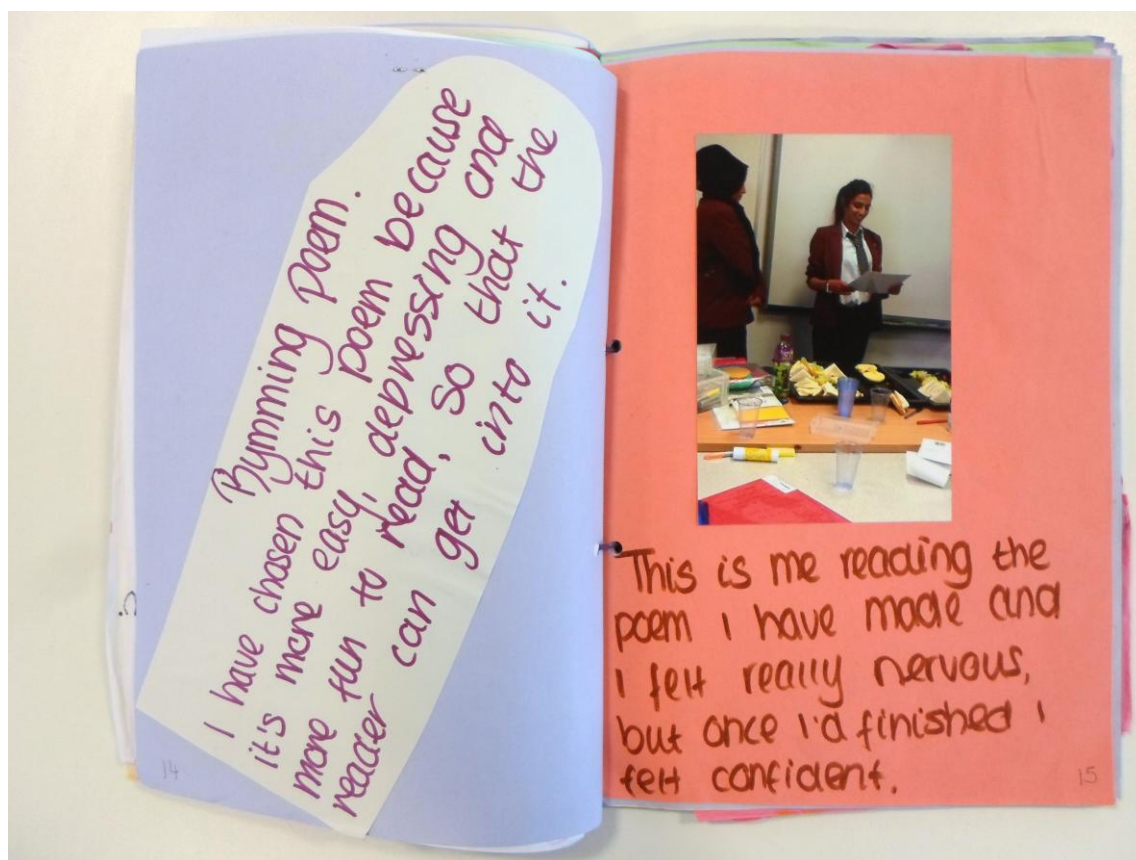


Keeping Our Girls Safe Arts Award case study

Context

Keeping Our Girls Safe (KOGS) is a charity in Oldham which works with girls and young women to raise awareness of grooming, exploitation and unhealthy relationships. Through safe, vibrant, engaging projects KOGS hope to improve public knowledge and understanding of unhealthy relationships and empower young people to make positive choices.

Issues are explored through art, dance, drama, film and photography workshops, allowing young people to explore sensitive subjects via creative means. KOGS have found that using the arts is an ideal way to discuss these difficult topics in a safe way.



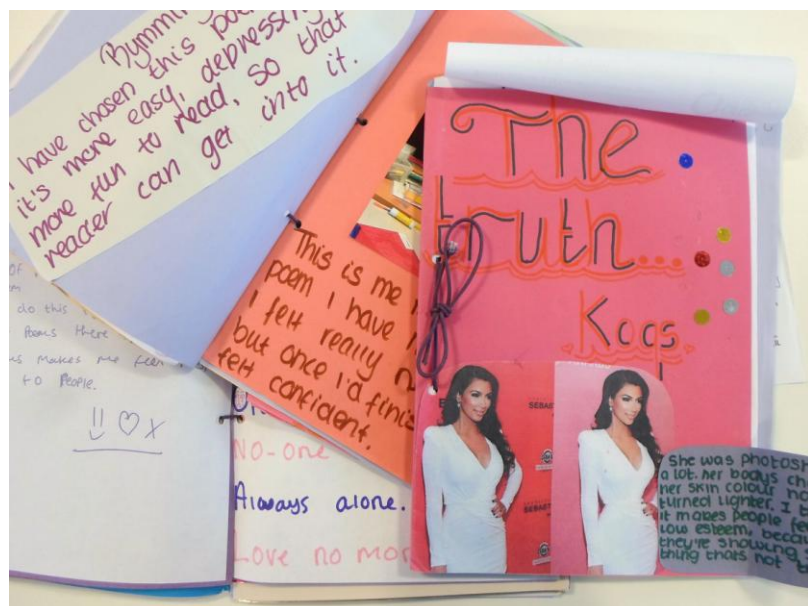
Approach

'The Arts Award programme is an achievable accreditation which is flexible enough to allow anyone willing to show commitment and interest in the arts to achieve. It allows us as an organisation to stretch the young people and raise aspirations in an interactive and innovative way.' Hayley Harewood, KOGS

Following feedback after their first moderation, KOGS' approach is to allow the young people as far as possible to take ownership of their work and take an independent lead. At the beginning of each project, everyone completes a *What are you good at?* questionnaire, thinking about what they like, and introducing new art forms they may not have thought about before. The first session focuses on the issue the group will be exploring, and in the second session young people think about how they can use their art form to express what they've learnt. Therefore as well as exploring sensitive social issues they also build on their arts skills.

One of the groups KOGS are currently working with is a group of young women who are deaf, three of whom are Czech and have limited English (they have their own signers). KOGS have found that using the arts works as an effective way to transcend the language barriers and allow the girls to explore topics and demonstrate understanding in a creative way. For example, the group recently looked at violent relationships, using expressive dance to explore the subject. The whole group were able to express what they had learnt and understood through creating their own dance pieces.

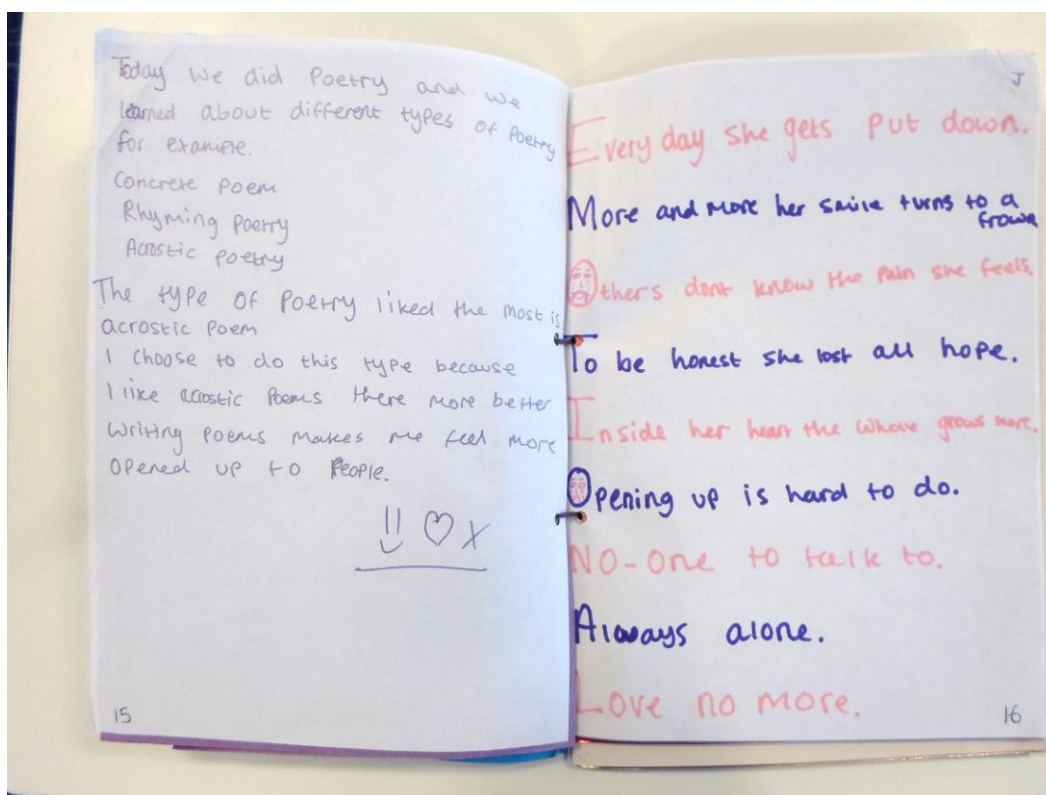
KOGS also work with a local theatre company who perform a production about grooming and child exploitation (which can be used for Bronze Part B – Explore the arts as an audience member). Using the arts to explore these issues allows the young people to push themselves and learn about and explore challenging topics in a safe environment. One group who are doing Silver have created their own play about domestic violence, which they will be presenting to their school to raise awareness peer-to-peer.



Impact

Most of the girls referred to KOGS have been put in a vulnerable situation, and many are disengaged from mainstream education. KOGS have found that delivering creative activities, and using Arts Award, has proven a draw back into education for many of the young people they work with.

'Many of the girls we work with will start by saying, "We don't care about the Arts Award", but as time goes on, they get more and more into the qualification... Some girls who are not attending school, come back for the [KOGS] after-school workshops, and then end up going back to lessons too.'
Hayley Harewood



After taking part in the programme, young people are empowered to make positive choices in their own lives. It has also helped to raise their aspirations, through showing them future career paths, and local opportunities in the arts available to them. Many of the girls who have completed Bronze are now working towards Silver, and mentoring younger members of their groups who are doing Bronze. They have become particularly active in the community, focusing on influencing, improving and integrating the wider community through their Arts Award activities.

'Our young people have not only developed their art skills but have also gained confidence, improved self esteem, engaged in group and team work, been given an outlet to express their feelings, ideas and opinions and have shown an interest in their community and its art provision.' Hayley Harewood

One young lady that KOGS worked with was very shy and reserved. She felt she had no art skill at all, and was not particularly interested in art. However,

the advisers soon discovered that in actual fact the young person had an amazing talent in Mendhi painting and had her own scrap book which she had created in her own time of her designs. She was encouraged to attend a small event in a local library and pass on this skill to other young people. Her growth in confidence was apparent to the whole group and her Head of Year mentioned that she had not seen her appear so comfortable and confident before.

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