

Bronze Arts Award in Secure Accommodation

Secure accommodation is provided for young people for a variety of reasons of welfare, health or justice. Secure Children's Homes provide residential, education and health care for young people aged 10 – 17, who are placed in secure accommodation by a court order. The young people placed in Secure Children's Homes are among the most vulnerable young people in the country, and levels of support and supervision are high. Young people can arrive and leave at any time, and their length of stay may not be fully clear when they arrive. They are, obviously, separated from their normal life, for whatever reason.

The security and safety procedures are extensive and in the context of Arts Award, and indeed any arts delivery, this means that;

- Visits to cultural events or facilities is not possible
- Internet access is restricted and must be supervised, limiting research and independent working
- All visiting artists, equipment and resources are subject to intense scrutiny and risk assessment for safeguarding purposes
- Music and other art works in use must not perpetuate or positively promote ideas of discrimination, violence, crime, or negative life choices

Intensive Arts Award delivery is not necessarily ideal, as embedding, exploration and reflection within the process are limited by the fixed and short timescale: however in the context of participants arriving at and leaving from secure accommodation at short notice, and the need for cultural experiences to be within the setting, it works as a pragmatic delivery option.

In this particular setting, creative music making is on offer every week during education 'terms' and also in enrichment weeks. All new arrivals at the Home are invited to make a CD of music they like in their first session; Music Leaders learn about interests and experience quickly, and the newly arrived young person has something useful and valuable in a situation where personal possessions are limited. In this setting, that has led to more than 80% of young people taking up creative music making on a regular basis. Sixteen were already actively participating in weekly music making activities which were highly individualised; one participant was most interested in learning kit drums and ranged over many musical genres, whilst another would write lyrics, melodies, create beats, record and edit instrumentals and mix to create entire tracks alone. Some young people worked in pairs to create and perform together, and participants who had learned skills often helped new arrivals to learn the basics.

The context for the Arts Awards week was therefore one where participants had regular engagement with music beforehand, and also in visual arts through regular education provision. The educational programme in the Home is in line with the national curriculum and Ofsted inspected, and as this was to be an 'enrichment' week all the activities were designed to be different. (Enrichment weeks are out of term when there are no formal lessons).



20 young people participated in arts activities to achieve a Bronze Arts Award over ten days, with two significant collective events; a performance by visiting professional musicians, and a final celebration and sharing event. We used standard Bronze Arts Award log books, supplemented with digital materials, for portfolio building. As an example of the necessity of comprehensive safeguarding and risk management, the staples were removed from log books before they were issued. We also notified Trinity in advance of confidentiality needs and that moderation visits would not involve meeting the young people.

The Arts Award programme had to be less individual than weekly music-making and more focused on group and co-operative work over considerable periods of time, which for some young people was a challenge, involving negotiation and co-operation to create art works together over long sessions. Staff in the SCH's are highly trained facilitators who are able to manage challenging behaviour and maintain a balanced atmosphere; the over-riding senses within the home are those of consistency, compassion, calmness, a well-ordered environment in which everyone is valued and cared for, but also expected to value and care for others.

The timetable moved participants from one activity to another during the day in small groups, with tasks for each session planned and prepared by the music leader and other staff. For variety, one non-arts based activity was included into each day, working as a social, reflective and pastoral session; making chocolate mousse, for example.

As Arts Award is richer through the experience of different art forms, and in any case art form boundaries are increasingly fluid, practitioners and activities were organised so that music could readily be combined. We used creative writing and wordsmithing, and film making which could lead to a song, rap, a film with sound track, or a film with voice over in combination.

Creative Writing – writing prose and poetry on the theme 'where I come from' gave young people the opportunity to share something of their own history and background. It was not about a 'life story', but sharing of mostly positive thoughts of cultural and personal identity; it was revealed that more than one resident had connections to the travelling communities, another fondly recounted the Caribbean island that was a grandmother's home, and two shared a home town. A liking for motor bikes and football teams were also common themes, as participants learned they had connections they had not previously known. The writing was developed and honed into different results – prose and poetry, short and long, for performance or for display. The creative writing tutor, Paulette Morris, is also an accomplished singer and songwriter and contributed to the performance event.

Film-making – had not been offered before as part of visual arts, so was an entirely new skill to be learned. Stop-frame animation needed only a camera mounted on a tripod, an understanding of the principles, and a subject to be filmed. Residents were offered lentils and rice, blu-tack, and any drawing materials they needed to create film subjects. Two participants made a film of a picnic featuring the soft toy collection of one of them, others a 'rice dragon' and a blu-tack man scoring a goal and celebrating.



Music activities were creating a sound track for a parkour (free running) film sequence with elements of chase, comedy, speed, and agility. Residents worked in groups of four or five to plan, execute and edit their soundtrack to fit the sequence exactly, using spoken word, singing, percussion, instruments and samples. This was the best evidence of team work and negotiation as each group agreed principles, goals, roles, then scrutinized and improved their work.

In the past, there have been 'Music Festival' events organised in the Home, with young people taking responsibility for everything around the performance; posters and publicity, catering, stage crew and occasionally performing, so all staff had previous experience of supporting the organisation of the event, and sharing in it.

The performance event – as always in the past – was spectacularly successful, providing as it does a reach to the outside world, albeit a brief one. Singer Paulette Morris (a charismatic singer who can perform across a range of musical styles, but also be very 'normal'), guitarist Chris Campbell (who has world class skills that captivate at close quarters) and Chris Morris (multi-instrumental and multi-talented) played for the participants – a fully professional presentation and extremely high standards of performance to re-inforce to the residents that they are not second best. By far the most popular performance though, was by one of the residents, singing a song he had written himself in his regular music sessions. The responses to the performance in Arts Award log books were overwhelmingly positive, though in context this is not surprising. Reviews of the performance were displayed.

For the Arts inspiration research project, most participants chose to research a musician. Education staff supported them in finding artists with enough research materials available on the limited internet access at the Home. Bob Marley was a popular choice, no doubt inspired by some reggae performances earlier in the week.

All participants were asked to share their skills with another person. The 'sharing' took the form of a short lesson delivered to a peer or staff member, a discussion or presentation of skills to a small group. Participants were able to appreciate that their new skills had value to others, and that their knowledge empowered them. Skills shared included; Playing a drum beat, recording into the computer, animating with clay and writing lyrics and poetry.

On the final day of the programme, all the participants attended a celebration and sharing event to mark its close, including three new residents who had only arrived after the programme had started and so had not had the opportunity to participate. The plan was to share as much of the completed work as possible, though some of the participants were reluctant initially. However, as the session progressed, all except one participant agreed that their work could be shown. In the case of poetry this was read, but not always by the author. The atmosphere was overwhelmingly positive, with participants finding the comedy, skills and quality in other people's work. The session was led by Chris Morris who described (for example) the professional timescales for producing short animations, and complimenting the efforts made by the participants and what they achieved in a



short time. There were prizes for 'best at this' and 'best at that' – and everyone was rewarded with chocolate.

The Arts week was regarded as a success by the senior staff in the Home, and the participants have been enthused to be more creative and plan more events and showcases for later in the year, including a musical gymnastic display and a Christmas concert.

Chris Morris (Music Leader for Yorkshire Youth & Music, and funded by the National Foundation for Youth Music) was awarded most valued staff member for the month of August by the Service Manager responsible for Adel Beck on behalf of Leeds City Council!