



Visual Roots Case Study

John Hansard Gallery

Summary

The John Hansard Gallery provided two accredited volunteer placements for young people aged 16-25, in partnership with the Wessex Youth Offending Team. The Gallery, in partnership with the Wessex Youth Offending Team, recruited the volunteers from those young people who had participated in previous Summer Arts Colleges or the rolling Bronze Arts Award partnership project with Southampton ISSP (Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programme). The project gave the young people an opportunity to progress and engage in real work experience, while embedding the Gold Arts Award into the gallery programme.

The context

The organisation

The John Hansard Gallery is a public contemporary visual art gallery regularly funded by the Arts Council of England and supported by the University of Southampton. The Gallery has successfully led projects for hard to reach young people over the past eight years. These have included work with the University of Southampton, young people from secondary school satellite programmes and Pupil Referral Units, and work with vulnerable or at risk young people, who are supported by the Fairbridge Solent charity. Over the last two years, the Gallery has also developed its work with young people through Wessex Youth Offending Team.

The situation

The John Hansard Gallery was looking for options to set up a volunteer placement programme for young people and in particular, as a progression route for some of the young people it has worked with through the Wessex Youth Offending Team. As a smaller arts organisation, with a temporary exhibition programme, this can prove more difficult to support. The Visual Roots programme has enabled the Gallery to facilitate this.

This is first time that the Gallery has hosted volunteering placements for under 18s and supported young people to complete the Gold Arts award accreditation.

The Idea

The project was devised in partnership with Wessex Youth Offending Team, with support from the Southampton ISSP. It was structurally based around accreditation for the Silver or Gold Arts Award and informed by the Gallery's knowledge of the young people who

previously worked with the organisation, successfully gaining accreditation for the Bronze Art Award.

Participation in the Visual Roots programme was vital to the Gallery as they envisaged it would help them structure both a volunteering programme for young people and increase the Arts Award accreditation at all three levels. The work aimed to explore how the gallery could support work-related learning across the curriculum as well as for the Creative and Media Diploma. It also provided the Gallery with an initial structure to develop these areas of provision for the future.

The project

Planning

Planning for the project took approximately three days over a period of three weeks. During this period a consultation meeting was held between Gallery staff involved (Head of Education and Access, Freelance Education Assistant and Communications Officer), Wessex Youth Offending Team, the recruited volunteers and their parents / guardians, and School Liaison Officers, to agree, plan and finalise the details.

The key partners on the project were the Youth Arts Co-ordinator for the Wessex Youth Offending Team, and the Southampton ISSP (Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programme). Both partners had taken a consultative role on the project and acted as initial mediators between the Gallery, young people, their parents/guardians and school.

Delivery

The project lasted approximately 6 months from October 2008 to February 2009. There were 16 contact sessions in total and each volunteer attended the Gallery every Thursday from 10am-4pm. The Head of Education and Access and Freelance Education Assistant supported the volunteers. The participants include one female and one male volunteer are both 16 years of age. The young male came through the ISSP programme, and the female volunteer is supported by a School Liaison Officer and a Youth Offending Team Case Worker.

Other partners involved in the project included departments at the University of Southampton (such as the School of Engineering for one volunteer interested in a career in that area and Aim Higher). In addition, a freelance artist was employed to provide tuition to volunteers in different art forms to help them develop their creative practice and complete the Arts Award.

As part of the Arts Award, one of the volunteers wrote an opinion piece about how young people are judged in society and how they get involved in the arts. His piece was presented to a group of individuals in Southampton responsible for arts and heritage. He also presented his work and views at a meeting with Government Minister Sarah McCarthy-Fry MP, the Undersecretary of State for Schools and with other local council people involved in the Find your Talent scheme.

Outcomes

Impact on participants

Both volunteers chose to gain accreditation for the Gold Arts Award, rather than the Silver. They both regarded their accredited volunteer placements as beneficial to their progression to further education and or employment. The project will help one of the volunteers to progress on to an F.E Fine Art course and or employment in the arts. The second volunteer, interested in Engineering, was signposted via the University to the Science and Engineering CREST Award, which is similar in structure to the Arts Award. Both volunteers have subsequently been offered references by the Gallery after their placement.

Accreditation

The Arts Award accreditation was chosen because the Gallery had relatively recently become a registered centre for the Arts Award and volunteers had already been through the process at Bronze Level. This gave continuity and a sense of progression to the young people.

Institutional impact

Gallery staff members have had to think more clearly about how they structure work for volunteers of a younger age. They have also looked at ways of linking their work to the Gold Arts Award qualification and have learned new skills in guiding young people through the Award.

Impact on working practice included:

1. Learning how to plan for a volunteering programme for young people under the age of 18.
2. Learning best practice for hosting volunteer placements.
3. Mentoring young people.
4. Guiding young people through the Gold Arts Award.
5. Not to underestimate what young volunteers can do or want to do!
6. Awareness of best practice working with hard to reach young people.

Evaluation process

Learning has been monitored through structured Arts Award related activities devised by the two staff member's directly supporting volunteer and via the evaluation tools that were provided by the Visual Roots programme. These included: Volunteer Diaries, Staff Diaries, entry interviews (by Visual Roots evaluator), photographs, volunteers' sketchbooks, Gallery Log (which includes volunteer attendance, activities etc).

Next Steps

The Gallery is looking at options for hosting two new accredited volunteer placements again as it feels that they will need to develop and build on what it has learned from Phase 1. This area of work is an ongoing, gradual process, particularly for a smaller arts organisation. They will also continue signposting volunteers to other courses and or employment opportunities and continue developing the volunteer scheme for the ex-young offenders that the Gallery works regularly with.