

VisualRoots



Voluntary accredited placements in the
visual arts for young people

Phase Two Evaluation Report

Rebecca Lee

February 2010

engage in the
visual arts



department for
children, schools and families

Visual Roots | Evaluation Report

FOREWORD	3
VISUAL ROOTS EVALUATION	4
1 INTRODUCTION	5
1.1 The Visual Roots Programme	5
1.2 The Visual Roots Projects	7
1.3 Young People’s Advisory Group	7
1.4 Evaluation	8
2 CONTEXT	8
2.1 Introduction	8
2.2 Volunteering for young people	9
2.3 Current policy on volunteering & apprenticeships	11
2.4 Arts sector workforce developments	13
2.5 Youth placements and volunteering in the arts	15
3 VISUAL ROOTS PLACEMENTS	16
3.1 Background	16
3.2 Characteristics	18
3.3 Accreditation	23
3.4 Gallery learning	24
4 YOUNG PEOPLE	27
4.1 Learning and outcomes	27
5 NOTES	35

FOREWORD

During 2008-10 engage worked with ten galleries on the accredited placement programme for vulnerable young people, Visual Roots. 20 young people have participated in the programme which been supported by the Department of Children, Schools and Families and Arts Council England.

This evaluation report by Rebecca Lee, on the second year of the Visual Roots programme, demonstrates the benefits that participants gained from volunteering at their host galleries. All of the participants successfully completed Arts Award accreditation, one young person has gone on to participate in the Creative Apprenticeships Programme, others have applied to university or college, many enjoyed creating their own art work and decided they would like to have a career in the arts as practitioners or as administrators. The host venues had the opportunity to work with young volunteers over a sustained period and valued the input of young people's ideas, skills and energy into their organisations.

As Rebecca Lee describes, in the last decade new accreditations such as Arts Award, the Diploma in Creative and Media and Creative Apprenticeships have been introduced. Visual Roots has been a great way for galleries and young people to test out different these forms of accreditation. Programmes such as Visual Roots encourage young people to think about careers in the arts: in turn this contributes to meeting the need to diversify the visual arts workforce which was reported in Creative & Cultural Skills' Visual Arts Blueprint in 2009.

engage is keen to share what has been learnt through Visual Roots with colleagues working in the arts and with young people. Case studies from Visual Roots are on the engage website www.engage.org. engage continues to work with young people and with the Children's Workforce through programmes such as enquire and Watch this Space. Children and young people will continue to be a priority in engage's future plans.

engage would like to thank: Norma Rosso, Director, Visual Roots; Lilli Brodner-Francis, Visual Roots Co-ordinator; and the host visual arts venues and young people involved in Visual Roots, in particular the Visual Roots Advisory Group.

Jane Sillis, Director, engage

February 2010

VISUAL ROOTS EVALUATION

This evaluation report is for phase two of the Visual Roots programme. The report aims to collate information about the programme, and the learning that has come from it as well as put the Visual Roots programme in the context of other youth volunteering work and issues. Each of the six galleries, and the other stakeholders in the project, contributed to the evaluation by sharing their own thoughts and experiences.

My thanks go to the Visual Roots team, the staff at the galleries and particularly to the volunteers who undertook placements. The appetite from everyone for reflecting on their experiences and discussing their thoughts has assisted me as an evaluator and led to a greater joint understanding of these kinds of placements.

Rebecca Lee

February 2010

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Visual Roots Programme

The Visual Roots programme is managed and developed engage, the National Association for Gallery Education. engage is a membership organisation that supports colleagues working in the visual arts and education through: continued professional development, research, activities, advocacy and the dissemination of practice. engage, through its members and activities encourages access to galleries and visual arts venues often for audiences new to the visual arts.

Visual Roots is a programme that assists galleries in offering voluntary accredited placements for hard-to-reach young people. The galleries involved provide the opportunity for two young people to work with them on a regular basis for an average of five months. The young people work alongside staff within the gallery as well as working on their own art practice and receive an accreditation on completing their placement. This work has developed from the five-year envision project that engage delivered in galleries between 2004 and 2009. Envision assisted galleries in finding new ways of working with and involving young people in their work. Visual Roots offers longer-term work-related learning opportunities that aim to provide hard-to-reach young people with the chance to learn new skills, develop their artistic practice, learn about the gallery sector, learn within a formal work-environment and plan their pathways forward.

The positive benefits of volunteering and cultural activities for young people is the main focus within the (current) government's ten-year 2007 HM Treasury Strategy for young people's engagement *Aiming High for Young People*. The *14-19 Agenda* is the national plan to engage young people in flexible learning routes in their school and post-school education and training. Visual Roots offers galleries a new

way of delivering along these recommendations as well as developing the involvement of young people within their organisations. It is also in line with the recommendations of recent publications from the visual arts sector that address the lack of diversity and entry routes for young people.

The second phase of Visual Roots ran from July 2009 to January 2010 and was funded by Arts Council England, allowing six galleries to take part. Phase one involved four galleries and ran from September 2008 to March 2009. It was funded by the Department for Children, Schools and Families. An evaluation report for phase one was produced by Rebecca Lee. It contains a full description of the development of the Visual Roots programme as well as details engage's motivation for developing work in this area. A copy can be obtained by contacting engage¹.

Phase two began with a training and networking event for staff from the six galleries. This event shared the lessons learned in phase one of the project and the galleries heard from Stephanie McGreevy (former Visual Roots Coordinator) about different approaches to working with and engaging young people. It also provided some background context for the galleries by involving Dave Philips from the National Youth Agency. He explained the recent history behind government youth volunteering initiatives and recent research into the positive impact that volunteering can have on young people.

A mid-point knowledge-sharing workshop for gallery staff supported the galleries in their learning process and a final celebratory event for staff and participants was held in London at the close of the programme. The event gave participants the opportunity to share their thoughts on their experiences as well as enabling everyone to reflect on their own journeys through creative workshops and discussions.

1.2 The Visual Roots Projects

Six galleries from across the UK were selected using an application and short-listing process. The short-listing and final selections were led by the Visual Roots Young People's Advisory Group and facilitated by the Visual Roots team.

Focal Point Gallery, Southend-on-Sea; <http://www.focalpoint.org.uk>

A local authority managed contemporary art gallery.

Cornerhouse, Manchester; <http://www.cornerhouse.org>

An independent centre for contemporary visual art and film.

Orelans House Gallery, Richmond;

http://www.richmond.gov.uk/orleans_house_gallery

The principle borough council art gallery for Richmond upon Thames.

The Hive, Shrewsbury; <http://www.hiveonline.org.uk>

An independent arts organisation specialising in music and media.

The Photographers Gallery, London; <http://www.photonet.org.uk>

The largest public gallery in London dedicated to photography

artsdepot, Finchley, London; <http://www.artsdepot.co.uk>

A professional arts venue showing visual and performance arts.

1.3 Young People's Advisory Group

A Young People's advisory group was formed during phase one of Visual Roots and continued to operate throughout the development of phase two. The group is made up of six young people from across the UK, all interested in the engagement of young people in the visual arts. Two of the members are former volunteers from phase one of the

project. Through consultation and working with the Visual Roots team, they have the opportunity to influence, advise and assist in the development and delivery of the programme. As well as assisting in the gallery selection process, the advisory group conducted a peer evaluation and met with the current programme participants at the final sharing event.

1.4 Evaluation

The evaluation of Visual Roots follows the model of evaluation used in phase one whereby information is gathered directly from project participants and gallery staff and not through observation or assessment. This was mainly done through individual entry and exit interviews. In addition logs of gallery activity, the Arts Award portfolios of the participants, mid-point and final reports and the peer-to-peer evaluation interview conducted by the advisory group have contributed to the process. This approach allows gallery staff and participants to express their thoughts and experiences and tracks learning, development and changes that may occur during and as a result of the placement.

2 CONTEXT

2.1 Introduction

This section of the report aims to put the Visual Roots voluntary placement programme within a policy context and alongside the developments of cultural-sector placement and work-related learning opportunities. Rather than provide extensive detail about each initiative, this section contains Internet links to enable the reader to follow their interest and read more about current opportunities and policies.

2.2 Volunteering for young people

Since the turn of the millennium, there have been a number of interlinked Labour government initiatives that aim to increase the opportunities for young people to volunteer in their communities. They were developed in response to changes in the delivery of national children's and youth services and commissioned research on the positive impacts of volunteering for young people. Alongside these developments has been the increased delivery of work-related learning and apprenticeship schemes.

The first governmental volunteering programme for young people was [Millennium Volunteers](#) (MV), a publicly funded scheme for young people aged between 16-24. It offered accredited volunteering opportunities within community settings and had nine guiding principles that included 'sustained personal commitment', 'voluntary involvement', ownership by young people' and 'recognition of achievements'².

The next significant push for more young people to take part in volunteering came as a result of the 2003 *Every Child Matters* Green Paper and the subsequent Children Act 2004. [Every Child Matters](#) is a national framework for the 'joined up' delivery of children's services (this includes education, culture, health, social care and justice. The outcomes framework (2003, updated in 2008), listed 10 goals, including '*All young people participating in positive activities to develop personal and social skills, promote well-being and reduce behaviour that puts them at risk*'³. Following the establishment of 'positive activities' for young people as a governmental goal, [The Russell Commission](#) was formed in 2004 to 'develop a new national framework for youth action and engagement'⁴ that would be in alignment with the Every Child Matters outcomes framework. The final report (<http://archive.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/russellcommission/report/index.html>) claims that by volunteering, young people 'meet people and make

new friends, feel good about themselves by helping others, learn new skills, help themselves get better job, go to new places, make better communities⁵. The commission recommended a major increase in the number and diversity of volunteering opportunities for young people by forming a new agency. This organisation would work with the public, community and private sectors to develop a variety of volunteering opportunities and make it easier for young people to find out about them.

In 2005 the Government published their [Youth Matters green paper](#) and *Youth Matters 'Next Steps'* in 2006. These papers published proposals for ways of improving the outcomes for 13-19 year olds by changing the way that youth service providers within Local Authorities work. A major part of their proposals and the objectives for carrying them out is that young people should have 'more opportunities to volunteer and to make a contribution to their local community'⁶. Linked to the delivery of new these opportunities for young people are Public service agreement targets that Local Authorities are required to deliver against.

To deliver the recommendations from the Russell Commission and to support the new governmental aims outlined in the Youth Matters strategies, the government set up [V, the national young volunteers service](#), in 2006, a charity dedicated to 'helping young people volunteer in ways that matter to them'⁷. V works with private sector and voluntary sector organisations to create long and short-term youth volunteering opportunities through their three grants programmes. Since being launched, the 107 Vinvolved teams in the UK have created over 900,000 opportunities for young people. The V website allows young people to find a volunteering placement that suits them as well as creating their own profile as part of the online community.

2.3 Current policy on volunteering & apprenticeships

Volunteering has become a significant feature of youth policy because research like the Russell Commission report, shows the range of ways young people can benefit from taking part. The benefits reach beyond simply improving employability through skills and knowledge development (though these are part of the benefit). In addition, it has been reported that young people can:

- Develop personally: for example, by improving their confidence levels or learning to work closely with other people
- Change their attitudes: (and also feel satisfaction) by assisting in an educational or community setting
- Develop their leadership skills and thus develop their sense of empowerment and citizenship

In 2007, the government published [Aiming High for Young People](#): A ten year strategy for positive activities, which outlined plans to ‘help all young people, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, to take part in enjoyable and purposeful activities in their free time’. The strategy was makes commitments ‘focusing on increasing young people's participation in positive leisure-time activities’ in order ‘develop new skills and raise aspirations’⁸. Being involved in the arts is recognized as a way to ‘build confidence, self-esteem and self-discipline and help develop social and team-working skills’⁹. *Get Involved* is the young people’s version of the Aiming High Strategy and can be [downloaded from the DCSF website](#).

In addition to the development of specific Governmental strategies creating positive activity and volunteering opportunities for young people, it is useful to understand some of the developments of new accreditation systems for young people that have taken place as part of the [14-19 children’s workforce reforms](#) (of which Aiming High is part). These reforms have affected all those agencies and authorities

involved in the support of young people. An important part of the changes has been the creation of a new [Diploma](#) qualification and the promotion of new, flexible pathways for young people in transitional periods after full-time education or training. The Diploma requires a mixture of class work and hands-on activities. There is a specific [Creative and Media Diploma](#): it focuses on 'creativity in context; thinking and working creatively; principles, processes and practice and creative businesses and enterprise'.

Part of the 14-19 children's workforce reforms has been [to hand over to Local Authorities, the responsibility for the learning of 16-19 year olds](#) (this will happen in 2010; the Learning and Skills Council is currently responsibly). This move has taken place in order that youth services within Local Authorities (for example, schools, colleges, youth justice services, youth signposting services) can work together and serve young people in a more 'holistic way'. This move is notable for the arts sector because all Local Authorities will now be delivering 'the 14-19 entitlements to: Diplomas, Apprenticeships and the Foundation Learning Tier'¹⁰.

Another notable current development is the increased work on developing youth leadership opportunities led by the [National Youth Agency](#). Their project, [The Youth of Today](#), is bringing together youth organisations to provide more changes for young people to take leadership roles in their communities and includes having direct access to funding.

Finally, in the lead up to the next general election, volunteering and work-related learning continues to feature in party policy and planning. The most recent Labour government move in relation to work-related learning has been the [Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009](#). This act sets out an apprenticeship programme, *World-class*

Apprenticeships: Unlocking talent, building skills for all. The programme will be delivered by the [National Apprenticeship Service](#) and 'would place the Apprenticeships programme on a statutory footing, and would guarantee that all suitably qualified young people will be entitled to an apprenticeship place'. Apprenticeships are a development of the work-experience that all young people are entitled to and are in alignment with the new Diploma qualification. They are available in a growing number of schools.

The Conservative party plans to continue the development of volunteering opportunities but have taken a stance against what they feel is 'compulsory volunteering'¹¹ suggested by the current Labour government. Their plan is to develop the number of opportunities available but also form a new '[National Citizen Service](#)', that would provide the chance for all school leavers to take part in a six-week placement with other young people.

2.4 Arts sector workforce developments

In parallel with the development of work-related learning opportunities for young people has been the increased activism within the arts and cultural sector for workforce development and the diversifying of the routes by which newcomers can begin careers within the arts.

In November 2009, The Creative and Cultural Skills Council (CCS), and [Arts Council England](#) (ACE) published [The Visual Arts Blueprint](#). The Blueprint is a 'workforce development plan for the Visual Arts in the UK'. [Creative and Cultural Skills](#) is the Sector Skills Council for Advertising, Crafts, Cultural Heritage, Design, Literature, Music, Performing and Visual Arts. They work with public and private cultural organisations, the education sector and the government to assist potential employers in developing skills for their sector.

Through publishing this report and its recommendations, CCS and ACE hope that ‘access and progression routes enable anyone who has the right ability to develop their full potential’. They also recognise that there are challenges for the visual arts in developing its workforce, these include that ‘the workforce in the sector lacks diversity, and there is a particular need to find and develop the leaders of the future from all parts of the community’. Among the recommendations, they suggest that ‘there is a gap between formal school-based qualifications and the creative activities in which young people take part, and work should be done to recognise their creative achievements¹² and in addition, that whilst volunteering and internships are already established in the arts as an entry point, they could be ‘better organised to offer identifiable skills gains and made more widely accessible¹³’ (there are often financial and access obstacles that prevent less wealthy or hard-to-reach young people taking up these offers). The development of sector-specific apprenticeships is also acknowledged as a way of providing an entry route for young people.

The development of better training and career related training for young people is a recommendation also included in the Arts Council’s ten-year visual arts strategy [Turning Point](#). Research contributing to the final report found that there were few people with vocational training working in the arts; most had degree level qualifications. Young people who are at risk or vulnerable are even more likely to be excluded from employment in the arts.

A youth-specific arts campaign is being led by the [English National Youth Arts Network](#) called Young Arts leaders. Their aim is to “raise the profile of, and support the youth arts sector in, the development of leadership skills, aspiration and potential of young people within the arts and cultural industries”¹⁴. ENYAN has created a resource document that advocates for the development of this area of work as

well as showing the benefit for young people through taking part in the arts and to signpost the sector to further information. The document also includes several casestudies and further discussion of the policies surrounding youth arts and volunteering programmes.

2.5 Youth placements and volunteering in the arts

There are a number of national initiatives, which initially informed the development of Visual Roots project. These initiatives, described below, aim to provide entry pathways to young people to the cultural sector and increase the opportunities for paid work. However, as outlined further in this evaluation report, engage has found that the barriers encountered by many of these young people, particularly those who are hard to reach or disengaged are not exclusively financial. The Visual Roots project has demonstrated the effectiveness of offering bespoke programmes to these young people as a first step towards their engagement in more traditional career pathways in the visual arts.

Creative and Cultural Skills have led, with their development of a sector specific apprenticeship, the [Creative Apprenticeship](#). Launched in September 2008, the programme is the first scheme of its kind for the cultural sector and is delivered through the National Apprenticeship Service mentioned above. The programme aims to assist young people access paid work-related learning placements in a culture that often accepts that unpaid voluntary work is the only way to begin a career in the arts. The financial barrier that this presents for many young people is alleviated by the apprenticeship, which is full-time employment paid at least national minimum wage. The scheme presents a new way of gaining a qualification suited to the sector in the way that formal education courses cannot and selection is based on ability, not academic records. Participants can develop skills that are appropriate to their potential line of work (and could only be learnt 'on the job') and employers can encourage the type of working that they need. The

apprenticeship gives participants with vocational and theory based qualification (level 2 is equivalent to 5 GCSEs A*-C grade and level 3 is equivalent to 2 A-levels) and is currently offered in six areas:

- Live Events and Promotion
- Music Business (Recording Industry)
- Technical Theatre (Rigging, Lighting and Sound)
- Costume and Wardrobe
- Cultural and Heritage Venue Operations
- Community Arts Management

The first Creative Apprenticeships were carried out in 2009 and [Museums Libraries and Archives Council](#) will support another 50 placements in 2009-2011. Employers apply for a grant of £5,000 to deliver an Apprenticeship. The Cultural and Heritage Venue Operations, and Community Arts Management are the two areas that could be delivered within a Visual Arts setting.

3 VISUAL ROOTS PLACEMENTS

3.1 Background

Each of the six galleries involved in Visual Roots received a grant of £4,000 from engage to use to provide two placements for two vulnerable young people. As part of the application process, they prepared a budget that set out their costs for delivering the placements (and ensuring they were accredited) as well as any other income or in kind support that would be involved. The funding was used to cover the costs that the gallery incurred in supporting the volunteers (including staff time and the accreditation costs) and also covered the expenses of the young people they worked with. The young people were aware that the programme was a voluntary one and did not receive an allowance or wage. The overall cost of the projects in each gallery, including in kind support was between £6,000- £8,000.

engage's Visual Roots team administrated the whole programme and liaised with the galleries throughout their projects, supporting them on any issues that arose, for example, assisting during the recruitment of the young people. One of the aims of Visual Roots was to continue and share learning about best practice in running longer-term projects for vulnerable young people: the Visual Roots team arranged three events at which the galleries could meet and share their learning and support each other on any issues that might be arising: the initial training session, a mid-point reflection afternoon and a final event where the galleries presented about their work. The final event also provided a chance for all of the participants to meet and share their experiences of the programme.

The young people were recruited by the galleries themselves through local youth service or education partners. The process used by each gallery varied, but most began by approaching community partners they had worked with before and by distributing information to their contacts. Following this, young people either approached the galleries independently (this happened in about half of the placements) or a partner organisation, for example, Connexions, referred two young people they thought would be interested and suitable for the programme. The galleries met with the young people, but there was no formal application or interview process as there sometimes is for cultural youth placements. The selection was made through discussion and through the suggestions made by community or education partners. The galleries worked with a range of partners, including:

- The YMCA
- Local Refugee Services
- Way to Work
- New Deal
- Local colleges
- Local Children's Teams

- Connexions
- Local Looked After Children's Teams and Leaving Care Teams
- Other community arts organisations

The process of recruitment sometimes took longer than expected, as many potential volunteers were unable to commit to a long-term placement. An additional factor in this process was that galleries were trying to work with vulnerable young people, many of whom have other commitments or pressures within their lives that make signing up to a four-month placement a difficult choice. In half of the cases, the galleries worked with young people they had had some contact with before in the gallery through other projects. This had some effect on the how the placement developed, but did not effect the engagement or otherwise of the young people involved.

The galleries produced detailed plans for their projects as part of the application process and these formed the basis of what they delivered through the placements.

3.2 Characteristics

3.2.1 Planning and ways of working

The reporting processes for the Visual Roots required galleries to keep in mind their aims for the projects, both for their own learning and that of their participants. All of the galleries expected that by delivering these placements they would learn more about how to work with vulnerable young people. In addition, they expected that they would understand the nature of offering a placement that was much longer than their previous work experience placements (all have provided placements for secondary school or university students over a week or two), and finally, that they would, by involving two young people in their gallery team over a number of months, that they would involve a youth

‘voice’ in their organisational working. For most of the galleries, this project formed part of their development of a youth forum or youth team; the volunteers could be part of this following their placement. In one of the galleries, they involved two young people they already worked with as mentors to two volunteers new to the gallery.

I am hoping that by the end, they will think it's feasible for them to have a job in this area.

Gallery staff member

When reporting on what they hoped the young people to get from the placements, all of the galleries had, as a focus, the long-term career development and life-chances of the young people. This is one of the ways in which the Visual Roots placements differ from a work-experience placement. The galleries hoped that the young people would benefit from their placements by gaining¹⁵:

- Experience as part of a team
- Experience having responsibility
- New artistic skills
- New work-place skills
- Increased confidence and self-esteem
- Knowledge of how a gallery works
- An understanding of how they might be involved in the arts sector
- Some plans for their future career development

One of the other distinguishing characteristics of the Visual Roots placements has been way in which they have been devised through consultation with their volunteers. Each gallery had expected that their young people would work across the gallery with a range of staff and undertake different kinds of activities, but the final planning was only made on meeting with the young people, finding out their own areas of interest (both in the organisation and artistically), what they felt they were strongest doing and their availability. The placements were therefore tailor-made and flexible and the evaluation shows that that

this was where the projects' success was based. Providing this kind of responsive opportunity meant some changes in the way the galleries worked and new demands on them; these will be discussed in section four.

Most departments were able to offer some kind of experience, which the young people were informed of, enabling them to make decisions regarding their personal experience

Gallery staff member

Because each placement evolved according to the interests, needs and other commitments of the young people, the timetabling of guided learning and individual learning hours was arranged differently in each gallery. Most allocated a particular day of the week for the placement, some even two days a week. These sometimes stayed the same throughout and were sometimes changed week by week in response to the young people's ability to attend.

Tailoring the project to the participants' needs helped realise the aims of the project successfully

Gallery staff member

Following the initial consultation and discussion when planning the project, all of the galleries ensured that they provided a reflection and evaluation space each week with participants. This was part of the process that ensured the galleries could respond to any changes in circumstances, or external pressures for the young people. It also, importantly, clearly demonstrated that they were interested in hearing about the experience of the young person (ie, holding a review session whether anything needed discussing or not) and were making time for them. This could encourage engagement and the development of trust in a new situation. In addition, taking time reflect on a personal journey proved to be a good way of reinforcing the learning for the participants.

It was necessary to continually evaluate the placements each week with the individuals to ensure they were happy and that they were getting what they wanted out of the experience

Gallery Staff Member

3.2.2 Working on the placement

Whilst with the gallery, the young people took part in a range of activities as well as working on their own portfolios as part of their accreditation. The evaluation shows that the galleries provided the chance for them to work as part of a team, on long and short term projects that were part of the artistic programmes as well as independently or with one member of staff on general day-to-day and behind the scenes tasks that contributed to the running of the gallery. The young people were able to decide on their preferences and thus do more or less of the kinds of things they felt they were strongest at, preferred doing, or would be of benefit to them beyond the placement. The number of activities the young people were part of is very extensive. Most began by learning about these areas and taking on supporting roles. By the end of the placement, most participants were able to take responsibility for certain areas of a project and worked alongside gallery staff. This list gives an idea of how they were involved in the operation and work of the galleries:

- Planning, invigilating, curating and installing and reviewing as part of gallery exhibitions
- Planning, attending and meeting people at gallery events
- Taking part in and assisting artists in education workshops
- Learning about and helping in finance and administration departments
- Assisting in a range of marketing activities
- Learning new ICT skills (both for administration and for artistic practice)
- Working with the technical and operations teams

- Organising personal artistic projects and exhibitions as part of the gallery programme and arts award accreditation

Working across an organisation has meant that all of the volunteers have worked with staff from a range of departments. For most of the galleries, the extent to which this happened on Visual Roots is new for them. Some shorter placements spend a little time with other staff to learn what they do, but on this project, the young people, depending on their interests, may have spent much longer and worked closely with staff from marketing, finance or administration and not focused their time on engagement or education teams. The galleries reported that the placements involved nearly all of the organisation's staff, with placements working with up to 15 different people throughout their time in the gallery.

She suddenly had this ownership of the gallery; that was brilliant to see

Gallery staff member

3.2.3 Personalised Learning

Particular to the Visual Roots is the inclusion of specific time dedicated to the development of personal artistic skills. This is particularly focused on because the galleries have all chosen the Arts Award as their method of accreditation for the placements. The young people are able to work with professional artists on producing their own work and develop their portfolios. Just half of the young people involved in Visual Roots phase two plan to use their artistic skills and practice in the training and paid work they plan to get in the future, so working on these alongside their work for the gallery is important to them.

Spending time with professional artists also enables learning about career paths and the different experiences freelance or independent artists have in starting out with their practice. Through allowing the young people to work with a range of staff and artists, the galleries

have provided the chance for the young people to begin to see how they might translate their skills, or passion for the visual arts world into more training or paid work. One of the ways in which Visual Roots has developed in phase two is the extent to which the placement focuses on next steps and routes forward for the young people. All of the galleries involved had planned that this would be part of their work with the young people. In this area, the galleries have supported the young people in a range of ways. These include:

- Researching options for continuing artistic training
- Researching the options for developing more work-related skills
- Helping the young to understand the transferable skills they have gained
- Assisting with the completion of university, course or job application forms
- Providing further opportunities at the gallery or, as in two cases, being able to provide paid employment (through a temporary piece of work and through a Creative Apprenticeship)

They've all got their own problems going on, they find it calming and comforting being here.

Gallery staff member

As mentioned above, half of the galleries worked with young people they already had relationships with through other projects. Those working with new young people did not encounter any more difficulties with engaging or supporting the young people. The only very slight difference was that for those working with young people they knew, a progression route was more of a major focus from earlier in the placement.

3.3 Accreditation

The galleries all chose to use the Arts Council's Arts Award as the accreditation for their placements and all have felt that they provide a good structure to use alongside a placement that allows for a

personalised learning route. The modules, particularly the arts challenge and leadership sections, are flexible and can be used in a number of ways, focusing on self-led learning and hands on tasks, rather than the acquisition of skills or knowledge. Another benefit is that many of the galleries already run arts awards and the young people understand how the credits can work for them on UCAS forms, or applications for other training. Crucially, they also contain an area that focuses on developing artistic skills and require reflection and evaluation of learning and personal development throughout.

One of the challenges staff found when using the arts award is that they were time consuming to administer when substantial personal support and guidance was also required by the young people as part of the placements. In some places, the young people felt that concentrating on the 'work-related' skills they were learning was more important to them than the artistic side as they could see these leading to paid work sooner. By concentrating on these skills, they were not able to complete all that the Arts Award required of them, despite their commitment.

3.4 Gallery learning

Most of the learning experienced by the galleries (which is in part outlined above) is centred on how best to work with young people in hard-to-reach or vulnerable circumstances on a programme of this length.

In order to ensure the placements could happen, gallery staff committed a lot of their time assisting the young people in organising their timetables and understanding the reasons that might prevent them from attending. This proved a challenge in itself, but also made planning tasks and activities difficult, as young people could not necessarily come in for the same amount of time each week. By

keeping in very close communication with the young people and breaking the overall placement plan down into smaller tasks and areas of work, staff were able to respond to changes but keep the placement on track. In addition, staff had to be able to respond to the different needs of two placements, some of whom could work independently and some required more continuous contact on their days in the gallery.

As much as it's been rewarding, it's been also very challenging. It's been both all the time.

Gallery staff member

To be able to respond meant understanding the pressures that the young people were facing in their lives outside of the gallery. Each of the galleries learned of the demands facing the young people and the support networks that they were also engaging with. This meant learning about the demands of other training or education courses, personal or family issues, or statutory requirements that the young people had to fulfil also. The list of partnership organisations above shows the types of situations the galleries had to familiarise themselves with if they were to understand the situations their young people were coming from into the gallery. Linked to this was the sometimes complex issue of disclosure and relationships between staff and volunteers. In no cases did this cause any problems, but galleries did report that they ensured they had policies and plans in place in order that boundaries were made clear between work and personal contact.

The structure needs to be reviewed on a daily basis, as they might not show up on the day they said they would. So my planning has changed completely. They arrive and we look at what to do.

Gallery staff member

The building of trusting relationships and the treatment of the young people as individuals has been at the heart of how the galleries have delivered their placements. Some of the galleries noted that through

providing the placements, they gained a clearer understanding of the different ways in which they might provide support. One example is that whilst providing an open and volunteer-led opportunity was useful in some cases, the galley realised that direction and assistance in planning beyond the placement was what was needed. Allowing the young person continued opportunities at the gallery after the placement would not (in this case) assist them in moving forward.

People have seen the value in work placements both for individuals completing them and for staff supervising

Gallery staff member

For most of the galleries, this was the first time that young people had been engaging with teams from across the organisation. All of them reported that this had been successful not only in providing the young people with a wide range of tasks and a better perspective on the organisation, but for all staff to be involved in a learning project. Several staff members commented on the benefit they gained from working with (and learning from) the young people and their increased understanding of what their gallery or organisation as a whole can offer to young people, aside from the creative projects they more usually run.

That's really important for us, is that young people are at the heart of what we do

Gallery staff member

Spending time with a different set of people and understanding their perspective on contemporary art and creative practice has also been part of the learning.

[Staff have] had to accommodate another view from the highly educated workforce [they] normally come into contact with.

Gallery staff member

One of the galleries has been able to offer full-time employment to one of their volunteers through the Creative Apprenticeship scheme. The volunteer will also have a role in mentoring other volunteers. This has developed the organisations understanding of how it might engage young people and what else it can offer by working with a volunteer team.

This long level commitment is different; being part of the team for a change. That sense of progression up to a creative apprenticeship; it's like there's a whole other staff strand now.

Gallery Staff Member

Of all of the learning that the galleries reported the most consistent and frequently talked about was the need for flexibility in all aspects of the placement delivery. All of the galleries used a work plan or action plan but were aware that in order to make it most possible for the young people to engage in and benefit from the placement, they needed to be responsive.

Flexibility in all areas; this was essential for the placements to last

Gallery staff member

4 YOUNG PEOPLE

4.1 Learning and outcomes

4.1.1 Introduction

The evaluation shows that the outcomes and learning for the young people involved in Visual Roots falls can be split into four main areas: skills and knowledge, artistic practice, personal development and routes forward. For most of the volunteers, they see the changes in their plans for the future as the major impact for them. These changes, in some ways have been able to happen as a result of learning and development in the first three areas.

4.1.2 Skills and knowledge

Section 3.2.2 lists the different kinds of activities that the young people were involved in during their placements. They all reported developing their skills and knowledge in relation to these activities, first taking supporting roles and then in most cases, taking on tasks as a member of staff would.

I like coming into work on a week when it's hectic and there's so many things to be doing. *Visual Roots volunteer*

The main areas the young people reported learning about and developing skills in were:

- Understanding the curation process and developing an 'eye' for art works
- Handling, moving, hanging and working with art works
- Front of house and customer service procedures and roles
- Understanding the maintenance and operations side of building management and the tasks that accompany general upkeep
- ICT skills through marketing and documentation tasks
- Understanding and learning to work on administration and finance operations
- Learning how to negotiate, work with and present to other staff members
- Understanding the principles of research and project development
- Learning how to operate art specific software for imaging and editing
- How education workshops are prepared for and delivered
- Preparing for marketing and managing an public exhibition
- Mentoring other young people
- Improving spoken and written English

All of the young people talked of their increased understanding of how a gallery operates and the process, people and projects that work within it.

The event was just awesome; I loved getting to meet new people that were my age. We're all so different; everyone's ideas were so different.

Visual Roots volunteer

This understanding not only allowed them to learn new skills but was also part of the way in which they have begun planning their routes into work in this sector.

4.1.3 Artistic Practice

As mentioned above, the Visual Roots model (using the Arts Award as an accreditation) includes time for young people to focus on their own arts practice. For some, this is more important than others as they are keen on pursuing this as a career option. Approximately half of the young people involved plan to continue developing their art as a career following the close of the placements, rather than working on a role within the arts sector. For them, the learning has two sides. Firstly, they have had individual tuition and tutoring on their particular area of interest, including film and media production, illustration and photography. They have all reported that they have seen definite developments in their own work as a result of through their improved skills as well as their increased ability to reflect on, devise and develop ideas. Young people and gallery staff reported recognising that they were developing personal preferences and styles through focused work.

In the beginning I felt that being a photographer was all about snapping and taking photos, you have to do some work that links to the photographs, to work win the book shop, in print sales, you need to know those things, it's a big change for me as a photographer.

Visual Roots volunteer

The young people have all reported that as well as feeling that they are better at what they do, they have also developed a clearer understanding of how an artist works, operates and communicates with

other people. All of them had to present on their work and work alongside professional artists who shared their own career routes and experiences with them. A number of the participants were able to explain their newfound knowledge about the broader role of an arts practitioner outside of simply producing work.

4.1.4 Personal Development

Tracking the personal development of the young people involved is more difficult than seeing improvements in certain skills, or an increase in knowledge. This is partly because it could be after the placement that the real impact on the young people happens and we cannot be sure in what way it may occur. However, we can use the reflections of the young people and staff involved to track some more immediate recognition of changes.

Step by step, they built the confidence inside me.

Visual Roots volunteer

More than half of the young people expressed that they had noticed they had become more confident. Staff from all of the galleries reported that they had observed that their volunteers had grown in confidence. The area in which confidence developed was different for all of the young people. They mainly felt that they were more confident in:

- Their role at the gallery
- Talking to and working with staff
- Approaching people they didn't know or members of the public
- Their own artistic work
- Themselves personally
- Managing tasks
- Moving forward beyond the placement

I didn't think I'd be talking to all the people that work here. It's the communication that's vital. If something needs sorting, you've to be able to talk to someone. **Visual Roots volunteer**

Most staff and volunteers also felt that there had also been an improvement in concentration and time management skills within the work environment. Linked to the increase in confidence, as been a realisation in most of the young people that they have personal strengths and skills. On beginning their placements, they did not know where these lay. By discovering them as part of work-related learning, a number of the young people were looking for opportunities to build on these. One example was the discovery by one volunteer that they were particularly good at and enjoyed working in administration. Knowing that this is something that people are employed to do has given them new confidence in getting paid work, particularly in something that they know they enjoy.

I've never really known what I was good at. Being here has kind of summoned me up a bit. I said when I came here, 'I want to do everything!' It made me realise what I wouldn't mind doing for a living. **Visual Roots volunteer**

Having a distinct role and working as part of a larger team appears to have benefited the young people in a number of ways. Given responsibility, they have reported enjoying the fact that they have a contribution to make. Towards the end of their placements, most of the young people were given responsibilities and treated as members of staff rather than supporting roles.

If there's a problem or an issue, I've sometimes been the one that people have counted on because I've been around the gallery working in lots of different areas. **Visual Roots volunteer**

A number of the volunteers said they felt proud of what they had done and of themselves. They all were able to reflect on changes they felt

had happened in them over the time they had been with their gallery setting.

For the first time ever in my life I'm actually proud of something I've done.

Visual Roots volunteer

They saw these changes not only affecting their chances at getting jobs within the sector, but as affecting them as people beyond their work in the gallery. A few of them were surprised at themselves and the things that they'd done.

I've started listening to people a lot more. Before, I never really listened because I was quite scared of talking to them, I don't know why. I've got a lot better at talking to people. At the private view, I went round saying hi to a lot of people I didn't know, which would never have happened beforehand.

Visual Roots volunteer

4.2.1 Routes Forward

The development of new skills, knowledge and confidence has been a tremendous achievement for all the young people involved in the placements. One of the ways of demonstrating the impact of the placements is what the young people plan to do on finishing their work. Almost all of the young people involved reported that they have had help to either map out a plan for themselves where they initially did not have one, or to focused in on what they would now do to get them closer to their aim of getting paid work within (and some outside) of the sector. Some of the young people felt that beginning to have an idea of their skills was a major turning point and for some there has been a considerable change in their ideas of the future since they began. For some of the young people, the placement has taken them in directions that they did not expect.

My plans? I'm considering going to university. I never thought I would. I was a college drop out; I didn't do too well in school.

Visual Roots volunteer

The ways in which the gallery placement and staff have affected the plans of their volunteers are as follows:

1. After being referred by Connexions, and learning more about the broader work of an artist or practitioner, the gallery have helped one volunteer to research the entry level qualifications that would be needed in order be able to start an art diploma and reach his aim of starting a foundation course and have worked with his social workers to ensure his next steps support these plans.
2. The placement showed one young person the wide variety of jobs available within a gallery and she discovered what her own personal skills were and how these might be transferred into paid work with the support of her social workers.
3. After working on the Visual Roots placement alongside his Way to Work NVQ qualification at the gallery, one volunteer has been offered a Creative Apprenticeship at the gallery which will paid at least minimum wage and provide two-years of job security.
4. Taking the Visual Roots placement alongside a college course has helped one volunteer plan out her potential career path following education and support her educational attainment through work-related learning.
5. After taking part in numerous gallery projects over the past two years, one volunteer has plans to go to university after expecting that he never would. The gallery helped to research what his next steps need to be and how his arts award will contribute to his qualifications.
6. The project has enabled one volunteer referred by the YMCA to decide on what he would like to do in the future. He now plans to gain a gold arts award and apply to university.

7. One volunteer discovered her skill for and enjoyment of administration and has contacted Connexions in order to look for paid work in this area. She had stopped attending college and had no clear plans before the placement.
8. One volunteer felt he had become more skilled at time management and working with other people as a result of his placement and felt that this would help him in the college course he is undertaking.
9. After working with the gallery for some time before the placement, one volunteer now feels that they have begun developing their own practice and has become part of the women's refugee group who meet regularly in the gallery. She plans to use her experiences and continuing volunteering in order to find work within the gallery sector.
10. Attending the placement supported the ICT training that one volunteer was also undertaking and has provided more opportunities for her to take part in future projects and the gallery youth forum.
11. The placement helped one volunteer to see the area of gallery work she might go into and how she wanted her own practice to develop. As a result, she changed the university course she was applying for to something more specific to her skills.
12. After finding out about the placement through Connexions, one volunteer has worked on his own artistic skills and plans for the future as well as gaining employment through the gallery on a new project.
13. The placement showed one young person how they might incorporate their enjoyment of the arts in the work they are training to do with children and young people.

There are more gates open to me now.

Visual Roots volunteer

5 NOTES

¹ email info@engage.org

² Taken from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Millennium_Volunteers on 17 January 2010.

³ <http://publications.everychildmatters.gov.uk/eOrderingDownload/DCSF-00331-2008.pdf>

⁴ <http://archive.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/russellcommission/faq/index.html>

⁵ Page 13, *A National Framework for youth action and engagement Executive Summary to the Russell Commission*, Ian M Russell, March 2005

⁶ <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/Youth/youthmatters/whatisyouthmatters/whatisyouthmatters/>

⁷ <http://vinspired.com/about-us/about-us>

⁸ *Aiming high for young people: a ten year strategy for positive activities*, 2007, ISBN: 978-1-84532-263-2, HM Treasury: Department for children, schools and families, <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/Youth/aiminghigh/aiminghigh/>

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19/index.cfm?go=site.home&sid=57&pid=505&ctype=None&ptype=Contents>

¹¹ *It's time to inspire Britain's Teenagers*: National Citizen Service for the 21st Century, available from http://www.conservatives.com/Policy/Where_we_stand/Family.aspx

¹² *The Visual Arts Blueprint*, Creative and Cultural Skills, November 2009.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ *Young Arts Leaders: ENYANs National Campaign*, <http://www.enyan.co.uk>

¹⁵ This is a combination of the plans that all of the galleries made.