

Summer Arts Colleges

Digest of the Evaluation Report 2007-11



By Professor Roger Tarling and Maree Adams

FOREWORD

The innovative strategic national partnership between the Youth Justice Board and Arts Council England has funded and supported the development and rollout of the Summer Arts Colleges programme.

The outcomes reported here emphasise just how fruitful this partnership has been. This digest report provides not only remarkable findings about the impact of the Summer Arts College programme, but is an important testimony to the hard work, commitment and creativity of the many hundreds of YOT staff, artists and educationalists who have worked together over the last five years.

Their efforts have been doubly productive, in that, in addition to their high-quality direct work with the young people, they have also assiduously provided a wide range of information on the performance of their projects.

This digest and the full evaluation report (Tarling and Adams, 2012) will be supplemented by a reconviction study, a return on investment analysis and a qualitative report on the views and experiences of the young people who participated.

This report could not have been produced without an enormous data gathering exercise by Unitas staff, which has resulted in an unusually high level of information for each young person participating.

I would like to express particular thanks to Professor Roger Tarling for preparing the evaluation report and to Maree Adams, the researcher who worked tirelessly in collating and analysing the data.

Martin Stephenson, Executive Director, Unitas, May 2012



BACKGROUND

Summer Arts Colleges have been designed to meet the educational needs of young people who have been involved in serious and/or persistent offending, such as young people serving the community part of a Detention and Training Order (DTO), or who are subject to intensive supervision and surveillance.

A salient feature of these young people is that they have often become detached from education, training and employment. Using a creative, arts-based curriculum, this intensive programme aims to re-engage these young people in learning and divert them from re-offending.

This initiative resulted from the strategic partnership between the Youth Justice Board and Arts Council England, who have jointly provided the funding. This partnership working is mirrored at a local level, where youth offending teams (YOTs) work in tandem with artists and educationalists to deliver the projects.

The programme is managed by Unitas, a national charity. Unitas staff provide information, advice and guidance to YOTs to assist them with their planning, identify mainstream venues and skilled arts practitioners, build the curriculum, and deliver effective programmes.

Comprehensive online training and a bank of arts enrichment resources are available to YOTs running Summer Arts Colleges. Unitas manages a thorough quality assurance system, which includes systematic data collection and monitoring, as well as quality audit visits.

YOTs are supported at each step of planning, implementation and evaluation, to ensure that the programme offered is of the highest quality possible and is based on evidence of effective practice.

This management role has ensured that, while each Summer Arts College is adapted to local circumstances, the national model is faithfully implemented with consistently high quality outcomes.

THE PROGRAMME

Being disengaged from education, training and employment is one of the most significant risk factors for offending. This is particularly so for young people who are involved in serious or persistent offending.

The programme design draws on available evidence that suggests that the arts and creative activities may have particular potential for engaging young people with these experiences (Hughes, 2005). In addition, the programme design incorporated evidence-based practice of 'what works' with young people at risk of offending (Stephenson, 2007).

The programme has three key objectives:

- To increase educational achievement through improving literacy and numeracy skills and achieving the Arts Award, a nationally recognised qualification.
- To raise educational participation and facilitate transition into mainstream education, training and employment (ETE).
- To reduce levels of (re-)offending both during the programme and in the subsequent months.

The main requirements of the Summer Arts College specification are:

- A structured, arts programme is delivered over the school summer holidays, running for five taught hours a day for five days a week.
- The College is delivered with ten young people aged 14-19.
- Attendance and participation is promoted through effective arrangements for transport, coupled with practical and emotional support.
- Close links with parents and carers are developed.



■ Arts enrichment resources are used in the College to ensure that literacy and numeracy are embedded into all activities.

■ High quality, mainstream community venues such as FE colleges are used as the location for delivery.

■ Visits and other activities to raise awareness of work opportunities in the arts and creative industries are included in the programme.

MAIN FINDINGS

Profile of the young people

Over 1500 young people from 76 YOTs in England and Wales participated in Summer Arts Colleges between 2007 and 2011. Their characteristics were:

- Typically, male (83%) and white (70%) with an average age of 16.4 years.
- Almost one in three had been in the care system (31%).
- Nearly one-fifth (18%) had statements of special educational need.
- Over two-thirds were either on a Supervision Order, a Youth Rehabilitation Order (YRO) or the community phase of the Detention and Training Order.

■ Three out of five of the young people had Asset scores in the medium-high or high-risk bandings.

■ Almost half (42%) were not in education, employment or training (NEET).

■ Only around one-fifth of the young people had educational qualifications, despite the majority being above school leaving age.

■ Four out of five young people had literacy (80%) and numeracy skills (82%) below that expected of a typical 11-year-old (Level 1).

OUTCOMES

Attainment and skill development

- The proportion of young people achieving Level 1 for literacy and numeracy skills almost doubled between starting and completing the programme (literacy 21% pre and 39% post; numeracy 18% pre and 32% post).
- Over two-thirds of young people increased their literacy and numeracy scores (69% and 68% respectively).
- Among those young people who completed the Summer Arts College, 86% achieved the Bronze Arts Award and 7% achieved the higher Silver Arts Award.

Participation and progression

■ Almost four out of five young people completed the programme (79%).

■ For those who completed the programme, on average, 81% of the programme hours were attended.

■ The numbers of NEET young people among programme completers fell by more than 60%, and overall nearly three-quarters of all the young people were in ETE in the four weeks following the programme.

Reducing offending

■ The average rate of offending almost halved between the 13 weeks before the Summer Arts College (8.9 on average) and the period in which the young people were participating in the programme (4.9 on average).

■ The average rate of offending increased slightly between participation in the programme and the 13-week period immediately following the Summer Arts College (5.7).

TRENDS

Most of the key indicators of success improved over time, between 2007 and 2011. Completion rates, for example, increased from 69% in 2007 to 85% in 2011. There were large improvements in literacy and numeracy attainment over time, particularly in 2010. Whilst 59% of the young people improved their numeracy scores in 2007, this had risen to 74% by 2010, although it fell to 67% in 2011.

INTENSITY

Different programme lengths were experimented with to identify the optimum performance and value for money, with colleges varying from three to six weeks. Strikingly, the three-week programmes showed no reduction in performance compared to the longer ones. Whilst it was not unexpected that



completion rates would be higher on three-week programmes (85%) than on six-week programmes (67%), it is interesting that literacy and numeracy gains, the achievement of the Arts Award and reductions in offending were at least as good as those achieved in five- and six-week programmes.

It is possible that, despite their reduced duration, the three-week Summer Arts Colleges in 2010 and 2011 compensated with an increased intensity of work with young people.

This made a dramatic difference in terms of value for money, with a 40% reduction in per capita cost.

REFERENCES

Hughes, J. (2005) *Doing the Arts Justice: A Review of Research Literature, Practice and Theory*. Canterbury: The Unit for the Arts and Offenders, Centre for Applied Theatre Research.

Stephenson, M. (2007) *Young People and Offending: Education, Youth Justice and Social Inclusion*. Cullompton: Willan.

Tarling, R. and Adams, M. (2012) *Summer Arts Colleges Evaluation Report 2007-11*. London: Unitas.

CONCLUSIONS

The evaluation of the Summer Arts Colleges has provided strong evidence for the success of the programme in achieving its intended aims and objectives. The initiative successfully engaged young people at considerable risk of (re-)offending.

Completion rates and attendance levels were high, as was the proportion achieving a national qualification, the Arts Award. There were significant improvements in basic skills. Progression to further education, training and employment following the programme was achieved by the great majority of young people who completed.

Importantly, the positive education, training and employment outcomes were also achieved by those young people most at risk – those who were previously NEET.

The remarkable educational outcomes of this programme were accompanied by significant reductions in offending, particularly during the programme, and to a lesser extent in the subsequent months.

Unusually, the outcomes of this national programme have improved as it has increased substantially in size and been replicated in a wide range of environments. The continuing refinement of the project model has resulted in significant productivity gains and substantial cost benefits.