

Art and Community Safety

Evaluation of the creative arts programme of the
Thames Valley Partnership

A summary

February 2005



Foreword

Sue Raikes, Chief Executive, Thames Valley Partnership

The Thames Valley Partnership is a voluntary organisation which brings people and organisations together across the Thames Valley to promote community safety and look for long-term solutions to crime. The Thames Valley Partnership extends across the three counties of Buckinghamshire, Berkshire and Oxfordshire and works with criminal justice agencies, local authorities, voluntary and community organisations and the business sector. Our approach is based on a commitment to earlier preventive approaches – rather than picking up the pieces. We believe that more can be achieved by working together, harnessing skills and resources to achieve things that no one organisation can achieve on its own.

For the last four years the Thames Valley Partnership has been exploring the use of art as a way of engaging people and communities, exploring difficult personal and community safety issues, developing new skills and opportunities.

For the year September 2003-04 this was made possible by a grant from Arts Council England, South East which enabled us to employ an Arts and Community Safety Officer to deliver the four projects which made up the Creative Arts Programme.

As with all our work we have acted as a broker bringing people and organisations together to open up and explore new opportunities. We have experimented with different approaches and tested out our ideas on the ground. Now, in this report, we are disseminating and sharing our ideas and experience so that others can learn from and build on the work that we have done.

The evaluation of our Creative Arts Programme has been an important part of the project itself. We asked our evaluator to look at each of the projects as they developed and to feedback ideas and findings along the way, so that we have been able to use the evaluation process to inform our work and our future plans. This report draws together the common themes from our four demonstration projects and presents us with some important common themes and recommendations for the future.

A full copy of the evaluation is available on our website at www.thamesvalleypartnership.org.uk. If you would like to know more about any of the projects featured, or about the wider work of the Arts and Community Safety project please contact Judy Munday, Arts and Community Safety Officer on 01844 202001, judy@thamesvalleypartnership.org.uk.

Sue Raikes
Chief Executive
Thames Valley Partnership

About the Projects

Taken as a whole the Creative Arts Programme was seeking to test the use of different artistic media in different settings to achieve different outcomes. The common thread was the promotion of community safety and an attempt to broker links between artists and public service providers to support future work.

1. The Way It Really Is

A peer led alcohol education project created by a group of young offenders alongside other young people using drama and video

This project had three phases: -

- drama based team building and exploration of the theme of alcohol;
- filming of a finished product;
- visits to schools to present the video and run short peer-led workshops on alcohol.

Four young people under Reparation Orders with the Buckinghamshire Youth Offending Service worked alongside seven young people recruited through the Buckinghamshire Youth Service.

The project was firmly steered by an inter-agency group that had a clear agenda to raise awareness of the dangers of alcohol through peer education. It had built in deadlines and a requirement to create a final product. To be effective, it also needed to support the development of a strong team of young people from very different backgrounds, which, in turn, would benefit the individual participants. It required a great deal of professional support and co-ordination and cost more than the other three projects put together (without allowing for the large investment of time provided by the various partner agencies).



Filming out doors for *Alcohol: The Way it Really Is*

2. Sound Studio Hostels Project

A project to encourage creativity, skills development and confidence for older high risk offenders using digital music production

This had a more exclusively therapeutic objective. Two digital music artists worked individually with residents of probation hostels over several months. The residents were male high-risk offenders many of whom had never used a computer before.

The project was described as '*simple...two artists, a laptop and a group of residents.*' Relatively little co-ordination was required because participants were resident, equipment was minimal and the artists were from just one organisation.

3. GENER8

An estate based project to contribute to regeneration and reassurance programmes through intergenerational work and community art using ceramics and street participative arts

GENER8 was a complex project involving several strands and a wide range of partners. It was conceived as an intergenerational project linked to the Greenham Neighbourhood



Young and old display their artistic talent

Action Group and the National Reassurance Policing Project to find ways of bringing older and younger residents of Greenham (a small community just outside Newbury) together through a creative artistic process. The project soon became linked to wider regeneration initiatives on the estate and was used to support a community-planning event (Planning for Real) organised by the largest local social landlord. There were two phases to the project, each of which was free standing but enhanced the other. Phase one involved some older residents in joining with children and teachers at Greenham Court Primary School and Greenham Youth Club in producing ceramic art to decorate the community centre. Phase two

was a community event at which the ceramic artist, drummers, a keyboard player, young dancers and balloon sculptors drew local residents into creative work and a Planning for Real exercise.

Examined from different angles, the project looked variously like a community arts initiative, an intergenerational process, a consultation exercise, an intervention to tackle anti-social behaviour, a reassurance programme to tackle fear of crime, a regeneration project or simply a community fete. An inter-agency steering group supported the process and tried to link the various agendas.

4. stART!

A school team building event to ease transition for Year 7 children using dance, rhythm work and collage

The Thames Valley Partnership agreed a process to support transition into Quarrendon School, Aylesbury and hired three arts providers to run workshops over three days in September 2004 for all the new intake of Year 7. Pupils were divided into groups of nearly 60 and rotated between the three workshops. Over the three days they attended each workshop three times. The artists offered dance, music (drumming and voice) and collage. The school could see the beneficial impact the project had on the new pupils and hope to continue the project in future years.



'Finding Common Links' collage work at Quarrendon School, Aylesbury

Key Findings

Establishing and Steering the Projects

- A strong steering group creates a firm base and facilitates trust between partners. It should include all parties from as early as possible.
- To reach a predetermined outcome (such as production of a video), roles need to be clear and it is worth investing in the relationships between the professionals involved to build trust.
- A target-free and flexible approach to project development/management is a good way to nurture a flexible approach to project delivery. The more curious and open the Thames Valley Partnership was in the way it established a project, the more possible it was for the artists to be curious, open and non-judgmental when working with participants.
- An open approach allows the project to fit well with other local activities and contribute to a wider process but risks losing focus.
- Successful intervention in an institution such as a hostel or school is dependent upon an enthusiastic member of staff. However, the wider team must also support the project. The best way to ensure that people get involved is to ensure that staff are engaged. It may be worth marketing the project more actively to all staff (and offering training if appropriate).
- Risk management is very important but can be used as an excuse to hamper innovation.
- It is difficult to find artists that are confident and experienced in working with young offenders.

Art Forms

- When deciding what is the most appropriate art form to employ, it is worth considering which of the following areas are most important (few art forms will be able to contribute well to them all): -
 - How accessible is it? Will it attract or quickly engage the target group? If not, how should it be marketed to overcome preconceived ideas about whom it is for?
 - What potential is there for intrinsic and extrinsic skills development?
 - What opportunities are there for personal creativity and self-expression?
 - What scope is there for developing awareness of relevant issues?
 - Will it assist with the development of empathy and group cohesion?
 - Will it contribute to a wider community development process?



The completed ceramic tiles now on display at Greenham Community Centre following the *GENER8* project

- A drama process can be limited by the need to create a video. Shooting a video takes a long time and, if young people are to be involved technically, this needs to be built into the project plan.
- Drama and video are relatively easy tools with which to engage young people and create a product full of content.
- Participants can be involved in a transforming artistic experience in a short period of time using only a laptop under the tuition of a digital music artist. This is a remarkably simple thing to organise compared with a drama project.
- The choice of software is significant in that it can either produce better quality music (eg Cubase) or facilitate more control by a novice (eg ACID).
- Music production (like painting or sewing) presents an opportunity for relatively solitary creative exploration. It is not good for groups of more than three.
- Ceramic art has a permanence, which allows participants to contribute very publicly to the regeneration of their environment and celebrate themselves in their community. It is personal and accessible and has the potential to engage participants both creatively and technically. It is not, however, a popular form and therefore needs to be well marketed to attract interest.
- Large high energy and demanding workshops provide a good opportunity for students to play, get to know each other and experiment safely and fairly anonymously.
- Routine and technique based dance and large group rhythm work creates potential for excitement and team building but does not allow for much in the way of personal reflection. It is also hard to introduce content to a large group over a short time frame.
- Collage has a slower and calmer dynamic, which seems less thrilling but presents opportunities for quiet consideration.

Participation



Community participation in Greenham

- It is possible for young people from very different backgrounds to work well together if they are well supported and the process is well handled.
- It is important to value the informal contact between artists and participants, which can be very productive and therapeutic. Artists may need support in understanding their role.
- If the project is fundamentally about team building, the modelling of older people and professionals is crucial. They need to be prepared for the event and have their role explained.
- Ownership of the process by the entire staff team in an institution is essential.

Art and Community Safety

- Enabling young people to work well in groups and express themselves creatively is in itself a community safety outcome. Providing education on alcohol is also a community safety outcome. Both are equally valid.
- Music production allows opportunities for the examination of issues through lyric writing and conversation but this is incidental. It also contributes to important protective factors such as literacy and numeracy. As an instrument to improve

community safety, however, it contributes mainly in soft ways such as raising confidence and enhancing the spirit.

- Finding ways of bringing older young people and younger old people together requires careful attention over a long time. *Gener8* was too diffuse to achieve this.
- Exploring issues of identity in the context of regeneration may help to build community spirit. This may in turn contribute to community safety. There is no way of proving this, however. What is clear is that those involved in the project enjoyed themselves and felt it was worthwhile.
- A broader linking introduction to the *stART!* project may have helped clarify themes for both artists and participants. As with *GENER8*, it may be the case that an artistic intervention to promote teambuilding will ease transition into school, which may in turn reduce levels of alienation and improve community safety.

Creating Sustainable Partnerships

- Differences in ethos and statutory responsibilities need not stand in the way of effective joint working between agencies if those differences are understood and respected by the various parties.
- A regional project designed to introduce digital music production into probation hostels will need to build in more attention to the sustainability of partnerships as well as the development of pathways for enthusiastic participants.
- Contributing to huge concepts such as regeneration and reassurance involves working with a wide range of partners. This is more easily delivered over a long time by locally based staff.
- A well-managed large public event such as *GENER8* has a significant impact because it is different and memorable. This can produce improved relationships and high expectations. There needs to be a plan about how cultural activity will be developed on an estate over the longer term.
- Some opportunity for the school, the artists and (possibly) the students to share their experiences may have fixed the value of *stART!* and provided opportunities to consider further development.
- School transition projects need to be part of a broader integrated transition strategy.



An extract from the commemorative plaque at Greenham Community Centre

Role of the Thames Valley Partnership

Projects supported by the Thames Valley Partnership as part of its Creative Arts Programme have certain notable characteristics: -

- They would not have happened without the Thames Valley Partnership.
- They introduced participants to art forms with which they were not familiar but which became familiar: they were accessible, user-friendly and stretching.
- They introduced artists to members of the community with whom they do not normally work.

- They introduced agencies that may develop into productive partnerships over the long term.
- They generated enthusiasm, excitement, creativity and strong bonds between professionals and participants.
- They explored very different ways of using Art as an instrument to improve community safety through process, content or both.
- They explored how different forms can facilitate peer-led learning, self-expression, skills development, community consultation, inter-generational understanding and team building.
- They left open the question of sustainability and pathways on to further opportunities.

The Future

- All artistic interventions are dependent upon the quality of the artist. The pool of artists confident in working flexibly with a range of people, including some whose behaviour can be challenging, is not large. The Thames Valley Partnership could invest in recruiting and training such people.
- Partnership working takes time and energy. Future projects should include resources for follow up to help partner agencies debrief and plan further work.
- Any projects based in institutions should include a marketing and training phase aimed at securing ownership from senior management and the wider team. This should involve the artists.
- Projects aimed at relationship building should be long enough for the process to develop organically and meaningfully.
- These recommendations should not deter the Thames Valley Partnership from experimentation in new areas and with new art forms. There is plenty more to learn.



**The cast
and crew
of *Alcohol:
The Way it
Really Is***

Safe art

Judy Munday is an experiment, the Arts Council's, who is also experimenting. And the laboratory work seems to be working.

She is half way through a two year commission from ACE in Brighton to make the arts work in the realm of community safety.

Broadly, it is concerned with crime – and that includes issues of social exclusion, poverty, educational difficulties, and health issues like drug addiction and mental disorder.

As recently as five years ago, to have an arts officer sitting in the middle of all that would be unthinkable. "Now, my colleagues see how the arts is relevant to all they do –

Gener8 was a kind of benign Trojan horse, art being perceived as something all sorts of neighbours could get engaged in, and appreciate, and which could bring them together for the first time to discuss what was wrong with their shared living space.

everything they do" Judy says.

The most recent experiment to come up trumps works with something with the comfortingly prosaic title of the Reassurance Policing Programme, and the tiles (see illustration) are part of the result. Judy's test-tube has a more arty name: Gener8.

Gener8 is an intergenerational community arts programme on an estate of about 400 families at Greenham,

near Newbury, one of 16 across the country earmarked by social services and police authorities for special attention.

The idea was to tackle anti-social behaviour and fear of crime, to promote enhanced tolerance and encourage community spirit. So the first recruit to the operation was, of course, a local artist, Jonny Diorio.

He brought the school, the local youth club and residents from sheltered housing together to make ceramic tiles and masks, and about 300 tiles and 16 masks were made, which were mounted in frames and put up on the walls of the community centre.

Then they were unveiled on "a community arts day" which became a platform for consultation on the reshaping of the estate. The school had made a model of the estate, and after admiring the artwork, the 200-or-so residents talked to trained advisors about their concerns for their estate, the hopes and wishes for their living space.

Gener8 was a kind of benign Trojan horse, art being perceived as something all sorts of neighbours could get engaged in, and appreciate, and which could bring them together for the first time to discuss what was wrong with their shared living space. They were invited to make suggestions as to what ought to happen on small flags and attach them to the model at strategic spots, and by the end



Ceramic tiles created by artist Jonny Diorio and Nightingale estate residents

of the day there were 311 flags.

"We need something straightforward to do together, and the tiles and masks were our idea, but we also wanted something we could leave behind, so Jonny is still working with people on the estate" Judy says. "We also wanted to appeal across the generations with something that could grow into a community project, and that is what happened".

Judy works as the sole arts officer within the Thames Valley Partnership which is an independent charity, and with arts officers in local authorities.

Gener8 hasn't been the first of her experiments. She has worked with Buckinghamshire Youth Offending Service and Buckinghamshire Youth and Community Service to create a video on alcohol use and abuse, made by youngsters aged 15 to 17 with drama and film artists, and they presented it to even younger audiences, aged 13 and

14. The video they made is still doing the rounds nationally.

Judy can be less precise about the experiment with digital music because it concerns men in probation hostels, but a musician helped the men develop digital literacy and self-esteem through music-making.

Now she is making her bid to the Arts Council for another two years at least. "It works, and we hope that Gener8 will have other manifestations elsewhere in the Thames Valley" she says. "The key has been the support from the Partnership, from the police, from local authorities and from other partners, and although I'm constantly fund-raising to get the programmes going, the key is the core funding from the Arts Council, and I hope they'll agree that it works."

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With thanks to
Arts Council England South East



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