

Arts Award Shared Offer Project



Introduction

In our roles as Arts Council England Associate Bridge Organisations for London, Roundhouse and Sadler's Wells have worked closely with leading arts and cultural providers in Camden and Islington to co-design a Shared Offer for local Arts Award Supporter organisations.

The Arts Award Shared Offer has involved 19 different cultural providers based in the two boroughs, with activities delivered across two phases.

Over the course of the programme, partners have come together in order to;

- Create a shared platform for Arts Award in Camden and Islington.
- Improve coordination and signposting between organisations to better meet interest and needs of young people.
- Diversify the opportunities and enhance the quality of the 'Arts Award journey' for children and young people.

Partners

19 cultural organisations took part over two phases of the project;

Partner	Phase	Artform	Borough
All Change	Phase 1, 2	Combined Arts	Islington
Almeida	Phase 1, 2	Theatre	Islington
Artsfirst, lead partner in Islington Music Hub	Phase 1, 2	Combined Arts	Islington
British Museum	Phase 1, 2	Museum	Camden
Camden Arts Centre	Phase 1, 2	Visual Arts	Camden
Camden Music Hub	Phase 1, 2	Music	Camden
Candoco	Phase 2	Dance	Islington
English Folk Dance and Song Society	Phase 1, 2	Dance, Music	Camden
Film's Cool	Phase 2	Film, Media	Islington
Islington Museum	Phase 1	Museum	Islington
Kenwood House	Phase 1	Museum, Visual Arts	Camden
London Sinfonietta	Phase 1, 2	Music	Islington
October Gallery	Phase 1, 2	Visual Arts	Camden
Platform	Phase 1	Combined Arts	Islington
Poetry Society	Phase 2	Literature	Camden
Roundhouse	Phase 1, 2	Combined Arts	Camden
Sadler's Wells	Phase 1, 2	Dance	Islington
The Place	Phase 1, 2	Dance	Camden
WAC Arts College	Phase 2	Combined Arts	Camden





The boroughs of Camden and Islington are home to some of the most exciting cultural and creative organisations in London - many of which are keen to develop more effective and efficient ways of supporting children and young people in achieving their Arts Award.

In late 2012 Roundhouse and Sadler's Wells, in our roles as Associate Bridge Organisations for London, began a series of conversations with arts and cultural providers to explore a shared approach to delivering Arts Award locally. The Shared Offer partnership was developed in response to;

- Uncertainty around how to deliver Arts Award within existing programmes and structures.
- Difficulty in recruiting young people and supporting them to navigate through Arts Award - especially to progress beyond bronze.
- Challenges for individual organisations in resourcing support for Arts Award.

By bringing together cultural organisations of varying sizes, art forms and specialisms, we aimed to facilitate a community of creative providers that would share information and develop local knowledge and understanding around Arts Award.

Over the two phases of the programme, we have worked together to test out models that enable creative partners to offer part of an Arts Award through their existing programmes and projects. This idea is rooted in the principles of the Arts Award Supporter programme, in which young people can combine activities in several venues to complete a whole award.

Aims of the programme

Creative Projects at Roundhouse, 2015. Photo: Ellie Pinney

Arts and cultural organisations

- Become more confident in considering strands of their work that will support young people to achieve an accredited outcome.
- Increase their knowledge and understanding of local Arts Award Supporter activity thus improving signposting for young people and awareness of context.
- Share some of the administration and promotion needed to deliver Arts Award.
- Share experience with peers and build skills to deliver Arts Award.

Children and Young people

- Increase their awareness of local opportunities to get involved with Arts Award.
- Gain access to creative opportunities they might not otherwise have known about.
- Increase confidence in navigating pathways and progression routes through Arts Award.

Programme highlights

Phase 1: September 2013 - May 2014

2 Arts Award advisers and a central coordinator led the initial phase of the project and played a critical role in starting conversations with cultural partners and designing a programme of creative group sessions for young people at different partner organisations.

15 cultural organisations were supported with bespoke advice around how they could incorporate Arts Award into their offer to young people.

7 group sessions were organised for young people at different creative venues around Camden and Islington.

26 young people took part in creative group activities;

- **1** Discover - Arts Award achieved.
- **9** Bronze - Arts Awards achieved.
- **15** Silver - 2 Arts Awards achieved, **13** on-going through school partner.
- **1** Gold - signposted to external adviser for on-going support.

“Arts Award is definitely not something we could have done on our own.”

Cultural partner

Stevee's Journey:

“I really love the arts so it was really interesting for me to do my Arts Award.

I got involved when my school told me about the Shared Arts Award project organised by Roundhouse and Sadler's Wells. We visited different arts organisations around Camden and Islington while working towards my Bronze Arts Award.

Firstly I visited the British Museum with my friends to review the exhibition 'El Dorado' - this formed Part B of my Bronze Award. For Part A I took part in a half-term improvisation masterclass with Almeida Projects. This was my favourite activity as it was really challenging and drama is important for me. I researched an artist I'd been introduced to at school, Hundertwassa, for Part C, and then worked with a group at Camden Arts Centre to share my visual arts skills and support others to make a mother's day card for my Part D.

The Arts Award group I was part of met monthly. I felt comfortable in the group and everyone's opinion was valid.

Doing the Award was a really good experience, I loved it, and I'd definitely suggest it to my friends.”



Programme highlights

Phase 2: September 2014 - March 2015

21 Arts Award drop in advice sessions were held over autumn and spring terms 2014/15 - as with the pilot phase, sessions were led by a central Arts Award adviser, but were designed to support a more independent journey through the award.

28 young people took part in drop in sessions - 8 bronze, 8 silver, 13 gold. Drop in attendees used sessions to top up and compliment other activities; find out more about what Arts Award is; and access support from a trained adviser. Participants were signposted to further opportunities to continue their award from within the Shared Offer partnership.

16 organisations activities were mapped in the Shared Offer Guidance booklet, launched in September 2014.

175 local advisers and centres were engaged through termly e-shots promoting upcoming opportunities and offers from within Shared Offer organisations. Offers included tickets to events, workshops, exhibitions, artist talks, performances, volunteering opportunities, and masterclasses.

7 organisations benefitted from visits with a trained Arts Award adviser, including 3 schools, 3 arts organisations, and 1 youth centre. Visits were offered as part of local advocacy work around the Shared Offer as well as practical advice on delivering the award.

2 CPD sessions offered support to partners in developing skills around Arts Award support and delivery;

- Action Space presented findings from a piece of work they led over summer 2014, introducing ideas for creative evidencing based on work with young people who are non-verbal or have additional learning needs.
- Training in using Artsbox, a digital space for recording evidence, was delivered in autumn 2014.

2 newly created projects were commissioned from partner organisations to explore innovative models for group Arts Award delivery;

- Arts Award Club - Camden wide open: Camden Music Service worked with two local partner organisations; EFDSS and The Place. Arts Award Club sessions held at different venues were attended by **23** young people; **15** Bronze, **6** Silver, and **2** Gold.
- Islington Arts Award Research and Support Team: All Change, Candoco Dance Company and Almeida Theatre engaged **3** young professionals to research, evaluate and feedback about the journeys and experiences of young people achieving the Arts Award.

Naomi's Journey:

"I moved back to London after finishing my degree, but found I had no job prospects, no money and a free diary. An email from the Roundhouse pinged into my inbox talking about something called Arts Award, that could help me get better connected with arts organisations and also help develop my creative skills! This is exactly what I needed.

Before I knew it I was sitting in the Roundhouse Lobby on a Thursday evening, waiting to speak with Arts Award adviser Fran at the Arts Award drop-in.

Fran spoke about the 'Shared Offer' - in which cultural organisations around Camden and Islington were opening their doors to Arts Awarders like me.

Having a background in drama, two organisations popped out straightaway - Almeida and All Change - and with Fran's support I got in touch with All Change.

Raising aspiration in largely deprived communities has always been an important life aim for me. I come from a disadvantaged background and would have not achieved half as much if it wasn't for music and drama. I have seen the Arts build up self-confidence, aspiration and motivation in those thought hopeless, and bring the best out in people

Working at All Change as a Project Support Volunteer has been an amazing experience. I have been able to work with all different members of the community, which has affirmed my belief that the arts can support positive social change. I have gained key insight into the various aspects of an arts charity.

I received mentorship from a range of professional artists: spoken word artists, verbatim theatre practitioners, theatre designers and photographers. In addition, I learnt more about the administrative and project management elements of community arts projects. And this has all contributed to my Gold Arts Award!

In short, the Shared Offer has enabled me to get connected with a brilliant arts organisation, which has provided me with excellent mentorship for my Gold Arts Award. I now feel more equipped and confident for a future career in the arts."

"The Shared Offer both through the pilot and also via the drop ins has given the opportunity to a number of young people to navigate and achieve their award at different levels."

Shared Offer Adviser

Outcomes

Establishing a collaborative, peer-led network of Arts Award Supporters

Through the Arts Award Shared Offer, a collaborative environment has been established, with high quality opportunities for peer learning and support. By creating a flexible offer, the partnership has been able to meet the needs of a wide range of organisations with different levels of experience, capacities and ambitions for supporting Arts Award.

Pooling resources and sharing some of the administration and promotion around Arts Award has increased collective power to create opportunities and ease access into Arts Award, while reducing time and costs for individual organisations.

“It was really helpful for the first meetings to be round a table with people from other organisations talking about ways to deliver Arts Award.”

Cultural partner

Raising the profile of local opportunities

In bringing together local cultural providers, the Shared Offer partnership has been able to successfully map what each organisation delivers, specialisms, and strengths to provide young people, advisers and peers with an overview of the range of activities, spaces and platforms that can support a young person's Arts Award.

Key resources such as the Shared Offer Guidance Booklet and termly newsletters highlighting upcoming opportunities to engage with partner organisations have been powerful tools in raising the profile of local opportunities for young people as well as between organisations - encouraging the sharing of experience and knowledge, and increasing local coordination.

“I have been given a booklet with all the arts organisations I can get involved with, which goes into details about each section and exactly what you do.”

Drop-in attendee

Developing access points and opportunities for progression

Having central Arts Award advisers supporting the pilot and leading drop-in sessions provided a flexible access point into the award for young people with different levels of experience.

Advisers provided essential advice and signposting, creating new relationships by introducing young people to different cultural organisations and helping to build trust and confidence to try out new activities.

Young people like Naomi, were introduced to partner organisations through an adviser, who helped her gain access organisations like All Change and Almeida - and ultimately gain support for her Gold Arts Award as well as opportunities to progress in her career.

“Brilliant experience - has been absolutely fundamental to my development as an artist and creative!”

Drop-in attendee

Exploring innovative models of group arts award delivery

Through the two phases of the project, we have been able to test out new and innovative ways of working together to more effectively share knowledge and resources and develop a more coordinated and accessible local offer for young people.

The two commissioned partnership projects that took place in 2014/15 provided an opportunity to test out ways of working together in small groups. Bringing clusters of partners to work together more intensively has helped to embed partnerships and increase the sense of shared purpose.

“The partnership with EFDSS and The Place has been really positive - we enjoyed working at Cecil Sharp House and visiting The Place and the young people have really benefited from these contacts.”

Camden Music Service, Arts Award Club project lead

“Having a variety of organisations in terms of the size, art forms, how they engage with Arts Award, and how they engage with young people created a really good platform to support a wider variety of young people and also sharing of practice between organisations.”

Arts Award Adviser

Key learning points

Through the Shared Offer, we have worked together with partners to find solutions to some of the challenges and questions Arts Award Supporters often face. However, the scale and diversity of the cultural sector in Camden and Islington coupled with the complexity of the different needs of young people accessing Arts Award has highlighted continued gaps in provision around Arts Award knowledge, support and delivery.

Capturing evidence

Supporting young people to effectively evidence activities they are taking part in for Arts Award can be a challenge, particularly for organisations not directly delivering the award. Arts Award Supporter organisations often have varying capacities and resources to support young participants in-house, and consistency in approach to evidencing activity at different venues was highlighted as an area to develop by Shared Offer partners.

Working with trained advisers and discovering how other organisations support evidencing was critical for partners in gaining knowledge of different ways to help young people evidence activities they are using towards an award.

Through the partnership, organisations were able to share learning around building evidencing activities into existing programmes and projects - such as developing questionnaires and feedback forms linked to events; running capture sessions and post show Q&A's; and using digital tools, photography and video as part of sessions.

Through the Shared Offer, partners were supported in building skills around evidencing through two training sessions;

- The first session led by Action Space, introduced ideas for creative evidencing based on work with young people who are non-verbal or have additional learning needs.
- A session on using the Arts Award's digital platform, Artsbox, was delivered to seven partner organisations - highlighting the use of digital tools to capture and evidence work.

The importance of the Arts Award adviser in guiding evidence collection should not be underestimated. Shared Offer partners benefitted from centralised advice led by experienced Arts Award advisers, but even with this shared resource, capacity to effectively document activities was a challenge. Organisations can build capacity for supporting Arts Award and drive uptake and progression within their organisation by training artists and tutors as advisers.

Increasing flexibility vs. Monitoring progression

The Shared Offer programme was designed to expand the reach and flexibility in how young people can access Arts Award opportunities, and to increase the diversity of activities on offer by making it easier for organisations with different capacities for supporting the award to become involved.

Through the Shared Offer we found that young participants were often already doing a great deal that could contribute to an award, and were using opportunities from within the Shared Offer to top up or complement activities at school or with other Arts Award Supporters and centres. Many young people engaged in a range of activities at multiple venues - from within the Shared Offer and without - some partners found it difficult to measure the value of their organisation's contribution to an individual award.

Some of these challenges relate to the way information about progression through an award is shared and tracked between advisers, centres and Supporters.

Beyond measuring the number of completed moderations, is there a way to capture the breadth of ways in which Supporter organisations contribute towards Arts Award success? Partners felt strongly that there needs to be more value placed on the many ways Supporter organisations are interacting with and helping young people to achieve an Arts Award - from signposting to offering activities and advice.

Demonstrating organisational benefits in delivering Arts Award

Partners in the Shared Offer are very keen to advocate for the value of engaging with Arts Award for young people - from gaining access to creative opportunities, and developing leadership skills to achieving UCAS points. However, the complexity involved in delivering the award led some organisations to encounter barriers within their own organisations around articulating the benefits of adding an Arts Award element to projects and programmes.

Beyond the requirement for National Portfolio Organisations to support Arts Award, the perceived value of the award was often not seen to be in line with associated time and cost of delivering and tracking activities for individual organisations.

The Shared Offer was designed to address some of these challenges and to support organisations in reducing costs and communicating the value of Arts Award for their organisation. Going forward, partners felt that there would be a benefit in developing an advocacy toolkit that can help demonstrate the value for organisations to include an Arts Award element in their programmes, as well as mapping out the resources involved - including adviser training, evidencing and staff capacity needed to support Arts Award at different levels.



**Developing a long term vision -
stronger together!**



Creative Projects at Roundhouse, 2014. Photo: Peter Schiazza

Members of the Arts Award Shared Offer project are committed to continuing to work in partnership.

Over the past two years of working together through the Arts Award Shared Offer project, partner organisations have encouraged a growth in local understanding of how arts and cultural venues can support young people to engage in Arts Award - through building an Arts Award element into existing programmes and activities, creating new opportunities, and signposting.

Working in partnership has strengthened the local Arts Award offer for young people, and has helped partners to demystify the award and gain confidence in delivering opportunities. While challenges and complexities remain around how organisations can best meet the needs of diverse groups of young people, making small changes and pooling collective knowledge and experience has been hugely beneficial in creating a more coherent and accessible offer. However, step change both organisationally and amongst young people takes time and a long term approach to building up knowledge, demand, and confidence is needed.

Going forward, partners in the Arts Award Shared Offer are committed to working together to strengthen opportunities and open up access points for young people. The diversity of organisations taking part and flexibility around ways to get involved, has established a collaborative environment that will continue to support local connections and generate opportunities for children and young people working towards their Arts Award.

The Camden and Islington Arts Award Shared Offer project has been led by **Roundhouse** and **Sadler's Wells** in our roles as Arts Council Associate Bridge organisations for London.

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Arts Award

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