

CASE STUDY 1 | Youth Work | Middlesbrough

Arts programme offers young people an education lifeline

PROJECT START

FUNDING

Around £40,000 a year from Middlesbrough Integrated Youth Support Service and the Working Neighbourhoods Fund

PURPOSE

To engage young people not in education, employment or training (Neet) and help them gain new skills and confidence

BACKGROUND

Government figures from October 2011 revealed Middlesbrough had the highest unemployment rate in the country. Last year 9.3 per cent of 16- to 18-year-olds in the town were not in education, employment or training.

A creative programme, stART is designed and delivered by Tees Valley Arts, which is working to

reach out to young people who are Neet, encouraging them to get back into learning and helping them access the support they need to turn their lives around.

ACTION

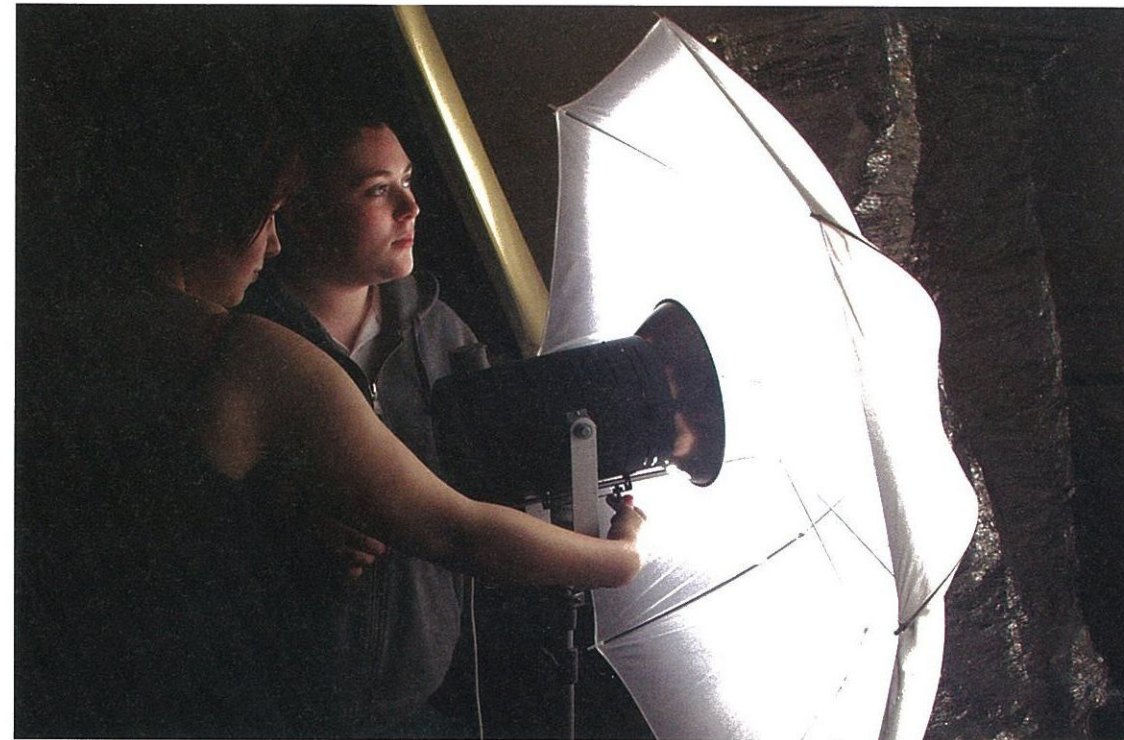
The stART scheme is an intensive eight-week programme built

around the arts award qualification. It is managed by Trinity College London in association with Arts Council England. The three-day-a-week course, which began in January 2009, targets 16- to 19-year-olds and is aimed at “hooking them in” through enjoyable activities and

encouraging them to build on their new-found skills and confidence.

Tees Valley Arts works closely with Middlesbrough youth service, including when it comes to identifying young people who may benefit. Participants have included young people in care, young offenders, those with substance misuse problems and learning difficulties, young parents and those newly arrived to the UK.

Young people work towards an accredited qualification by building up a portfolio of artwork from individual and group activities. “The approach is focused on the needs of young people who may have been turned off education in the past,” says Tees Valley Arts director Rowena Sommerville. “The ‘arts diary’ gets them working towards the award from day one.” Activities are based



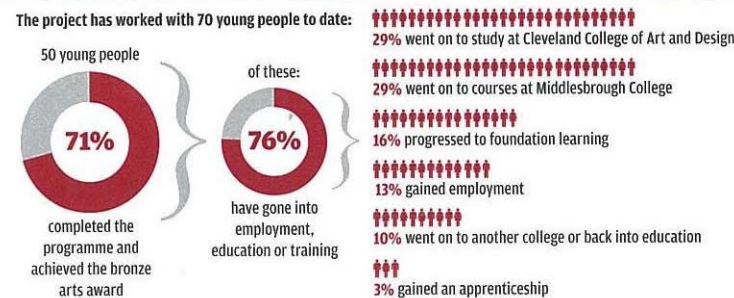
Activities involving the visual arts help to give young people a sense of achievement as they work towards a qualification

young people it is their only accredited achievement,” explains Sommerville. Attendance levels are also high – 78 per cent of those who completed the course had above 80 per cent attendance.

Of those who completed stART, 76 per cent have gone into education, employment or training. And of these, 29 per cent went on to study at Cleveland College of Art and Design, 29 per cent to courses at Middlesbrough College, 16 per cent progressed to foundation learning, 13 per cent gained employment, 10 per cent went to another college or back into education and three per cent gained an apprenticeship. According to Sommerville, having an accredited qualification can give young people a head start when it comes to embarking on a college course. “In some cases it means a young person is eligible for a two-year course as opposed to a three-year course, which makes a big difference,” she says. “At that age, three years seems like a very long time.”

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ART FOR ‘NEETS’: IMPACT OF THE PROJECT



Source: Tees Valley Arts

around the visual arts and include collage, photography and model-making, and are designed to offer “quick wins” so young people who may otherwise have chaotic and disordered lives rapidly gain a sense of achievement and progression, she adds. Youth workers often visit the project and the close relationship with the local youth service means any problems that emerge during the

course are quickly addressed and young people are chased up if they fail to attend.

Tees Valley Arts works with groups of up to 10 young people and runs about four programmes a year. Young people are encouraged to have a say in how the course is run. Each group draws up house rules covering issues such as mobile phone use and smoking breaks. Once they have completed

stART, participants are encouraged and supported to move onto college courses or take up training and job opportunities.

OUTCOME

The project has worked with 70 young people to date. Seventy-one per cent (50 young people) completed the programme and all achieved the bronze arts award. “For a large proportion of these