



What's art got to do with it?

Briefing paper on the role of the arts in
neighbourhood renewal

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Introduction

Human beings have used the arts to tell their stories, to ask questions and to give answers since prehistoric times. The context may have changed over the years, but we are still using the arts for the same reason – to communicate with each other.

This simple fact explains why the arts are a successful tool for neighbourhood renewal. In communities officially described as deprived, communication is always a challenge: communication within families, between individuals and different groups, between one community and another. Poverty is not just about having little money; it is also about having no status or profile. This makes people feel that no one is listening. It is not hard to see how individuals, families and whole communities can lose their confidence and sense of direction.

The role of artists in a deprived community is to help communication – to use their creativity and imagination and to give them a view of a different future.

The arts do not offer a magic potion, but they can question beliefs and ambitions and help individuals and communities take a new direction. No other field can do this.

This report shows how the arts can help neighbourhood renewal. It is for anyone who needs easy access to key facts and examples.

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1 Personal development

'The artist and the cultural agent are not the deus ex machina who will resolve all political and social problems. This is the task of the citizens.'

'Talking about the neighbourhood: views from locals and artists' (Michel Steimer, in *Culture and Neighbourhoods*, European Commission, 1997)

Case study 1¹

Twenty-one organisations with arts-based Millennium Festival Awards in London were asked about the impact of their awards. Their projects reached an estimated 53,000 people. All of the organisations believed that individuals had benefited and that the benefits would continue after their project had ended.

Type of benefit	Percentage of organisations agreeing this was a benefit
Felt more self confident / ambitious	95
Developed knowledge and appreciation of artforms	95
Developed creative abilities and skills	90
Felt a sense of pride / greater self-esteem	86
Improved social skills	86

Case study 2²

The people that took part in 17 London-based projects funded by the Regional Arts Lottery Programme (RALP) were asked what the impact of their arts project had been on them personally.

- 71% felt more confidence and self esteem
- 88% felt they had learned new skills

The benefits to individuals were much greater than the organisations expected when they applied for funding.

¹ Jermyn, Helen, *Millennium Festival Funded Arts Projects in London*, London Arts, 2001

² Etches, Sheena, *The Benefits of Regional Arts Lottery Programme Funding*, London Arts, 2001

Case study 3³

Of the 243 adults that took part in six arts projects evaluated by Comedia as part of its research into the social impact of participation in the arts:

- 91% made new friends
- 86% tried something they had not tried before
- 84% were interested in something new
- 84% felt more confident about what they could do
- 81% said that being creative was important to them
- 62% said it was important to communicate their ideas through an arts project
- 54% felt that they learned about other people's culture
- 49% thought that taking part had changed their ideas

Case study 4⁴

A ten-year study in America looked at 120 community based organisations in 34 urban and rural areas with 30,000 young people. The chosen organisations all worked in poor neighbourhoods. They were athletic/academic, community service or arts based. The researchers wanted to know: 'What happens in these organisations that draws young people to sustained participation, performance and production that both they and external critics judge to be of high quality?'

A sample of young people completed the National Educational Longitudinal Survey and their results were compared with a national sample. The study found that young people taking part in arts programmes after school were:

- 25% more likely to say they felt satisfied with themselves
- 23% more likely to say they could do things as well as most other people
- 23% more likely to feel they could make plans and successfully work from them
- 31% more likely to say that they plan to continue education after high school
- 200% more likely to win an award for academic achievement
- 800% more likely to receive a community service award

³ Matarasso, François, Use or Ornament. The Social Impact of Participation in the Arts, Comedia, 1997

⁴ Brice, Shirley and Soep, Elisabeth, 'Youth Development and the Arts in Non School Hours', in *Educational Researcher*, USA, 1998

Case study 5⁵

A training course for 17 women from Dublin was evaluated. They used the arts for community action, social change and personal development, and found a number of individual, group and community benefits. The women developed new skills and, importantly, the ability to adapt these to group and community situations. The benefits they found included:

Individual benefits

- strengthened and evaluated their own value, skills and creativity
- increased artistic, organisational and communication skills

Group benefits

- increased awareness of how collective, creative action can achieve change
- increased awareness of community issues and their ability to respond to community needs using arts skills
- increased involvement in community activities

Community benefits

- increased volume and quality of community action
- increased networking within communities
- more local control
- increased local identity and cohesion
- sharing arts skills through the wider community

'It made me realise that I'm capable of doing anything I put my mind to, whereas before I never thought that I could do anything.'

Person taking part in *Social Impact Monitoring Study* (by G. Moriarty, Bolton City Challenge and Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council, 1998)

⁵ Bowles, J, *Arts Action. A study of a community development training course*, CAFÉ, Dublin, 1991

2 Stronger communities

'Art cannot change the world, but it can contribute to changing the consciousness of men and women who would change the world.'

Herbert Marcuse, Philosopher (1898-1979)

Case study 1⁶

A MORI survey of attitudes towards local arts facilities and events showed that the public felt these facilities and events created a sense of pride for local people, gave a focal point and sense of local identity for the community, and improved the quality of life for local people.

Benefit of local art facilities and events	A great deal	A fair amount	Percentage of people stating either a fair amount or a great deal
Keep city/town centres lively and attractive places to visit	23%	44%	67
Attract tourists and day-trippers to the area	23%	40%	63
Create a sense of pride for local people	17%	46%	63
Provide a focal point for community / give a sense of local identity	14%	47%	61
Improve quality of life for local people	16%	40%	56

Case study 2⁷

A survey by Comedia of more than 500 people that took part in 11 arts projects (nine in the UK, one in Helsinki and one in New York) found that taking part in the arts leads to social benefits. The case studies showed that taking part in the arts:

⁶ MORI, 1993, quoted in Jermyn, Helen, *The Arts and Social Exclusion: a review prepared for the Arts Council of England*, 2001

⁷ Matarasso, François, *Use or Ornament. The Social Impact of Participation in the Arts*, Comedia, 1997

- helps personal growth and leads to greater confidence, improved skills and educational developments. It can also develop the social contacts and employability of people
- can bring a community closer together by developing social networks and understanding, and helping communities organise themselves
- brings benefits in other areas such as environmental renewal and health promotion, and adds creativity to organisational planning
- produces social change that can be seen, evaluated and broadly planned
- is a flexible, responsible and cost-effective part of community development

Case study 3⁸

Twenty-one organisations with Millennium Festival Awards in London were asked about the impact of their awards on themselves and their communities. All of the organisations felt that 'groups, cultures and communities' had benefited in some way. The table below shows the benefits they listed and the percentage of people that named each benefit.

Type of benefit	Percentage of people agreeing
Better understanding of other cultures	76
Enhanced sense of community belonging	76
Developed pride in local community	67
Stimulated pride in own culture	62
Better understanding of other generations	38

Case study 4⁹

Almost 400 people that took part in and watched nine community arts projects in South Australia were interviewed two years after the projects ended. More than 90% said that the projects had a lasting effect on the development of their communities. These effects included:

- setting up valuable networks
- development of community pride
- raising public awareness of a community issue

⁸ Jermyn, Helen, *Millennium Festival Funded Arts Projects in London*, London Arts, 2001

⁹ Williams, Deirdre, *Creating Social Capital. A study of the long-term benefits from community based arts funding*, Community Arts Network of South Australia, 1996

Over 80% said that there was a fall in the number of people cut off from the community, and more than two thirds said they had a better understanding of cultures or lifestyles.

This report says that arts programmes and projects were effective in producing what the author describes as 'community development outcomes'. These include development of community identity, decrease in social isolation, improvements in recreational options, development of local enterprise and improvement in public facilities. The author of the report also suggests that creating or strengthening communities often creates the need for social change.

Case study 5¹⁰

Between 1996 and 1998 the Combat Poverty Agency (CPA) in Ireland and an organisation called CAFÉ (Creative Arts for Everyone) ran a programme to identify the role the arts have in community development. The use of the arts by groups to 'express their views on and influence the processes that shape their daily lives' became known by the CPA as 'developmental community arts'. The pilot programme found that the aims of developmental community arts projects usually included:

- building creative and artistic skills
- developing imagination and imaginative ways of tackling issues
- using creative methods to understand, and recognise a shared experience or culture
- enhancing community development and anti-poverty work

People that took part in the pilot programme found the following benefits:

- greater personal skills, imagination and talent
- building of group trust, self-confidence and self esteem
- increased ability to identify and communicate needs to explore ways to change their situations and to organise
- increased organisation skills
- increased group work skills
- increased support and understanding skills
- better mutual support systems
- better understanding of social exclusion
- development of art expertise
- better opportunities for employment and training

¹⁰ *Creating Change: A Strategy for Developmental Community Arts*, Combat Poverty Agency, Dublin, 1996

3 Employment and skills

'There is growing evidence that the kind of skills which people acquire through being involved in arts projects – team-working, communication, self-motivation, flexibility, creativity, etc. – are vital to success in the changing employment market.'

Poverty and Oysters. The social impact of local arts development in Portsmouth, by François Matarasso, Comedia, 1998

Case study 1¹¹

The Arts Factory in the Rhondda Valley was formed in 1990 as a small-scale arts and regeneration project. It is now an award-winning community business, giving training and employment opportunities for local people and rebuilding the habit of work.

The Arts Factory runs a mother and toddler group, a youth drop-in facility, health and legal advice services, a cinema and a job search service. It also offers free day and evening classes, mostly in arts subjects, such as stained glassmaking, pottery, graphic design and DJ skills. These services are partly paid for by the earnings of seven enterprise teams. The teams take on contracts for environmental art, pottery, design, video production, woodwork and gardening. Each team is made up of a combination of paid staff, trainees and volunteers. About half of them are long-term unemployed.

The Arts Factory is now one of the largest employers in the upper Rhondda Valley. The open door policy, the team work approach, the integration of deaf and disabled and non-disabled people and the creative nature of the jobs on offer have combined to create a strong sense of local identity for the project and a commitment to its continued success.

Case study 2¹²

Seventeen young people that took part in a film-training project run by Hi8Us in Manchester were asked how they had benefited from the project. The training had

¹¹ Dwelly, Tim, *Creative regeneration: Lessons from ten community arts projects*, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2001 and Shaw, Phyllida, *Re-creating Communities: Business, the Arts and Regeneration*, Arts & Business

¹² Evans, GL and Shaw P, *A Study into the Social Impact of Lottery Good Cause Spending*, DCMS, 2001

involved work behind and in front of the camera and training in performance and presentation skills.

- 71% said they had developed personal skills
- 75% said they had learned new media skills
- 88% said they had a greater knowledge of television drama

All of the people that took part said they wanted to follow a career in the media.

'It has been a very positive experience. There's been loads of new things to learn. It's made the future look more positive on the whole in that I can get involved in other things.'

Person taking part in Hi8ls film training project

Case study 3¹³

A former community radio project in Liverpool has become a leading trainer in radio production skills. Each year the Ariel Trust takes 45 unemployed people on a 13-week course in radio production. Local radio stations give tutors, placements and, very often, employment. A large part of the course is about building up the confidence and communication skills that the trainees will need to survive in commercial broadcasting.

When choosing people for the course, it is more important that they have a creative mind and a determination to succeed than either formal qualifications or technical skills. Most of those chosen have experience in music, writing or theatre. The Director of Ariel Trust said applicants that are involved in a band, a drama group, or who are writing their own stories and poetry are well equipped for a job in radio production.

In Newham, east London, a music organisation called Urban Development has been working with Newham Sixth Form College to give students in one of the poorest boroughs in the country with skills in music performance and production. Many students come to the college with few qualifications and little confidence. The arts and technology are two of the driving forces of the college, and students have access to high-quality teaching in both A levels and vocational qualifications. A large number goes on to further or higher education or straight into employment in the creative industries.

¹³ *Creative Connections, Arts & Business, 2001*

Case study 4¹⁴

An evaluation of six arts projects in Portsmouth found that about half of the adults taking part felt they had gained new skills. These included skills in the arts but also 'organisation, fundraising and working with others in a team'.

Recognising skills they already had and building confidence to talk about and show those skills to future employers was as important as gaining new skills.

Case study 5¹⁵

Arts and the Learning City is a London-wide group of further, adult and higher education organisations and the London office of Arts Council England. Its aim is to broaden opportunities to take part in learning through the arts.

Arts and the Learning City ran 11 research projects led by arts and educational organisations working with young single parents, ex-offenders, refugees, disaffected adults, people who were excluded from school, deaf and disabled people and mental health service users. The research found that:

- the arts are effective in attracting and motivating some of the most disaffected people to take part in learning and education
- the involvement of people in the arts maintains their commitment to other study skill areas
- taking part in the arts is a way to integrate and develop communities that feel excluded by giving them a way into education and employment in London

¹⁴ Matarasso, François, *Poverty and Oysters. The social impact of local arts development in Portsmouth*, Comedia, 1998

¹⁵ *Arts and the Learning City*, Action on Access, London Institute, 2001

4 Crime

'The arts can help a person move from offender to citizen by building a positive sense of self.'

The Unit for the Arts & Offenders¹⁶

Case study 1¹⁷

In 1996 Impossible Theatre worked with a group of young offenders and people affected by their crimes on the Batley Carr estate on a series of short films about crime from different points of view. The films were shown in a shop window in the high street over a three-week period and were activated by members of the public walking by. This film project was part of a neighbourhood safety project that included a number of environmental improvements. Research by City Challenge shows that 67% of residents on the Batley Carr estate now feel safe from crime. This is an increase of 11% over the period of the research. Older residents said they 'felt less threatened or anxious about local young people, after working alongside them on this project.'

Case study 2¹⁸

A one-month dance project led by Motionhouse in a therapeutic wing of HM Prison Grendon was evaluated. The evaluation compared the people taking part in the dance project and a control group. . Before the project started, the people taking part filled in a questionnaire about the group they were in. They were asked another set of questions at the end of the project.

There were some changes in the dance group that were not seen in the control group. Members of the dance group 'found it easier to approach others in the group, rated themselves as knowing each other better, had increased their trust for one another, and became more likely to take a problem to a fellow group members.'

¹⁶ The Unit For The Arts & Offenders, Neville House, 90-91 Northgate, Canterbury CT1 1BA email: info@a4offenders.org.uk

¹⁷ *An Analysis of the Impact of Creative Arts Opportunities for People Caught in a Cycle of Offending*, Unit for the Arts & Offenders, London Arts, 2001

¹⁸ The Unit For The Arts & Offenders, as above

Case study 3¹⁹

*Coming up Taller*²⁰ is an American report that says the arts connect with young people at risk of offending by:

- showing them images of success
- improving academic performance
- encouraging knowing and learning
- teaching discipline and teamwork

Case study 4²¹

Clean Break Theatre Company and Camden Women's Centre ran a drama-based anger management programme for women. Over two years, 40 women took part in the programme. The aim was to develop control over emotions and literacy. The evaluation of the programme found that women had:

- learned to communicate better
- developed their understanding of the roots of their anger
- a greater understanding of how to deal with other people's anger
- learnt to walk away from situations where they might get angry

¹⁹ The Unit For The Arts & Offenders, as above

²⁰ Weitz, J H, *Coming Up Taller: arts and humanities programs for children and youth at risk*, President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities, 1996

²¹ The Unit For The Arts & Offenders, as above

5 Health

'Art should not be seen as one of those activities like physiotherapy that is ancillary to medicine; nor as alternative medicine. It is concerned with our common sensibility, and our shared vision of what life is about and how it should be lived... Art should help us in medicine to minister to patients as whole persons living out their lives, enabling us to treat life in its totality.'

John Davis, Professor Emeritus in paediatrics, University of Cambridge. Speech at *A Vision of Caring Environments*, Manchester, 2/3 November 1989

Case study 1²²

A healthy neighbourhood is safe, clean, inclusive, confident and creative. Local people can support the development of healthy neighbourhoods by:

- taking responsibility for maintaining the positive aspects of their neighbourhood
- getting involved in local activities
- giving their skills, knowledge and time

The arts are ideally placed both to motivate individuals and groups to take action and to give them some of the skills they need to be effective (organisation, team work, communication etc). In his research for *Use or Ornament*, Matarasso reports that of the 243 adults taking part in arts projects, 52% said they felt 'better or healthier' and 73% were 'happier' since they started taking part.

'The arts bring a different dimension to clinical practice, that of the art of healing, and are complementary to the science base.'

Sir Kenneth Calman, Former Chief Medical Officer

A large-scale study of more than 10,000 people over a 14 year period (by Professor Lars Olov Bygren of the University of Umea in Sweden²³) showed that over the

²² Gowan, Natasha, *Healthy Neighbourhoods*, King's Fund, 1999

²³ Bygren, Lars Olov, Konlaan, Boinkum Benson, and Johansson, Sven-Erik, 'Attendance at Cultural events, reading books or periodicals and making music or singing in a choir as determinants for survival', in *British Medical Journal* 21-28 December 1996, Vol 313 pp.1577-1580. Also 'Visiting the cinema, concerts, museums or art exhibitions as determinant of survival' by the same authors, in *Scandinavian Journal of Public Health*, 28, 2000. http://bmj.com/cgi/content/full/313/7072/1577?maxtoshow=&HITS=10&hits=10&RESULTFORMAT=&titleabstract=Cultural&searchid=1020270327173_15977&stored_search=&FIRSTINDEX=0&resourcetype=1,2,3,4,10

course of the study the death rate of people that do certain types of cultural activities was considerably lower than those who did not. Regular visits to museums and art exhibitions showed the highest positive link to good health, with concerts and film attendance also having a positive effect.

Another pilot study²⁴ looked at the health of groups of people taking part in cultural and sports activities against a control group. The cultural activities included watching film, opera, concerts, theatre performances and going to art exhibitions. Both sports and cultural activities were found to lower blood pressure. Physical activity was particularly effective in lowering cholesterol, and cultural activity had a specific effect on stress hormones.

Case study 2²⁵

A survey of 90 community-based arts projects, and visits to 15 of them, found that the projects built skills that were transferable to other areas of work, such as discipline and coordination, as well as arts-related skills that could be used in future employment. The aims of the projects included taking part in community activities, capacity building, regeneration, health and health promotion. Most of these projects identified the following benefits:

- increased social skills (through friendship)
- greater self-esteem
- personal development
- greater confidence
- improved mental health

The main benefit was that these projects helped people to show feelings they normally would not show.

The researchers did not reach any conclusions about the improvement in the health of the people that took part, because they had no way of measuring these improvements. But 91% of participants said there had been health improvements in their local area because of the effect the arts activity had on people's self-esteem and 82% said the improvements were linked to greater confidence. The report did find that the increase in well-being and self-esteem reported by people taking part was directly linked to their involvement in an arts activity.

²⁴ Konlaan, BB, Bjorby, N, Bygren, LO et al, 'Attendance at cultural events and physical exercise and health', in *Public Health*, 2000 14, pp.316-319
www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/entrez/query.fcgi?cmd=Retrieve&db=PubMed&list_uids=11035447&dopt=Abstract

²⁵ Meyrick, Jane, *Art for Health: a review of good practice in community-based arts projects and initiatives which impact on health and well being*, Health Development Agency, 2000

Case study 3²⁶

A three-year research programme is being carried out at the Chelsea and Westminster Hospital. Its aim is to measure:

- the responses of visitors, staff and patients to the permanent works of art and live performances that take place at the hospital
- levels of anxiety and depression

The interim findings show that 'two thirds of the staff and patients and visitors who have participated in the study have felt that live performances significantly help to take their minds off immediate worries or medical problems, diminishing their stress level and changing their mood for the better.'

'Dull, inert cities...contain the seeds of their own destruction and little else. But lively, diverse, intense cities contain the seeds of their own regeneration, with energy to carry over for problems and needs outside themselves.'

Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Cape, 1962

²⁶ *A Study of the Effects of the Visual and Performing Arts in Healthcare* by Lelchuk Staricoff, Rosalia and Duncan, Jane. Email: research.project@chelwest.nhs.uk

6 Further reading

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