



Daisi's **Open Up Arts** project is part of Devon County Council's 'Doing What Matters Community Grant Scheme' which sets out to connect people in a positive, fulfilling and inclusive way, tackling and reducing loneliness and undesired isolation in all their forms and across all age groups

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1. Summary

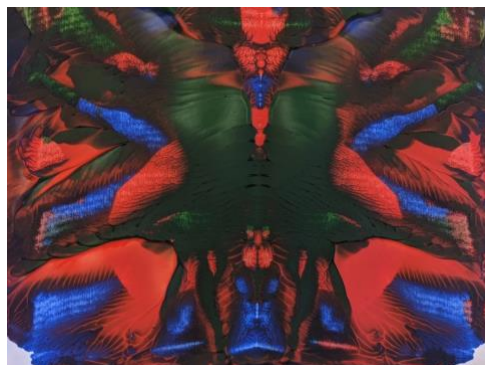
Delivered from March 2020- March 2021, during a most difficult year of uncertainty and anxiety, Open Up Arts has had a greater and more beneficial impact than anticipated.

Having identified fifteen local settings representing young people - youth clubs, voluntary sector organisations, respite care centres, non-formal education groups and schools - Daisy brokered a partnership between these settings and professional freelance artists, enabling the successful delivery of high value participatory arts workshops to young people at a time when feelings of isolation and anxiety were running high.

The process started with conversations to match artists to groups of young people, paving the way for next- step consultation sessions. Artists skilfully engaged with the young people to co-design their workshop plans. In most settings the sense of shared ownership impacted positively on motivation. Some sessions were delivered online during lockdown and others slotted into the gaps when face to face delivery was possible.

Open Up Arts involved over 220 young people and young adults and happened in the following places:

- 1 Tavistock Youth Cafe - youth centre for young people
- 2 CEDA - Exeter based empowering service for adults and young people with disabilities
- 3 YMCA - Exeter charity and housing association supporting vulnerable children and young adults
- 4 Young Devon Ilfracombe - Sheltered Housing project for young people and young adults
- 5 Five Rivers Child Care - foster care services and therapeutic crisis intervention for children, Exeter group
- 6 Westbank Young Carers - Newton Abbot setting
- 7 Westbank Young Carers - Totnes and Tavistock settings
- 8 Westbank Young Carers - Ivybridge setting
- 9 Vbranch House, Exeter for children with moderate to severe physical disabilities
- 10 Okehampton Youth Club - part of Devon Youth Service: Space
- 11 Glendenning Academy for students with social communication and interaction needs, Newton Abbot
- 12 Chances Alternative Education Service, Dawlish
- 13 Children in Care at Georgie's, Barnstaple North Devon Group: DCC children's services
- 14 Home Grown Kids - home educated young people, Bideford
- 15 Heathcoat's School, Tiverton - Primary school children



Symmetry, Five Rivers participant



Artist, Gemma Edgecombe making music happen at CEDA

2. Introduction

2.1 Key stakeholders

The Open Up Arts key stakeholders are Daisy, Devon County Council, professional freelance artists and the fifteen settings representing the young people who participated in workshop sessions.

Devon County Council inspired the Open Up Arts project through its 'Doing What Matters' Fund, successfully bid into by Daisy.

"Doing What Matters Community Grant Scheme is connecting people in a positive, fulfilling and inclusive way, tackling and reducing loneliness and undesired isolation in all their forms and across all age groups".

Daisy works alongside more than 100 professional artists to create arts experiences with over 7,000 young people each year. Working across all art forms - from dance to literature, media arts to music - and with children and young people from pre-school age to their late teens, both in and out of school, Daisy advocates widely for the positive impact of arts activities on learning and social outcomes for young people. Daisy matched the artists to the settings, whilst supporting, documenting and evaluating the sessions and building the evidence base which influences good participatory arts practice in the region and beyond.



Artists Peter Margerum, Anna Boland, Kerrie Seymour, Matt Macklin, Cara Roxanne, Sara Hurley, Monica Shanta- Brown, Gemma Edgecombe, Sam Lythgoe -Jones and Sam Walker have together worked in fifteen different settings. Artist profiles and some of the artist's work can be found in the Open Up Arts online exhibition:

www.openuparts.org

These artists' enabling skills supported young people to:

- create original work
- gain confidence
- feel more connected
- have fun

Settings contact and paired artist

- Tavistock Youth Café, Vicki Lloyd-Walsh, Tavistock Youth Cafe manager. Artist - Anna Boland
- CEDA Exeter, Craig Bowden, partnership and marketing manager. Artist - Gemma Edgecombe
- YMCA, Tim Wells, group work co-ordinator. Artist - Sam Walker
- Young Devon Ilfracombe, Devon young carers. Artist - Sam Lythgoe Jones
- Five Rivers Child Care, Olivia Doherty, participation and engagement officer. Artist - Anna Boland
- Westbank Young Carers, Patrick Agnew, support worker. Artist - Kerrie Seymour
- Young Carers, Totnes, Patrick Agnew, support worker. Artist - Kerrie Seymour
- Young Carers, Newton Abbot, Patrick Agnew, support worker. Artist - Kerrie Seymour
- Vbranch House, Zoe Gilbert, secondary school co-ordinator. Artist - Anna Boland
- Okehampton Youth Club, Mike St John Cooper, senior youth worker. Artist - Anna Boland
- Glendenning Academy, Sheridan Bond, teacher. Artist - Anna Boland
- Chances Alternative Education Service, Gary Hayes, youth worker. Artist - Peter Margerum
- Children in Care at Georgie's, Claire Richardson, Participation Team Leader. Artist - Kerrie Seymour
- Home Grown Kids, Dominique Sequoia, support worker. Artist - Kerrie Seymour
- Heathcoat's Primary School, Demelza Higginson, Headteacher. Artists- Sara Hurley and Monica Shanta- Brown

2.2 Project Outline

The Open Up Arts project has enabled a wave of new collaborations between Daisy and isolated young people across Devon. Through co-development with participating young people, support workers at the settings/communities where they meet, Daisy project managers and lead artists, each setting has benefitted from a consultation session followed by four further sessions allowing relationships and trust to build.

Daisy has 'opened the door' to ongoing engagement through these new relationships. This engagement will feed into Devon's Cultural Education Partnership (DCEP) strategy ensuring that these settings will be contacted again and offered further artist engagement in the future. The DCEP connects a wide range of arts, cultural and heritage organisations and venues across the county.

'Hands-on', participation in the arts has allowed young people to gain connection to themselves and to others in their community. New skills have been acquired and aspirations have been lifted

through the sharing of work. The online exhibition, curated by artist Cara Roxanne, adds profile and longevity to the project and the artwork it has stimulated.

Some defining features of the project have been:

- valuing personal and social as well as artistic outcomes
- overcoming barriers to engagement
- placing co-design at the heart of planning sessions
- valuing the input and responses of all participants equally
- actively encouraging diversity
- engaging skilled creative practitioners
- reflective practice and sharing learning
- listening carefully



Heathcoat Primary School pupils exploring their local surrounds



Heroes imagined by Five Rivers participant

3. Strategic Aims

“Every child should have access to arts and culture, and to the benefits that access brings. The arts are a positive force in society: children feel more confident in their ability to create, challenge and explore, to be part of society, and to make change happen. The arts empower children. They contribute to the development of all aspects of a child’s potential and personality: studying the arts fosters creativity, innovation, empathy, and resilience. The arts enrich young lives, making them happier and healthier. Access to the arts is access to our national life, and it is a social justice issue.”

From: ‘Why Arts is a Social Justice issue’ Paul Hamlyn Foundation/Cultural Learning Alliance 2019

Open up Arts - Strategic Aims:	
1	Connect with young people / young adults in a positive and inclusive way through arts activities
2	Engage young people / young adults in a hands-on experience of high quality, inclusive arts activities - making them better equipped to seek or take up such opportunities and connect with others through such activity now and in the future
3	Young people / young adults gain experience of the creative process, and that of the many roles that they themselves can play in that process
4	Encourage young people / young adults to realise their own skills and aspirations and gain confidences (including artistic and personal / social)
5	Tackle and reduce loneliness and undesired isolation for the young people / young adults taking part
6	Initiate new collaborations with youth settings/groups and young people / young adults
7	Support young people / young adults to gain connections to their peers, their setting and its staff and others in their community and other communities
8	Increase awareness in young people's / young adult's settings of how the arts can help to achieve connecting people in a positive, fulfilling and inclusive way

The young people who have engaged with Open Up Arts experience different kinds of isolation due to their life experiences - being vulnerably housed, having caring responsibilities, being set apart from their peers, lacking family resources or support, low self-esteem or feelings of anxiety and loneliness.

Arts experiences can effectively support wellbeing. The October 2019 report from the Durham Commission (www.artscouncil.org.uk/publication/durham-commission-creativity-and-education) reiterates the importance of cultural learning experiences for enhancing community identity and social engagement, and for personal fulfilment and wellbeing, and the new Ofsted framework now requires schools to develop their pupils’ cultural capital.

4. Participant Feedback



Happily joining in at CEDA

4.1 Learning new skills

" Max has loved the extra music sessions as they have enabled him to access things that he would not otherwise have had the chance to do. In particular, his complex disabilities mean that it is often very hard for him to "get close" to and use musical instruments. Your hands-on approach has overcome this and he has both benefited greatly from and enjoyed the sessions. Watching the videos of the sessions and seeing his positive reactions was a great way of sharing them with us. Since participating in the sessions he has shown an (even) greater interest in different musical instruments and types of music. It's also worth noting that when he comes home from the sessions he is always in a more positive and happy mood. "

Parent Feedback at CEDA

4.2 Gaining confidence

"Sophie enjoys your music sessions so much. She has a natural rhythm. Being a beautiful downs syndrome teenager, singing is harder for her but boy does she enjoy it! I feel it is good for her confidence but also for her speech. She is always singing at home and talks about what she has done with you she was raving about your junk band session!"

Parent Feedback at CEDA



"I think my painting is brilliant – I'm going to sell it for £94,000,000"

Participant Feedback at Five Rivers

4.3 Evaluation tools

The *Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Forms* have been collected from participants at the start and end of sessions (except online sessions where this was not possible). These will contribute to Devon County Council's evaluation of Doing What Matters. Artists have also recorded their own thoughts and observations (see section 6). Artists are encouraged to note any comments they have overheard during the session or particular moments that demonstrate the impact of the session. Photographs and video footage of work in progress and final art works also form part of the evaluation and quotes from participating young people and /or their parents or carers. This qualitative evaluative data can be found on the project website: www.openuparts.org

The challenges of this unprecedented year, with sessions spread out, sometimes over months and young people's attendance being sporadic has made written feedback forms difficult to collect. The Open up Arts website serves as a vital connecting place for feedback, the sharing of creative work, celebration of successful partnership and comment.



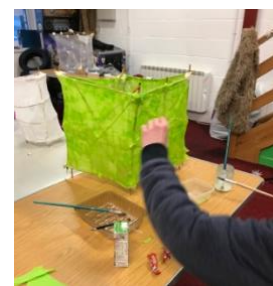
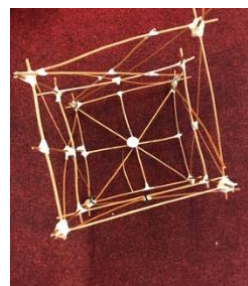
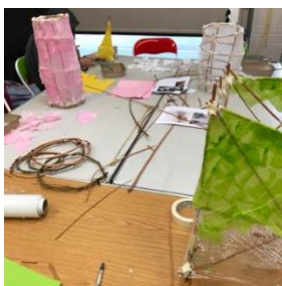
Using tools to reshape 3D objects: work in progress at Chances

5. The role of Setting Partners and feedback

Setting Partners have contributed well to the project, engaging in conversations with Daisy about their young people's needs, the timings of sessions, the setting (physical or online) and the content and processes of artist delivery. This has meant that artists have been well supported and positive learning has taken place between all partners.

A typical process starts with Daisy contacting the setting partner to identify their needs, propose an arts activity and suggest a potential lead artist to deliver sessions. Further conversations around the specifics of the engagement take place. The co-design of the workshop sessions starts here. An initial consultation session between the artist and young people follows. This allows the artist to plan sessions while taking into account ideas and preferences regarding art form, materials and objectives. These early discussions all help to pave the way for good attendance, commitment and motivation from the participating group.

Setting Partners have taken responsibility for recruiting the groups and, where possible, they have supported the WEMWBS data collection and shared the www.openuparts.org website with partners and young people.



Lantern making sessions: work in progress at Tavistock Youth Cafe

5.1 Five Rivers Child Care (online sessions)

"The sessions were wonderful! The children loved the resources and produced fantastic artwork. Lots of creativity, excitement, and joy during both days. A special thanks to Anna for running the sessions so well!"

Marina Rogov, Fostering Support Worker, Five Rivers Child Care

5.2 CEDA (in person sessions)

"I am really pleased we are working with Gemma, she is fantastic!"

Craig Bowden, Marketing Manager, CEDA

5.3 Young Carers at Westbank (in person sessions)

"Thanks so much for the wonderful session at Totnes Kerrie, the young carers loved it and it was a pleasure to work with you. Looking forward to the next setting!"

Patrick Agnew -Young Carers Support Worker, Westbank



Colourful Lanterns made by participants at Tavistock Youth Café

6. Artist reflections

6.1 Anna Boland working with young people from Five Rivers

Session Dates: 15th and 16th Feb 2021

Setting : zoom

Number of participants: 7



artwork by Five Rivers participant

Q. What did you have planned for today's session, and did your delivery differ from the plan at all?

A. *The two - day painting workshop was delivered via zoom.*

The plan for the two days was:

Monday session 1 - Mark making exploring a range of different techniques and processes.

Monday session 2 – Testing techniques

Tuesday session 1 – further testing and exploring young peoples "favourite things in response the theme of love.

Tuesday session 2 – identity paintings.

The workshops followed the plan as within each session I had planned specific tasks for the young people to take part in.

Q. What was your best moment from today's session?

A. One of the best moments from the project was when I was talking to the young people about how much artists can sell paintings for and one of the young people said, "I think my painting is brilliant – I'm going to sell it for £94,000,000" That made me smile.

Another great moment was to see the confidence develop between day 1 and day 2. The young people were much more confident on the second day of the workshop.

Q. Did anything surprise you from today's session?

A. What surprised me was the speed at which a couple of the young people worked. Some took their time but the younger ones tended to work much faster as they were excited and wanted to show what they had done.

Q. What was the most challenging moment and why? How did you respond?

A. One of the most challenging moments was when one of the boys got very upset as he had got green paint on his blue painting. Both myself and the youth worker talked to him and explained that everything was fixable with paint and that he just needed to let it dry and he could fix it in the next session. Obviously this is very different dealing with via zoom than face to face and takes more reassuring virtually. He did fix the painting and it was the first thing he showed us all the next day and he was pleased.

Q. Were any of the participants particularly engaged or disengaged during the session?

A. All the participants were so engaged with the project that they didn't want to take any breaks, they just wanted to keep painting. They made 14 paintings each across the two days.

Q. Did you feel you were able to connect with the young people in the session?

A. There was good connection and discussion with the young people throughout the workshops – we talked about painting and art, it was also one of the young people's birthday so there was lots of discussion about food and cake. Also for some of the painting tasks and to get the young people thinking about what they liked and didn't like - I would ask questions like favourite food, favourite hobby, favourite animal, number, colour etc and then they had to make paintings about them.

Q. Thinking about the strategic aims of the project (listed in section 3 of this document), were any of these met through these sessions? If yes, please add details....

- 1. Connect with young people / young adults in a positive and inclusive way through arts activities**

"...as the project was delivered via zoom young people were even more connected with each other in a positive inclusive and supportive environment".

- 2. Engage young people / young adults in a hands-on experience of high quality, inclusive arts activities - making them better equipped to seek or take up such opportunities and connect with others through such activity now and in the future**

“...the young people had hands on experience throughout the duration of the project and were keen to engage in further workshops”.

3. Young people / young adults gain experience of the creative process, and that of the many roles that they themselves can play in that process

“...the young people developed new skills and techniques for painting and are now much more aware of different types of painting and artists and they were all keen to sell their work with the realization that artwork can be sold”.

6. Initiate new collaborations with youth settings/groups and young people / young adults – new partnerships have been developed

“...throughout the project I worked with different youth workers and partners and the young people also had the opportunity to work with new people”.

7. Support young people / young adults to gain connections to their peers, their setting and its staff and others in their community and other communities

“...the young people all came together to take part in the workshops from different parts of Devon - allowing them to meet new people and become more aware of other around them”.



Painting experiments at Vranth House

6.2 Peter Margerum working with young people from Chances, Dawlish

Session Date: 11th March 2021

Setting : Chances, Dawlish

Number of participants: 6

Q. What did you have planned for today's session, and did delivery differ from the plan at all?

A. I had planned to introduce the students to the materials, fixings and tools that we would be using in the workshop sessions and to spend one hour of the session experimenting with the resources and becoming familiar with the tools and different techniques with assembling and joining the materials together to create 3D artworks. The main difference from the plan was that the majority of the students quickly became involved in fabricating artworks, confidently using drills, saws and other hand tools and assisting each other.

Q. What was your best moment from today's session?

A. When one of the students commented at the end of the session how much he had enjoyed the making of his artwork and thanked me for the experience. Also one of the students commented towards the end of the 1.5 hour period that he hadn't had a mid-afternoon break, but had been so involved in the making process hadn't realized that it was almost time to finish and go home.

Q. Did anything surprise you from today's session?

A. The confidence amongst the students in problem solving and being able to take advice from myself and the other adult staff about resolving practical and aesthetic issues that arose during the making process.

Q. What was the most challenging moment and why? How did you respond?

A. One of the students was struggling to assemble part of his wood and metal artwork and I didn't want him to lose interest or abandon it because of this complication. I made a suggestion to the student that he modify part of his artwork and substitute a more solid piece of material to facilitate making it easier to fix together. I was impressed by his mature approach to the problem solving, and that he was prepared to take my advice and to be able to pursue the fabrication of his artwork.

Q. Were any of the participants particularly engaged or disengaged during the session?

A. Most of the students were engaged for the duration of the session and in particular the practical fabrication stage. One of the students needed a lot more adult support in being able to decide how to start the creative process and which materials to choose at the beginning of the session. The teacher is going to discuss the project with the students prior to session 2, having experienced the materials that are available and the potential for what could be created in the project timescale.

Q. Did you feel you were able to connect with the young people in the session?

A. I felt very relaxed and at ease with the students and confident in being able to talk to them about what they were doing practically and offering them assistance. There were also opportunities to talk to them generally about my work as an artist and the environmental issues linked to the 'recycled and waste' materials that I had provided for the session.

Q. Thinking about the aims of the project (listed in section 3 of this document),, were any of these met through today's session? If yes, please add details....

A. The workshop session and in particular the practical making process covered the aims 1-4 which gave the young people the opportunity to engage with the visual arts and gain experience of using a new and diverse range of 'art materials' and make decisions about resolving practical problems.

Aim 5 was met as they engaged and helped each other during the making process and were able to talk about what they were creating with each other.

Aims 7-8 were met through the involvement of myself and the three staff members that participated in the workshop session and the support and assistance that we gave the young people. Also the staff talked with the young people how they could further develop the material resources that I had provided, and that the young people and the staff could help to contribute to these resources for the subsequent sessions. They also discussed the possibility of the artwork that the young people create could be displayed in an external space after the project has been completed.



Artwork from Vranck House participant

7. A Backdrop of COVID Restrictions



March 2020 - National Lockdown one

May 2020 - conditional plan for lifting lockdown

June 2020 - phased reopening of schools

July 2020 - local lockdown in Leicestershire

September 2020 - rule of six imposed indoors and out

November 2020 - National Lockdown two

December 2020 - end of lockdown 2 restrictions over Christmas

January 2021 - National Lockdown three

March 2021 - schools return

Wearing a mask has become normal

Scheduling sessions in and out of lockdown has been challenging, often resulting in long gaps between artist visits, cancellations and uncertainty. Partner settings have remained supportive of the project and Daisy's optimism has kept artists' spirits up, even when no one knew what each next phase of the pandemic would bring. Flexibility, resilience and determination have been the keynotes to this project.



Tavistock Youth Café participant

8. Conclusion

Open Up Arts has been an important project for Daisi and for the freelance artists engaged to deliver it. Valuable new connections have been made, and Daisi has gained access to new cohorts of young people who are vulnerable and isolated. Through Devon County Council's 'Doing What Matters' fund, young people suffering from loneliness and coping with challenging circumstances (exacerbated by the difficulties of this year), have been enabled to access quality arts workshops and to feel the relief and comfort from being involved in them. Daisi's workshop programme has been fun and fulfilling and has met its social, personal and educational intentions.

Open Up Arts has helped to connect at a time when young people have been away from the support of school and other social settings. Daisi is proud of this achievement and intends to re-visit the partner settings as soon as possible.

9. Links

www.openuparts.org

www.daisi.org.uk



Five Rivers Heart