



University of the  
West of England

# **Evaluation Report of the Kingswood Foundation's Arts4Life Project**

Performance and Arts Intervention  
for Young People

Conducted by:

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## **Acknowledgements**

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## **Evaluation Report of the Kingswood Foundation Performance and Arts Intervention for Young People: Arts4Life**

### **Context**

The Foundation has established a programme of arts and performance aimed to engage young people who are or have had difficulties in school. These young people were selected by their school in consultation with the Foundation. The programme involved the students attending the Foundation one day per week. During the period September to December 2009 students from ten secondary schools and one Pupil Referral Unit were involved and they attended one day per week for the set period. At the end of the programme students gave a performance to demonstrate the skills they had achieved. The performances were attended by the staff of the Foundation and on two occasions by one of the evaluators.

### **Data**

- Data was collected from a wide range of informants as listed below:
- Project Director at the Foundation;
- Workers directly employed by the foundation;
- Observations of the students' performances:
- A sample of school students;
- A sample of teachers involved with the students and the programme;
- Learning mentors and teaching assistants;

Data was collected by face to interviews.

### **Ethics**

A guarantee of confidentiality was given to each informant. In addition a verbal explanation of the nature and purpose of the research was also provided. In the case of school students, informed consent was gained via the offices of their schools and they were given a statement informing the students of confidentiality and anonymity was also explained. The researchers followed the principles and procedures set out in the British Educational Research Associations statement of ethics.

## **Description and analysis of the data**

### **Foundation Project Director**

The Foundations Project Director provided detailed information of both her role and the aims and objectives of the programme for the students. She made a particular point that one to one work with the students was a major feature of the programme and this was designed to make a significant contribution to the students' reintegration into school life. Close contact was made with the schools and in the case of student absence she phoned the school. On some occasions the school phoned in with an explanation. Activities art, graffiti, dance, circus skills, music technology and documentary making had all been positively evaluated by the relevant staff and by the students. The director was very positive about the contributions that the various artist/workers had made to the programme. She noted that as well as relating to particular fields or disciplines that the workers made very positive contributions at the social level. For instance eating breakfast with the students and encouraging activities such as football during the lunch break.

#### ***Positives***

- Workers socialising with students
- Student enthusiasm for the performance and artistic work
- Student performances

#### ***Challenges and potential problems***

- Difficulties with transport
- Student punctuality

## **Circus Skills Tutor**

Circus skills are not easy to learn but they give the students confidence in themselves. The skills are something they learn to do which is connected with school but is not taught in school. The circus skills tutor expressed admiration for the way that the students were prepared to stick at the task. He also noted that although the level of skill acquired was variable this did not lead to competition or argument something he felt might happen in the case of physical skills in school. He was also clear as to why the students had been selected by their schools:

- Disruptive;
- Poor focus of attention;
- Lack concentration;
- Do not fit the ideal of the student

Circus skills require activity and focus because some of the skills are dangerous. The requirements are beneficial to the students. Concentration is required in both trapeze work and juggling and diabolo work.

Circus skills also require high levels of co-operation students have to support each other and take responsibility for getting out and taking care of the apparatus.

### ***Positives***

- Students learn to develop new relationships
- They show they can co-operate
- Learn new and difficult skills leading to high levels of concentration and attention
- They learn to accept authority because they can see the need for it in this potentially dangerous work

### ***Challenges and potential problems***

- Students do not easily connect the circus work with school physical activities.
- Teachers need to see what they can actually do

## **Evaluators of Teaching sessions, Performances and Social Interaction**

### **Music Technology**

Two boys preparing for an afternoon performance work with the music technology teacher. They continue work done in previous weeks and are given help when they seek it. At one point the tutor asks them the name and uses of the software and they engage in a discussion of its possibilities and to some degree its limitations. One student wants to find jokes to tell in the afternoon and begins to search the web. At this point another Foundation worker came into the room and asked why the students had been throwing a coke can around in the morning, rather than denying it they accepted a mild rebuke and apologised. Joke searching continued. Up to this point the two male students had concentrated for two hours although they said that Concentration is our problem. Two girls from the same group arrived late and wanted to engage in general talk, the male students refused this and continued with their work. Later the tutor gently but firmly refused permission for the student to use INTERNET jokes on the principle they were unsuitable. The students accepted the provision.

#### *Positives*

- Lengthy concentration by the two male students
- Their refusal to be distracted by the two girls
- Careful guidance of the tutor
- Acceptance by the two boys of the refusal to allow jokes

#### *Challenges and potential problems*

- Punctuality of the girls
- Ease with which they assumed they could distract the boys
- Lack of discipline of the above by the tutor

## **Performances**

Two performances were observed.

Students actively engaged and co-operated in setting up the equipment demonstrating their capability to co-operate. Circus skills featured prominently as did music technology and to some extent dance.

### *Positives*

- The performances demonstrated that students had gained confidence. (“Couldn't have done it before”)
- Considering the short period of study the level of all skills were high
- Excellent but non interfering support from relevant tutors
- Sizeable and appreciative audience from the foundation

### *Challenges and potential problems*

- Low number of performers in the performances seen by evaluator
- Attempt to get some school teachers as well as learning mentors to attend

## **Social interaction with students**

The social interaction between Foundation workers and staff and students was easy and appropriate. The evidence for this is in part the way in which breakfast was shared and the kind of conversations that went on.

## **School students**

A sample of students from four schools was used - in total sixteen.  
Students were interviewed in groups with either teachers or learning mentors attending.

**All students had heard about the programme via the school and understood why they had been chosen to go.**

“I need help to get more confident”  
“I'm not so good at making friends”  
“I'm not really very good in class sort of mess about”

**When asked about the experience they were all very supportive.**

“It was good”  
“I'd like to keep going”  
“We should be able to go there every week”  
“They treat you like a grown up and don't keep telling you what to do”  
“Circus skills were good I liked dressing up as a clown”

**What have you learnt from the experience?**

“I think I'm more confident now”  
“I'm able to do things in front of other people but not all the time”  
“I could walk away, (from trouble?)”  
“We liked the way we could work with people from other schools”  
“It was good there was no anger because everybody was happy”

**What other kinds of things could there be?**

A lot more activities  
BMX  
Scooting  
Football

### *Positives*

- The students were overwhelmingly positive about the whole experience and thought it should be available all the time
- They gained confidence
- Learnt how to make relationships with peers, which many had previously had difficulties with
- Developed new skills
- Acquired strategies to overcome difficulties such as anger

### *Challenges and potential problems*

- Students felt there were some difficulties with transport.
- Students did not relate what they did at the foundation with typical school activities e.g. Circus skills were not related to P.E.

### **Teachers and Learning Mentors**

#### *Positives*

- In general they were very supportive and appreciative of the programme
- They understood the general aims of the programme
- They saw the aims as quite broad and of considerable relevance to students with low self esteem, acting out problems, and those struggling
- Communication with the foundation was easy and on the whole good
- Information exchange and proactive behaviour issues were well dealt with
- Students learnt to get on with those from other institutions.
- Can be used as carrot for those consistently on report
- Encouraged some of those with learning difficulties to work independently and to understand what they can do
- Circus skills and music technology were identified as particularly helpful.
- Graffiti art taught responsibly
- Would definitely send more students
- Would like more provision

#### *Challenges and potential problems*

- The value of graffiti art was questioned by one individual
- Problems for year 9 students on BTEC courses because of exams
- Some concern about the language use of some tutors as being unprofessional

## **Conclusion**

**In this section we make an overall commentary on the data as a whole.**

**It is clear from the data collected both from schools and from students, and indeed from Kingswood Foundation workers that the whole process increased the confidence of the student body. This is not just confidence in terms of academic work but the confidence to be actively involved in school life at most levels, including requesting help from teachers, mentors and learning assistants.**

**Second there is very good evidence of acquisition of new skills. This was particularly apparent with respect to circus skills. The important point here is that the new skills are not just individual but involve the support of others and trust in both tutors and fellow students.**

**Although not reported for all students schools report an improvement in engagement with learning. Students reported by schools as having this improvement were more prepared to persevere than in the past.**

**Finally there is very good evidence that for the majority of students personal skills improved. They now felt more confident in taking responsibility for their own actions and were much less likely to blame others, i.e. school and fellow students for conflict. Many students stated they now felt able to take responsibility for dealing with conflict and in some cases felt some confidence in trying to resolve conflict. Perhaps as important this improvement in personal skills and qualities as set above enabled them to take some responsibility for their own learning.**

**Our general conclusion must be that the programme as evaluated was highly rated and highly successful.**

Report completed 29th June 2010  
By Professor Dwyfor Davies and John Lee

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