



Creativity|WORKS

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The Creativity|**WORKS** project has engaged with children and young people from early years to age 25, introducing a range of arts projects that link in with their families and communities, as well as involving them in designing and developing projects that they themselves have identified as important.

The project has worked in areas of most need and the widening of access and inclusionality has been a main motivational core value and principle in an ongoing action research reflective process.

The project was supported by a funding partnership including Arts Council England (South West) Norton Radstock Town Council, Keynsham Town Council, Bath & North East Somerset Council and Barnardo's

The project was run in a range of partnership workings and contexts with; APEX, Off the Record Counselling and Off the Record Young Carers Services, Project 28, BANES In Care Services, Timeout Keynsham, Writhlington School, Timsbury Youth Club, Radstock Youth Centre, Bristol Alcohol Drugs Advisory Service, Integrated Youth Support Services, Fringe Art Bath, artlworks Festival committee, Snowhill Community, Somer Housing, Health Visitor Service, London Road Partnership, Boom Stage, Club Flix, Suited & Booted & The Big Lunch

With thanks to all those people who have contributed both in the project and within this publication.

With special thanks to Sue Fairhirst Graphics, Karen Dews Photographer and the **nesa** team

Edited by Andrew Henon Lead artist and project manager Creativity|**WORKS**



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Snowhill

Challenging issues

Multi layered

Complex ecologies of
learning, change and
processes of change

Individual change,
personal change, forming
a community group,
social change

“Hope for the future”



Context by Philippa Forsey

In consultation with Somer Community Housing, B&NES arts development, PCT Health Visitors Services and the London Road and Snow Hill Partnership this pilot project facilitated a community in Bath to access arts activities and community engagement in a social housing and community setting.

The Creativity**WORKS** project in Snow Hill was built on an existing group and a previous **nesa** Fathers' Art Project in 2007.

There are a number of complex and challenging issues identified in the project and these are covered elsewhere in the project reports and evaluations.

The pilot project began in February 2009 until July 2009 firstly by working in a group for families with young children that already met in Centre Track community resource room weekly. It expanded to groups after school for school aged children, men and youth in the day and silk painting for adults at night and moved to other wider community activities. The project continued building links with the community through partnerships with agencies and residents to engage people in the community and culminated in a community event. Regular steering group meetings were held to track project progress throughout and from which future plans could be made for project development.

Description of the Project

The Snow Hill Community provides an environment of multiple challenges, issues and complex dynamics and for this reason it was not expected that a major change could be made instantly. A number of small effective changes were achieved with recommendations for further activity in the area. Philippa Forsey, the freelance facilitating artist had a relatively open brief to enable engagement in creative activity using a responsive and receptive working methodology capable of exploring through different creative approaches specific needs, expectations and aspirations of individuals, families and key community groups living in Snow Hill.



Context

by Philippa Forsey

In Partnership

Somer Housing
Jo James

Health Service Primary
Care Trust Health Visitor
Services

Dr Robyn Pound
Clair Waldron

Community Learning

Community Groups

London Road Partnership

Fringe Art Bath
Boom Stage Festival
The Big Lunch
Kensington Meadows

Somer Housing

by Jo James

Supporting Artists

Artists

The project was coordinated by Philippa Forsey who also facilitated creative sessions with the parents and toddlers and some children's sessions and enabled a further activity in crafts and art forms to be explored and engaged with through bringing artists from a range of different disciplines to the project throughout the 6 months.

Artists included: Angela Bell: ceramics, Andy Southwell: willow weaving, Andrew Bolton: mosaics, Jeff Body: stone carving, Andrew Eddleston: pottery, Lucy Rosewarne: mask making, Marina Sossi: drama and cooking, Neil Light: film making and documentary, Karen Dews: Photography

Support workers

Stewart: mental health nurse, Carl Thompson: B&NES Riverside youth worker, Lawrence Buabeng: London Road and Snow Hill Partnership

Some Key comments and feedback from Jo James Somer Housing Community Officer

- The Project has been a successful way to engage residents in a hard to reach area and improved partnership working.
- Positive connection with residents.
- Wider links with the community.
- Opportunity for residents to take part in a variety of art projects.
- Residents developed new skills and gained a sense of pride in their achievements
- Raised awareness of Centre Track
- Kensington Gardens (link with bath fringe festival) broaden community engagement
- Big Lunch as the end event celebrated the fantastic work achieved by residents.

What we found out

Some Tangible Results from Parent and Toddler Creative Sessions

The group evolved from the early weeks when the need to contain children's impulses to attack each other was ever present. Mothers were encouraged to overcome their fears of poor behaviour and physical danger to allow their children to experiment. We cooked together, played with food, moved to floor based activities encouraging cooperation, imagination and mess using a range of media. Behaviour became calmer, mellower and cooperative and gradually new families felt able to return to the group. Relationships softened. The whole of the floor space has potential for creativity, interaction and communication amongst children and adults. New skills begin to be learnt and shared between adults and children. Opportunities in different media are always offered as an option and from here and into future weeks story making and role playing are developed. The creative sessions provoke discussion and questions as children are given relative freedom to explore and investigate different media and experiences. The venue is prepared each week to protect the surfaces and be safe for the children, but we don't limit a child's curiosity. Parents come to the sessions with children prepared, dressed in old clothes for mess and full engagement. It leads to a sense of discovery and enjoyment for all.



Previously where mess and spillages were considered unsuitable by parents we now move into watching the engagement of the child with the different media. I promote questions about what the children might be trying to explore/ work out. Parents begin to see involvement as learning and expression rather than mess and chaos. The Health Visitor and I are able to work alongside the children over the weeks with issues of hitting, fighting and tears and soon we see children collaborate and develop stories and games together. There are issues of language delay but the activity enables the children to express themselves in many ways (100 languages of children).

Philippa Forsey

Lead Artist
Snowhill

*"The whole of the floor
space has potential for
creativity"*



Participant voices

*"I wouldn't know anyone
if I didn't come here"*



Health Visitor witnesses mothers becoming more confident to be clear but kind in managing their children until 'bad' behaviour was no longer feared or the dominating feature of the group dynamic. The modelled practice was to be clear about limits to behaviour with encouragement and hopefulness about the present rather than punishment of past demeanours or fear for future characteristics. Children were gradually given more freedom to explore without constraints of adult expectations. Children previously frustrated by limited ability to communicate for various reasons began to find voice and grow in confidence, skills and ability to relate.

The sense of ownership of this group by the children is tangible each time they arrive. No longer behind their Mothers legs they come straight in and take part straight away with what they find or make contact or conversation with others in the room.

"Lia loves coming to the group" Parents Quote

We notice between the children the behaviour is less aggressive and there is tolerance. We note that the parents are happy for the children to be unrestricted in their play. Week 8, we begin to notice more praise coming from parents to children. The imagination of the children becomes more evident through their confident story-telling and activity and we can see the development of ideas. This is a positive step; imagination gives possibilities of beyond you, what's possible and alternatives. There is a sense of community within the group as friendships have developed.

"I wouldn't know anyone if I didn't come here" Participants Quote



Over the 5 months the parents and toddler sessions were beneficial for developing a sense of community, shared experiences and addressing parents and child relationships. Creativity enabled situations of family relationships to be seen in a different light. Engagement over a few months helped us and parents see developments in children's behaviour. The aim to enable parents to contribute to their own create sessions might have been ambitious in the short time of the project, although it is evident from feedback from the parents that some parents have found the sessions useful in enabling children's play at home with simple materials. Feedback from parents was that they would like to continue using Centre Tracks as a community centre and to continue with creative interventions.

Philippa Forsey

Individual creativity

Collective creativity

Individual experience

Shared experience

Creativity works to form social networks



A health visitors along sidedness

by Dr Robyn Pound



Introduction

"This project in Snowhill was built on an existing group and the previous **nesa** three month Fathers' Art Project in 2007. It began in February 2009 by working in a group for families with young children that already met in Centre Track weekly. It expanded to groups after school for school aged children, men and youth in the day, silk painting for adults at night and moved to other wider community activities. My involvement as one local health visitor is to engage people in the community, maintaining continuity of relationships that respond to their particular preoccupations and forge links between community and agencies."

The process

"The family group was experiencing difficulties retaining members since the end of Community Learning activities in the autumn 2008. Drop in attendance was partly because of lack of focused activity beyond health visitor-led discussion and because of deterioration in the dynamics and behaviour within and outside the group. Parents wanted more dedicated activities for their children and more interesting things to do for themselves. By Feb 2009 numbers had dropped to less than half a dozen families who came intermittently to use it as a place to go to meet others with young children and for health visiting support. These were mostly mothers, with children from baby to nursery age and school aged siblings. Men from the previous **nesa** Father's Art group still dropped in showing how relationships forged through art groups sustain."



"For this project the artist and myself, health visitor, worked together with occasional help from other professionals and community members. The artist Philippa brought principles of the 5X5X5 Early Years Project providing creative resources to stimulate children's play with their parents. Parents were encouraged to closely watch and enjoy their children playing and encourage their exploration following the children's lead. Process of exploration was more important than producing a product. A climate of mutually rewarding, encouraging relationships was promoted."

“After a few weeks we knew of enough adolescents around the estate in the day, teens and after-school aged children and fathers at home in the day, to begin activities for them. My job was engagement. Time constraints through staff shortage reduced my availability for door knocking than was previously possible. I believe the reduced attendances show the effect of this. This mirrors my experience of the Father’s Project when I was able to prioritise engagement time. School children were easier to attract because they need less encouragement to become involved.”

Some tangible results

“The group evolved from early weeks when the need to contain children’s impulses to attack each other was ever present. Mothers were encouraged to overcome their fears of poor behaviour and physical danger to allow their children to experiment. We cooked together, played with food, moved to floor activities encouraging cooperation, imagination and mess using a range of media. Behaviour became calmer, mellower and more cooperative. Gradually new families felt able to return and relationships softened.”



Processes of engagement

Creativity as an activity works

Creativity begins to work in processes of change

***“It takes time to
restore confidence
and heal hurts.”***

I witnessed mothers becoming more confident to be clear but kind in managing their children until ‘bad’ behaviour was no longer feared or the dominating feature of the group dynamic. The modelled practice was to be clear about limits to behaviour with encouragement and hopefulness about the present rather than punishment of past demeanours for fear of children’s future characteristics. Children were gradually given more freedom to explore without constraints of adult expectations. Children previously frustrated by limited ability to communicate, for various reasons, began to find ‘voice’ and grow in confidence, skills and ability to relate.



We were able to include a child with particular developmental/behavioural difficulties for short periods. It is intended that we will find ways to improve inclusion of such children in the future for the sake of the children, the parents and community cooperation. Because of this project it may be possible to attract affiliations locally with Speech and Language therapy, focused play workers and the Early Years Relationship project.

The group was deliberately kept small initially because of the difficult dynamic. As the climate improved it became possible to begin inviting families back to the group. It takes time to restore confidence and heal hurts.

In the estate there are 12 more families with young children and school children who have attended groups at the centre in the past, more first babies due and families with children who have not attended because they have different health visitors. Experience has shown that this particular client group will not come because they are told we are here. Health visiting contact through regular visiting, usually new babies, is needed to create safe access for isolated families into a community group. I estimate it may take around 8-10 hours of engagement to achieve one hour of attendance. This is important to bear in mind when we remind ourselves that one of the aims of this project is to tackle social exclusion.



This engagement barrier is particularly true of men who are fathers at home in the day. The Father's Art Project of 2007 still reaps the reward of easier on-going communication with me on matters of importance to them and shows the value to their family's access to services. These are the men who found it easier to walk into the current project and appear more able to access help even if they preferred to leave art to their partners. Contributors to the group before the current **nesa** project such as Community Learning, Stop Smoking Support, Young Parent Support (Off the Record) are interested in returning. A community nursery nurse newly appointed to the health visiting team is interested in carrying on the principles of 5X5X5 in promoting play within this group and the weekly drop in access to health visiting will continue.

I continue to be optimistic about increasing opportunities for engaging youth and men because I am known, constantly around the estate and have seen their interest. My learning from this latest project was that groups need to be ready to run as soon as interest is shown in them. Willow, ceramics and stone carving were all acceptable media. I have no doubt that this is a valuable venture towards our aims and will I support search for further funding.

Future engagement

People have long memories if the experience was a good one



The Big Lunch

Individual change to
global influence global
change

Group and community
cohesion, co-creativity

Community and group
celebration

A local project joins a
national initiative

Creativity works to
celebrate together and
share experiences

Joined up with Fringe
Art Bath For Boom Stage
Festival



The Big Lunch is an Eden Project national initiative
<http://www.thebiglunch.com/big-idea/big-lunch>

"We need Human Warming - Communal Social and Environmental Action, not just individual actions - as the antidote to Global Warming and Global Isolation"

"Communities were built around agriculture and worked to the rhythm of the agricultural calendar, or were formed around a particular industry that bound them together. People's surnames were often born out of their role and skill in the community: Smith, Baker or even Thatcher!"

"For many of us there is now no narrative as to why we live where we do, except to earn a wage. Whilst there are a significant minority of communities that are closely-knit and act as a beacon for neighbourliness, many of Britain's communities are, at best, anonymous. "

Quotes from Big Lunch Web Site



Boom Stage is a one-day music festival entirely dedicated to young people. The creators and founders of Boom are all under 18, and everything from the acts to the marquee has been overseen by them. The event consisted of two stages, the main stage and the acoustic tent, and close to 20 acts performed on the day. We tried to incorporate as many different genres of music into the day and had a mix of music from heavy metal to R&B. The majority of the acts were local however some of the bands needed transport to reach the event. Therefore we needed funding to cover their transport costs and, in some cases, pay them for their performance. Finnigan Illsley-Kemp

"The event was a great success with around 1000 people attending" Young Persons Comment

"The bands were fantastic and the crowds loved every minute." Young Persons Comment



nesa Supports, facilitates and enables young people to create their own steering groups, self organise and pursue their own ambitions and creative aspirations. Young Peoples cultures are always the movements of the future. What was considered subversive becomes tomorrow's mainstream activity. This funded activity also ties in with a connective strand of work with Boom Stage, Rock School (Writhlington School) and Club Flix all groups of young people and work featured elsewhere in this publication relating to 21st Century Literacy and digital media developments with young people.

Boom Stage

Connecting up in the communities

A Young Persons report and feedback

Finnigan Illsley-Kemp



Festival

The creativity of
collective effort

Many hands make many
faces

At the Boom stage festival the community of Snowhill and Kensington Meadows joined together to celebrate and enjoy a festival of creativity and visual arts. This included the music provided by the Boom Stage organisers of young people and Fringe Art Bath and **nesa** arts activities. An earlier clay tower had been produced at Centre Track and a new one was made on the day that everyone could contribute towards. A quantity of clay objects produced by residents of Snowhill was also Raku Fired on site.



nesa works across the different communities in BANES to provide opportunities for creative festivals and celebrations. Much of the work produced during the year is then shared and added to, when people are enabled to contribute towards these festivals.

