

With COVID-19 upending the routines of parents, carers, children and young people alike it was an ideal time to trial a remote version of Arts Award. Technology was in place to adapt the qualification for online delivery. It was a moment to show how arts-based learning can impact and energise people online.

“As the Arts Council Bridge organisation for Yorkshire and Humber, when lockdown hit, we were determined to ensure children and young people were not cut off from access to great creative and cultural opportunities. We know how important creativity and culture is, and the enormous positive impact it can have - especially at a time of upheaval. Growtheatre and Third Angel have demonstrated that with a bit of creativity and flexibility you can still deliver a great Arts Award opportunity for young people during lockdown.”

Verity Clarke, Programme Director, Bridge - IVE

Growtheatre CIC and Third Angel, came forward as project partners and facilitators. As experienced Yorkshire-based arts organisations they brought a history of co-working, including joint Arts Award delivery at both Bronze and Silver levels.

Out of hard times a new project was born that would take six young creators on an unforgettable journey.

A pandemic project with purpose, ambition and heart



With everyone adapting to lockdown life it was ambitious to start a project with a new delivery model and short timescale. But project partners were determined that creative learning shouldn't stop due to COVID-19; young people needed a positive focus and outlet.

Taking care of wellbeing - For all of the young people their school routines had been disrupted. For some, their GCSE qualifications had been cancelled. These impacts were taking their toll on wellbeing and motivation. It was agreed that emotional supports must be a project priority.

A tailored approach - Every young person was coming from a different starting point in terms of their skill and confidence levels. Some were familiar with Growtheatre's workshop programme whilst others were new to it. From the off, peer support structures and 1:1's (with parents) would prove invaluable.

Scheduling for success - Planning and communication was prioritised to keep on top of objectives and milestones. Usefully, Growtheatre had already piloted digital delivery models with their youth theatre programme – providing a key framework to build on.

Keeping aims in sight – All parties stayed focused on overarching project goals ensuring everyone stayed on track for qualification success. They followed these golden rules:

- Build a sense of community and stability at all times.
- Motivate young people through digital and arts skills-building.
- Ensure parental and peer support structures sound.
- Motivate each other to achieve the Bronze Arts Award.

A tailored project framework to ensure Arts Award success

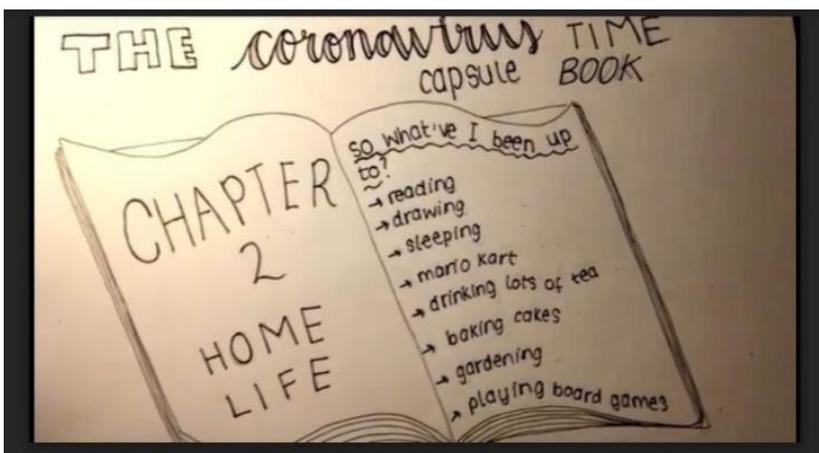


image © Growtheatre participant Arts Award work

Given the project's short timeframe it was key to have a solid framework in place that was both flexible and person-centred for these COVID-19 times.



Whilst the project leaders had past Arts Award expertise to draw on delivering online was a brand new territory. As the young people built their learning portfolio's the facilitators were in the learning seat too - thinking of ways to animate remote delivery. They trialed a mix of theatre games, Zoom breakout rooms, research sessions and other activities. It was creative thinking and learning in action for all! Read below for an overview of the structures they put in place.

Learning from existing practice - The young people had been attending weekly online sessions with Growtheatre on creating a coronavirus time capsule. This work would provide a key stimulus for Part A of the Arts Award ('Explore the Arts as a Participant').

Young people in charge - With so much out of the young people's control putting the reins in their hands was important. They were empowered to decide the direction of 'their' Arts Award.

Peer support first - Given the mixed ages and experience amongst participants peer contact was essential to the project. The facilitators made space for building positive connections remotely.

Family/friend engagement - Participants were given the opportunity to complete their Part D (Arts Share) with either family, friends or peers. One young person delivered his session with younger members of Growtheatre.

Arts Award - making a difference to young lives remotely

The remote nature of the project added **new value to the Arts Award delivery model**. It allowed the facilitators to "*satellite with ease into young people's homes for an hour a week.*" The **removal of logistical challenges** helped the project flow in new ways.

The emphasis on producing digital portfolios was also a positive spin-off. As a result every participant **grew their competency in at least one creative digital area**. The facilitators were "*blown away by the young people's readiness to embrace new challenges.*"

Due to the small group size facilitators were well placed to monitor participant progress. Across the 6-week period they were amazed by the shifts in **interpersonal and creative confidence**. Read below for some highlights.

Confidence gains - There were tangible gains in esteem and confidence across the board. Participants moved from an 'early reticence' to a place of 'full engagement.'



Documentation skills – Every young person pushed through to complete their Arts Award documentation and outputs. This was evidenced by their final portfolio's and Arts Share sessions.

Qualification success - Everyone completed their Arts Award Bronze within a 6-week period. Given the COVID-19 back-drop this was an achievement to be proud of.

Inspiring impacts at a difficult time

On any ordinary year it would have been a challenge to put six young people through Arts Award remotely; in this extraordinary one it was even more of a feat.

On reviewing project impacts it's the participants reflections that shine the brightest light on its success.

Several young people felt they had grown in terms of their written, research and presentation skills.

"I've gained more skills in writing and time management. I learnt how to make professional looking work and improve my presenting skills."

Audrey

"I gained more skills in researching something and then presenting to a group which also helped my confidence I think. I learnt more about animation techniques and also film making techniques"

Babette

As a common theme, participants expanded their knowledge of creative practices and the arts in general.

"I gained more skills in regards to presenting confidently to a group and also branching out my knowledge of the arts. I learnt more about the development of films and the difficult role a film director has especially as a woman in the industry."

Beth

"I gained more skills about critiquing a performance and writing about this. I think this has helped me in my Drama GCSE too. I learnt more about drawing inspired by Lauren Child and it also encouraged me to watch more performances in lockdown than I would have done otherwise."

Millie

Across the board, the young people were enriched creatively and left more confident by the experience.

"I've gained more skills when it comes to filming interesting shots on just an iPhone and different ways you can incorporate sound and lighting to make your videos more interesting."



I've learnt a lot about editing videos and also I've learnt to be more confident in the work that I produce."

Greg

Arts Award – an adaptable model delivering creative change

Off the back of COVID-19 came an opportunity to deliver Arts Award remotely and flexibly. Over 6-weeks facilitators and participants tested this approach. The results show that Arts Award is adaptable and makes a positive impact online. Overall, it was an uplifting, celebratory experience - enhancing wellbeing and creativity.

Remote delivery certainly simplified logistics and enabled smaller group work and digital discovery. However, project leaders felt it was important (where possible) to deliver aspects of the Arts Award face-face. This was felt to aid relationship building and the accessibility of the qualification. On this, digital poverty was flagged as a reality to be weighed up when delivering Arts Award online. This was particularly key in terms of engaging young people from areas of socio-economic deprivation.

Everyone involved in the project gave 100% and the impacts are clear to see. It underscores that, even in tough times, the arts and technology are vehicles to inspire and enrich young lives. As we move out of lockdown arts and culture have important roles to play in readying our young people for the future.

"The arts are going to be more important than ever for young people as they come out of lockdown. Through drama, music, dance and the visual arts they can express themselves, process and evaluate the impact of the past year in a safe space. The joy, escape, passion, skills and confidence the arts provide should never be undervalued. Arts Award has a key part to play in all of this - celebrating achievement and allowing young people to design their own arts journey."

Rachael Walton, Third Angel

Discover the joy of this unique COVID-19 project [captured in this short film](#)

Find out how IVE can support you to deliver Arts Award, online and/or in person, [on their website](#) or get in touch with your sub-regional contact:

- West Yorkshire – Sarah Beckett (sarahb@weareive.org)
- South Yorkshire – Jamie Butcher (jamie@weareive.org)
- North & East Yorkshire – Mary Owoo (mary@weareive.org)



About Arts Award - A nationally recognised qualification, supporting anyone aged up to 25 to grow as artists and creative leaders. It can be delivered in any organisation which works to support young people including: schools, colleges, alternative education provision, youth justice settings, community settings, health-care settings, scout and girl-guiding groups and the arts and cultural sector. The Arts Award qualification is fully accessible and flexible – offering young people the opportunity to start their Arts Award journey at whichever level is appropriate for them.

Trinity College London manages **Arts Award**, in association with **Arts Council England**. IVE As a key advocate and regional expert in Arts Award delivery. IVE has seen how the programme touches and enriches lives

About Growtheatre - A Community Interest Company (CIC) focused on connecting youth, landscape and theatre. Formed in 2012 by Rachel Newman and Sophie Hunter they take outdoor space as an inspiration for theatre-making and other activities - empowering young people to explore their creativity and the natural world. [Find out more here.](#)

About Third Angel - Co-founded in 1995 by Rachael Walton and Alexander Kelly they specialise in contemporary performance pieces that speak to diverse audiences. Their work includes theatre, live art, installation, film, photography and more. Accessibility is a key focus for them with an emphasis on community outreach and creative learning. [Find out more here.](#)