

enquire about learning in galleries



Briefing note 1: participation

This is the first in a series of briefing notes about how gallery education is addressing key issues in current arts and education policy.

engage is the national association for gallery education, representing visual arts organisations, gallery educators, teachers, artist educators and curators. We carry out research, training and advocacy and have a powerful network of people who work with millions of gallery visitors, developing interest and enjoyment of the visual arts.

enquire is a major research programme in partnership with Arts Council England and the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council.



The potential for high quality, sustained partnerships between young people and creative professionals to inspire learning and develop life skills is widely recognised. The **enquire** programme focuses on the learning benefits and the conditions for effective learning in galleries.

When it reports in July 2008, the **enquire** programme will bring detailed findings from long-term projects in seven clusters across England. At the interim stage, we are already seeing strong evidence of how gallery education engages young people with art and also addresses key current social, cultural and education policies. This briefing focuses on **participation**.

Key findings

- Working with artists outside of the school setting tends to encourage young people to become more responsible individuals and better citizens.
- **enquire** is finding many examples where initial contact through the programme has led to increasing interest and involvement, and where young people exposed to the arts for the first time through enquire projects are now undertaking work experience or professional qualifications.
- The projects have given young people skills and experience to become active more widely within the community.
- The role of the artist as a professional – but not a teacher – seems to be key to unlocking interest in art and design and individual creative potential.
- The programmes develop vital life skills; improved skills in listening and debating, respecting others' points of view; improved social skills; enhanced concern for others.
- Young people in all categories benefit from working with art and artists, but it is more pronounced among groups who are most disengaged from school and learning.
- **enquire** is finding strong examples of cases where this programme has worked for individuals when more orthodox, established pedagogies have not.



Through the **enquire** programme, **engage** is developing a unique knowledge-base for policy-makers and practitioners. And through our networks, we have the capacity to drive up the quality of activity in galleries on a national scale.

Galleries and artists have much to give to our young people. For further information on how schools and others can take advantage of this fantastic resource visit **www.engage.org**

Case studies

“Being a member of Babylonfifteentwenty has been a great experience for me, opening up new routes and ideas both on a personal level and linking with my college work. I have recently also begun working for the Babylon Gallery which I feel to be a great opportunity, and is something that would not have happened without my link through Bft. Working with Bft over the last year has proved a lot of fun and will hopefully continue.”



Tom's story Kings Lynn Arts Centre

Tom had been with the Pupil Referral Unit for a month before the Art Centre's workshops began in October 2006.

It was hard to believe that the gentle young man who attended every session was formerly prone to aggressive and disruptive behaviour. Tom clearly enjoyed learning new skills and getting to grips with materials as he participated enthusiastically in the workshops.

His delivery of instructions and one-to-one skills with young people during a special teaching session for primary school children so impressed Art Centre staff that a future work experience placement for Tom is in the pipeline.

After **enquire**, Tom and the rest of the PRU group attended a series of new media workshops with emerging Korean artist Kira Kim. During a candid interview in one of these workshops, Tom expressed regret for his actions in the past and how the Arts Centre had changed his ideas about his future.

Tom still takes part in **enquire** projects, and is currently attending a new series of workshops at the Arts Centre, making short animated films with artist Tim Edwards.

The programme has given him a whole new perspective, the skills to get his life back on track – and the potential for a different life.



Lucy's story Babylon Gallery, Ely

Lucy became a member of Babylonfifteentwenty in August 2006. The project opens up opportunities for young people, like Lucy, who may not otherwise come into contact with the arts.

It brings the chance to work with professional artists, attend group gallery visits and take part in activities linked to school or college work. The sheer amount of opportunities raised for Lucy is breath-taking.

Having heard about the Arts Council's Arts Award scheme for the first time, she has attained a Silver Award and is now working towards Gold.

The group participated in Ely's Big Draw event, part of the national Campaign for Drawing.

The group worked over a weekend at Curwen Print Studios, responding to ideas within the Babylon Gallery exhibition *Uncanny Tales* through dry-point etching and screenprinting – totally new to all the participants.

Lucy now plans her own workshops, and has run sessions for members of Ely Young Carers, with whom the group has established strong links. And she has recently begun working at the Babylon Gallery.

In less than a year, taking part in the Gallery has brought Lucy an insight and work experience in the arts. It has also provided her with life skills to help her to develop as a citizen – and to participate in many different ways.