The enquire programme has been funded jointly by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, the Department for Education and Arts Council England as part of the Strategic Commissioning Programme for Museum and Gallery Education. In phase 4, local authorities provided partnership funding for the eleven regional projects. The enquire programme has been managed by engage and developed in association with Arts Council England.

Strategic Commissioning for Museum and Gallery Education aims to develop capacity for galleries and museums to provide learning opportunities for children and young people and to make that learning increasingly effective. Since 2004 enquire and Watch this Space, the strands working with contemporary art and managed by engage, have involved more than 100 galleries across England.

Watch this Space has supported placements for teachers and trainee teachers in galleries and for gallery educators and artists in schools. This has led to greater understanding of the learning benefits of working with galleries, and how that learning contributes to school plans and the curriculum.

For further details visit www.engage.org/watchthisspace/index.aspx

This series of briefing notes describes how gallery education addresses social provision and educational opportunities for children and young people, in the context of current education and local authority policies.

Children and young people have worked with galleries and artists to explore and make art as part of enquire. Since 2004 this national programme has carried out research in clusters of galleries, schools, youth groups and universities to investigate what children and young people learn through engaging with contemporary art. In doing so it has explored the conditions that support and enable that learning.

In 2009-11 enquire concentrated on testing how galleries contribute to the aims and objectives of local authorities and to achieving their ambitions for children and young people. In eleven projects across England, galleries worked in close partnership with their local authority and collaborated with short stay schools, care homes and children’s centres.

Key research findings

enquire research has evidenced that:

- gallery education projects are characterised by co-learning and mutual respect
- being treated as an adult is not what pupils expect and they respond positively to this trust
- projects develop vital life skills; confidence, listening and debating, respecting others’ points of view and team work
- all young people benefit from working with art and artists, but the benefits are most pronounced among those who are disengaged from school and learning
- gallery projects have worked for individuals when more orthodox, established pedagogies have not
- young people make rapid progress, including those who had previously been disruptive, and the gallery context can open up new ways of seeing their potential.

The visits to QUAD were successful in that all the pupils in the complex group attended, which was a positive experience in itself. Some pupils enjoyed going into a new environment as part of their education though it was more of a challenge/anxiety for others who were out of their ‘comfort zone’ of the class base. The fact that all participated well and fully engaged in the activities was encouraging and very positive.

Teacher, Short Stay School
Case studies

Essex / firstsite

firstsite in Colchester trained artists to work with looked after children and young people. Participation has exceeded expectations and had significant learning and behavioural benefits.

Essex County Council introduced social pedagogy to the running of its care homes in 2008. firstsite worked with Children’s Services to develop pilot projects with care homes and to demonstrate how learning through the visual arts can contribute to the social care and education of young people, and address two of the Council’s priorities:

- The educational outcomes of our looked after children is one of our top priorities. We will work to ensure children and young people are living in settled placements that encourage them to focus on their education with additional support services to increase their access, attendance and attainment levels.
- We will increase the numbers of children and young people participating in positive play, leisure, cultural, recreational, volunteering and community activities.

‘Home Art’ delivered an education programme in eleven of the twelve residential homes. Artists provided specialist skills and care home staff recognised the artists’ abilities when using non-directed learning techniques.

Both artists were very encouraging towards the young people while avoiding being directive towards them. They used their imagination in allowing young people to use the abilities they have, and not to feel limited by their disabilities… The artists skilfully facilitated excellent eye contact, maximum sensory involvement with the materials, and humorous conversation in which the young person could participate with laughter and glances. Home Manager, Special Educational Needs Respite Home

Engagement was high compared to other activities run by the homes, and participation consistently increased as projects progressed. Staff are clear about the learning and behavioural benefits, and how the project contributed to a favourable Ofsted report.

We had an Ofsted inspection two weeks ago and the inspector praised Leo’s [Home Art artist] work, of which the young people were justifiably proud. Staff Member, Short Stay Residential Home

As a result, all the homes are keen to take part in a similar project again.

Richmond / Orleans House Gallery

Orleans House Gallery designed workshops in children’s centres to provide cultural activities for families in deprived areas of the London Borough of Richmond. The art sessions for fathers and their children were particularly successful.

Orleans House worked in partnership with local children’s centres to embed visual arts activities in their programmes. The project addressed targets in the Borough’s Children’s Plan for 2009-13, localising services and building capacity to deliver service improvements for families and young people with a commitment to:

- enhance partnership working and commissioning to support integrated high quality working
- create high quality localised services as part of a wider protective and preventative service
- ensure all children and young people are able to participate, enjoy and achieve

Participation in the art projects was very high. As a result of the first two programmes, centres see the workshops as a regular part of their programmes and the gallery has been approached to provide services during most school holidays. It was commissioned by one centre to deliver a month-long arts programme over a summer and has since provided activities in the February half term. Another centre wishes to similarly invest in a monthly workshop for fathers and their children, and a weekly art club in the summer term.

The art workshops provide families with shared experience and enjoyment of arts activities on familiar ground, and introduce them to the wider opportunities provided by the gallery.

Derby / QUAD

Young people in short stay schools in Derby took part in a project with QUAD, working with artists in school, visiting exhibitions, working with gallery staff and mounting a public exhibition.

QUAD set out to develop the young people’s understanding of art, to build their skills and confidence in using the gallery. The project not only gave students an opportunity to work with artists and mount their work in a professional gallery, but to work with a range of QUAD staff on marketing, planning, exhibition presentation, stewarding and hosting.

The project addressed Derby City Council's ‘Narrowing the Achievement Gap’ strategy which aims to support localities with the greatest gaps in order to improve achievement. The work was supported by the Arts in Education Officer who cites the project as a success story for the ‘Narrowing the Gap’ agenda within Derby City.

Teachers reported that: Pupils were engaged at so many levels, and the vast majority managed to find the right level for them. Those who were specifically involved in working with artists on the various projects gained confidence, and you could see the pride in their faces when they could show family and friends the work they had been part of, in such a public display. For young people who rarely get singled out for such things it was a real boost to their self-esteem. Some of our most hard to engage youngsters were really switched on by the project. Sue Bradley, Head Teacher, The Kingsmead School

The young people’s achievement in mounting and hosting the exhibition was recognised and enjoyed by official visitors: An amazing experience – incredible art work, films and dancing. All the pupils are really talented. Many thanks to the staff for all the hard work! Angela Cole, Head of Social Development and Inclusion

Children from Newton’s Walk gave a personal tour to Ros Vahey, the new Head of Derby City’s Children and Young People’s Services: Wonderful work – it just shows what can be done with high expectations, imagination and hard work!