Orleans House Gallery Case Study: *Every Drawing Matters*

1 **Summary**

Every Drawing Matters set out to explore how Orleans House Gallery could introduce young people to a more long-term and involved relationship with Cultural Services in the London Borough of Richmond and support them to input into decision-making processes. The project used creative media as a consultation tool to gather young people’s views which were then included in the Children and Young People’s Plan.

Over a 10 week period, artist Nathalie Palin facilitated creative workshops with 37 young people aged 9 to 19, and 4 open workshops for families. The groups were encouraged to consider the themes of Every Child Matters, the current government reform of services for children and young people which has resulted in the development of local Children and Young People’s Plans across England. The final pieces were exhibited at The Stables at Orleans House Gallery in May 06, curated and installed by young people and gallery staff. A private view was attended by participants, staff, partners, local providers, friends and family. The exhibition coincided with the launch of Richmond’s Children’s and Young People’s Plan and the official opening of the gallery’s Arts Education Centre, attended by the Minister for Culture, David Lammy MP.

2 **The context**

2.1 **The organisation**

Orleans House Gallery is a local authority museum and gallery and home to Richmond Borough Arts Service. The gallery’s Education Programme has two strands - Lifelong Learning and Schools, and project work and alternative education for vulnerable young people.

Over recent years, strong partnerships have developed within the local authority, with the gallery providing services for other departments including Education, Inclusion and Youth. This project has been supported locally by The Children’s Trust and Learning and Skills Council.

The gallery employs 5 full time and 3 part time members of staff, and 12 other members of staff on flexible hours. The gallery also benefits from the support of a number of volunteers, through both graduate internships and young people participating in work experi-
ence programmes. The annual turnover of the Gallery and Arts Service is approximately £400,000.

2.2 The situation

The project set out to explore how Orleans House Gallery could introduce young people to a more long-term and involved relationship with Richmond Cultural Services and support their input into decision-making processes. In order to do this, we needed to:

- Solidify relationships with agencies supporting children and young people, and the position of the gallery in relation to Integrated Children’s Services.
- Assess the gallery’s capacity to meet young people’s requests for sustained involvement with the gallery beyond the life of a project.
- Explore how involving children, young people and their families in creative practice could increase their investment in shaping Cultural Services.

2.3 The idea

The project set out to use creative media as a consultation tool to gather young people’s views on local cultural provision and to support their involvement in the development of the Children and Young People’s Plan. We used drawing as a creative medium to encourage children and young people to explore the gallery, the arts and the work of the Children’s Trust.

Each group explored the objectives of Every Child Matters through means appropriate to their understanding and abilities. The project placed value on the quality of final work, to help participants recognize personal achievements. Important aspects of the project were:

1. Allowing the gallery and Arts Service to work in partnership with the Children’s Trust and other key agencies supporting children, young people and their families. This level of partnership aimed to increase the impact of the project across services and for children and young people. The project was planned to coincide with the launch of the Children’s Trust, helping to embed Cultural Services into the landscape of support for children and young people locally.

2. Recruiting young people from different age groups, locations and with different needs. Participants were also recruited in different ways – through open sessions, structured groups, and individual referrals. As a result of this, the expectations of young participants and what they wanted from the gallery was very different. This allowed the gallery and partner agencies to assess capacity, methods of partnership and young people’s needs in a shared way.
3. Allowing the gallery to use less confrontational forms of consultation (direct questioning can be inappropriate for less confident participants). Workshops hoped to break down perceptions of ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ answers, allowing views to emerge in a more discursive way. The project also assessed which ways would be most appropriate for those who are least likely to invest in Cultural Services and input into shaping the service over the longer term.

3. The project

3.1 Planning

The project was initiated jointly by the Head of Arts and the Head of The Children’s Trust for Richmond - to create an avenue for children and young people to input into the establishment of the Children’s Trust. The facilitating artist was involved from early in the project’s development and already had a good knowledge of the Arts Service and partner agencies supporting young people in the borough. In addition to the Youth Participation Team, the Children’s Trust and the Arts Service, a large number of potential partner agencies were invited to participate by referring groups or individual young people to the project activities. Once the objectives of the project were set, the artist developed ideas for workshop delivery - based on the needs, dynamics and interests of each group, allowing participants to input into the workshop content.

3.2 Delivery

In total, 32 creative workshops took place from October 05 to May 06. Of these: 23 were scheduled with partner staff for 6 distinct groups, where young people worked within a familiar peer group (friends, school group, support group); 4 were Family Learning workshops open to local families - with families of some participants from the closed groups invited directly; 5 workshops were arranged directly with participants late in the project, to allow additional time to refine their work after school and at weekends. These workshops were more ‘flexible’ with individuals from different groups negotiating space with others using the gallery.

Over the course of the project, 37 young people attended creative group sessions. Of these 37, 23 young people completed work for the exhibition. An additional 2 intend to complete work for the touring show following the Stables exhibition. 12 young people attended the private view and brought friends and family along, and 5 young people were invited to attend the official opening of the gallery’s new Arts Education Centre the following week, and discussed the project and exhibition with visitors. 19 of the 23 young people who made work for the exhibition attended the gallery and saw their work on display. A majority of the participants wanted to continue a relationship with the gallery in the form
of regular art-making sessions, GCSE art support, or a follow-on project. When asked if they would be interested in participating in a regular discussion-based group, only 2 young people said yes. As one young person put it, “don’t ask my opinions, let’s just do the activities”.

4 Outcomes

4.1 Impact on participants

Of the 23 young people who completed work for the exhibition, 21 reported a positive experience. 21 out of the 23 were pleased with the work they had made (2 young people said it was neither good nor bad). Almost all of the participants openly demonstrated pride in their work, and surprise at the quality of work they had produced. However, only 12 of the 23 participants attended the Private View. Partner staff noted the following reasons: for 1 group, activities out of school hours were associated with detention and punishment, and the only member of the group to attend was on Fixed Term Exclusion; some of this group did not receive invitations until the day before the day of the Private View, so although they knew the date and time, they would have felt less desire to attend. For some young people with particularly low self-esteem, partner staff thought that the Private View would be seen as risky and potentially exposing.

17 young people would like continued contact with the gallery. Of these, 9 made this request independently (i.e. were not prompted by evaluation questions). Based on staff feedback for 4 young people, the project has had a significant impact on their worldview and self-confidence, and supporting agencies are keen for them to have continued contact with the gallery or artist. All of these 4 young people are considered particularly vulnerable and/or are struggling to stay in mainstream education: either on Fixed Term Exclusions, at risk of Permanent Exclusion, are at risk of offending or are Looked After young people. For 1 young person, all of the supporting agencies noted a significant change in his behaviour and said that, “over the past weeks he has found a way of communicating and expressing himself that he has not had before”. Continued support for this young person is now viewed as essential as he has not found positive engagement in other mainstream or alternative provision. 1 other young person who was put on Fixed Term Exclusion during the project, continued to attend workshops at the gallery site, and came to the gallery independently, to curate the exhibition with the main exhibitions team.

On seeing the exhibition one project group were all “genuinely impressed” with their work, and discussed areas that they would like to improve. 5 members of the group wanted to sign their work and have requested further workshops to refine it before it tours the borough. Now that the young people in this group have begun to take ownership of their
work, the impact of these follow-on workshops will be assessed at a later date. 2 of the more reticent participants have requested to take up GCSE art at the gallery.

2 young people from the youngest referral group (ages 9-12) have identified the gallery as one of their preferred ‘hang-outs’ and have built strong relationships with members of the core gallery team. In the 4 weeks since the project’s end they have visited the gallery at least twice per week, independently and with family members.

4.2 Impact on others involved

Most of the project partners had either worked with the gallery previously, or had knowledge of the gallery’s work with young people prior to the project. Of the 6 partners involved in the project, 5 gave feedback. All felt that the project had had the positive outcomes they had expected and they wanted to develop future work with the Arts Service. One of the partner staff, who had not worked with the gallery before, commented that she was surprised at the positive impact that art could have on improving the behaviour and outlook of her most challenging students. This group will be working on a follow-on project with the gallery over the summer term.

The two supporting artists said they had found the project very rewarding and were surprised by how well some of the more challenging participants settled in and positively engaged with them as adults: “They’ve [the young people] been just great. They’ve got so much potential … If there is another project like this in the future, I’d love to be involved.”

Feedback from the exhibition showed that partners, parents and visitors were impressed by the ideas and quality of work that the young people had made: “… a wonderful range of styles and approaches to drawing. We are very proud to be part of this exhibition exploring such important themes in such a lively and creative way.” At the launch of the Education Centre, a number of the visitors commented on the confidence with which participants explained the project and their ideas: “It was a pleasure talking to the young people about their work – their pleasure in explaining what they had done was terrific.”

4.3 Institutional change

The gallery is looking to establish a ‘transition period’ for the project where young people can continue to attend the gallery with the artist present as a way of handing over to core gallery staff. The use of a dedicated project artist is successful for the duration of the core project, but does not allow for long-term contact with young people who locate the gallery as a place to return to. Building this transition period into future work will give young people enough time to develop long-term relationships with permanent staff. The flexibility of workshops over the final period of this project acted as a bridge to a more informal relationship with the gallery for some participants – and this is a project element that we
would like to incorporate into future work. The gallery is also considering using a rotating ‘bank’ of artists so that young people and partner staff can develop more sustainable relationships with freelance artists facilitating gallery projects.

This project aimed to incorporate consultation throughout its activities, for children, young people and their families. In reality, most of the project workshops took place over an intensive 10-week period, and this meant that the quality of the work took president over the gallery’s consultation with young people on what they could do differently. The gallery identified that projects would need to be longer to achieve better ongoing consultation whilst not compromising the quality of the young people’s work.

Since the culmination of the project, 4 of the participants have already accessed opportunities at the gallery independently. For the other participants who would like a continued relationship with the gallery we are setting up follow-on opportunities to continue the dialogue with them this time without the pressure of preparing work for exhibition.

The involvement of the artist from the outset allowed this project to be honed to participants’ interests and abilities at an early stage. However, the success of key partnerships was partly personality-led rather than by design, and the gallery would like to establish a more robust framework for regular updates with key partners to ensure good communication in future projects.

5 Lessons learned

5.1 What worked and what didn’t

Key things that we got right:

1. Young people on the project related very well to the gallery environment and appeared to feel ‘at home’. All of the partner staff noted that groups’ behaviour was much improved in comparison to behaviour at school. The artist ran workshops in schools and youth clubs as well as on the gallery site, and also felt the young people were able to take on a much more responsible role when they worked in the gallery environment. Significantly, 17 of the 24 young people who attended 1 or more workshops on the gallery site have said that they would like continued contact with the gallery in some way.

2. The content of the final workshops was left open until very late in the project, and this meant that the gallery and artist could be very responsive to young people at a point when they wanted to come to the gallery independently and refine their work. This level of flexibility helped to build relationships with individuals outside of the group work, and increased young people’s sense of ownership of the gallery and their work. Partner staff commented that this was an unusual and particularly beneficial element of the project planning.
3. The range of project partners meant that there was an overlap between services supporting the same young people and their families. This meant that over the course of the project, the gallery worked with siblings through different groups, and partners were able to support participants more thoroughly. This also meant that parents were more aware of the project and the gallery, and a number of families attended the gallery independent of their initial referral agency.

Practical ideas:

1. For the two largest groups of young people, creative sessions included a mixture of activities, ranging from work that demanded concentration and visual decision-making, to more kinaesthetic learning activities such as posing and directing each other to create backlit silhouettes. Through the Silhouette workshops, young people supported each other far more, and shared ideas and found practical solutions in a very adult and generous way.

2. The final exhibition deadline gave young people focus and helped maintain momentum through moments of boredom and anxiety. Most participants took the responsibility of getting work ready for an exhibition very seriously: “I think we are going to need more workshop time if we are going to get this done in time for the exhibition, don’t you?” For a number of the young people, the point when they saw their work installed in an exhibition was the point when they were able to begin acknowledging their own achievements.

3. Some of the ideas and techniques were quite challenging. In a number of the workshops, some individuals were frustrated by what they found difficult. Yet, by the time they had completed their work, almost all of the participants commented that their work had turned out better than they had expected and that they were glad they’d seen the project through. They valued the experience of knowing that their perseverance had contributed to their achieved success.

What didn’t work - mistaken assumptions & missed opportunities:

1. Due to a broad range of individual need in one of the groups, the artist directed young people to work towards a collaborative series of canvases. This was intended to encourage the group to support each other. Ownership of this work was comparatively low, and the artist and partner staff discussed whether working on individual pieces of work would have been more successful for most engaged young people. It was only when the group finally saw the work on exhibition that they began to take ownership of it and discuss improvements. At this stage participants requested more workshops to develop their collaborative pieces and the gallery are hoping to schedule 2 additional workshops to capitalise on the group’s new-found interest.
2. A number of workshops were delivered off-site, in youth club and youth support settings. Early in the project, staff identified that in these settings there was a conflict of interests and too many distractions for participants to engage fully. For the Positive Activities for Young People group, workshops were re-located to the gallery site, where young people found it considerably easier to engage and their behaviour noticeably improved. For the Young Parents Group, workshops took place once per month during their group support session. The large gap between workshops meant that the impetus to complete work was difficult to maintain. The participants said they would like to finish their work for the touring show, and one couple came to the gallery independently to work with the artist. Partner staff felt that it was beneficial for this group, but overall project contact was insufficient to have any significant impact.

3. Some of the most vulnerable young people who had identified the artist as a trusted adult were not able to rely on her presence at the gallery regularly in future. The gallery have discussed a ‘transition period’ to allow young people who have invested in the project to get to know and trust core staff. Talking this through with participants is needed, to establish realistic expectations. With follow-on opportunities that have come out of the success of the exhibition and the launch of the Children’s Trust, young people are beginning to get to know other members of the core team and attend the gallery independently.

4. At present, the number of young people from the project who would like further, independent contact with the gallery (through work experience, ongoing workshops etc) cannot be sufficiently supported. The gallery is now working with partners to address how to meet the needs of those participants for whom the project has been most significant, and to assess how to increase the gallery’s capacity to support them over the longer term.

5.2 Next steps

The Children’s Trust would like to incorporate the artwork from Every Drawing Matters into their touring launch across each ward of the borough. Participants are eager to have their work returned and the gallery plans to reproduce the work as exhibition boards with the help of a studio photographer. One of the participants suggested that many of the images from the project would work well as ‘postcards’ for young people’s dissemination and the Arts Service is now looking to develop this as a follow-on activity for young people interested in design and print.

Supporting participants to sustain their relationship with the gallery following projects has been an important aspect of this and previous gallery projects. On the whole, an average of 1 or 2 young people from different projects have become clearly attached to the gallery and we have been able to continue to support their relationship with Orleans House. The number of young people now wanting a sustained relationship with the gallery has in-
En-vision project report

creased and prompted us to question how we meet this demand. As a result of the pro-
ject, new partners have emerged and the gallery is now hoping to offer an Art & Design
GCSE programme for young people referred directly from their schools. Other services,
in particular, services for young people Looked After want the gallery to offer more sus-
tained provision for young people who have been on Fixed Term Exclusions, and/or at
risk of permanent exclusion. The gallery is now working with partners to assess how to
support individuals through a combination of work experience and creative workshops. In
particular, the gallery is discussing how to offer young people more robust outcomes from
work experience, be this through accreditation or specific skills training.

At the outset of the project, the Arts Service wanted to assess the viability of establishing
a Steering Group for young people to input into Cultural Services. Findings from this pro-
ject suggest that a discursive forum would be inappropriate - many of the participants
have asked for more contact with the gallery, but they are not ready to take part in a dis-
cussion-based forum. The gallery intends to establish an ongoing creative group, through
which decision-making can continue, but be supported in a creative consultative way.
This group could also act as an ongoing ‘art class’ for young people referred from Arts
Service projects, but the gallery would like to test this model, to see how young people
from different groups can negotiate joining and leaving an ongoing, mixed group.

The gallery would now like to take this action research project and apply it to other areas
of Cultural Services – Libraries, Archives, Sports and Parks. The gallery’s extensive ex-
perience with young people means that we are the most appropriate area of Cultural
Services to broker relationships between young people and Libraries and Archives in par-
ticular.

The gallery is also aware that our partnerships would benefit from more knowledge and
skill sharing. The Arts Service would like to develop Arts Training for professionals in
other sectors, to increase understanding of the Arts and how creative practice can en-
hance their work with children and young people.

6 Appendix

6.1 Who was involved

Project Staff:

Project Development Rachel Tranter and Nathalie Palin
Project Coordination Ali Bennett
Lead Artist Nathalie Palin
Internal Evaluation    Nathalie Palin
Artist Support    Elli and Joe Elford
Additional support from young people: Nicole, Sid and Jerry.

Partners and funders:

Most importantly, thanks to all the young people who have worked so hard to on this pro-
ject and exhibition. And to those who have worked in partnership with Orleans House
Gallery, including:

Julia Hunter and Nikki Harrison - Teddington School
Sarah Brown and Mitch Williams - Christ’s School
Bevan Woodhead – Grey Court School
Nicola Blake, Martin Donnelly and the Looked After Children’s Team
Lois Ratcliffe, Katie Bond and the Youth Participation Team
Rob Henderson and The Children’s Trust
Ahmed Saliu, and the Young Fathers’ Project
Anjum Khan, and Positive Activities for Young People
Richmond A.I.D (Advice & Information on Disability)

Also, the following schools made contributions to the final exhibition:

Hampton Wick Infant & Nursery School
Stanley Infant & Nursery School
The Queens School Kew
6.2 Answers from questionnaires.

Responses from 22 of the 23 young people who completed work for the final exhibition.

Some completed questionnaires, but for others, particularly those who did not feel confident with writing, we held one-to-one conversations with the artist, incorporating these questions into more open discussion about the project and how they might want to be supported in the future.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Negative</th>
<th>Not stated / or not asked</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What did you think of the project?</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What did you think of the artist?</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you see the final exhibition?</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What did you think of the final exhibition?</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What did you think of your final piece of work?</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What did you think of the workshops?</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you know more about Every Child Matters than you did at the beginning of the project?</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you know anything new about arts than you did at the beginning of the project?</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What did you think of the gallery and the buildings where we did the workshops?</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What did you think of the other staff who work at the gallery?</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you like to do more workshops at the gallery?</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you like to do anything else with the gallery e.g. work experience gcse art, anything else?</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>%1</td>
<td>%2</td>
<td>%3</td>
<td>%4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has the project helped you realise any of your talents that you didn't realise before?</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>