

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

ARTS AND EDUCATION STRATEGY

PART 1: INTRODUCTION:

- 1.1 This strategy has been written following consultation with a range of providers and users of arts education in Reading, evaluation of a range of arts projects, an audit of Reading Borough Council schools and a small audit of youth centres. (Full findings of this consultation are included in appendix -)
- 1.2 The strategy intends to take into account and build on the significant amount of arts education activity that already takes place in Reading, and is based on national recognition of the varied and vital role that the arts can play in education and learning. Reading Borough Council recognises the potential of the arts to make a positive and lasting contribution to people's lives and raise the self-esteem and therefore the achievement potential of children and young people.

PART 2: BACKGROUND

2.1 Reading Borough Council as a unitary authority

Since April 1998 Reading Borough Council has been a unitary authority with new responsibility for Education, Youth and Community Services, Social Services and Libraries. Internal partnerships are being developed through identifying shared service objectives, and strategies for meeting these objectives. The partnership between the Education and Community and Arts and Leisure directorates has been prioritised, and a joint approach has been taken to developing this Arts and Education Strategy.

2.2 Reading Borough Council Cultural Strategy

The Arts and Education strategy has a key role to play in Reading Borough Council's Cultural Strategy, which sets out clear objectives for the contribution of the cultural sector to learning. The Arts and Education Strategy will contribute to achieving the goals set out in the Cultural Strategy for creativity, access, social inclusion and cultural diversity.

2.3 Reading Borough Council Public Art Strategy

The Public Art Strategy identifies the need to encourage public art commissions that have an element of education or participation. This strategy will link with and inform that goal.

2.4 Lifelong Learning

The arts are playing a key role in Reading's Lifelong Learning Plan which aims to develop a number of partnerships to deliver projects.

2.5 Arts and Theatres Service development - Reading's Arts and Theatres service has recently been restructured to enable the delivery of an integrated approach which focuses on access, education and participation, and which brings together programming and project management expertise. Specifically Arts Development and 21 South St Arts Centre have been brought together into one team to enhance ability to link programming with participation through residencies, workshops and training opportunities.

2.6 Cultural Diversity

Reading Borough Council has well developed strands of work in African Caribbean and Asian arts development. Many of these are focusing on the needs of young people with a number of training projects emerging.

2.7 Reading Borough Council Vision and Corporate Objectives

Reading Borough Council has the following corporate aims:

- Develop Reading as a Green City with a sustainable environment and economy at the heart of the Thames Valley
- Promote equality, social inclusion and a safe and healthy environment for all
- Establish Reading as a learning City and a stimulating and rewarding place to live and visit

The Arts and Education Strategy will contribute to establishing Reading as a learning city and promoting equality and social inclusion is at the heart of the strategy.

2.8 Independent Arts Organisations and Artists

Currently, a great deal of arts education work in Reading is led by independent arts organisations with the involvement of local artists. Several of those groups have education at the heart of their organisational aims and are seeking to increase their capacity for this kind of work. The strategy seeks to acknowledge and develop that involvement and move towards greater collaboration and shared planning between all sectors providing arts education.

PART 3: PRINCIPLES:

3.2 This strategy will be relevant to:

Formal education (nursery, primary, secondary, further and higher education) and informal education, for instance informal education within the Youth and Community Service and Play Development Service.

However, the workplan for years one and two of this strategy focuses on primary and secondary education and developing services for young people in the context of lifelong learning.

3.3 RBC defines arts education or arts in education as:

The use of arts activities (through participation, experiencing finished work, watching artists at work, or the use of techniques and methods derived from the arts) to enhance the delivery of the national curriculum, the delivery of creative and cultural education*, the development of artistic and creative knowledge and skills, the development of basic skills **, and as a channel for personal, social and issue-based education.

*As defined in the DfEE report "All Our Futures: Creativity, Culture and Education", creative education is "Forms of education that develop (young) people's capacities for original ideas and action" and cultural education is "Forms of education that enable (young) people to engage positively with the growing complexity and diversity of social values and ways of life"

**As defined by the Basic Skills Agency : " the ability to read, write, and speak in English, and to use mathematics at a level necessary to function at work and in society in general "

PART 4: AIMS OF THE STRATEGY:

To foster a co-ordinated, sustainable approach to arts education in Reading by:

- Taking into account existing arts education provision and identifying and encouraging best practice
- Raising the profile, quality and impact of arts education in Reading
- Encouraging partnerships, collaboration and shared planning between providers and users of arts education in Reading
- Developing the partnership between Reading Arts and Theatres and Education and Community Services

PART 5: OBJECTIVES AND TASKS:

5.1 Strategic Overview

To create a strong, sustainable and inclusive infrastructure for arts education development in Reading. This needs to acknowledge current activity and need as well as looking towards sustainability for a widening range of partners/providers and participants.

- Create a new post of Arts Education Co-ordinator to maintain an overview of Arts Education in Reading and to broker activity, opportunities and partnerships.
- Have the strategy formally adopted by Reading Borough Council.

5.2 Co-ordination

To ensure that arts education development across Reading is co-ordinated and monitored, rather than relying on ad hoc development.

- Establish ongoing formalised links and relationships with relevant RBC directorates, arts organisations, school teachers and other providers, partners and users of arts education.
- Organise strategic planning opportunities/ meetings for all of the above (for instance, an Arts Education Forum for Reading)
- Establish strong links with the formal and informal education sector.
- Establish and support a strategic system of evaluation for projects and initiatives
- Establish a co-ordinated approach to arts education planning, programming, marketing and working with schools across Reading Arts and Theatres.

5.3 Communication

To address the current lack of key communication channels for providers, arts organisations and users.

- Instigate and support strategic planning meetings (see 2.) for all interested parties to give a clear sense of the big picture, identify and encourage collaborative opportunities, highlight specialisms and priority areas and ensure a two way flow of information and feedback.
- Create an arts newsletter for schools
- Establish an internal clash diary for providers, RBC departments and partners etc. to support communication in between meetings.
- Ensure broad representation of arts education across RBC directorates and beyond by attending key education fora and meetings.
- Develop a high quality and robust arts education website for Reading

5.4 Resource/Information Development

To create an arts education resource for Reading that is accessible and useful for providers, partners, arts organisations, clients and participants alike.

- Create a paper and IT resource that is easy to visit and use.
- Collate and update currently relevant materials to arts and education including audit findings, curriculum information, information on community resources, artists, funding opportunities and priority areas.
- Ensure access is available to all IT resources developed as part of the strategy and that these are updated and improved as required.

5.5 Supporting the 2002 - 2007 Education Development Plan (EDP)

Where possible and appropriate, to allow the priorities of the EDP to inform the planning and focus of new arts and education projects and initiatives.

- Positively promote inclusion through arts and education projects reflecting the EDP's target groups and endeavour to engage children and young people in new opportunities.
- Take steps to ensure equality of opportunity to all RBC schools for participation in projects, activities, forums and initiative.
- Support and work with schools as they look to enhance the curriculum through creative input. For example, in moving towards a new flexible 14 - 19 agenda, or exploring curriculum tie-ins such as literacy or numeracy.
- Facilitate partnerships and links between schools and arts organisations where appropriate.
- Make external arts organisations aware of the EDP priorities so that they can choose to take this into account in their arts and education plans where appropriate.

5.6 Programme

To support and inform future arts education programming across Reading.

- Work closely with RBC partners to underpin arts education opportunities.
- Research and initiate a training programme that develops the arts education strategy.
- Encourage an ethos of collaboration amongst and between providers, partners and clients.
- Ensure that programming is rooted in user need and aspiration.
- Support strategic arts education projects and initiatives.

5.7 Funding

To identify the best means of increasing financial and resource support for arts education.

- Collate and update extensive information on arts education and community funding opportunities

PART 6: MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Progress of the post holder and programme will be monitored and managed by the RBC Arts and Education Steering group who are already in place. This will be further informed by quarterly reports and presentations by the Co-ordinator and by the annual review of targets and budgets. The steering Group and the post holder's Line Manager will also ensure that the Co-ordinator understands and complies with RBC's equal opportunity, customer care and health and safety procedures.