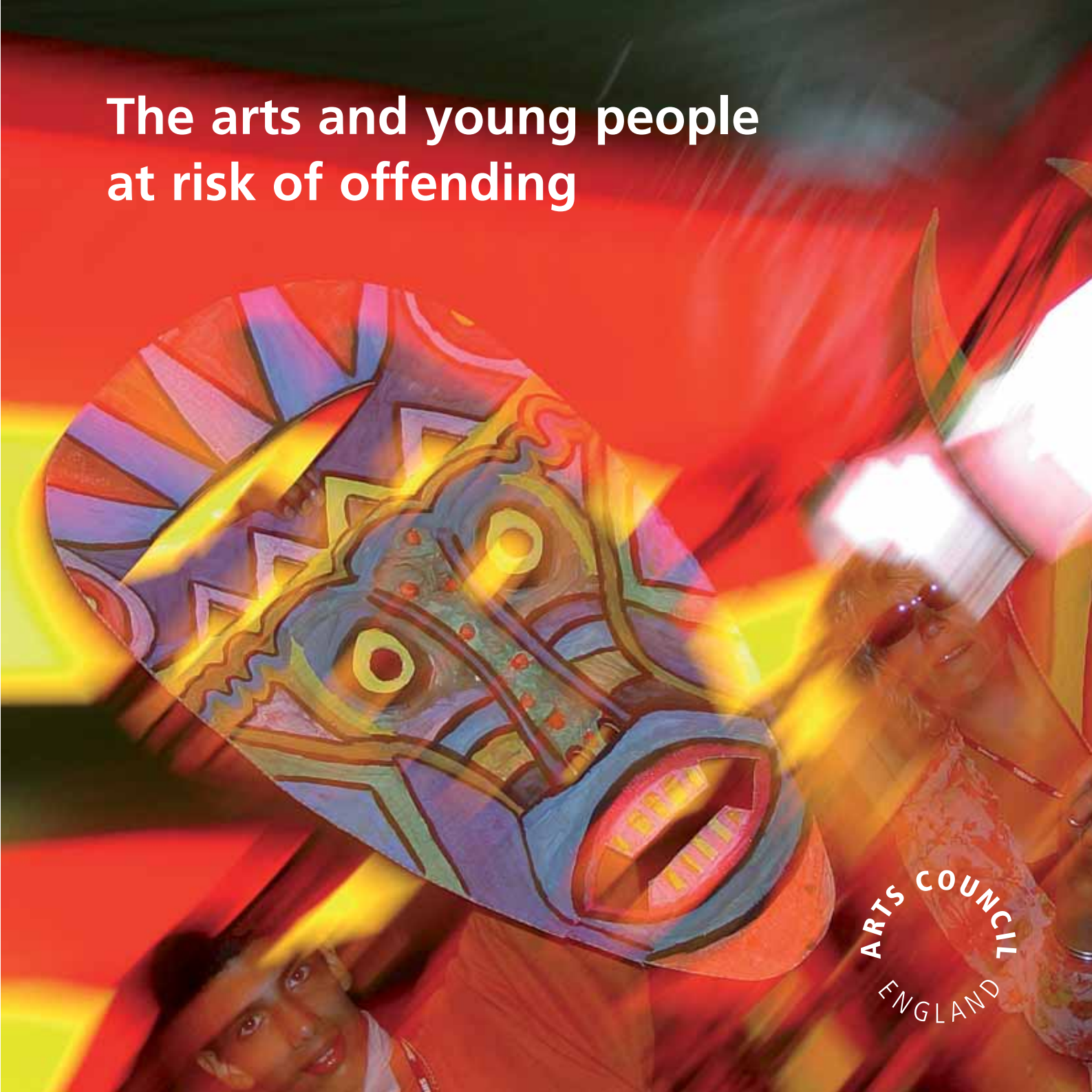


The arts and young people at risk of offending



ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND

Arts Council England is the national development agency for the arts in England. Between 2005 and 2008 we are investing £1.7 billion of public funds from Government and the National Lottery. This is the bedrock of support for the arts in England.

Our vision is to promote the arts at the heart of national life, reflecting England's rich and diverse cultural identity.

We believe that the arts have the power to transform lives and communities, and to create opportunities for people throughout the country.

In our manifesto *Ambitions for the arts 2003–2006* we set out to:

- prioritise individual artists
- work with funded organisations to help them thrive rather than just survive
- place cultural diversity at the heart of our work
- prioritise young people and Creative Partnerships
- maximise growth in the arts

Cover image:

Young people in public care in Oxfordshire participate in a multi-artform week-long residency each summer. The theme here is North South East West and this mask depicts the young people's interpretation of the culture, colours and dance of Africa. Photo: Helen Le Brocq, courtesy of Oxfordshire Social and Health Care, Learning and Culture and the Oxfordshire Youth Arts Partnership Trust

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Foreword

I am delighted to introduce Arts Council England's national strategy for the arts and young people who are at risk of offending and re-offending.

Behind this strategy lies our profound belief that the arts have the potential to transform lives and communities and to promote social inclusion, neighbourhood renewal and cultural citizenship. Dedicated artists and arts organisations have been working effectively and creatively for many years within the health, education, crime reduction, regeneration and other important sectors in our society. The Arts Council remains firmly committed to supporting and promoting this wide range of activity.

As part of this commitment to the arts and social inclusion, we will be prioritising arts and young people at risk of offending over the next three years. We will continue to develop many other activities across the Arts Council, supporting, for example, wider work in the criminal justice system and in health and well-being, as well as pioneering work with refugee and asylum communities and with homeless people.

We want to recognise and celebrate the wide range of interventions through the arts, from crime prevention and reduction through to custody and resettlement of offenders. There is emerging evidence that such interventions are effective in terms of both arts and criminal justice outcomes. The Arts Council strives to sustain and

develop this work by acting in partnership with other stakeholders. Our work with the Youth Justice Board, for example – promoting the integration of high-quality arts activities into programmes for young people in the youth justice system – has gained international recognition.

Our focus on young people at risk of offending is part of our wider strategy for children and young people and the arts. The Government's new framework for services set out in the Children Act (2004) and the Green Paper *Youth Matters* (2005) provides a context for this policy. Our commitment to this work is also underpinned by criminal justice policy that emphasises positive ways for young people to engage in education, training and employment.

Young people themselves must be the drivers of this strategy if we are to meet their needs and aspirations. Creating opportunities for access and participation in the arts is just the start. If our vision is about deep-rooted, long-term change, we must find the ways and means to encourage progression so that young people can develop their growing interest in the arts, sustain their new-found skills and be in a much stronger position to connect with mainstream society.

Sir Christopher Frayling
Chair, Arts Council England
October 2005

Our vision

By strengthening our partnerships with the criminal justice and education sectors and by investing in the artists and arts organisations active in the field, Arts Council England will be in a strong position over the next three years to build on successful programmes already underway with young people at risk of offending.

We want to support long-term change rather than simply providing short-term activities. Principles of access, participation and progression through the arts will, therefore, be fundamental to the success of this strategy.

We will support young people at risk of offending, particularly those aged 10–17, to:

- develop their interest and skills in the arts
- challenge their views of themselves and raise their aspirations
- engage with learning
- connect with new education, training and employment opportunities
- make a positive contribution to society

Realising the needs and ambitions of young people is fundamental to our vision and to this strategy. We need to balance young people's rights to a voice and a say in their own future with their responsibilities to themselves and the rest of society. Through balancing freedom and discipline, the arts can offer young people at

risk of offending an important means through which to address their own behaviour and to play a positive part in the world.

To realise our vision, we will:

- ensure that we listen to the views of young people, engage them in decisions that affect them and broaden the range and appeal of what we offer so that it is relevant to them
- continue our support for the arts sector, building and sustaining this resource to enable it to deliver wider and more effective arts programmes through:
 - investment from Grants for the Arts, our open access grant scheme
 - ensuring that our targeted schemes, such as Creative Partnerships and the young people’s Arts Award, play a role in this work
 - working with our regularly funded organisations to realise their ambitions to work with young people at risk
 - cultivating the skills, capacity and knowledge within our sector
 - building an effective infrastructure for our programmes
- develop our own specific programmes and initiatives in this area of work through partnerships with educational, criminal justice and other organisations in the field, both regionally and nationally
- work collaboratively with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and other Government departments, local authorities and a range of other agencies concerned with children and young people

'The arts are capable of liberating the potential of marginalised young people who, for various reasons, have lost out. Which is why the Youth Justice Board attaches enormous importance to this strategy.'

Rod Morgan, Chair, Youth Justice Board

Street Trilogy, written by Chris O'Connell, was performed by Theatre Absolute at arts centres and non-theatre venues around the UK in spring 2005, supported by the Arts Council National Touring Programme. This scene is taken from *Raw*, the second of three plays about crime, its causes and consequences, and about justice and redemption. By encouraging partnership working, the project attracted young people from Connexions, Pupil Referral Units and Secure Training Centres and also from organisations representing young carers and young fathers.

www.theatreabsolute.co.uk

Photo: Alastair Muir



The challenge

The crime

Each year the youth justice system deals with about 150,000 young people who have become involved in crime. Young people aged 10–17 account for a disproportionate number of criminal offences and the majority of them have become completely detached from education, training and employment. This is a serious problem and solutions are urgently needed.

Since the early 1990s, there has been a dramatic rise in both school exclusions and in the number of young people in custody. The UK imprisons more young people than most other countries in Europe – some 7,000 each year. Yet reconviction rates are very high for young people, with over two-thirds of those under 18 years old being reconvicted within 12 months of release.

Current Government initiatives for the more effective use of custodial and community penalties for adult offenders are matched by initiatives to tackle youth crime. The recent establishment of the National Offender Management Service, for example, has signalled a stronger emphasis on the effective resettlement of offenders. The Government has also provided a wider context for services for young people, introducing the Children Act in 2004 and publishing the Green Paper *Youth Matters* in 2005.

Youth Matters focuses on young people aged 10–19, including those at risk of offending, whom the Government hopes can be diverted from anti-social behaviour and crime by, among other things, early intervention and better coordination of services. Crucial to the success of this approach is the Youth Justice Board (YJB), set up in 1998 under the Crime and Disorder Act with a mission to prevent offending by young people. The YJB, which is responsible for developing policy and practice and for monitoring performance, is also developing new and innovative approaches to the prevention of offending, commissioning research and publishing information on ‘what works’ with young people at risk and with those who offend.

The causes of crime

To deal effectively with youth offending, the factors that lie behind offending behaviour need to be identified and addressed.

The YJB has singled out several areas of risk: low educational attainment and detachment from education, training and employment; problem behaviour both in the family and among peers; and a range of personal factors. This list is extended by the Government’s Social Exclusion Unit, which also cites drug and alcohol misuse, housing problems, physical and mental health problems, and reduced employability as contributory factors.

Determining precise cause and effect among these risk factors or attempting to uncover what originally triggered offending behaviour is very difficult, especially when an individual's personal history and experience are taken into account. Yet all the evidence suggests a strong link between youth offending and socio-economic disadvantage. Being born into poverty still has a major influence on future life-chances and many children and young people in custody or at risk have a background of profound social exclusion.

One indication of this is that over half of those under 18 in custody have a history of being in care or of social services involvement. Another is that around a quarter of young male prisoners are either homeless or living in temporary accommodation before going into prison. Significantly, there are a disproportionate number of black and minority ethnic young people in custody. Young people in the youth justice system, and particularly those in prison, also suffer more than others from health problems, especially mental health and emotional disorders and conditions associated with substance misuse.

The one apparent route out of poverty and exclusion available to all young people is the formal education system, yet non-attendance is a serious problem and schools report increasing numbers of children being excluded or at risk of exclusion. A large proportion of school-age young people now in custody had been permanently excluded from school.

From this brief and bleak account, we can trace a negative progression route taken by a significant minority of young people: from achieving little at school as a result of early social and personal disadvantage to disengagement and exclusion from education and failure to gain qualifications, leading to decreasing employability and an increased risk of offending – and of ending up in custody.

'When these young people disconnect from mainstream society, not only do they often have a low level of literacy and numeracy skills, but they are denied opportunities to participate in and enjoy the arts. There is also the increased likelihood of them becoming involved in youth crime. Young people in custody, for example, may well have a chronological age of 17, a reading age of only 7, but a "street" age of 37.'

Professor Martin Stephenson, Director of Social Inclusion Strategy, Nottingham Trent University



'Watching youngsters who have never realised their potential become aware of their talent is one of the most satisfying things any artist can witness.'

David Harewood, actor and director

This Grassmarket Project workshop took place in Polmont Young Offender Institution for *Bad*, an Edinburgh Fringe First winning play. The young man is describing his life of running – from his parents, social services, the police, gangs, but most of all himself.

Photo: Bruno Beloff

The role of the arts

The relevance and application of the arts

The social, educational and cultural consequences of anti-social and criminal activity can be devastating – not just for the young people involved but for society as a whole. Raising a generation where a significant minority lack the ability and the desire to make any kind of contribution, creative or otherwise, to society will wreak considerable economic, social and cultural damage.

Exploring a range of initiatives and approaches to tackle the risk factors associated with offending is an urgent task. The Youth Justice Board (YJB) is interested in creating long-term solutions, strategies and outcomes, arguing that, while young people at risk of offending do need to be engaged in positive activities, they also need clear progression routes into education, training and employment.

Arts Council England is working closely in partnership with the YJB, demonstrating our own strong commitment to young people at risk of offending and to the notion of offering them effective learning and career pathways. The evidence shows that involvement in education, training and employment is what makes the difference to a young person's quality of life and is the strongest protective factor in preventing offending. We believe the arts have a significant and unique role to play here.

That belief is inspired in large part by the considerable achievements of the many artists and arts companies working in the field of criminal justice and with young people at risk of offending. They bring an enormous range of professional skills and insights to this work and, in turn, testify to the reinvigoration of their own creative practice. The methods and approaches they have developed over the years produce, at their best, startling artistic, personal and social outcomes. We aim to make this work more visible. Its success is borne out in the consistency of testimony and research-based findings from arts projects, which suggest that there is a strong case to be made for the effectiveness of arts interventions with young people who offend. We aim to increase this evidence base.

Arts interventions

In terms of prevention, arts programmes range from projects in Learning Support Units and Pupil Referral Units, which address the problems of non-attendance and exclusion through the arts, to participation in, for example, Youth Inclusion Programmes or Positive Activities for Young People (PAYP), aimed at reducing anti-social behaviour.

Similarly, in community and custodial sentencing, arts interventions contribute in increasingly creative ways, not least to existing

offending behaviour programmes. In many cases, the arts are seen to have a positive impact on the prison education system and even on media and public attitudes to youth offenders. As well as independent projects and prison-based residencies run in partnership with artists and arts organisations, there is increasing collaboration between the arts sector and Youth Offending Teams (YOTs), set up as part of the YJB's mission to prevent offending, and which offer considerable potential for sustaining creative interventions.

We have also been working with the YJB to create high-quality arts enrichment programmes designed by artists working with literacy and numeracy specialists. These programmes, which are already taking place in custodial and community settings, aim to enhance basic skills through engaging young people in creative activities.

Where young people have been involved in more serious or persistent offending, arts-based resettlement programmes have had some remarkable success in encouraging ex-offenders into training and employment and increasing their employability by helping them to gain formal accreditation as well as enhanced communication skills. All of this makes it less likely that they will re-offend. Many participants will also have gained an insight and interest in the arts that will stay with them for life.

The impact of the arts

We believe that the arts can address the whole person *without prejudice*. In other words, rather than identifying young people with their current or past behaviour, artists and arts organisations address their potential as creative people and as learners. They challenge young people's sense of themselves, their limits and their potential in a very different way to that of youth justice practitioners, providing a new environment for them to explore their identity, skills and abilities and to build their resilience. By providing individual attention, affirmation and recognition, arts practitioners can help young people to build relationships based on trust and respect. Their new self-confidence, their ability to work as a team member and their greater communication skills may then lead to a change in the attitudes and behaviour that led them into offending.

Many evaluations of arts interventions note their effectiveness in engaging young people in education. This may be partly due to personal and attitudinal change, but the learning intrinsic to the artistic process is a major factor, especially where young people have a role in designing projects. Participating in the arts develops creative and thinking skills in an informal, often pleasurable and challenging way – giving young people an opportunity to work individually and as team members to solve problems, experiment and innovate. These skills are transferable, as relevant to developing literacy as to making art.

Enjoying and participating in the arts should be an entitlement for every child and young person, including those at risk of offending. The sense of achievement in creating high-quality art and acquiring practical skills can have a powerful and lasting impact on young people, contributing to their artistic, personal and social development. For those who are excluded from mainstream education, such success is a rare experience.

However, the case for the arts needs to be made much more strongly and pursued strategically if it is to be seen, heard and acted upon by those reviewing, setting and evaluating national criminal justice and related policies. We are now in a good position to make this case.

A participant of *Repeating Stories* discusses design ideas with sculptor Jon Ford at HMP & YOI Swinfen Hall. *Repeating Stories* was a prison-based drama and sculpture programme facilitated by Rideout (Creative Arts for Rehabilitation) which culminated in the public exhibition of 28 original kinetic sculptures.

Photo: Jack Webb



Taking our vision forward

The strategic context

The impact and achievements of artists and arts organisations in this field have opened up opportunities for the Arts Council to build new resources for the arts through partnerships with the criminal justice and education sectors and other agencies.

The converging concerns around children and young people at risk in both the youth justice and arts sectors have led to our groundbreaking partnership with the Youth Justice Board, which has identified a range of schemes and programmes, points of intervention and opportunities for collaboration that we need to explore further over the next three years, regionally and nationally. *Youth Matters*, too, points the way forward for further partnerships by emphasising the pivotal role of local authorities working, for example, through Children's Trusts, and by arguing for closer relationships between the public, voluntary and private sectors.

Our strategic objectives

This strategy sets out **seven** priority areas to which Arts Council England is fully committed.

- **Partnerships**

Forging local and regional partnerships within a national strategic framework between the arts and those agencies and organisations working for the benefit of young people at risk of offending

- **Progression**

Supporting progression routes for young people at risk of offending through which they can develop their interest and skills in the arts and engage with education, training and employment

- **Research and evaluation**

In collaboration with other research partners, building the evidence base for this work through better information management, more rigorous evaluation and longer-term research programmes

- **Advocacy**

Raising awareness among artists and arts organisations, policy makers, the Government and the wider public about the potential impact of arts activities with young people at risk of offending

- **Professional development**

In partnership with relevant agencies, supporting professional development opportunities for artists and arts organisations working with young people at risk of offending

- **Resource development**

Working with other agencies, policy makers and funders (including public, private and charitable sectors) to maximise investment in this area of work

- **Networking**

Encouraging the establishment of professional networks bringing together artists, arts organisations, youth justice professionals and relevant agencies regionally and nationally to share effective practice

Implementation

Our strategy will be implemented nationally and regionally through partnerships with artists and arts organisations, youth agencies, local authorities, Learning and Skills Councils and the youth justice system.

Details of our plans for young people at risk of offending are available from our national and regional offices. These plans describe our approach to implementing this strategy and include improving literacy and numeracy through the arts, linking artists' training to the YJB's National Qualifications Framework and developing relationships with Youth Offending Teams.

Further information

- *Access, participation and progression in the arts for young people on Detention and Training Orders*

This report presents data on engagement with the arts among young people on Detention and Training Orders (DTOs).

Nottingham Trent University/Ecotec

Arts Council England, 2005

www.artscouncil.org.uk

- *Addressing youth offending: Arts Council England's contribution to the SPLASH programme*

Summary report of evaluation of the Arts Council's role in the 2002 Splash Extra programme, run by the Youth Justice Board.

Arts Council England, 2003

www.artscouncil.org.uk

- *The Arts Included*

Report of the first national conference on the role of the arts in Pupil Referral Units and Learning Support Units.

Richard Ings

Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation & The Arts Council of England, 2002

- *Creating Chances – Arts interventions in Pupil Referral Units and Learning Support Units*

This publication explores the impact of creative projects on the work of Pupil Referral Units and Learning Support Units around England.

Richard Ings

Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 2004

www.gulbenkian.org.uk/main_f.htm

- *Doing the Arts Justice*

A review which examines the effectiveness of the arts in criminal justice settings, particularly the use of arts in the prevention of crime, in custodial and community sentencing, and resettlement.

Hughes, J et al

The Unit for Arts and Offenders, 2005

www.artscouncil.org.uk

- *Every Child Matters*

Every Child Matters: Change for Children is a new approach to the well-being of children and young people from birth to age 19.

www.everychildmatters.gov.uk

- *Including the Arts: Preventing youth offending*
Report of the first national conference on the role of the arts in preventing youth offending.
Nick Randell ed.
Youth Justice Board, The Arts Council of England & The Paul Hamlyn Foundation, 2002
- *Including the Arts: The Route to Basic and Key Skills in Prisons*
Standing Committee for Art in Prisons and Bar None Books, 2001
- *Serious Play – An evaluation of arts activities in Pupil Referral Units and Learning Support Units*
This report is an in-depth comparative study of arts projects in Pupil Referral Units and Learning Support Units in England.
Anne Wilkin, Caroline Gulliver and Kay Kinder: National Foundation for Educational Research
Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 2005
www.gulbenkian.org.uk/main_f.htm

- *Youth Matters*

The Youth Matters Green Paper sets out the Government's new strategy for providing opportunity, challenge and support to teenagers.

www.dfes.gov.uk

Youth Justice Board: <http://www.youth-justice-board.gov.uk/>

For further information on Arts Council England/YJB programmes contact the PLUS team on 020 7304 7072 or email plusinformation@ecotec.co.uk

Young dancers from HMYOI Wetherby took part in a Dance United project *Third Symphony: Men at War*, choreographed by Royston Maldoom and designed by Kate Owen. This was an eight-week intensive project in April-May 2003 with young offenders, none of whom had ever danced before. It was funded as part of Arts Council England's Dance Included initiative.

Photo: Nick Gurney



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We are committed to being open and accessible. We welcome all comments on our work. Please send these to Ian Day, Director, Information at the Arts Council England address above.