

# Children, young people and the arts



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: 'Diggers' Road to the Beach was an ambitious year-long creative development project between The Works, Creative Partnerships Cornwall, Motionhouse Dance Theatre and the Extreme Academy. It worked to inspire young imaginations, develop new skills and ultimately bring 800 young people and creative practitioners together in two massive, magical performance events entitled *The Edge* at Watergate Bay, Cornwall in June 2005.**

**Photo: Morgan Lowndes [www.lephoto.com](http://www.lephoto.com)**

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# Foreword

I am delighted to introduce the Arts Council's new strategy for children, young people and the arts.

Arts Council England has a long track record of working with young people from all backgrounds and abilities. Over the last 30 years we have increased our investment in arts activities for, by and with young people, notably through our education work, funding from the National Lottery, our funded organisations' programmes and, most recently, Creative Partnerships. We are well placed, as a national organisation with nine regional offices working throughout England, to maximise the impact of our current programmes and to expand and develop the work.

This strategy puts young people at the centre and commits us to ensuring that we consult and listen to them in developing our policies and programmes. We believe that every young person has the right to participate in the widest possible range of artistic and creative activity as practitioner, as participant and as audience.

This is a time of substantial change to services for children and young people. We will be working with the Government's new framework for services set out in *Every Child Matters* and *Youth Matters*. We believe that the arts can contribute to achieving all five outcomes outlined in *Every Child Matters*: being healthy, staying safe, making a positive contribution, achieving economic well-being

and enjoying and achieving. We have seen a steady stream of evidence which demonstrates the impact of the arts in achieving these outcomes – particularly when we work in partnership with other sectors such as health, education and youth justice.

This strategy will be underpinned by nine regional plans, including our work with children and young people at risk, which will continue to respond to trends in the wider world. Most importantly, this strategy will respond to the views, needs and interests of children and young people themselves. To achieve this we will:

- engage young people in all decisions which affect them
- reflect and value young people's own cultural expression and choices in all our work
- broaden the range and appeal of what we fund and support

Our vision is for all young people in the country to be able to participate actively in the arts as a matter of right. This is ambitious. We look forward to working with our partners in the arts sector and beyond to deliver this strategy between now and 2008.

**Sir Christopher Frayling**  
Chair, Arts Council England  
September 2005

# Children, young people and the arts: our vision

Engagement in the arts and creative opportunities transforms the way children and young people learn and explore the world around them. It can change the way children and young people see themselves – even what they dream of for the future – as well as helping them to develop specific skills.

We believe that everyone in England, through early childhood to young adulthood and beyond, should engage with the highest quality of arts and creative experiences. Through listening to children and young people and valuing their artistic practice, we will provide relevant opportunities that stimulate a lifelong passion for the arts and a lifetime involvement as reflective and critical spectators and/or as creative practitioners in and beyond the arts. Every child and young person in England should be able to participate in a diverse range of cultural opportunities – from taking part in arts activity and producing work as an artist, to working with and seeing the work of creative practitioners. By meeting and challenging children and young people’s individual interests and needs, we can help them to develop their creativity.

Increasingly, young people are being inspired to use their creative potential and move into the professional arts and creative industries. Young people need support with training and effective further career pathways to take this inspiration and make it a reality, irrespective of where they live in England.

Artists and other creative professionals and those in sectors that collaborate with the arts – such as the education, health and youth justice sectors – can facilitate exciting, inspirational and challenging activity by, with and for children and young people. In order to do so, they will need the right skills, knowledge, experience and commitment.

Parents, carers and other family members also can play a vital role in encouraging young people's engagement in the arts and can become powerful advocates for the value of the arts and creativity for their children. To do so they need the best possible arts experiences and information on why and how to access these creative opportunities with and for their children.



*Caution: Young Artists at Work*

Fluid installation at Impressions Gallery, York, summer 2005

Fluid is a partnership project for 11–18-year-olds in York. In July 2003, the young people embarked on a two-year programme of artist-led multimedia exhibitions and projects funded by Grants for the arts. The young people were at the heart of the development, delivery and evaluation throughout. They met weekly to organise projects and presented a selection of the artwork created over the programme's two years. The exhibition featured animations, digital video, photography and a site-specific mural.

Photo: Roger Moody

# The context of our work

Our vision for children and young people will only be achieved if we understand and work with relevant external agendas.

Children and young people are now at the heart of Government agendas. The Children Act 2004 sets out a national requirement for local providers to build their programmes around the needs of children and young people. The Government's documents *Every Child Matters* and *Youth Matters* suggest radical change in how services support children and they aspire to place children, parents and learners centre-stage. The 2004 Department for Education and Skills Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners includes a strong focus on tailoring teaching and learning to the needs, interests and aptitude of the individual. It also advocates developing partnerships beyond the classroom.

The Government recognises the importance of creativity and the arts to the economy, civic renewal and individual fulfilment. The cultural industries are the second-fastest growing sector in the UK economy and have an enviable international reputation. Children and young people should be able to develop their own artistic and creative practice and contribute to the full range of arts practice in this country.

Research shows that the arts can transform the lives of young people. However, it also shows that opportunities for children and young people to engage in the arts are not available consistently across England. There are areas of significant deprivation, with little arts and creative provision, and those young people most in need of high-quality provision are often least able to access it.

Funding such a wide-ranging vision as ours will always be a challenge and no single public sector body can create an equality of arts and creative provision for all children and young people. But the value we place on creativity and our emphasis on children and young people, coupled with our position as a leader and champion for the arts and creativity, will enable us to be a catalyst for driving forward this agenda.

We recognise that this drive for change will occur in the context of competing priorities and funding constraints. We must understand and negotiate the multitude of agendas and priorities and maximise our existing and potential investments and partnerships so that we can move towards an arts entitlement for all.

# How we work

Children and young people are one of our five priorities, as set out in our manifesto *Ambitions for the arts 2003–2006*. Our work on these priorities involves close collaboration and partnership with other organisations and sectors.

We work in a number of ways, including:

- **regularly funded organisations:** We fund over 1,100 arts organisations on a regular basis, usually through three-year agreements. All of these organisations work for the benefit of local communities and most involve children and young people
- **strategic Arts Council initiatives:** Creative Partnerships challenges schools to put creativity at their heart as an inspirational tool for change. Artsmark and the Arts Award foster and celebrate arts and creative experiences for and by children and young people. Numerous initiatives target specific types of arts and/or regional development and promote innovative practice
- **Grants for the arts:** Our popular and highly competitive open-application programme attracts and funds an extensive range of arts work, often benefiting children and young people

- **partnership working:** We work with Government departments and agencies on the shared agenda of supporting the creativity and enrichment of children and young people. Our regional offices, in partnership with local authorities and regional agencies, have an excellent understanding of the arts and cultural provision and strategic development in their areas. They continually work to strengthen and develop this provision as well as signposting opportunities for careers in the creative industries

‘Being part of the radio station has helped us in many ways, such as being able to communicate better with people and improving our presenting skills. If we want to go into a career that involves media this will help us, as we can show that we have had past experience in radio.’

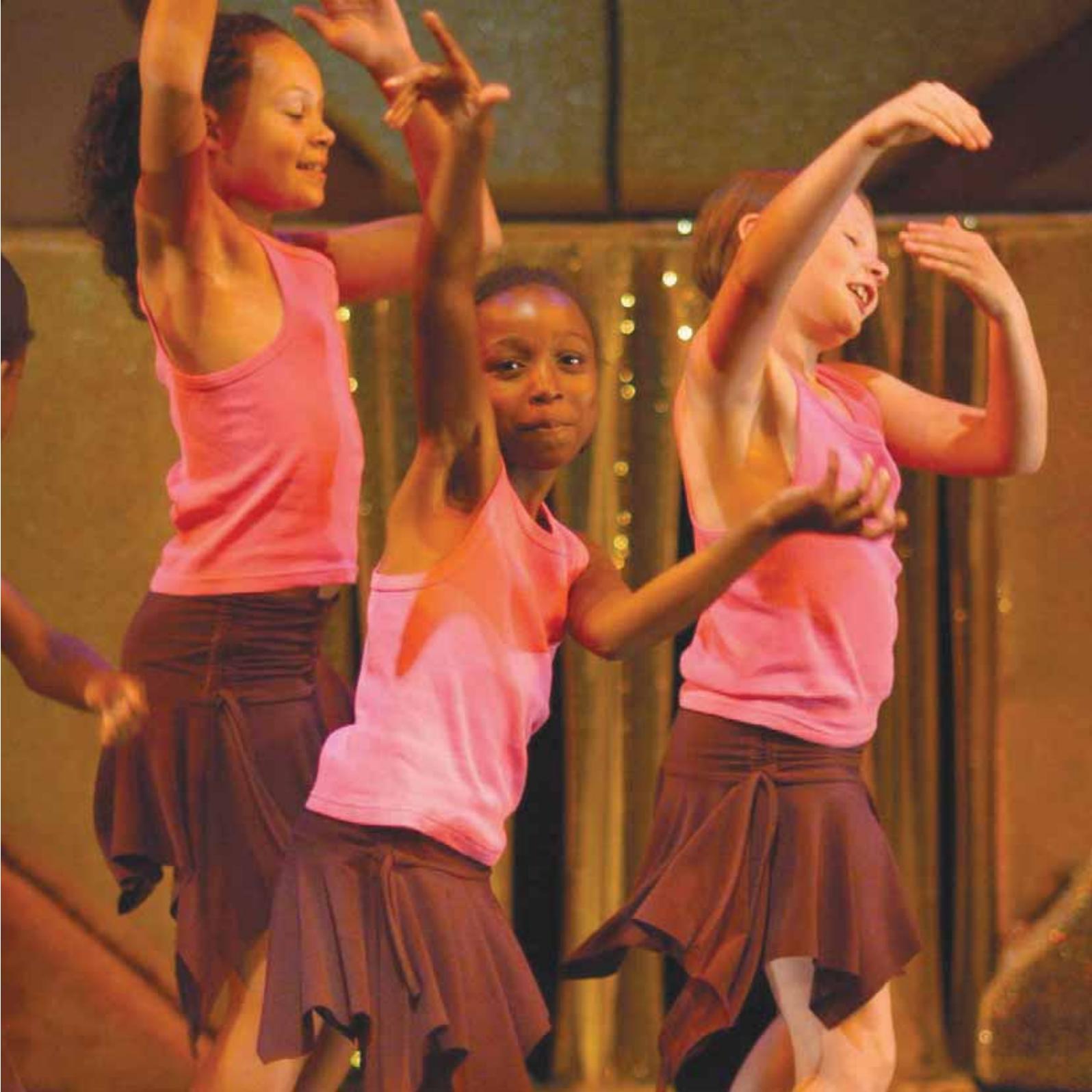
**Maria, Megan and Farah are 16-year-old students who participated in the Arts Award. They run the Beckfoot Radio at their school in Bradford.**

# Our aims for children and young people

Our aims in this area up to 2008 are:

- to foster a world-leading arts infrastructure alongside other cultural organisations that supports and values the cultural expression of children and young people and increases their opportunities to engage in activities relevant to their needs and interests
- to ensure the arts and creativity have a place within wider Government and other policy agendas that have an impact on children and young people
- to see wide social recognition of the value and transformational power of the arts and creativity, particularly in relation to children and young people

**Free Expression Dance UK (FED UK) provided a programme of participatory dance activities for culturally diverse young people in Manchester. In 2004, 36 young people participated in FED UK's second annual summer initiative, *Journey through the soul*. The project involved three weeks of creative dance, music and theatre sessions with professional artists, informed by the young people's cultural heritage, and culminated in a performance on the professional stage. FED UK was funded by Grants for the arts.**  
Photo: Brian Slater



# Taking our vision forward

We will achieve a high quality of creative arts and cultural engagement for all children and young people by:

- developing and implementing corporate approaches to ensure that we hear the views of children and young people, engage them in decisions that affect them and broaden the range and appeal of our 'offer' to ensure it is relevant
- maintaining an accurate picture of what is currently available for children and young people. This will enable us to identify areas of need and use our resources to best advantage
- developing the skills, capacity and knowledge of people in organisations engaged with children and young people in arts and cultural activity. It is particularly important to assist practitioners to identify, describe and assess the quality of arts and creative provision by, with and for children and young people. We must also help our sector to understand and link with Government and wider policy agendas

- using our strategic programmes and initiatives to continue to develop, share and advocate for innovative practice with, for and by young people and for all programmes to achieve a collective impact wider than any single programme or initiative
- working with our partner organisations – local authorities and agencies – to maximise the contribution of the arts to their existing and emerging strategies
- advocating effectively for the transformational power of arts and creativity by monitoring, evaluating and sharing high-quality work and using the lessons learned from our initiatives as evidence



'The arts are used to support children's learning in other areas of the curriculum and because the staff believe that there is an intrinsic value to the teaching of the arts. The arts are not seen as an 'extra' that can be fitted in after literacy and numeracy.'

**Sharrow Nursery and Infant School, Sheffield**

**Awarded Artsmark Gold in 2005**

Year One pupils from Grays School, Infant and Nursery, Newhaven, East Sussex watched chrysalises become butterflies and enjoyed seeing them fly away. Here, they are performing their music and movement to the 'Caterpillar Boogie' at the 2005 South East Artsmark awards celebration event at the Sevenoaks Playhouse.

Photo: David McHugh

# Further information

## **Artsmark**

Artsmark is a national award scheme that recognises and rewards schools that have a commitment to the full range of arts – visual art, dance, drama and music. Over 3,000 schools currently hold an award. All schools in England can apply annually.

[www.artsmark.org.uk](http://www.artsmark.org.uk)

## **Creative Partnerships**

Creative Partnerships is a programme managed by Arts Council England. It gives young people in 36 disadvantaged areas across England the opportunity to develop their creativity and their ambition by building partnerships between schools and creative organisations, businesses and individuals. Creative Partnerships aims to demonstrate the pivotal role that creativity and creative people can play in transforming education in every curriculum subject for children of all ages and abilities.

[www.creative-partnerships.com](http://www.creative-partnerships.com)

## **Arts Award**

The Arts Award is the first award scheme to recognise young people's development through the arts. Young people grow as artists and arts leaders by setting their own starting points and challenges. Young people can take part in the award through their schools, youth groups or local arts organisations. The award is accredited through Trinity College London.

[www.artsaward.org.uk](http://www.artsaward.org.uk)

### **Grants for the arts**

Grants for the arts are for individuals, arts organisations and other people who use the arts in their work. They are for arts-related activities that benefit people in England or that help artists and arts organisations in England to carry out their work.

[www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding)

### **Every Child Matters**

*Every Child Matters: Change for Children* (Department for Education and Skills, 2004) sets out the national framework for local change programmes to build services around the needs of children and young people so they maximise opportunity and minimise risk through measuring five outcomes: Be healthy; Stay safe; Enjoy and achieve; Make a positive contribution; Achieve economic well-being.

[www.everychildmatters.gov.uk](http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk)

### **Youth Matters**

The Government's Green Paper *Youth Matters* (HM Government, 2005) offers for consultation a new strategy for providing opportunities, challenges and support to young people. This consultation document builds on the ambition of *Every Child Matters* and aims to re-shape services for young people.

[www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/youth](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/youth)

### **Arts Council England in your region**

Contact details and information on each of our nine regional offices can be found at [www.artscouncil.org.uk/regions](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/regions)



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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.