Making Inroads
Kildare County Council

Youth Arts Strategy 2009-2011

Kildare County Council
Ag fónamh don phobal

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Key Aims

- Encourage organisations with responsibility for young people to engage in quality Youth Arts practice
- Explore innovative and sustainable models for Youth Arts programming
- Support Youth Arts training and professional development for youth leaders and young people
- Explore the potential of technologies in Youth Arts provision

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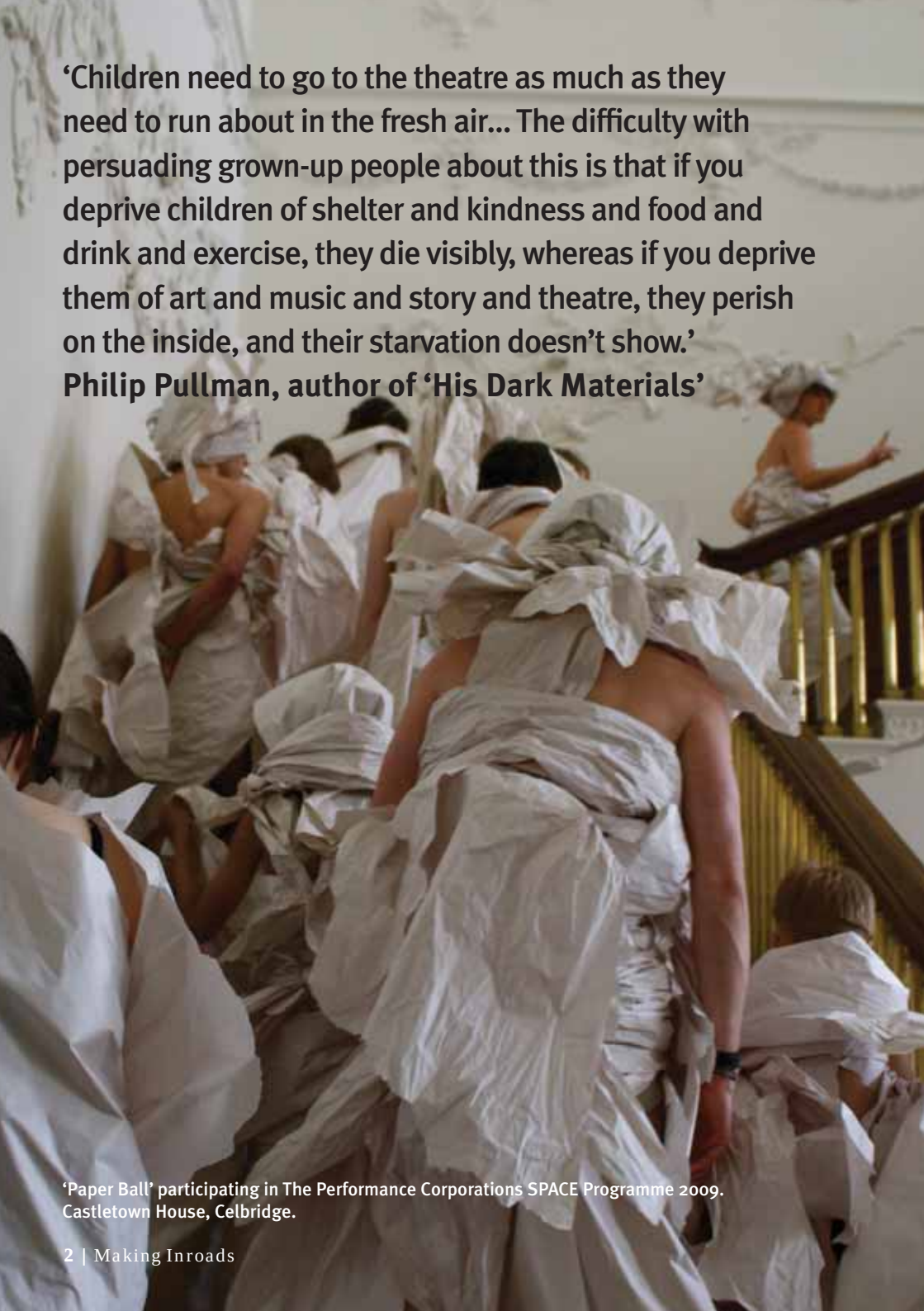
‘Children need to go to the theatre as much as they need to run about in the fresh air... The difficulty with persuading grown-up people about this is that if you deprive children of shelter and kindness and food and drink and exercise, they die visibly, whereas if you deprive them of art and music and story and theatre, they perish on the inside, and their starvation doesn’t show.’
Philip Pullman, author of ‘His Dark Materials’



‘Paper Ball’ participating in The Performance Corporations SPACE Programme 2009. Castletown House, Celbridge.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY YOUTH ARTS?

The terms Youth and Arts can have a different resonance for providers of both Youth and Arts programming. In order to advocate for, promote and provide Youth Arts programming it is important to clarify what Kildare County Council terms as 'Youth Arts'.

Definitions

Young Person

The United Nations **Convention on the Rights of the Child** which was ratified by Ireland in 1992 states that:

'A child means every human being under the age of 18.'[1]

Teenspace: the National Recreation Policy for Young People 2007 states that a young person is 'aged between 12 and 18.'[2]

Whereas the **Youth Work Act 2001** defines a young person as '...a person who has not yet attained the age of 25.'[3]

For the purpose of this strategy Kildare County Council will define young person as being aged between 12 and 25 years of age.

Kildare County Council Arts Service will continue to provide arts programming for younger children through the 'If I had an artist for a day...' arts in education scheme and the 'Arts in Libraries' programme.

Youth Arts

The Participation of Young People in the Arts in Ireland report commissioned by the Arts Council of Ireland in 2002 describes Youth Arts as:

'The practice of all art forms in which young people in the 12 – 25 year age range engage as active participants as consumers / audience members in their own free time.'[4]

Arts in Their Lives, A Policy on Young People and the Arts commissioned by the National Youth Council of Ireland confirms this, and expands upon it. 'Youth Arts can broadly be defined as young people taking part voluntarily in creative, cultural or expressive activity outside of the formal education process. It can encompass participation and appreciation, as well as engagement with arts work specifically created by, with or for young people.'[5]

Kildare County Council recognises Youth Arts as being something that encompasses the needs of the young person in tandem with the integrity of the art form, each having importance and value.

Aine Stapleton participating in The Performance Corporations SPACE Programme 2008 Castletown House, Celbridge.

Kildare Dance Summer School 2007

Kildare County Council recognises the need to support Youth Arts organisations whose artistic process and engagement with young people is still developing.

Young people generally engage with **Youth Arts** on a voluntary basis, in their own free time and outside of the formal school system. However, Kildare County Council recognises the importance of the formal education system in County Kildare as a means to access young people.

It is important to clarify that this strategy document is not an 'Arts in Education' strategy but will be complementary to formal Arts Education.

Kildare County Council understands that diversity of needs exist within the 12 – 25 yeas age group, and that the type of programmes and services required for this group may differ to that of other age groups.

Kildare County Council acknowledge the breadth of experience of young people within the 12 – 25 year age bracket which include:

- Second Level Students
- College Students
- Emerging Artists
- Young People generally

Due to the diverse range of agencies providing Youth Arts programming, Kildare County Council will define Youth Leader as: Teachers, Youth Workers, Youth Theatre/Dance Leaders, Music Practitioners, Individual Artists, etc...

NOTES

'The Man in 301' Tilted Pictures

SETTING THE CONTEXT

The Arts Act 2003 states that 'Arts means any creative or interpretative expression (whether traditional or contemporary) in whatever form, and includes, in particular, visual arts, theatre, literature, music, dance, opera, film, circus and architecture, and includes any medium when used for those purposes.'

It goes on to state that 'A local authority may provide such financial or other assistance as it considers appropriate to such persons or in respect of such activities, projects or undertakings, for the purpose of

(a) stimulate public interest in the arts

(b) promote knowledge, appreciation and practice of the arts

(c) improving standards in the arts, within its functional area.[6]

At a local level, official figures from the Central Statistics Office show that in the 2006 census, 21% (40,344) of the population of County Kildare was between 10 and 24 years of age.[7]

This legislative requirement, coupled with the high percentage of young people in County Kildare highlights the need for Youth Arts provision in the County.

While this strategy spans a 3 year period, a Youth Arts operational plan will be devised each year, outlining aims and objectives of Kildare County Council's Youth Arts provision and programme, including training initiatives, direct grant aid, engagement with key organisations / Youth Arts providers and Arts Service programmes for that year.

Responsibility

Responsibility for Youth Arts policy and programming lies with agencies, organisations and individuals with responsibility for young people working both voluntarily and professionally including:

Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism, the Arts Council, the National Youth Council of Ireland, National Association for Youth Drama, Local Authorities, Catholic Youth Care, Youth Services, V.E.C.'s, Arts Venues, Youth in Action Groups, Youthreach, Youth Theatres, Youth Dance Companies, Youth Workers, Individual Artists.

The Assistant County Arts Officer with responsibility for Youth Arts reports to the Arts Officer for Kildare County Council. The Arts Service is placed within the Library Service, under the Directorate of Housing, Community and Cultural Services.

NOTES

'Ham Sandwich' Guest performers at the launch of Platform 4 Recording Studio, Leixlip

YOUTH ARTS IN KILDARE

One of the key goals of **Kildare 2012; An Economic, Social and Cultural Strategy for Kildare** is to 'promote recreation, amenity and culture as integral parts of living' to ensure a better quality of life for the county's citizens. In **Making Inroads: Kildare County Council Arts Development Plan 2006-2011**, Kildare County Council Arts Service identified Youth Arts as a key area for development. The Plan's guiding policy for Youth Arts is as follows: 'Kildare County Council will work with key organisations and agencies to foster and promote best practice in Youth Arts'.

Key projects to date:

A Musician in Residence programme, **Platform1**, providing opportunities for emerging musicians to engage with Irelands leading singer-songwriters including Steve and Joe Wall, (Stunning, The Walls), Mundy, Declan O'Rourke, Ollie Cole, with Marilyn Bane, took place in Leixlip Library.

In 2007 the annual **Oxegen Battle of the Bands** competition was launched which provided opportunities to emerging musicians in Kildare to play on the New Band Stage at the Oxegen Music Festival. The competition also offered the winning bands mentoring and recording opportunities in **Leixlip Library Recording Studio**.The Music

Programme further developed with the opening of a purpose built Recording Studio, housed in Leixlip Library in 2008.

Since 1998 Kildare County Council has continued its support for **County Kildare Orchestra** which affords amateur / emerging musicians the opportunity to train and perform with professional musicians.

From 1998 – 2001 a **Dance Artist in Residence** programme with Cathy O'Kennedy, professional dancer and choreographer, took place, with initiatives in primary and secondary schools in the county.

The biennial Kildare **Dance Summer School,** established in 2005 in NUI Maynooth offers Youth dance modules for Youth Leaders, to develop their practice with young people.

In 2002 the County Arts Service adopted the co-ordination of the **Cecil Day Lewis Short Story and Poetry Competition**, with the primary and second level education categories. The awards are now being administered by Athy Heritage Centre, and funded by Kildare County Council Arts Service.

The County Arts Service is housed within the library service where many complimentary arts related projects have taken place. This includes writing workshops for children and young people, starting in 2000 with **Critique 2000**, a reading and writing workshop for young adults, funded by The National Reading Initiative. Further workshops held since that time include **Wicked**, a collection of ghost stories by young writers aged 13 to 16 and **Anything Goes**, a magazine created by the participants, aged 8 to 14.

The Library and Arts Service supported **Artastic Street Theatre Company**in its incubation period by the provision of dedicated workshop space. Artastic engages a large number of young people as puppeteers, costume designers and street performers.

In 2005 **Threading Tales**, a Library and Arts based reading development initiative with parents from the Curragh schools and textile artist, Kathleen Delaney was devised. Following its success, a further Threading Tales programme was set up, with the

Athy Travellers Group, including a large number of young mothers.

To mark its tenth anniversary in 2009, **Griese Youth Theatre** received direct grant aid for a production of 'Joan of Arc'. This project sees the Youth Theatre come full circle by updating and developing their first production in 1999, using current and past members.

Support for **Kildare Youth Theatre** has been ongoing. From 2000 – 2008 KYT and Crooked House Theatre Company had a residency in Kildare County Council's cultural campus **Riverbank**. In 2009, KYT received start up grant aid from Kildare County Council to enable the group to set up in its new premises in Newbridge.

In 2008, Kildare County Council established an annual funding arrangement with **The Performance Corporation**, a theatre company based in Castletown House in Kildare, for its **SPACE programme**. SPACE offers emerging artists from all disciplines a unique residency opportunity to collaborate, experiment and innovate in an inspiring environment.

Emerging visual artist **Colleen Lambe** undertook a residency programme in Rathangan Libary to create a woodland sculpture project supported by Coillte.

Emerging artists have consistently been funded through arts grants and bursary award schemes such as the **Film Bursary Award** and the **Drama League of Ireland** summer school bursary.

Alongside the work of Kildare County Council Arts Service, Youth Arts in Kildare has seen steady growth over the past number of years.

Kildare County Council recognises the commitment of Youth Arts Providers, such as, Youth Theatres, Youth Dance Companies and Kildare Youth Services to the development of Youth Arts in the County.

It is the intention of this strategy document to continue to support and develop Youth Arts in County Kildare with partner organisations, Youth Arts Providers and Individual Artists working in the field, in key areas identified for development.

‘Not all young people want to sit on a board or take responsibility for organising an event; they may just want to turn up on the day. Not all young crew want to participate, they may just want to watch. Adults generally have many different choices in relation to what level they engage in the arts, all of them valid. It’s important that the same variety of access points are offered and promoted to youth.’
Propel Youth Arts, Western Australia

‘Macbeth’, Kildare Youth Theatre

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Drawing on national and international experience and in accordance with models of best practice, the development of Kildare County Council's Youth Arts strategy will be guided by the following principles:

- Access and Participation
- A Partnership Approach
- Best Practice
- Training and Professional Development
- Documentation and Evaluation

Sound Engineering for transition year students 2009. Leixlip Library.

Access and Participation

Under the Arts Act 2003, local authorities must draw up plans for arts development. Furthermore in a 2007 NESF report **The Arts, Cultural Inclusion and Social Cohesion** 'in terms of legislation local authorities are the organisation given most responsibility for broadening participation in and access to the arts'.[8] Locally **Kildare Local Authorities Corporate Plan 2005-2009** outlines its intention to target library and arts service to promote social inclusion.

Participation of Young People

The level of involvement for young people in Youth Arts can be broadly defined as:

Passive – Developing critical skills as audience members and consumers.

Active – Participating and contributing to a Youth Arts programme, including programme development and the artistic process.

Creative – Young people taking the initiative and developing their own Youth Arts programmes.

A Partnership Approach

Making Inroads: Kildare County Council Arts Development Plan 2006-2011 is committed to a partnership approach to support enhance and extend arts opportunities.

Kildare County Council will work with its partners, to offer advice, provision of direct grant aid, assistance to apply for grant aid, collaborative projects, sharing resources, provision of training programmes and influencing of arts programme content.

Kildare County Council recognises key partners for the continued development of Youth Arts in County Kildare as:

- The Arts Council.
- The National Youth Council of Ireland.
- The National Association for Youth Drama.
- All departments within Kildare County Council.
- Kildare Youth Services.
- Comhairle na nÓg.

Youth Arts Advisory Panel

In accordance with this commitment to a partnership approach Kildare County Council will set up a Youth Arts Advisory Panel which will include members from key youth organisations including Kildare Youth Services, Community and Enterprise department in Kildare County Council and the Irish Wheelchair Association. The panel will also consist of Youth Theatre/Dance leaders, Individual Artists working in the field and young people.

The purpose of the panel is to guide Youth Arts practice for Kildare County Council.

Why have a Youth Arts Advisory Panel?

1. The people on the panel are dealing with the young people of Kildare on a daily basis and are attuned to their particular needs.
2. Their combined knowledge of Youth Arts will be beneficial to developing Youth Arts in Kildare.
3. To promote an inclusive partnership approach, which supports sustainability.
4. Other stakeholders can help to inform the Youth Arts operational plan of Kildare County Council.

5. It will help to develop a relationship with stakeholders that will encourage engagement and investment in the strategy.

Best Practice

Best practice in Youth Arts can broadly be described as engagement with young people through an artform that respects the young person as both maker and participant; their views and opinions and also tries to bring about maximum outcomes of the artistic engagement.

Kildare County Council advocates the adoption of models of best practice in areas such as project planning, delivery, documentation and evaluation. The Arts Service will continue to support and develop quality artistic practice in Youth Arts through:

- Promotion of a code of best practice which considers the integrity of the artistic process and presentation.
- Promotion of a code of best practice which considers the importance of the involvement of young people in all areas of Youth Arts programming including the design, delivery and evaluation of the programme.
- Provision of advice and information about the engagement of professional artists for Youth Arts providers.
- Implementation of Kildare County Council's Guidelines for the Protection of Children.

Training and Professional Development

'A small pool of adults sustains a wide spectrum of Youth Arts provision...The sustained development of Youth Arts practice in Ireland rests on a commitment to invest in such people.... There is a palpable sense that a small number of exceptionally committed individuals carry an ever increasing load'[10] – The participation of young people in the Arts in Ireland, The Arts Council 2002.

Oxegen Battle of the Bands 2009.

'When well taught, the arts provide young people with authentic learning experiences that engage their minds, hearts, and bodies. The learning experiences are real and meaningful for them.' [9]

Excerpt from the United States, Champions of Change report

As outlined in **Making Inroads** a key objective for Kildare County Council's Youth Arts programme is the support of training opportunities for artists, key workers and service users. Therefore over the course of this strategy, Kildare County Council will, in partnership with relevant stakeholders, continue to scope a range of potential initiatives which address:

- Training and support for artists as an integral part of Youth Arts projects.
- Training programmes for Youth Leaders to develop, support or facilitate arts programmes.
- Training for service users across art forms, including accreditation, where possible.

Documentation and Evaluation

Kildare County Council Arts Service advocates the documentation and evaluation of work as an essential part of best practice. It is a crucial element of project development and promotion. Consistent evaluation will develop an evidence base that helps demonstrate and promote the benefits of Youth Arts.

Documentation and evaluation can be neglected in a Youth Arts programme as there are often other elements that require more immediate attention. As one of the key aims of this strategy, Kildare County Council will develop a resource pack for Youth Leaders on documentation and evaluation.

Why Document?

Documentation of a project is important on a number of levels including:

Funding – Documentation can help applications for future funding. In most instances it is easier to show the work you do rather than speak about it.

For the next time – Being able to look back on past projects can help to improve the work next time around.

To get others involved – When recruiting for a future project, good documentation will act as great tool to get new people on board.

To Celebrate – It is important to celebrate successful projects, in order to exemplify what can be achieved.

Why Evaluate?

'Evaluating is about taking the time to assess your activities and encouraging others to assess your activities. Evaluation can involve the participants, staff, volunteers and anyone playing a part in the project. It is not only about getting feedback but, determining what this feedback means' – **Propel Youth Arts, Western Australia**.

Evaluating Youth Arts projects is an important and necessary part of any Youth Arts programme. It provides everyone involved the chance to express how they feel the project went. Whether it was successful, what worked, what didn't work and also how to improve the work for next time. Therefore Kildare County Council advocates the implementation of evaluation methodologies which:

- Reflect the evaluative purpose.
- Are flexible and can be adapted to changes and developments in the project.
- Consider the use of formative as well as summative evaluation.
- Evaluate not only the impact on participants but also determine the lessons learnt from the project.
- Pay attention to the artistic outcomes detailing the impact on the artist and their artistic practice.

Storyboards from ‘Sleight of Hand’

Storyboards from ‘Sleight of Hand’

KILDARE COUNTY COUNCIL YOUTH ARTS STRATEGY

'Understanding Marcus' Griese Youth Theatre, Ballitore

KEY AIMS

1. Encourage organisations with responsibility for young people to engage in quality Youth Arts practice.
2. Explore innovative and sustainable models for Youth Arts programming.
3. Support Youth Arts training and professional development for youth leaders and young people.
4. Explore the potential of technologies in Youth Arts provision.

'Inside/Outside' by emerging visual artist Colleen Lambe, 2002.

1. Encourage organisations with responsibility for young people to engage in quality Youth Arts practice

Exploring and broadening definitions of the arts

- Develop arts programmes which promote unexplored and little recognised art forms e.g. mobile phone videos, graffiti art, that appeal to young people.

Redefining ways of working

- With youth organisations, explore ways of incorporating artistic elements into existing programmes for young people.
- Identify key personnel in youth organisations to act as conduits for arts programming.
- Within services for young people with disabilities, identify key personnel to act as conduit for arts programming.
- Identify Transition Year Co-ordinators in secondary schools to devise arts based programmes in schools, in film and music.
- Continue to support and develop arts based interventions in the Comhairle na nÓg programme.

'Taking Breath' Griese Youth Theatre, Balitore

Documenting the arts

- Create an archive of Youth Arts projects funded by Kildare County Council.
- Create an archive of Youth Arts projects of significance in the County.
- Encourage grant recipients to include programme documentation as a condition of funding.

Promoting best practice

- Host an annual Kildare based Youth Arts seminar for youth organisations which focuses on best practice, innovation and peer support.

Commissioning new work

- Extend the Per Cent for Art scheme to include commissions of theme based work which will be of interest to young people.

Capacity building in the arts

- Encourage youth organisations to avail of local, national and international funding opportunities, including the Arts Act grant scheme.
- Establish a Youth Arts Bursary as part of the annual arts grant schemes.

Development of arts infrastructure

- Establish and lead a County Youth Arts advisory panel.

2. Explore innovative and sustainable models for Youth Arts programming

Exploring and broadening definitions of the arts

- Establish a Youth Film Festival, with films of relevance to young people.
- Establish an annual Visual Arts exhibition of specific interest to Leaving Certificate Art History students, using Kildare County Council's Municipal Collection.
- Respond to the findings of 'Not Only Adults Drink Tea: An exploration of how young people in Kildare engage with Kildare County Council Library and Arts Services' [11]
- Develop resource material for Leaving Certificate Art History relating to the Municipal Collection.
- With Riverbank Arts Centre, examine models to best support Music, Drama and Dance programmes for young people.
- Continue to support the development of the County Kildare Orchestra.

Graffiti Art Project 2009. Maynooth Library.

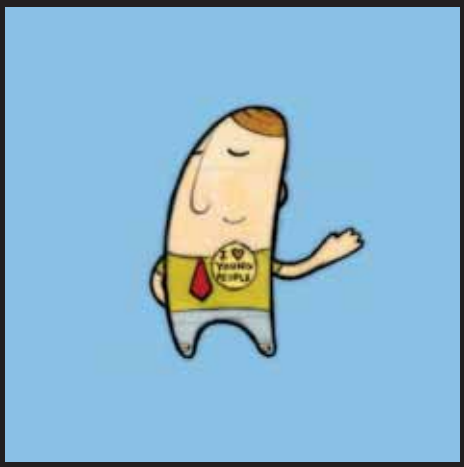
Documenting the arts

- Document and promote examples of good practice of Youth Arts in Co Kildare.
- Embed recording, documentation and evaluation as part of any Youth Arts process.

Promoting best practice

- Ensure all partnership Youth Arts programmes promote best practice having set out and agreed a set of principles.
- Establish a mentoring service for Transition Year Co-ordinators regarding arts programming options.

Illustrations from 'Not only Adults Drink Tea'



Commissioning new work

- Use the Youth Film Festival to showcase and promote films by young people in Kildare.
- Use the Platform 4 Recording project to record rap and R+B music with emerging musicians from multi cultural backgrounds.

Capacity building in the arts

- Create an on-line resource relating to: Local and National funding opportunities. Youth Arts training programmes. Developments in best practice.
- Create an on-line network of all Youth Arts providers in County Kildare.
- Act as an information point, liaison and advice service, relating to the arts for local and national training bodies.
- Continue to provide advice to youth organisations seeking funding.

Development of arts infrastructure

- Examine opportunities within Kildare County Council departments to support Youth Arts development.
- With Riverbank Arts Centre, and other venues examine opportunities to showcase Youth Arts practice across art forms.
- Liaise with local community transport companies to provide transportation for young people to key arts events.
- Explore the possibilities of Youth Arts programming and training for leaders in Youth Cafes throughout County Kildare.

Illustrations from 'Not only Adults Drink Tea'

Oxegen Battle of the Bands 2007.

3. Support Youth Arts training and professional development for youth leaders and young people

Exploring and broadening definitions of the arts

- With the assistance of the Youth Arts Advisory Panel, identify training and development needs for youth leaders.

Documenting the arts

- Develop a resource pack for youth leaders on documentation and evaluation.

Promoting best practice

- Advise youth organisations of upcoming training and professional development opportunities locally and nationally, e.g. Certificate in Youth Arts (NYCI).
- Create on-line resources, including template and sample documents, relating to Garda Vetting, Child Protection, Guidelines for artists, Health and Safety.
- Encourage arts facilitators to avail of current Child Protection training e.g. HSE 'Keeping Safe'.
- Explore opportunities to showcase Youth Dance in Kildare including the bi-annual Kildare Dance Summer School.

Capacity building in the arts

- With the Performance Corporation, make provision for emerging artists from Co. Kildare on the annual SPACE mentoring programme.
- Continue to provide mentoring to emerging musicians in the Platform Recording Project, Leixlip.
- Continue to develop the annual OXEGEN Battle of the Bands competition for emerging musicians from or living in Co Kildare.
- Continue to provide supports for the selected emerging musicians in advance of their performance at OXEGEN.
- Continue to provide annual bursary awards to attend the Drama League of Ireland Summer School.

4. Explore the potential of technologies in Youth Arts provision

Documenting the arts

- Use the GIS system to map Youth Arts Services and programmes in the County.
- Develop a Myspace site for musician's recordings in the Platform Recording project.

Redefining ways of working

- Fully explore the potential of e-Books to encourage engagement by young people with the Library Service.
- Uploading: Publish and promote Kildare based recordings (including music) via the Digital Zone within the County Library service website.
- Downloading: Providing library stock in formats such as MP3 and e-Book which would have broader appeal for young people.
- Continue to work with focus groups of students and teachers, e.g. Teen Forum, Maynooth, to advise on purchase of curriculum support material and stock for libraries, which promotes reading as a positive leisure time activity.
- Continue to procure library stock that is of interest and relevance to young people such as Console games, Music and fashion magazines, and preloaded MP3 players with popular fiction authors.

Commissioning new work

- Explore possibilities of documenting Youth Arts practice in County Kildare with Youth Arts providers, through film commissions and bursary awards.

Capacity building in the arts

- Use the 2009 pilot Sound Engineering project in the Platform 4 Recording project, Leixlip to devise an annual Transition Year Recording project for young musicians.
- Explore the possibilities of web based arts programming.

Development of arts infrastructure

- With the House Engineer in the Platform 4 Recording Studio, devise an annual radio based broadcast programme for Transition Year students.

NOTES

'The Importance of Being Ernest', Kildare Youth Theatre

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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