

# Guidelines for using Arts Award in therapeutic practice settings

## What is Arts Award?

Arts Award is a range of unique qualifications that support anyone up to 25 to grow as artists and arts leaders, inspiring them to connect with and take part in the wider arts world through taking challenges in an art form – from fashion to film making, pottery to poetry.

Through Arts Award, young people gain a nationally recognised qualification enabling them to progress into further education and employment. Arts Award has five levels, four of which (Explore, Bronze, Silver and Gold) are accredited qualifications on the **Qualifications and Credit Framework** (QCF). Arts Award Discover is an introductory level.

Arts Award is open to anybody in the UK. In England, Arts Award is managed by Trinity College London in association with Arts Council England working with 10 regional Bridge organisations.

From absolute beginners to more experienced creative young people there is a level and personalised starting point for their Arts Award journey and many different ways of evidencing achievement,



making it an accessible option for children and young people who use non-verbal or non-written communication methods.

Discover, Explore and Bronze Arts Award are achievable in a short space of time, so can be embedded within short term interventions, projects or programmes. Silver and Gold Arts Award will take longer to complete, maybe three to six months or longer depending on how much time young people have available.

In order to support young people through Arts Award, staff from your organisation

or freelance professionals attend a half-day or full-day training course to become an Arts Award adviser. Arts Award advisers facilitate arts experiences, support progress and assess young people's arts logs and portfolios.

*'Arts Award provides a new element to a young person's identity – as an artist and with a qualification'*

**Art therapist**

*'The Arts Award process felt like it consolidated the therapeutic alliance between young person and therapist'*

**Art therapist**

# The Arts Award Journey

## Gold Award

(Accreditation no. 500/9666/7)

Level 3 Certificate

35 UCAS points

QCF\* credit value: 15

90 guided learning hours (+60 ILH\*\*)

- develop arts practice and create new art work
- research the wider arts sector
- undertake placement and/or volunteering
- debate an arts issue
- plan, deliver and review an arts project

## Bronze Award

(Accreditation no. 501/0081/6)

Level 1 Award

QCF\* credit value: 6

40 guided learning hours (+20 ILH\*\*)

- take part in the arts
- review an arts event
- research an artist or craftsperson
- pass on your arts skills to others

## Arts Award Discover

20 hours (recommended)

- take part in the arts
- experience artists' work
- share your discovery

## Silver Award

(Accreditation no. 500/9914/0)

Level 2 Award

QCF\* credit value: 10

60 guided learning hours (+35 ILH\*\*)

- complete an arts challenge
- review arts events
- research arts careers
- plan, deliver and review a leadership project

## Arts Award Explore

(Accreditation no. 600/3984/9)

Entry Level 3 Award

QCF\* credit value: 4

25 guided learning hours (+10 ILH\*\*)

- take part in the arts
- explore the work of artists and arts organisations
- create an art work
- present your exploration

Find out more about training  
as an Arts Award adviser at  
[artsaward.org.uk/training](https://artsaward.org.uk/training)

## Using Arts Award in therapeutic practice



These guidelines have been prepared by Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust Arts Therapy Service and Sussex-based Arts Award training provider Culture Shift following a short pilot as part of the Arts Award Reaching Out programme. Reaching Out supported the development of Arts Award with a range of partners working with vulnerable children and young people including residential children's homes, fostering services, housing support, hospital schools, and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services.

The aim of the Sussex based pilot was to explore the use of Arts Award within therapeutic practice with young people. Ten art therapists were trained as Bronze/Silver Arts Award advisers. Each took at least one young person through Bronze Arts Award and contributed to developing these guidelines.

## Why use Arts Award in therapeutic practice?

*'Arts Award can be useful in answering the question "how will art therapy help me?" It can be used as a framework.'*

**Art therapist**

Arts Award is being successfully delivered in hospital settings and by professionals working with children and young people with mental health issues. Positive outcomes for young people include 'not being defined by their medical condition', increased communication and leadership skills as well as achieving a nationally recognised qualification. The partners and arts

therapists involved in the pilot project wanted to explore how far Arts Award can be embedded within professional art therapy practice.

*'This young person had never been to a gallery before, now she is very good at formulating her own opinions. That's a good therapeutic outcome.'*

**Art therapist**

The project partners found that Arts Award is highly accessible and achievable and can be a valuable tool for enhancing therapeutic goals, bridging this with young people's lives and interests outside of therapy and providing tangible outcomes to be proud of.

*'Seeing the young person I work with smile and actually be proud of what they have achieved is priceless!'*

**Art therapist**

- Arts Award offers an accredited outcome for young people experiencing health difficulties, and external validation of work produced within therapeutic or rehabilitative contexts
- The content and outcomes of Arts Award offer a flexible framework with no time restrictions which can enhance wellbeing and help achieve therapeutic goals
- Young people value Arts Award as it provides visible results and a tangible outcome. It is motivational
- Young people can use any art form and evidence their work in any format. It does not rely on written work
- Practitioners trained as Arts Award advisers gain professional development, adding new strategies to their toolbox and refreshing their practice

*'It has enabled the young person I work with to transfer some of the therapeutic benefits of the work, outside of the art therapy sessions, in developing the ability to work at home'*

**Art therapist**



These guidelines describe the key areas of learning of the art therapists involved in this pilot. They are designed to support further use of Arts Award within therapeutic practice and may be valuable to those working within the broader arts therapies. The guidelines are based on delivering Bronze Arts Award.

#### Bronze Arts Award encourages young people to:

- ▶ develop their own arts practice in any art form
- ▶ review arts experiences and share their thoughts and skills with others
- ▶ find out more about artists and the art world
- ▶ pass on arts skills to others

#### Bronze level provides opportunities for:

- ▶ inspiration
- ▶ new skills
- ▶ opinion forming
- ▶ decision making
- ▶ self expression
- ▶ self confidence
- ▶ recognising competence
- ▶ working with others

## 1 Who might benefit from Arts Award?

- ▶ Any young person going through therapy who has an interest in the arts may find the structure of Arts Award and its tangible outcome of value
- ▶ For young people that are missing school, the award provides an accredited qualification which can increase their self-esteem, pride and competence
- ▶ Arts Award can be undertaken by children and young people aged up to 25 years, so colleagues working with young adults may also be interested
- ▶ The benefits for therapists include developing their own learning and having another creative option in the toolbox

## 2 When is it best to introduce Arts Award?

- ▶ Consider Arts Award in pre-existing groups where a supportive atmosphere is growing
- ▶ Introduce Arts Award in the assessment or beginning phase of individual therapy as an option that can be returned to when the young person is ready
- ▶ Utilise Arts Award part way through, particularly if difficulties with achievement at school become apparent
- ▶ Bring it in towards the end of therapy to mark the progress made and support the closure of the relationship

Using professional judgment is key to determining how and when to introduce Arts Award as an option.



### 3 Getting started

- ▶ If you are not already a trained Arts Award adviser you will need to attend a **training session** which will provide you with resources and detailed information covering what young people can do, the different ways they can evidence their work, and how you will carry out assessment
  - ▶ Once you have your adviser status you can start supporting young people on a one-to-one or group basis
  - ▶ Be ready to explain the content (requirements and flexibility) and value of Arts Award in its own right and as a tool to support therapeutic goals. Explain the supportive role of therapist/adviser, and how others in the young person's network can help
  - ▶ It may be helpful to share an information sheet for young people and parents/carers so everyone knows what's involved and can support the young person outside of their therapy sessions. There are plenty of Arts Award resources that can help with this - from printed booklets and guides to short films and visuals on the **Arts Award** and **Arts Award Voice** websites
  - ▶ Acknowledge that Arts Award can take in all kinds of arts activities, experiences within and outside the therapy session. Arts Award isn't limited to visual arts/the practice of the therapist
  - ▶ Think about how you introduce Arts Award to the young people you work with. It may be useful for some young people to understand the evidence requirements and assessment criteria from the outset, for others this level of detail may be daunting. Some may respond well to structured sessions with a clear Arts Award outcome in mind, others may prefer to begin with informal activities that support Arts Award to gain a sense of progress, and move towards more formal activities as they build their portfolio of work
- Again professional judgment is important in considering what will empower the young person and what may overwhelm them.

### 4 Negotiating boundaries

- ▶ Consider the stage at which Arts Award is introduced and articulate how Arts Award differs from standalone therapy. Explain and negotiate the therapist-adviser role, issues of confidentiality and how decision making will take place
- ▶ Whilst pressure of deadlines might feel alien to a therapy situation, once a young person is engaged, a more directive stance may be useful. You should be prepared, where appropriate, to actively encourage young people and negotiate deadlines
- ▶ Sharing work made in therapy with an external audience might feel in tension with arts therapy protocols. Make sure you have appropriate consent in place to share young people's work with an external moderator and involve young people in selecting all work that is to be shared through Arts Award
- ▶ Photographs of young people participating in art making can help provide useful evidence however make sure you gain consent before taking any photographs or media recordings
- ▶ Check your local guidelines before you download any pictures or films of young people onto your computer

Think about consent forms and strategies for 'switching' roles during a session eg 'putting the adviser hat on'.

## 5 Keeping up the momentum



- ▶ Try to ensure regular contact to maintain focus and motivation
- ▶ Recognise what is possible within the confines of the sessions and either arrange extended sessions or employ the wider network to support activities in between therapy eg visits to arts events / experiences.  
**Note:** *although exploring the arts by being an audience member is actively encouraged for Arts Award this does not have to be an external / outside visit. Advisers can arrange arts experiences to take place in a familiar or secure venue as well as accessing online podcasts, galleries and events*
- ▶ Maintain a balance between achieving Arts Award and respecting the ups/downs of a young person's life. Arts Award may need to be put on hold for a while and can be picked up again later. Arts Award sets no time limit for completion – advisers book moderation when they are ready

Be clear about what flexibility you can offer.

## 6 Resourcing Arts Award

- ▶ Make sure you have worked out how you will fund the cost\* of Arts Award before you start working with a young person
- ▶ Be prepared to support young people's developing interests, without feeling you need to become an 'expert'
- ▶ Young people might struggle to think of a person for the 'Arts Inspiration' part of Bronze. You may want to have some visual prompts or ideas for internet research eg artists that have suffered from poor mental health. Access to the internet can transform the experience!
- ▶ Don't assume young people know where or how to access information about arts and culture. Be ready to help them find local or national information. Your knowledge is an important resource
- ▶ Remember you can apply to the **Arts Award Access fund**, which offers grants of up to £1500 for Arts Award centres working with disadvantaged young people. There may be other local budgets or sources of funding you can access

\* There is a cost per young person for moderation, and initial one-off cost for adviser training. Full details at [artsaward.org.uk/costs](https://artsaward.org.uk/costs)

## 7 Managing Arts Award

- ▶ The 'Skill Share' element of Bronze Arts Award can be daunting for a young person who lacks confidence so you need to find an appropriate challenge. This might be teaching a simple arts technique or activity to a trusted keyworker, friend or family member, or developing a filmed or written step-by-step guide or instructions to share with a third party
- ▶ Evidence can be presented in any way the young person is comfortable with - whether paper based or online/digital. Images, photographs, social media and recordings are all welcome as well as writing and the use of symbols and assistive technology. There's also Artsbox, a digital space and app for children and young people who are working towards their Arts Award or simply want to safely record their arts experiences in one place and share them with others

[www.artsbox.co.uk](http://www.artsbox.co.uk)

- ▶ At Bronze level young people will need support and direction from start to finish. You may find that the baton of leadership moves as the process evolves with young people taking increasing responsibility
- ▶ Do ask young people, teachers, family, keyworkers etc for feedback about Arts Award, its benefits and challenges

Evidence gathering can be a shared responsibility. Record everything and weave it into the whole process!

## 8 Managing anxieties

- ▶ Young people with mental health problems can feel very frightened of failure and feel worried about their work being looked at during moderation. It is important to reassure young people that by the time of moderation it is your assessment of their work being checked - not their work
- ▶ For groups larger than five, Arts Award asks to meet some of the participating young people at the moderation.  
**Note:** *you can apply for a special dispensation if young people are anxious about this*
- ▶ Support participants to think about who they might want to show their portfolios to once they are finished. It's important they feel as confident and proud of their work as possible. Work carefully with the young person especially about whether to include sensitive material made in art therapy in their portfolio.  
**Note:** *there is no requirement from Arts Award for anyone other than the moderator to see portfolios*
- ▶ There is plenty of support available to advisers including help for preparing for a first moderation. As well as referring to the specific requirements of Arts Award in the toolkit given to you at training, you can contact the Arts Award support team on 020 7820 6178. There are also [support surgeries and visits](#) available and a wide range of resources available to support planning and delivery from [www.artsaward.org.uk/adviserhub](http://www.artsaward.org.uk/adviserhub)
- ▶ Using Arts Award in arts therapy is a new area of practice. Try to join with other therapist-advisers for support and help solving problems. Once you have trained as an adviser you will have access to various forums, bulletins, and regional Arts Award events

Be collaborative in your approach with young people, work as a team and problem solve together.

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## More information

Art therapy: HCPC are the professional registration body for the arts therapies. For further information on art therapy see [www.hpc-uk.org](http://www.hpc-uk.org) or the British Association of Art Therapists [baat.org](http://baat.org)

Arts Award: For more advice, case studies, information and training dates in your area check [www.artsaward.org.uk](http://www.artsaward.org.uk) or contact the team at [artsawardenquiries@trinitycollege.co.uk](mailto:artsawardenquiries@trinitycollege.co.uk)

These guidelines were produced by Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, Culture Shift and Arts Award