

Delivering Arts Award to young people with challenging behaviour in community settings

Introduction

Dance United Yorkshire is a Community Interest Company that works with young people who are marginalised in society and whose potential is often unrecognised or unfulfilled. Contemporary dance training and performance of the highest quality have the power to unlock this potential. Dance United Yorkshire delivers work that is tough, tightly-focused and highly disciplined. No hiding places, no shortcuts, no excuses. The hallmark of our work is the bringing together of some of the top 10% from the professional contemporary dance world to work with the most disadvantaged 10% of society around the themes of equal access to artistic excellence and to life opportunities.



Photo © Brian Slater

Raising standards in challenging circumstances - barriers to learning

For many of the young people with whom Dance United Yorkshire work, education has been a negative experience. Illiteracy, language barriers, undiagnosed dyslexia - the majority of our young people have been struggling in mainstream education and feel uninspired by the curriculum.

For over eight years we have recognised that Arts Award can be used as a tool to re-engage young people with education, through an exciting and innovative arts curriculum.

Whilst using a range of creative evidencing, we believe that using written work as the core of a young person's portfolio is crucial to the success of our delivery. Although our projects are extremely physical (teaching six hours of contemporary dance a day, five days a week) the cohort must be pushed to develop their literacy.

Top tip

Even if it's a struggle, don't shy away from written work. Use your strong position of delivering an art form that a young person is engaging with (be it graffiti, photography, drama, dance, music) to your advantage. You are not demanding essays from the young people so the odd worksheet should be welcomed!

We have worked with 15 year olds that aren't able to write their name, but the fact they are co-operating with us and are willing to put in the work means we have the responsibility to go the extra mile and help them academically. We recognise that literacy is fundamental to a young person's progression into education and employment.

We encourage young people to use a pen and paper... writing's not dead yet!

Bronze Arts Award Journey

All young people on our projects work towards a Bronze Arts Award. We embed the qualification into the curriculum being delivered. Although the final goal is a 20 minute performance of contemporary dance on a professional stage, Arts Award work leading up to that point complements the techniques being taught and helps to deepen an understanding of the themes/narrative of the dance.

Part A: explore the arts as a participant

Portfolio work: This work maps a young person's journey on the project. They write about their experience when they first come to Dance United Yorkshire, they track their own progress and evaluate the final show. Alongside this we introduce worksheets that include topics such as 'What is a contemporary class?', 'Focus and Stillness' and 'Why do we need to rehearse?'

Additional evidence: We also include the programme for the final performance, photos of mind maps and group discussions that have taken place and a collection of feedback from audience members at the theatre. The moderator will also see a film of the performance.

Top tip

All work should link implicitly to their journey on the project and to a young person's engagement with the arts. Do not add work as a 'bolt-on' purely to tick a box for Arts Award. Everything should be relevant.

Part B: explore the arts as an audience member

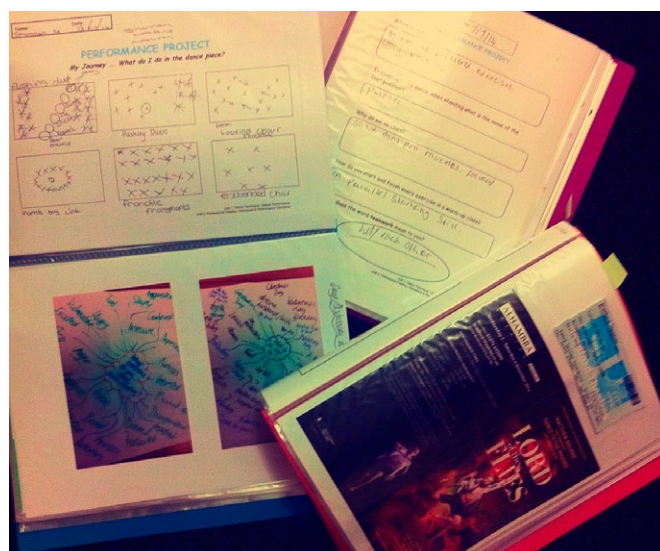
Dance United Yorkshire work with vulnerable young people who live in deprived areas and are culturally disengaged. The overwhelming majority of young people on our projects have never been to a theatre. We are fortunate to have the funds to take all young people to theatres to watch professional dance companies such as Matthew Bourne, New Adventures or Phoenix Dance Theatre.

Due to the nature of the groups with whom we work, we place a particular emphasis on teaching etiquette in theatres.

Additional evidence: The young people evaluate their experience as an audience member at the theatre. We also include the programme and ticket from the event.

Top tip

We deliver a theatre quiz which includes discussions on what it takes to be a good performer and how to be a good audience member. The quiz also includes questions about theatre safety and technical elements - again specifically linked to their experience of performing.



Top tip

If taking young people to be an audience member in a theatre (particularly if they are a disruptive group), remind them it is different to a cinema and therefore eating of crisps, sweets, chocolate or anything that comes in a noisy packet should be strictly forbidden.

