

CREATIVE PARTNERSHIPS

Creative Partnerships is a government-funded project that aims to give schoolchildren in deprived areas throughout England the opportunity to develop creativity in learning, and participate in cultural activities.

Its vision is based on developing long-term partnerships between schools and cultural organisations and creative practitioners. These include museums and galleries - as well as architects, theatre companies, historic buildings, dance studios, orchestras, website designers and many others.

Some museums and galleries are already involved in Creative Partnerships. This briefing aims to help many more take advantage of the opportunities that the scheme offers.

Background

Creative Partnerships was designed and funded as a pilot programme to run from 1 April 2002 to 31 March 2004. The pilot has a budget of £40m and covers schools in 16 areas. These areas were selected by ministers from a list of the most economically and socially challenged neighbourhoods in England.

Following the most recent comprehensive spending round, the government has committed more money to enable Creative Partnerships to at least double in size. All existing Creative Partnerships areas will continue to receive funding until at least 2006. Creative Partnerships will roll out to more areas in this next phase, all of them Neighbourhood Renewal Units. The new areas will be announced in summer 2003.

Schools can choose to work with cultural and creative organisations outside their immediate area – so if your museum is not in a Creative Partnerships area, it does not mean that you can not get involved.

How it works

Each of the 16 initial Creative Partnerships areas has a creative director, based locally. The creative directors are supported by an advisory group and they work with a programme co-ordinator and an administrator. The programme co-ordinator is responsible for liaising with the Creative Partnerships schools and the participating cultural and creative organisations. The scheme is overseen by the national director, Peter Jenkinson, formerly director of The New Art Gallery Walsall.

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First phase Creative Partnerships areas:

- Barnsley, Doncaster and Rotherham ■ Birmingham ■ Bristol
- Cornwall ■ Durham / Sunderland ■ Inner London East
- Inner London South ■ Kent ■ Kingston-upon-Hull
- Manchester / Salford ■ Merseyside ■ Norfolk ■ Nottingham
- Slough ■ Tees Valley ■ The Black Country

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Slough Museum

The Slough Creative Partnership is placing a strong emphasis on developing the cultural and creative infrastructure in its local area. So while schools will be working with museums from outside Slough – provisionally including the Museum of Reading and the Science Museum – a key partnership is with Slough Museum.

Slough Museum approached the creative director with a proposal for an oral history project. The project is being developed jointly with the Black and Asian Studies Association, which had also approached Creative Partnerships with a similar scheme. It involves pupils from the participating schools interviewing groups of older people in their communities. The oral histories will then be used as the starting point for other creative projects, including drama workshops. They will be added to the museum's collections and will also be used in an exhibition and possibly a publication.

Clare Bromley, community heritage officer at Slough Museum, is running the project. She had already been planning an oral history programme, but Creative Partnerships offered the opportunity to get schools involved. 'One of the most valuable aspects of the scheme for us has been the fact that it has provided an alternative way - apart from our education service - to develop relationships with local schools. Moreover, the schools will have a very different experience to that of a traditional school-based museum activity.'

Patty Cohen, creative director for Slough, agrees that the chance to work with schools in a new way is one of the key benefits that Creative Partnerships can offer organisations such as museums. 'Advocacy to schools is a huge part of our role. Creative Partnerships helps schools to recognise what cultural and creative organisations have to offer.'

In each area, a number of schools have been selected to take part. There are currently 377 - two thirds primary and one third secondary.

In some areas the regional agencies for museums, libraries and archives are represented on the advisory group. In the north east, the North East Museums, Libraries & Archives Council, Creative Partnerships and the Heritage Lottery Fund are jointly funding two officers who will work with participating schools to encourage them to develop projects with museums and other heritage organisations.

What is happening now?

The creative directors are currently planning programmes for this school year and next. These are outlined in a delivery plan for each area.

The first Creative Partnerships projects are running in 2002-3, and these include work with museums and galleries (see boxes). Each creative director is responsible for a budget of

£750,000 in the current financial year. Some of this goes to the schools and some to the partner organisations. A substantial number of projects are already underway.

Creative Partnerships represents a new and innovative way of working for schools and cultural and creative organisations. Because of this, the plans are being kept deliberately flexible. There is a strong commitment to evaluation – with programmes being refined on the basis of experience, as the scheme progresses.

Creative Partnerships recognises that it is important to respond to local needs. This means that the way the partnership is set up and administered varies considerably from region to region. Individual Creative Partnerships areas also place emphasis on different aspects of the basic idea – for example, some are keen to encourage links between different schools. But the core principles are common to all areas:

■ Creative Partnerships has a strong emphasis on sustainable relationships – it is not about one-off projects

■ Creative Partnerships gives schools and cultural and

creative organisations the chance to work closely together to develop programmes that really fit the schools' needs

■ Creative Partnerships aims to develop creativity in all areas of learning. It is not just about arts-based projects. Science, geography and history projects are all within its scope.

What are the benefits for museums and galleries?

■ The chance to build significant and lasting relationships with local schools. Museums often find that teachers lack the time and resources to use museum visits in a meaningful way. Schools participating in Creative Partnerships are already signed up to the idea of working with cultural and creative organisations and are open to new kinds of learning

■ Increased visits from schoolchildren and teachers

Ikon Gallery, Birmingham

The schools participating in the Birmingham Creative Partnership are divided in one or two cultural or creative organisations as a long-term partner. The Ikon Gallery works with schools in north Birmingham, including four secondary schools and one special school.

Andrew Tims is co-ordinating the partnership for the Ikon Gallery. He says that one of the benefits involved with Creative Partnerships was that it offered the chance to work with schools in a relatively short space of time. 'The high level of commitment to the scheme by the participating schools has formed strong working relationships with teachers in a relatively short space of time. This means that we can work together in much more challenging ways than on a traditional basis.'

The Ikon Gallery is working with schools on a number of projects over the next year, including a sex and health education project, with Brook Advisory Centres and the

Its first Creative Partnerships project, Down on Paper, grew from work that was done in 2001. It was worked with two artists who had designed a sample book of wallpapers with a grid of lines or dots to join. The designs were printed through in-kind sponsorship by Ikon. The wallpapers have been installed in the schools and artists, funded by Creative Partnerships, have used the material in a variety of ways. The special school has used the wallpaper in a creative way.

All the projects are tied to the gallery's main exhibition programme. The artist, Sarah Kent, in April and May 2003. Much of her work uses organic materials to explore ideas about nature. In her exhibition, she will be working with one of the schools to develop a garden in the school grounds. In Creative Partnerships, the garden will be used as the starting point for a range of projects that will provide a long-term legacy for the school.

■ Funding for some of the costs associated with working with the participating schools

■ The chance to develop and enhance existing programmes and projects, and bring them to new audiences

■ The opportunity to build links with other participating cultural organisations and creative practitioners.

Getting involved

All Creative Partnerships areas are keen for more museums and galleries to get involved. If you want to participate you should contact your Creative Partnerships area office to register your interest and discuss possible programmes.

Contact details for the regional offices are listed here.

You can also contact the central team via the website, www.creative-partnerships.com

to five clusters, each of which has one primary school. The primary school is a long-term partner for a cluster of schools.

It is one of the attractions of getting involved with schools with no tradition of visiting the gallery. This has meant that we have been able to build relationships. And we're building trust, which is essential for a traditional school visit.'

Over the next two years, including teachers' courses at the University of Birmingham as partners.

Work is already underway. The gallery is developing an interactive element, such as grids of patterns from a wallpaper manufacturer. The Creative Partnerships are helping them work with local artists to use maths lessons to help pupils think about patterns.

Any Gallaccio is showing at the gallery in London about transience and decay. During her visit to the school. Funded by Creative Partnerships about gardening and food. It will also



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