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*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
Promoting Improvement*



Providing Inspection Services for
**Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure**



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Education and Training Inspectorate

**An Evaluation of the
Creative Learning Centres
funded through the
Children and Young People Package**

February 2008

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1. CONTEXT

1.1 In March 2006, the Children and Young People (C&YP) funding package¹ for Northern Ireland was launched by the then Secretary of State. The overall objective of the package was to “reduce underachievement and improve the life chances of children and young people by enhancing their educational development and fostering their health, well-being and social inclusion through the integrated delivery of the support and services necessary to ensure every child has the best start in life.” The allocation of resources was targeted at dealing with the barriers to learning that many young people face.

1.2 The C&YP funding package allocated £1,240,000 over the 2006-08 period through Northern Ireland Screen’s agreed delivery plan with the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL), to the three Creative Learning Centres (CLCs) – the Nerve Centre in Londonderry, the Armagh Multi-Media Access (AmmA) Centre and Studio-ON on the outskirts of Belfast - “to provide training in e-learning and digital media”. The funding was to deliver training to adults, young people and organisations and was to include:

- 420 teachers, for introductory courses relating to the use of digital media to support and enhance teaching and learning, including 120 teachers who have not been previously involved in Moving Image Arts;
- 60 new schools;
- 48 youth leaders, to attend an introductory course in the use of digital media to enhance education for personal and social development and citizenship;
- 60 youth groups; and
- 30 ‘hard to reach’ groups.

During the nine months preceding the inspection, a number of these targets had already been met.

	2 Year Target	Total Dec 2007
Teachers	420	1,370
Schools	60	346
Youth Leaders	48	140
Youth Groups	60	64
‘Hard to Reach’ Groups	30	34

¹ Children and Young People Funding Package: Northern Ireland Priorities and Budget 2006-08

1.3 This evaluation also aims to provide information about the progress being made with regard to the six high-level outcomes in the Government's pledge² that, by 2016, "we will know that we have achieved our shared vision for our children and young people if, after ten years, we can report progress and evidence exists, which indicates that our children and young people are healthy; enjoying, learning and achieving; living in safety and with stability; experiencing economic and environmental well-being; contributing positively to community and society; and living in a society which respects their rights."

2. METHOD OF INSPECTION

2.1 During February 2008, the Education and Training Inspectorate carried out an evaluation of the provision by the CLCs supported by the C&YP funding package across Northern Ireland. A team of three inspectors and one professional associate visited a range of sessions agreed with the centres. The team also scrutinised documentation provided by the CLCs, including self-evaluation reports, and held discussions with the participants, facilitators and managers.

Case Study 1

In a primary school setting the children were involved in an engaging environmental project, working in groups to record digital images and sounds relating to the life of the local river from its source to the sea. There was evidence of good planning between the school and the CLC with clearly focused outcomes. The project included a behind-the-scenes film of the process the children had undertaken. Following the experience, the children talked confidently about the environmental issues in their area and demonstrated their skills and understanding of digital media. As a result of their increased confidence, the teachers have continued to make use of the digital technology in other aspects of school life to support and enhance the children's learning.

3. SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

3.1 The strengths of the provision supported by the C&YP funding package include:

- the high levels of engagement, motivation and enjoyment displayed by the majority of the participants, as a result of the very good working relationships observed in most of the sessions;
- the development of the personal and social skills of the participants, including their ability to work independently with a range of digital equipment and to make creative choices about their use of digital media;
- the increased opportunities for participants to gain an accredited qualification;

² Our Children and Young People – Our Pledge: A Ten Year Strategy for Children and Young People in Northern Ireland 2006 - 2016

- the development of the confidence, knowledge, skills and understanding of the participants in the use of a range of information and communication technology/digital media which promotes effective connections across the curriculum and which supports learning and teaching;
- the effective planning, for the majority of the programmes, between the CLC and the receiving organisation, which identifies clear goals to be achieved by the participants including increased technical skills, enhanced learning in specific curriculum areas and the development of personal skills and capabilities;
- the quality of the majority of the training which was consistently good or better, with a significant minority being excellent, as evidenced in the effective use of questioning to promote a creative response and the good opportunities for the practical application of skills, discussion and the development of specific specialist language;
- the good support provided for the participants, particularly those with special educational needs;
- the assessment of the achievements at the end of the programmes related to the identified outcomes for the group;
- the focus on capacity building through the ongoing support for, and progression of, skills development;
- the effective use of self-evaluation by the CLCs to evaluate and adjust, where necessary, the programmes;
- the joint planning and sharing of good practice between the three CLCs and the opportunities provided by the CLCs to share good practice between the participating organisations; and
- the very good progress made over the first nine months of the project to address the quantitative targets set by DCAL.

Case Study 2

Through a programme for year 8 pupils in the use of digital software, the school developed an effective collaborative project between the English, history and music departments. The teachers and the pupils created a rich resource in an electronic folder on the 'Black Death' containing maps, visuals, documentaries and documents, both contemporary and secondary, for the pupils to access when working at the CLC. The pupils developed good multi-media skills through careful scripting, inserting appropriate visual imagery, creating their own voice-overs and combining music to create presentations of a powerful nature. Throughout the programme there were good opportunities for pupils to assess each other's work in order to promote improvement; the final session allowed the pupils to celebrate their achievements.

The professional working partnership between the school and the CLC, based on a clearly laid out service level agreement, resulted in a very good educational experience for the pupils. This was an effective example of the use of digital technology to enhance the delivery of the curriculum in English, history and music to a high level.

3.2 The areas for improvement include the need:

- to ensure that all planning identifies clearly the learning intentions, and that they are shared and agreed with the participants to enable the facilitators and the learners to reflect on and to evaluate the quality of their work and their progress;
- to develop further the processes used to monitor and evaluate the development of skills and the outcomes of the professional development for teachers and youth leaders in order to promote sustainability; and
- to examine further how the planning can reflect the overarching aims of the C&YP funding package.

Case Study 3

The planning for the animation project with a special school was thorough, involving the senior management of the school, the class teacher, the children and the artist. The children decided on the theme of 'Healthy Hearts'. Learning outcomes, such as working as a team and developing communications skills, were identified clearly. The effective organisation allowed the children to become involved in all the activities; the majority were engaged totally in the story-boarding, model-making and photography. They displayed very good concentration and participation and there was evidence of progression in their communication skills, self-esteem and self-confidence. The teachers provided the children with good opportunities to use fine motor skills, to make decisions and to give directions to others. The project offered good opportunities for teachers and classroom assistants to develop and practise their newly-acquired technical skills. The well-planned second phase of the project aims to support further the development of the teachers' skills and to promote the dissemination of information and skills to other staff.

4. CONCLUSION

4.1 There is clear evidence that the work of the CLCs funded through the C&YP funding package has led to the enhanced provision of training in e-learning and digital media.

4.2 Within the three organisations inspected, this work has important strengths in most of its educational provision. The inspection has identified minor areas for improvement in the provision which the organisations have the capacity to address.

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