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**myplace**  
support team

Visual Arts

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# Introduction

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Getting involved with the visual arts can provide young people with an exciting way of exploring their world, how they see themselves and their place within it. This briefing provides advice on running arts projects from your **myplace** centre, and where you can get further information and help from.

## How to use the visual arts

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The visual arts can include painting, drawing, cartooning, mixed media, photography, graffiti, film, animation and more. There's no strict definition of what is and isn't included and much crossover between the different areas. Creating a stop frame animation probably requires some modeling and drawing too, and if you're making a movie you should also be taking a series of still photographs to use in the design of posters to promote your finished film.

What the visual arts have in common with other youth arts is that getting involved doesn't mean young people need to start with a particular artistic talent or skill – that's not what it's about. Although some young people may find that they do, of course, and want to go on and develop that area of their lives. It's much more to do with taking part, having a go and having some fun. The journey is more important than the result.

Doing something different, expressing themselves and being valued for their contribution can make them feel good about themselves and bolster their self confidence. But they will also gain a wide variety of skills from involvement with youth arts, and not just around the particular art form they get involved in. Through getting involved with youth arts, they will experience working as a member of a team, problem solving and develop their ability to communicate effectively, all of which are key life skills. Youth arts can offer the opportunity to make a positive difference in their lives and in their future.

Making a short film is probably the most common of the visual arts. This provides a huge range of opportunities for young people to work on a high quality project that explores their talents, tests their creativity and builds their confidence. Encourage young people to think about the many ways they can be involved in a project like this. Films aren't just about actors. More important is the initial idea – what is their film about, why do they want to say it and what do they want to say? Is it a documentary-style report on a local youth issue to raise awareness and lead to a change, or is it a hard-hitting drama on drugs, teenage pregnancy or other youth issues?

Only when they have settled on their idea can the project move forward, developing a script and storyboard, so they know how the story develops and concludes. There's the casting to consider, and the shooting schedule to arrange. Who will direct the film? What equipment is required? A digital camcorder of course and a computer with appropriate editing software is a must, but there's lots more too. Do they know what and does your centre have it or will you need to buy or hire it? Have they considered lighting and sound, make up, costume and props? What about a soundtrack? Can you encourage them to use original music created by young people at the **myplace** centre? Otherwise, you will need to get permission. Lots to think about, even before you organise and hold your premiere in the **myplace** centre!

With film it probably helps to work with industry professionals to help guide the project. There are lots of youth arts organisations out there who can help and advise.

The visual arts is more than just film though. The popularity and success of street artist Banksy has helped take graffiti from the fringes of vandalism to an art form in its own right, closely associated with youth culture and popular with young people. An outside wall of your **myplace** centre could be designated the graffiti wall and turned into a gallery to showcase the young people's talents and creativity. There are any number of organisations and individual artists around the country who can run projects with young people to help them design how spaces are used and develop proper skills and techniques, and a quick web search will throw up contacts in your area.

Or, if the young people's taste is more for animation, there are a variety of ways they can get involved, from simple flick books to short films. Skills include script writing, directing, lighting and model making. It's a great way to build teamwork, and to encourage young people to express themselves freely with the anonymity an animation can provide. Again, you will probably want to work with a professional who can pass on the relevant skills and knowledge and will be able to advise on the appropriate level of equipment required. Choose one too who has experience of working with young people.

“I discovered I could write poetry  
and I learnt to use a camera.”

## Action planning

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### Young People

It's vital that young people retain a sense of ownership over projects and that the technical nature of some of the activity doesn't exclude them. Make sure that it's their ideas that get developed; and that their thoughts are not dismissed as others come on board.

### Making a Difference

Creating a film or an artwork that highlights an issue of relevance to the young people can lead to a higher profile in the community. It is a powerful way of helping to change something they want to campaign about.

### Vision and Values

Hold some taster sessions at your centre to see which visual arts activities appeal to young people and which they'd like to do more of. Together research which individuals and organisations there are in the area who you could partner with. Encourage young people to think about ideas that they would be interested in exploring and how these fit with your wider vision for **myplace**.

### Practicality

Keep projects deliverable and not overly ambitious in terms of the young people's time commitment and levels of skills. Not every film can be (or should be) a blockbuster. Far more important is that it stays true to the young people's initial concept and they have fun delivering it.

### Tools, ideas, exercises:

Work with a group of young people to design an A4 poster to promote forthcoming events and activities at your **myplace** centre. Make sure you include information about the time, date and location of any event, if there's any cost involved and where people can get further information.

Think about the sort of person you want to come to the event and design something that will appeal to them. If you wanted to target a different group think how you would change the poster.

If you have a varied and wide-ranging arts programme at your centre you could do this for real, to promote a week-long arts festival celebrating young people's talents and including exhibitions, workshops and screenings.

## Links and Further Guidance

See **Arts at the heart of myplace** a guide for **myplace** centres produced by the Arts Council.

The Arts Council is the national development agency for the arts, supporting a range of artistic activities from theatre to music, literature to dance, photography to digital art, carnival to crafts. See [www.artscouncil.org.uk](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk) for a full list of Arts Council England publications.

Using Film In Schools – A Practical Guide, which is available as a free download from the First Light website, is an excellent resource, full of practical help and hints and easily transferable from a school to a **myplace** setting. First Light funds and inspires young people throughout the UK to make films reflecting the diversity of their lives. Find out more at [www.firstlightonline.co.uk](http://www.firstlightonline.co.uk)

Hub 4 is a national partnership project between Artsworld, The Prince's Trust and BBC Blast, and is funded by the Big Lottery. The project is running in four areas of the UK: Manchester, Newcastle, Norwich and Southampton, working with 16 to 25-year-olds who are not in employment, education or training. Hub 4 offers young people the chance to develop their own creative skills and learn how to set up and run their own youth arts project, through training, meeting professional artists, and practical hands on project management. For more information contact [hub4@artsworld.org.uk](mailto:hub4@artsworld.org.uk).

Get an accredited qualification for your arts work through the Arts Award for young people. Similar to the Duke of Edinburgh you can take the Arts Award at Bronze, Silver or Gold levels. More details at [www.artsaward.org.uk](http://www.artsaward.org.uk)

The English National Youth Arts Network (ENYAN) is a membership body designed to create connections throughout the diverse youth arts sector at national, regional and grassroots levels. ENYAN aims to raise the profile and support for youth arts within England, and by doing so create more opportunities for the creative and personal development of young people, especially young people at risk. See [www.enyan.co.uk](http://www.enyan.co.uk)

ArtSmart – A Toolkit for accrediting an Arts Based approach through the Youth Achievement Awards by Caroline Ash and published by UK Youth is full of practical ideas, session plans and recording sheets to help you get started in the arts. It covers the key arts themes of craft, creative writing, dance, drama, fashion, film, journalism, music, photography, poetry and visual art. The resource is designed to act as a self standing resource for youth workers as well as highlighting how to accredit the arts activities through the Youth Challenges and Youth Achievement Awards programme.

Order a CD Rom version by email to [yaamaterials@ukyouth.org](mailto:yaamaterials@ukyouth.org)

Intute:Visual arts provides free access to high quality resources on the internet. Each resource has been evaluated and categorised by subject specialists based at UK universities. Aimed at students but offering a wealth of suggestions. Find out more at [www.intute.ac.uk/visual/](http://www.intute.ac.uk/visual/)

The Arts and Young People Team at Birmingham City Council runs activities which deliver A Creative Future, Birmingham's strategy for children, young people and the arts. This strategy seeks to provide opportunities for 0 to 19-year-olds in the city to develop as creators, participants, audiences and leaders in the arts. Among other work the team has developed a toolkit designed to support arts organisations in hosting effective work experience placements for young people. See [www.birmingham.gov.uk/cs/Satellite/artsandyoungpeople?packedargs=website%3D4&rendermode=live](http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/cs/Satellite/artsandyoungpeople?packedargs=website%3D4&rendermode=live)

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