

Summer at ARC

Developing exciting and relevant activity for young people.



**“I loved just making stuff”
Art Room participant**

Report prepared by Rachael Ankers and Katherine Anderson

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Introduction

In 2014 ARC invested in developing and delivering a summer programme for young people aged 7 – 16 which was exciting, unique and could further develop the existing youth offer at ARC.

The programme aimed to:

- Further ARC's understanding of what both parents and young people need and want from summer activity

- Understand how we need to price activity to ensure accessibility, value and a reach of audiences

- Develop the existing young people's creative offer at ARC

- Ensure young people feel connected to ARC and see it is a place to socialise and have fun

- Increase the number of young people attending ARC compared with previous summers

- Increase the number of 'key' relationships ARC hold with young people

What we did

In March 2014 the Creative Programmes Manager and Marketing Manager at ARC visited Roundhouse in London, renowned for its work with young people. The visit supported our thinking and knowledge of how to engage young people and further enhanced our awareness of popular and unique creative activities for young people.

Having worked with young people over the last two years through consultation we already had an established idea of what our summer programme needed to look like and what activities we would need to feature. Bringing this knowledge and our learning from the Roundhouse together enabled us to develop a robust programme of summer activity that was new to ARC.

With a mock programme in place we worked with a group of young people to further shape the design and detail of the activity which included shifting the price and age ranges, timing of activity, content of sessions and even the title of the activity.

At this stage we explored how best to cost the programme, promote the activity and potential practitioners – once all departments were in agreement about how they could see the programme working and how they could support it the programme was given the green light.

Subsequent activity included working with a designer to create Summer at ARC print which was also approved by two groups of young people spanning the ages 7 – 16 and also contracting the right practitioners for the job!

The Programme

"I'm going to the dance class on Friday too" Art Room Participant

The programme was varied and robust and aimed at ages 7 – 16. There were a variety of weeklong activities, afternoon sessions, one day workshops and consecutive morning programmes to ensure we gained knowledge on what works and what doesn't when planning future activity.



We devised a programme which catered for different art disciplines covering dance / music / drama & performance / art as below.

MUSIC

Brit Fest

Singer songwriter

Music production

Open Mic

Summer Sing

DANCE

Dance Adventures

StreetDance!

DRAMA & PERFORMANCE

Stage It!

Technical Theatre

Pop Poetry Workshop

ART & VISUALS

The Art Room

Vlogging



Successes

“Only £2?! That’s cheap for 2 hours”

Dance Adventures parent

73 young people attended the summer programme at ARC in 2014, of whom 32 were coming to ARC to take part in activity for the first time.

Having attended one session, 12 young people then rebooked for other activity within the summer programme and 27 have continued to take part in ARC activities in the autumn.

Across the whole programme, average take-up was up 10% to 40%. In particular two activities, The Art Room & Dance Adventures were hugely successful and we have been able to continue both activities post summer. They were at times oversubscribed and maintained over the summer the same participants and numbers.

At the end of the programme, 100% of the people who responded to the questionnaire said that ARC was a great place to hang out.

“I really like the ARC, the staff are always really friendly!”

Summer programme participant



A big success was also the development of new relationships with young people, particularly through Open Mic Sessions and Technical Theatre, where we saw young people look to shadow activity with ARC post-summer and request more information on how they can be involved with ARC.

“The tutors were both great. They answered all the questions I had, and treated me like an adult”
Technical Theatre participant

What we learnt

Through the delivery of the programme we learnt two vital differences across the age ranges:

7-11 year olds are still looking to participate in practical creative activities throughout the summer, regardless of the time of day/length of workshop

All the 7-11 year old programmes sold well with some programmes selling out; this applied to all activity whether this was for a 2 hour evening workshop, a weeklong activity, a daylong workshop or a series of morning workshops. The bookers were predominantly the parents and regardless of price we saw parents preferred to book the tickets in advance with only a few paying on arrival despite some classes being just £2.

“My child thoroughly enjoyed the classes and I felt happy leaving her knowing she was in a safe environment.”
The Art Room parent

12+, young people are looking for opportunities that enable them to perform, master a skill or improve their employability.

Whilst we did offer activity for 12+ what we saw was a much younger audience base with some of these sessions being attended by 10 and 11 year olds. Repeatedly we

were being asked whether or not we could accept younger children into the activity. Overall we worked with fewer older teenagers in these participatory sessions with far more being at the younger end. Number-wise we also saw far less uptake in these sessions that we did in the younger activities.

What we did identify is that young people aged 12+ do want to be a part of activity at ARC but not necessarily participatory activity – there is a clear preference to be involved with activity that allows them to gain experience as an artist. For example we worked with one young person who shadowed participatory activity for a full week and we worked with a group of young people who supported marketing and promotion of the summer programme and ran an event for other young people and families. We also welcomed lots of new young people to ARC through the Open Mic sessions and Technical Theatre masterclass. These were all young people who wanted to gain hands-on experience in an arts venue either as a practitioner, as a technician, as a producer, performer or administrator.

**“You won’t remember me, I’m brand new to ARC”
Brit Fest participant**

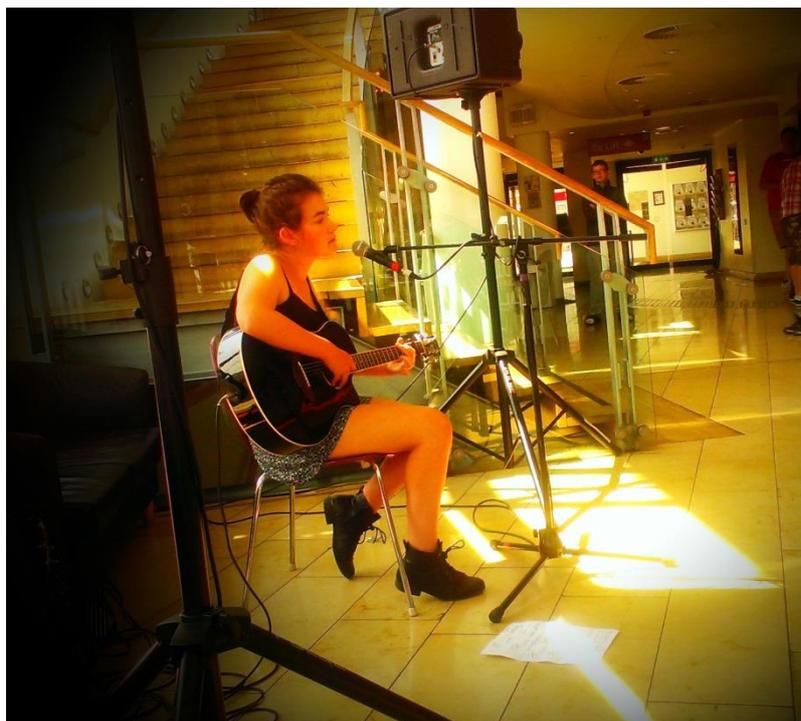
Next Steps

Following the summer we were already able to expand the young people’s programme with the following activity:

Dance Adventures, ages 6-11, Saturday mornings

Open Mic sessions, ages 13+, Last Saturday of every month

The Art Room, ages 7-11, one-off events during school holidays



We need to continue looking at what we have learnt to inform the future youth programmes both throughout the year and for holiday occasions. However we can already propose that next summer whilst we focus on providing participatory activity for 7-11 year olds the offer for 12+ needs to consider providing opportunities for shadowing experience, masterclasses, volunteering, working alongside ARC and performing.

“The girls are so excited!”

Summer Sing parent