

FULL ON FUTURES 2012

An Evaluation for

ARC, Stockton Arts Centre



Prepared by Colin Mitchell, Transforming Cultures
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INTRODUCTION

ARC, Stockton Arts Centre, contracted Colin Mitchell from Transforming Culture Ltd to undertake an evaluation of Full on Futures 2012. Unfortunately, due to unforeseen circumstances, the contract was not awarded until less than one week before the event. Preparation was short and not from the start of the project but this evaluation aims to capture the process and outcomes of the event.

The evaluation remit asked whether the project objectives are being achieved and to make recommendations for the future following feedback on the project and observation of the event.

METHODOLOGY

Various methodologies were used to evaluate the project:

Observation of Workshops

Each workshop was observed for 10 – 15 minutes.

Interviews with Project Manager, Funders and Facilitator

Short face-to-face interviews were held with the three supporting organisers individually.

Workshop Comments Sheets

A comments sheet was left with each workshop delivery partner to capture comments by children or teachers.

Teacher and pupil questionnaires

Each school group was given one short evaluation form for the teacher and two forms for pupils to complete at the end of the day.

Questionnaire prepared by the organisers

The young people organising the event also prepared a short questionnaire for the participants



CONTENT AND PROCESS

Full on Futures is a non-traditional science, technology, arts and innovation careers event run by young people for young people. The event was created by Creative Partnerships Tees Valley and is an annual event which has been running in various forms since 2005. The original purpose of the project was to fire young people's thinking about their futures in creativity and enterprise and this is still at its heart. Over the years the programme has developed but is still run by young people for young people with the support of adults experienced in creative facilitation and events.

The Full on Futures funding was provided by Creative Partnerships, Stockton Borough Council and the European Regional Development Fund. Partners on the project included University of Durham through Embedding the Benefits of Innovation project.

Full on Futures 2012 worked with 15-20 young people Not in Education, Training or Employment (NEET) on researching, devising and running the event held at ARC on Mon 28 May 2012. This was the first time a group of NEET young people had been engaged to deliver the event. ARC employed a professional practitioner, Mike McGrother, to work alongside the group.

Initially it was a struggle to get the group of NEET young people signed up to arrange the event, despite Stockton Borough Council providing an incentive pot to pay a small amount for their attendance. This was due to the tight programme period allowed to develop the event. Planning meetings for Full on Futures 2012 were held on Mondays starting in April and due to Bank Holidays, two of these were cancelled.

The professional practitioner sought to develop the following skills in the young people:

Knowledge and understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • developing understanding about how to run an event • deepening understanding of career opportunities in this area
Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • event and budget management • Problem solving • Communication with peers and range of 'experts' from different disciplines • team work
Attitudes and values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • positive attitudes towards personal abilities • increased motivation and self confidence • positive attitudes towards future opportunities in the NE



Enjoyment, inspiration and creativity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • developing new ideas and values • being inspired
Activity, behaviour, progression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • positive attitudes towards future opportunities in the NE (educational/working) • possible changes in attitude towards different careers

The young people were supported through a series of sessions based on the following:

- Team-building
- Understanding of event brief
- Creative thinking and ideas generation
- Roles and responsibilities
- Design
- Identifying partnerships and practitioners
- Selection of partners
- Planning in conjunction with partners
- Marketing and publicity
- Event co-ordination

For the first time, Full on Futures 2012 invited participants from Years 5 and 6 instead of Years 9 and 10 to attend the day. As such some of the workshop deliverers were attending for the first time and others adjusted their delivery for the younger age group.

EVENT: PLANNING AND DELIVERY

Seven schools were invited to attend Full on Futures 2012 and divided into 16 groups of 15 pupils. The young people selected and implemented 16 workshops, though on the day of the event one workshop leader cancelled their attendance. This led to some modest doubling up of school groups at workshops. The day was planned so that schools would get to see five workshops each, spread over the five levels at ARC. The workshops held for the 240 pupils were:

Science Busker – A one man demonstration of fun science tricks including illusions and balloon rockets

Think Forensics – An introduction to forensic science

Planetarium – Participants experience and learn about the night sky

Chef – A cookery demonstration which explored the science of food, taste and digestion



Animal Handling – A workshop that provides hands on learning about exotic animals
Dental Technology – A chance to make denture moulds and learn about teeth
Sport Science – A practical workshop covering how the body works when exercising
Slime Zone – A session on mixing chemicals to create play gels
Pro Energy Art/ Smart Art – A workshop exploring innovative art materials
Northern Architecture – Learning about architecture and building spaces from paper
Cancer Research – Extracting DNA from strawberries and learning about cancer research
Classroom Medics – First Aid, the human body and digestion
Colonise the Moon – Imagining a world in space and creating it in collage
Clown Doctors – A performing duo of clown doctors
A Way Out Alcohol Awareness – Practical exploration of alcohol and the effects
A roving Magician entertained the school groups during breaks.

Workshops lasted for 45 minutes then the organisers notified participants of the end of the session and the pupils were given 5 minutes to get to the next location.

KEY EVALUATION OUTCOMES

The day was well organised and was overwhelmingly well received.

Student Returns

From nine student returns what they enjoyed most was that they found the whole experience fun and exciting. Two of the participants stated that they enjoyed the cooking the most because they got to try the food as well! The Planetarium was also mentioned by some of the respondents.

When asked if any parts of the day could be improved all respondents stated “no” but two did think that more activities could be added to the event.

Teacher Returns

Five teachers made returns - three rated the day excellent and two good. The elements specifically mentioned were that it was all “great fun”, “interesting” and that there was a wide range of subjects. One teacher stated that all the “staff were enthusiastic”.

Although three of the teachers thought there was nothing to be improved, two of the respondents were double booked in the forensic and animal man activities which caused an enlarged group for each of the activities. This was an issue for them both. Other comments included that there should have been more emphasis on qualifications needed



in order to follow the career paths demonstrated and another queried "where clown doctors fitted into science".

Following the Full on Futures 2012 event, four schools subsequently emailed ARC to record their appreciation of the day. Some of the comments included:

"The children had a wonderful day and came back buzzing with ideas and aspirations!"

"I have never seen her so full of enthusiasm... she seemed a different girl."

"The children came back buzzing yesterday – and great reports from staff too."

"The staff and children reported it was one of the best days they'd been on. Staff were very impressed with the delivery, which held the children's attention all day"

"Even better if... some information on what jobs children could do if they wanted to use the skills seen today, or what courses etc. would qualify them for those jobs."

Activity Feedback

These are some selected comments from the response sheets – which were nearly all again very positive.

Slime Zone

- It was alright, the crazy soap was the best bit
- I have learnt more here than at school today
- It was the best activity
- I like making the tower with bubbles
- I like the slime zone best because it was EPIC!

Dental Tech

- Loved it...it was awesome
- I never knew, it made me want to do it

Sport Science

- Well organised and interesting
- Very engaging
- I loved learning about it

Northern Architecture

- I loved this activity because we could be creative and make up our own ideas
- I really liked it because I wished I was one

Think Forensics

- If you wanted to be a scientist you've started already



- I want to be in CSI!
- Learnt new things through exciting activities

Colonise the Moon

- Very exciting and creative
- "A massive headed robot might not be practical" – girl participant
- "What about the gravity?" – boy participant
- "I want to go into space and be a scientist" – boy participant

Planetarium

- My favourite one yet!
- I want to do it again!

Alcohol Awareness

- Really fun activity which got the point across well. All the children engaged and joined in, thank you. Fairfield Primary.
- Very informative for age range of children. Practical activity and fun as well as having learning elements. Quiz for ending good, thank you. Lingdale Primary School.

Chef

- I didn't like none of the veg, but it was delicious.
- I thought it was fantastic and amazing. Cooking food I have never tried or heard of.
- I thought it was an excellent activity. A traditional dish from Burma! The dish tasted absolutely divine.

Class Room Medics

- This session OWNED!
- Exciting but disgusting but apart from that it was great 😊
- This lesson was great, I learnt a lot

Jay's Animal Encounters

- I enjoyed it when the snake was wrapped around my neck
- I love maku and the bearded dragon

Science Busker

- I thought the best part was the illusion and would really like to see it again



- It was amazing, you actually make science fun. We would think you would be a great teacher.

Clown Doctor

- Awesome and super-cool
- Best so far

Cancer Research

- Very enthusiastic and interesting. All children were engaged in the activity and asked their question. This session I am sure has made a positive impact on the children. St. Therese Primary School.
- Group leaders were enthusiastic and kept the children engaged! Tasks helped children consider cells and how DNA is made!

Unfortunately responses from the Smart Art session were not received by the evaluator. However the participants seemed to be enjoying this too – especially the glowing beads and the hat that hardened upon impact.

Young People’s Questionnaire

There were 39 responses to the organiser’s questionnaire. Like the other evaluation tools, the reaction to the day was very positive. Asked to give a describing word for the session, responses were universally glowing – intriguing, awesome, mint, sensational and epic were just some of the descriptions given by the pupils.

All respondents thought that the sessions had improved their knowledge of science “a bit” or “a lot”. Ten respondents thought the day was “too short” whilst the other 29 thought it “about the right length”. Finally only two respondents thought that the event had not helped them think about their future (no reason was given why). 15 considered it had helped the “a lot” and 22 “a bit”.

As can be seen from the above comments, the overall impression of the day was that it was well organised and everyone enjoyed themselves. One boy leaving at the end of the day summed it up as “best day ever!”

EVALUATION: NEET DEVELOPMENT

Although much time was taken up with observing the participants, the evaluator was impressed by the organiser group. In the morning, when people were struggling to find where the sessions were being held, they were supporting groups to move round the building and ensuring the workshops were running smoothly. After lunch they conducted their own evaluation before the end of the day, interviewing some of the participants in a professional manner. It was interesting to see how some of them took the lead when problems arose and how people grew and settled into event as the day progressed.



After the event, Mike McGrother who led the planning was asked for his reflections on the impact of the day and the event planning and development process. The ability amongst the group recruited was wide. Some found the event process easy; others found it too challenging. Perhaps a baseline of the group abilities could be used in the future, though this was not possible on this occasion because of the compressed timeframe. Although there was no subsequent meeting of the organisers, Mike had seen a couple of the young people afterwards. There were some positive individual outcomes following the event. One girl was now volunteering at a school. Another had expressed an interest in a course of study about animals as a direct result of the Animal Handling session.

The young organisers had "enjoyed seeing something from nothing to completion", which contrasted with their school experience. One of the young men said "I hated science lessons but I'm enjoying this". There was lots of smiling and evident enjoyment from the organisers throughout the day. Finally the Nervous Pupil Referral Unit was so impressed with the impact of the day that it is discussing possible further projects with Mike.

In conclusion the project objectives for this group were met.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Although the day went well and was enjoyed by all, nevertheless some small improvements could be made.

Some of the spaces were so small that the quality of some workshop experiences may have been diminished. Perhaps future events could have slightly fewer workshops in better settings. And there could be some temporary signposts prepared directing people to the workshops or someone could be assigned to take groups between workshops, as some groups struggled to navigate the building quickly.

Secondly, the NEET group could have been better supported in their development in a number of ways. Some more time to recruit carefully would have been useful; the sessions on Mondays that were cancelled for Bank Holidays meant that their planning was curtailed; and it would have been good to have a post event session to allow them to reflect on their achievements and be supported to consider what could be the next step for them.

Thirdly, as the emphasis of the day is on science and creativity careers, an advice and guidance sheet could be prepared for the participants. Pitched appropriately for the age of the participants, this could suggest qualifications and career opportunities across a range of science and creative employment settings. This could be used as a template for all future events and could lead to modest sponsorship opportunities from local employers.

Finally, one suggestion for organisers to consider is that the Full on Futures project was so popular that it could be successfully repeated at different points through the year and/or targeted at different age groups. Whilst time consuming to organise, the value in this event of engaging so productively with young people who are NEET and in showcasing careers in important subject areas for the future British economy may mean that funding to support this work could be found from a number of sources.

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