

# Cultural Education Partnerships (England) Pilot Study

## Introduction and background

The Cultural Education Partnership Group (CEPG) was formed in 2012. It is made up of strategic partners who are interested in shared approaches to improving access to cultural education for young people. The group has representatives from Arts Council England (ACE), the British Film Institute (BFI), Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and English Heritage (EH). Following its formation, the group identified and established three pilot areas to explore, namely Bristol, Barking and Dagenham and Great Yarmouth. These local Cultural Education Partnerships (CEPs) work with other partners such as local authorities, voluntary and community organisations, schools, funders and the relevant Bridge organisation. Bridge organisations are set up by the ACE in order to connect children and young people, schools and communities with art and culture across a particular area.

The study on which this report is based explored the initial impact of the CEPs and the learning which took place in their first two years. The report also presents findings from interviews with 25 partners across the three pilot CEPs, interviews with 11 national strategic partners of the CEPG, data on young people's participation in cultural education in each pilot area and presentations with the CEPG, Bridge organisations and CEP partners.

## Key points

### Different approaches to Cultural Education partnerships

- The city of Bristol has a rich and diverse cultural offer provided by a plethora of arts and heritage organisations. The school system is also diverse, with numerous academies and some independent schools. The Bristol CEP consists of a large networking partnership of over 30 organisations, four action-focussed sub-groups and a smaller 'steering group' of partners who will focus on developing greater strategic direction for the city.
- The Bristol CEP has made progress in a number of ways. It is developing a place-based curriculum resource of 80 points of interest in the city which has led to the creation of a website featuring 80 things for young people to do in Bristol. It has also extended the reach of a family friendly arts festival and obtained funding to pilot a collaborative programme of 72 creative internships and apprenticeships. It is currently undertaking research on young people's attitudes to culture.
- Barking and Dagenham is an east London borough representing a fairly compact geographical area. Most schools are maintained by the local authority which has a commitment to developing arts, creativity and culture. The CEP in Barking and Dagenham is headed by a steering group of seven partner organisations and is chaired by the local authority's education directorate. The CEP has made progress in the following areas: obtaining funds to develop a local heritage project focusing on the First World War; recruiting school and governor 'culture champions'; developing a system for recognising and accrediting young people's cultural experiences through cultural passports; and developing progression pathways for young people.

- Great Yarmouth is a coastal town in a sparsely populated rural area. Although there is a varied cultural offer, young people's participation has been low and sporadic. The formation of the local CEP coincided with local authority spending cuts affecting support for culture. The Great Yarmouth CEP is led by a steering group of seven key partners. There is a wider networking group involving steering group members. The CEP has made progress in: engaging schools in shaping cultural provision and linking with the school cluster group; increasing the number of young people achieving Arts Awards through shared advocacy; giving collective advice in the development of the Local Authority Heritage Strategy; and collaborating to enhance the local delivery of existing programmes which have a partnership element, such as Heritage Schools and Museums and Schools.

### The impact of Cultural Education Partnerships

- It is clear that CEPs are providing an important role in local areas, impacting on partners, on the cultural provision in the area and on the young people themselves.
- Partners in CEPs have benefitted from: shared intelligence, expertise and resources; new relationships and a widening of the network; building capacity through joint CPD and resource sharing; and shared advocacy and marketing.
- Cultural provision has been enhanced through: coherence and research-informed relevance to needs; engagement of more schools and families; the enhancement of existing provision with a wider range of cultural experiences and expertise; and consistent cross promotion so that schools are more aware of the opportunities available.



- Children and young people have benefitted through: increased engagement in culture; increased confidence and aspirations; opportunities for employment and training; and enhanced understanding of local culture and history with resultant pride in their area.

### **Success factors for effective Cultural Education Partnerships**

- Through research and feedback, the evaluation team identified a number of success factors for CEPs as below.
- They need to be locally owned and responsive to local needs and circumstances; there is no blueprint.
- They should be made up of several partners to reflect the local cultural landscape and cultural development needs. The role of Bridge organisations is central.
- They need to have a defined structure and process for decision-making which enables partners to contribute in different ways.
- They must be action-focussed in order to achieve a shared purpose.
- Although they can run on low resource, they need some resourcing to coordinate the partnership and develop collaborative ideas.
- Partner organisations need to align their programmes in order to ensure greater effectiveness and efficacy. Where possible they should use existing funded programmes as 'pegs' for development.
- CEPs should be strategic and able to demonstrate impact. They should identify needs, link with wider strategies for culture and learning and monitor success indicators and added-value of the partnership.

### **Conclusions**

- The pilot CEPs have demonstrated enhanced capacity to deliver cultural education and increase the amount and nature of provision.
- The evaluation provides support for the concept of CEPs and there is potential for wider adoption of Cultural Education Partnership working. The Bridge organisations are likely to play a significant role in any wider adoption of CEPs.
- It is not yet clear how the CEP model will transfer to other contexts, and it is also too early to say how effective and sustainable CEPs may be in the longer term.
- It will be important for Arts Council England (ACE) to continue to evaluate the strategy as it is rolled out nationally.

### **Recommendations**

- CEPs should determine locally how best to improve the quality, quantity and access to cultural education.
- There is valuable learning from the pilot CEPs which should be shared with new and developing CEPs. ACE could develop and update the Cultural Education Profile Tool to incorporate the knowledge which has been gained.

- CEPs need to leverage resources successfully in order to develop partnership activities which address local needs. They need to find modest resourcing to support coordination and basic partnership administration.
- New approaches to working through CEPs need time to become embedded and expectations about what they can achieve within a given timeframe therefore need to be realistic.
- The CEPG might further increase its effectiveness by working with other strategic bodies with national responsibility for cultural education, development and funding. This would create further scope for widening cultural opportunities for young people.
- There is a need for ACE and other national organisations to work with Bridges in order to provide strategic leadership, oversight and alignment.

The full document can be downloaded from :  
<https://www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/CEPP01/CEPP01.pdf>