

## ARTS AWARD AND SUMMER READING CHALLENGE PILOT

### ABOUT THE SUMMER READING CHALLENGE

[www.summerreadingchallenge.org.uk](http://www.summerreadingchallenge.org.uk)

Children's reading can 'dip' during the long summer holidays. The annual Summer Reading Challenge, run by national charity The Reading Agency in partnership with public libraries, helps get over 800,000 children into libraries to keep up their reading skills and confidence. Because everything changes when we read.

The Summer Reading Challenge - running since 1999 - encourages children aged 4 to 11 to read six books during the long summer holiday. There is a different theme each year. Children can read whatever they like - fact books, joke books, picture books, audio books - just as long as they are borrowed from the library. Every time children finish a book they get stickers and rewards and there's a certificate for everyone who finishes.

The Summer Reading Challenge is open to all school children and is designed for all reading abilities. Schools work with local libraries and give out information to encourage children to take part, with 98% of UK libraries running Summer Reading Challenge activities and linked early years activity for pre-schoolers. The theme for the 2013 Summer Reading Challenge was 'Creepy House', illustrated by Chris Riddell.

### ABOUT ARTS AWARD

[www.artsaward.org.uk](http://www.artsaward.org.uk)

Arts Award's unique qualifications support young people to develop as artists and arts leaders. The programme develops creativity, leadership and communication skills. Arts Award is open to anyone aged 5 to 25, and embraces all interests and backgrounds. Through Arts Award, young people learn to work independently, helping them to prepare for further education and employment. Arts Award is managed by Trinity College London in association with Arts Council England, working with 10 regional Bridge organisations.

Arts Award motivates and celebrates young people's



artistic achievements. Young people can achieve an award through any arts, media or cultural activity, such as music, literature, film-making or drama, and through technical and support roles such as arts marketing, stage lighting and web design.

Arts Award connects young people with artists and cultural organisations. Young people develop knowledge and understanding of their chosen art forms but art form skills levels are not set. The award champions personalised learning and recognises individual creative development. The flexible framework provides structure for arts and cultural activities and projects.

### ABOUT A NEW DIRECTION

[www.anewdirection.org.uk](http://www.anewdirection.org.uk)

We connect children, young people and education with the best of arts and culture in London. We believe that together we can make London the best city in the world for young people's cultural and creative development.

- We campaign for the value of arts and culture to the lives of all young Londoners.
- We promote practical ways that schools and other institutions can develop cultural opportunities.
- We work with arts and cultural partners to ensure the highest quality in work with children and young people.

## ARTS AWARD AND THE SUMMER READING CHALLENGE OVERVIEW

**A New Direction has been working with The Reading Agency and the Bridge England Network to explore and develop opportunities to integrate Arts Award into the Summer Reading Challenge.**

Through previous work with libraries and knowledge of what works for the Summer Reading Challenge – an existing resource booklet (normally used for students transitioning from primary to secondary school) was reimagined as a resource to deliver Arts Award at Discover level. The booklet, titled ‘The House and the Mouse’, was part of the 2013 Creepy House themed Summer Reading Challenge, illustrated by Chris Riddell.

In London, AND developed a pilot offer to library services based on testing the use of the House and the Mouse booklet. The pilot aimed to:

- establish if libraries were able to incorporate Arts Award into their Summer Reading Challenge activity,
- test if a focused activity booklet linked with the Summer Reading Challenge would provide a useful framework for librarians to deliver Arts Award,
- ascertain if there is scope to deliver Arts Award Discover in larger numbers in library settings.

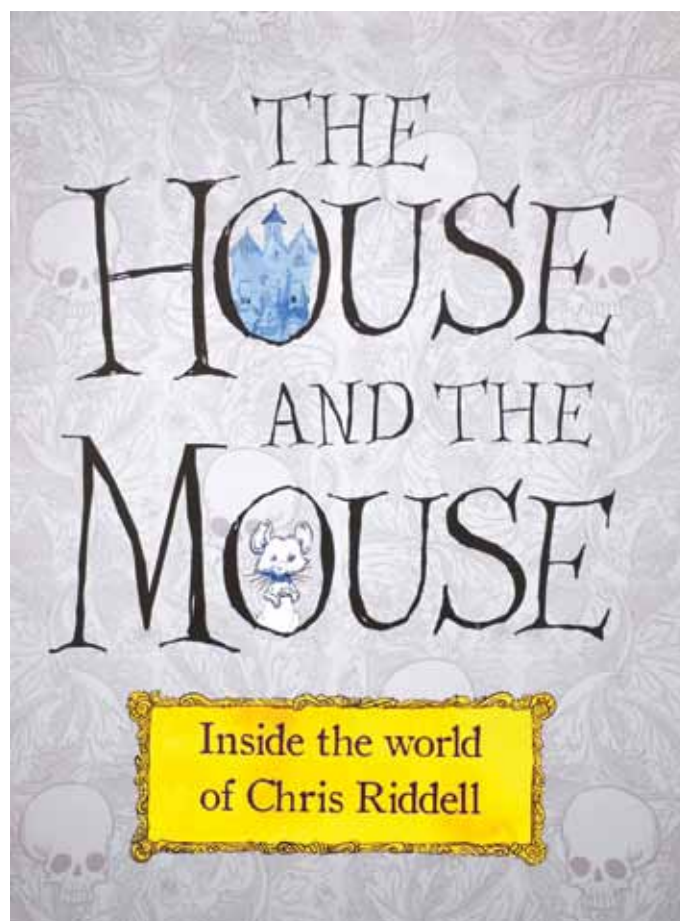
To test these aims, AND created an additional support offer for London libraries to facilitate the delivery of pilot activities. The offer comprised:

- Arts Award Discover & Explore Adviser Training (paid for up to three librarians from each borough),
- ‘The House and the Mouse’ booklets (up to 150 per borough),
- a launch session for library services on how ‘The House and the Mouse’ booklets map against Arts Award Discover,
- certification costs for all successful awards,
- a support visit from an experienced Arts Award consultant.

The pilot was originally planned for three London boroughs, but due to extensive interest it was eventually extended to 13 boroughs across London, achieving 392 Arts Award Discovers in total. This represents 64% of all Summer Reading Challenge Arts Award Discovers nationally, delivered in the following boroughs:

- Barking & Dagenham
- Bexley
- Brent
- Bromley
- Camden
- Enfield
- Hackney
- Haringey
- Havering
- Lambeth
- Newham
- Redbridge
- Westminster.

A variety of professionals from across the pilot boroughs were involved, and trained as Arts Award Advisers, including teams from libraries, young people’s accreditation teams and school library services. The pilot was non-prescriptive, and relied upon libraries’ expertise and knowledge in delivering existing Summer Reading Challenge activity for their service users.



## HOW DID DIFFERENT LIBRARY SERVICES DELIVER ARTS AWARD ALONGSIDE THE SUMMER READING CHALLENGE?

In running Arts Award as part of the Summer Reading Challenge, library services either delivered existing summer activities and workshops and collected evidence from the children involved, or developed new strands of workshop activities that complemented their existing Summer Reading Challenge programme.

One borough delivered individually tailored workshops that related directly to the booklets, with many enthusiastic library staff involved in the Arts Award workshops. The lead workshop leader had a teaching qualification and had a fun presentation style that captivated the children.

In these workshops there were lots of resources (e.g. mouse mask, arts objects, hand-outs etc.) that the team had spent time sourcing specifically for the sessions. All of the borough's workshops were backed up by detailed plans, and there was excellent organisation between the libraries in the borough. For example, the booklets were collected after each workshop and put in a crate that was taken to each workshop in case children taking part went to a different library in the borough; this allowed greater flexibility and responsiveness for the children as to which library they could attend for each workshop. The activities were also promoted by an eye-catching poster that highlighted the preparatory workshops delivered in schools before the end of the summer term.

Another borough tested three different models including:

- 1. School workshop with a class at a local primary school. Following this the teacher spent the next day and a half working through different activities for his class to complete the award.*
- 2. An activity session with the borough's Chatterbooks group (an existing group of six children).*
- 3. An activity session with the local children's holiday club (involving 18 children).*

The borough found success with all of the above three models, and would run them again next year as they felt that they were all valuable. One librarian commented that in her opinion "the school group got the most out of the project because they had more time". She also said that it was nice to begin in a more structured environment as it gave her a chance to try things out and test the timings for

each activity which was useful, the teacher's input was also valuable. He was very clear with his class that the children must really treasure their booklets (which they then did), saying 'not everyone gets the opportunity to have one of these booklets'. The librarian found this to be a very helpful approach and it helped to ensure a high completion rate of young people achieving the award.

Other models that have been successful in gaining high numbers of completed awards involved the young people's accreditation team from one borough, working on an intensive day of activity hosted within the library service. This method does, however, require a higher staffing ratio, and a clear and organised plan for delivery throughout the day. Another library from the same service commented that next year they would like to try a longer and more intensive model that involved a workshop in the morning, followed by a snack/break and finished with a trip outside to look at art in their local community.

### **Other notable examples of activities that have supported delivery included:**

- Services that developed additional worksheets for children that had missed some or part of a session to complete with their families.
- A library service that promoted Arts Award and the Summer Reading Challenge by putting up an eye-catching display, which proved to be an effective marketing tool.
- Integrating Arts Award into an existing arts club that takes place in the library

Final anecdotal evidence of the impact of strong delivery alongside the Summer Reading Challenge was a conversation between participants of a clay modelling workshop (two girls aged 10 and 11):

*Girl 1:* 'I like reading and art because it helps me to relax. I get so lost in my art that I don't hear my parents or teacher speaking to me.'

*Girl 2:* 'Me too. Finally I've met someone who feels like me.'

This was part of a much longer conversation as they worked away. By the end of the workshop the two girls had finished their own masks and then created a clay sculpture together. During the session a friendship had blossomed due to their love of the arts and facilitated by the additional Arts Award and Summer Reading Challenge work.

“It was great that there was no wrong or right. One little girl made her own jewellery and didn’t realize until doing this project that what she was creating was art. Previously the children thought that art was always in a frame.”

#### **WHAT WORKED WELL OVERALL:**

All of the libraries taking part in the pilot have welcomed the announcement of Arts Award Discover, open to children aged 5 and above from September 2013. Most services were delivering activities with younger children, and look forward to being able to widen their offer.

However, library services did comment that the concept is quite abstract for younger children and therefore might require more specialist librarians or practitioners to deliver Arts Award for that age group. The library services also commented that library use often drops off at age four or five once children start school, and Arts Award is a great way of reinforcing the connection with the library.

Many libraries felt that the certificate was enough of a reward for achieving Arts Award. Many commented that the children love being clapped and like to have their parents there to see them collect their certificate. Many libraries were organising a certificate-giving ceremony to make it a special event. One borough was going to serve cupcakes, others chose to give a low cost prize (e.g. a pencil or pin-badge) as a reward with the certificate.

The library services thought that the overall

concept of Arts Award was an excellent fit for their service. Some boroughs commented it was one of the activities that they enjoyed the most over the summer period. The staff loved the idea of the children becoming more aware of art in their local community. Arts Award meets many library objectives as it promotes literature and highlights their space in an exciting way. Libraries felt that Arts Award opens up children’s minds as to how they can be creative and this also ties in with the ethos of many library services.

Additional activities/elements that supported successful delivery of Arts Award in libraries, alongside the Summer Reading Challenge included:

- one library service felt it was great to use the booklets as the initial starting point and then have the flexibility to do your own thing,
- for those that had the budget to do so, librarians commented that having money to buy craft and materials boxes really helped when it came to the activities,
- another service commented that having a group of children together doing the activities really helped to motivate them,
- there was great feedback from almost all of the children that were taking part in organised activities at their libraries,
- the librarians commented that the flexibility on how to record things is good. It also helps that evidence can be collected digitally, and the assessment process for Arts Award Discover is simple and clear. The paperwork is therefore very straightforward for librarians to complete,
- with a longer lead-in time (most libraries plan up to two months in advance) all of the libraries would do more marketing in various ways (e.g. more creative and eye-catching posters/flyers, website, Facebook, tweets),
- many libraries commented that due to short staffing they wouldn’t be able to do a higher level of Arts Award. Many felt that Discover was just right and said that they were keen to do it again.

“It is lovely to market something new within the library...I enjoyed being creative.”

## **SPECIFIC FEEDBACK ON 'THE HOUSE AND THE MOUSE' ACTIVITY BOOKLETS:**

The activity booklets were well received and used by all library services and service users, and all boroughs were keen to continue to use this resource next year. They thought that they were a great size, and everyone particularly loved the illustrations, drawing activities and imaginary characters. Specific suggestions on points for improvement from librarians included:

- “Adding in some blank pages for notes/research would be ideal.”
- “Introducing some coloured pages would make it more appealing (less like a school activity).”
- “A broader use of language would be preferable, for example, the phrasing of the ‘Think About It’ page encourages the children to answer simply ‘yes’ or ‘no’ rather than giving ideas.”
- “Less dense pages.”
- “Children like to write on lines rather than in blank spaces. They are used to this from school. More obvious places to write some of the answers would be helpful.”
- A few boroughs commented that on the ‘Summer Record’ page some children thought that they had to do everything when it was just suggestions. This was daunting for them. Maybe it could have a different title such as ‘Optional Extras’ at the back, so it is clear that they don’t have to do everything.

Next year, many libraries would choose to keep the booklets in between workshops (as two boroughs did this year), as many got lost or weren’t seen again. Many staff felt that in theory it was nicer for the children to be able to take the booklets home like an artist’s sketchbook and show their parents what they had been doing. However the reality was that many of them got lost and weren’t seen again.

One library service also placed a nominal charge for the booklets in all but one of its libraries to ensure that the children taking part valued and held on to their booklet. However, based on their experience this year, they didn’t feel that it had been beneficial to charge. All other library services felt strongly that it was important that their activities were all free at point of contact and there should be no cost for the booklets during their summer holiday activities.

“It is great to be able to help the children to obtain another qualification.”

## **PLANNING/MANAGEMENT:**

All the boroughs commented that their library staff are creative and inventive, so planning the workshop activities was no problem. Many of the boroughs got staff together to plan activities and delivery as a team.

Many libraries targeted quick completers of the Summer Reading Challenge – this worked well in some instances and not so well in others. Other libraries targeted older children (10/12 years) as they felt the Arts Award gave them a chance to ‘think deeply and use their imaginations’.

## **COMMENTS MADE AND LESSONS LEARNT BY THE LIBRARIES:**

- “The Arts Award adviser training was excellent and it was nice to meet librarians from other boroughs.”
- “The timescales involved in getting adviser logins, registering centres and receiving certificates meant we needed to carefully plan delivery to ensure that the logistics of delivering the Award were integrated into their plans.”
- It was important to engage parents. Some libraries used Trinity’s guideline for parents to do this (which includes questions such as ‘What is Arts Award?’ and ‘What will my child have to do?’), others created their own shortened version of this.

- Libraries also commented that they need to do more training of staff to deliver more projects and outreach work for children and young people.
- Most libraries took lots of photographs of the children's work. One service had a volunteer photographer for the project.



## WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED FOR NEXT YEAR:

Librarians commented that it was hard to distinguish between the Summer Reading Challenge and Arts Award when explaining them to participants. They commented that they found it difficult to explain Arts Award to parents. It can be overwhelming when they are also having the Summer Reading Challenge explained to them - particularly if English isn't their first language.

Many libraries would choose to start things earlier and work with schools so that teachers could help support the Arts Award delivery. A longer lead-in time during the Spring Term to sign up schools and begin advance activity would be very useful, this could also enable libraries to overlap their delivery with the start of the new school term in September, allowing schools to 'bookend' the Summer Reading Challenge activity. This structured environment could ultimately lead to increased numbers taking part. All of the libraries said that when they work

with schools it is very important that the children come to the library at some point, whether for a workshop, tour or resources, or to collect their certificates, as the physical relationship with the library and the books is very important to them.

The key points of learning that were shared across library services included:

### **Appointing an Arts Award borough lead person to have an overview**

Having one main contact across all the libraries to discuss delivery plans, answer questions and coordinate the offer worked well in some library services, but could have a massive impact on improving delivery next year.

### **Arts Award Specific Volunteers**

A few libraries used, or wanted to use, specific volunteers for Arts Award in the same way that many use specific volunteers for the Summer Reading Challenge. Many people commented that it is useful to have staff involved that are more experienced with children.

### **Using new technology and media**

Libraries commented that it would be useful to get more evidence in creative ways from the children taking part and also to get feedback from parents and teachers. One library service said that next time they would like to incorporate more technology and digital media into delivery.

### **Space for activities**

The spaces where libraries were running their Arts Award workshops varied according to the building – many were working in open plan and therefore often noisy spaces. The workshops still worked well but services that had separate rooms or sectioned-off spaces for workshops, made it easier to manage in general.

### **Additional in-house support**

Next time most libraries would have more staff trained in house as Arts Award advisers as their involvement was key to the success of recruiting the children and keeping them on board, (particularly for services that had a drop-in model of delivery.)