

# Arts Award Impact Study 2012-16

## Executive Summary

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## **Arts Award Impact Study: Executive Summary**

In 2012 Trinity College London and Arts Council England commissioned a three-year study exploring the impact of Arts Award on young people over time. The research, led by London South Bank University, focused on Bronze Silver and Gold levels.

This executive summary presents the key findings and recommendations. There is also an infographic presenting data and a public summary booklet.

### **Research aims**

The study aimed to explore how participation in Arts Award impacts on young people in a range of areas: personal and social skills; arts-related and creative skills; knowledge and understanding of the arts and cultural world; enjoyment, enthusiasm and participation in arts and cultural activities and opportunities; and aspiration and motivation for arts-related further study, careers, or indeed other progression.

### **Methodology**

The research team followed a sample of 68 young people for up to two years beyond their Arts Award. In addition to this longitudinal sample, they collected a range of supplementary qualitative and quantitative data from Arts Award settings, advisers, other stakeholders, young people taking Arts Award, and Arts Award ‘alumni’ who had completed Arts Award three or more years earlier.

### **The impacts of Arts Award**

The research has found Arts Award to be a highly respected and successful qualification, which has a wealth of positive impacts on young people’s education and life experiences. Pedagogically Arts Award is exemplary and offers a flexible and inclusive approach to self-directed learning. It achieves its ambitions to develop young people as artists and arts leaders. Primarily, Arts Award enables young people to ‘learn to learn’, to have autonomy and agency in their own personal and educational development.

## **Hard outcomes: impacts on education and career progression**

- Arts Award had a positive impact on young people's education and career trajectories.
- Arts Award is a truly universal qualification. Bronze, Silver and Gold levels all produced 'hard' outcomes for a range of young people in different circumstances.
- Arts Award made aspirations for further study or careers in the arts more feasible.
- Progression to further self-directed artistic work was evident. In particular, young people at Silver and Gold levels went on to undertake an impressive array of projects.
- The higher levels of Arts Award usually had the greatest impact, including for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds with less access to regular and diverse extra-curricular activities.
- Arts Award provided a 'lifeline' for some young people who had lost hope that they can be successful. Through accrediting their artistic knowledge, Arts Award can re-engage young people in education and with art.
- Place matters. There is some evidence that young people in areas of the country with higher unemployment found it less easy to capitalise on Arts Award in terms of securing paid work.
- Accreditation is important. Advisers and young people were motivated by the fact that Arts Award is accredited, validating young people's artistic activity and sometimes providing them with their only qualification.
- Arts Award enabled young people to add valuable practical experience to their CVs when applying for further education or jobs.
- Longitudinal research revealed the longer-term impact of Arts Award, showing how the skills gained are utilised at later transition points.

## **Soft outcomes: life skills, leadership and confidence**

- Arts Award provided young people with vital transferable skills, especially communication and organisational skills.

- The way in which Arts Award enables young people to lead their own arts project fostered personalised, independent, learning which stayed with them in further education and work.
- Arts Award engendered professionalism, giving young people a taste of responsibility, time management and leadership.
- Arts Award gave young people from a range of backgrounds confidence in their abilities. Through enabling young people to ‘take part’ and ‘do it’, and through validating young people’s *existing* creative abilities, Arts Award fostered self-worth and a sense of entitlement to creative production and creative spaces.
- Arts Award provided some young people with ‘social capital’ through networking with artists and professionals.
- There is some evidence that those taking Arts Award embedded in an arts organisation have greater opportunity to capitalise on the connections made through Arts Award.
- Taking part in Arts Award provided cultural capital for a range of young people, including those who are new to the arts.
- All participants gained valuable soft skills but those facing more challenging social circumstances such as poverty, unemployment and mental illness, could still struggle to reap the benefits.

### **Does Arts Award maketh the artist?**

- Arts Award fosters young people as active producers of art, rather than passive consumers.
- Arts Award encourages creativity which young people actively apply in other aspects of their education and life. It encourages them to ‘think outside the box’.
- Arts Award encourages enjoyment in learning – young people enjoy Arts Award for what it is, rather than only focusing on what it can bring them. The importance of having fun was something they took with them into their professional lives.

## Recommendations

### Developing the qualification

1. Pedagogically, Arts Award is exemplary, keep up the good work: if it ain't broke don't fix it
2. Continue to work with Arts Award advisers to deliver Arts Award across a range of settings
3. Encourage depth of study, where possible, through all Award levels
4. Further investigate effective ways of delivering Bronze Award in large groups as part of a compulsory curriculum, improving the experience for young people and support for advisers
5. Do not lose sight of art for art's sake. Consider developing the socially-oriented aspect of the Awards concerning skills for citizenship and social action and collaborative learning
6. Encourage and promote Silver and Gold Award to arts and cultural organisations with depth of study and access to arts professionals
7. Inform Arts Award advisers on how they can maximise the impact of Arts Award

### Monitoring and research

8. Monitor recruitment methods to Arts Award to ensure a balance between compulsory and elective modes
9. Better record and monitor the balance in numbers of Awards *and* progression through Awards, and develop strategy in relation to this
10. Encourage Silver and Gold (in addition to Bronze, Explore and Discover) within arts and cultural settings
11. Make improvements in recording of ethnicity, and consider collection of other socio-economic indicators
12. Further investigation and strategy development in relation to gender equity in take up of Arts Award including by level and art form
13. Further investigation into the unconventional educational trajectories facilitated by Arts Award, given the potential openings for disadvantaged young people

14. Development of longer term plans to maintain contact with Alumni and collect further destinations data

### Arts Award aftercare

15. Continue to encourage progression through the Awards, but worry not as taking one Award can still have positive impact. Make information easily available to young people on progression opportunities.
16. Support a 'Life after Arts Award' programme that helps Silver and Gold graduates heading for creative careers to further the skills they have developed through Arts Award in preparation for freelancing
17. Arts Council England to invest in projects to level some of the geographic inequalities inherent in the creative sector (e.g some twinning or exchange programmes where young people in more remote locations exchange opportunities with young people in urban centres, perhaps through Cultural Education Partnership areas)
18. Stronger networks of support for young people struggling to capitalise on the Award, perhaps developed through the Arts Award Youth Network
19. Further work to raise awareness of Arts Award amongst employers, but particularly among HE and FE admissions
20. Further and ongoing engagement with the creative industries