

Case study: an ongoing partnership between Rugby Art Gallery and the Pupil Reintegration Unit

Summary

This partnership grew out of Rugby Borough Council's work developing projects to support its Social Inclusion Strategy. In 2003 a meeting was arranged between the Pupil Reintegration Unit (PRU), the Youth Offending Team (YOT), and the Rugby Art Gallery and Museum (RAGM) to discuss the possibility of working together.

The initial proposal was that the RAGM would develop new audiences for the gallery. The PRU and YOT would access a creative resource enabling young people to experience artists, and art in its widest sense.

The partnership also aimed to breakdown some of the barriers that prevent young people from visiting the RAGM.

The partners agreed that all future work should be part of an ongoing programme, which would develop over time rather than be a single one-off project.

Background

Borough profile: demography

The borough covers the town of Rugby (population 62,000) together with 40 parishes ranging in population from as little as 20 to nearly 3,000. The total population is 91,500. There are over 39,000 households, a quarter of which are single occupancy. The number of people aged over 45 is set to increase, meaning that the population, as in the rest of the UK, is aging.

People from minority ethnic communities represent 6.8 per cent of the Borough's population. These groups comprise a significant Indian majority, but there are sizeable populations of Pakistani, African-Caribbean and Chinese families.

Geographical position and communication links

The borough is situated in the east of Warwickshire on the border of the East and West Midlands. It covers 35,592 hectares and incorporates many strategic road links. It also has excellent rail links, being on the West Coast Main Line. The attractiveness of the borough's location and communication links presents opportunities for development. However, there is a need to resist pressure for development that would damage the environment or lead to Rugby becoming no more than a low wage distribution centre.

The Economy

46,200 local people are economically active. Of this working population, 31,900 are employed in the borough while 14,300 travel to other areas for work. This is balanced by an influx of roughly 15,200 who travel into the borough, making it a net importer of employment. In 1998 the unemployment rate for the Rugby/Daventry area was two per cent, which compares favourably with the national, subregional and county averages.

Employment levels have increased by 11 per cent over the last four years. Manufacturing continues to remain important within the borough, with 27 per cent employed in this sector. The distribution and transport sectors account for 26 per cent of those employed.

Farming is significant, this being one of the most important farming areas in Warwickshire with approximately 500 farms and smallholdings. In the future it is likely that employment in manufacturing and agriculture will decline as a result of technological development and changing practices.

Community Needs

The Borough of Rugby has a strong sense of its own distinct identity, which embraces both urban and rural areas. Nevertheless, the borough-wide generalisations above conceal a wide diversity of communities and community needs.

Three of Rugby's wards (Benn, Newbold and Brownsover) face significant deprivation according to the Government's Index of Local Deprivation. Rural villages too face their own particular problems, which are often less obvious to spot and harder to tackle.

Partnership Working

Rugby has a long and successful record of partnerships stretching back to 1993 and the creation of the Rugby Partnership. The Council and its partners have worked hard to develop a 'bottom up' approach to the creation of a Community Plan for Rugby. The guiding principle has been that the Community Plan should be owned by the communities of the borough and not simply be a document for statutory agencies.

The Community Plan evolved from a major consultation exercise conducted in 2000 under the banner of 'doorstep democracy' in which over 1,000 local people took part. The same inclusive approach has been adopted in developing a new local strategic partnership (LSP) called Rugby Forward.

Rugby Forward was designed by a working party of volunteers from different sectors following a conference attended by almost 100 people. The new partnership has been launched this year and membership is open to all. It includes representatives from the Rugby Borough Council; Warwickshire County Council; parish councils; Warwickshire Police; Rugby Primary Care Trust; the Rugby Chamber; the voluntary and community sectors; and members of the public.

Council profile

Council

The council comprises 48 councillors representing 20 wards who are elected by thirds. For some time there has been no overall control in the council. The current political composition is as follows:

Conservative	21
Labour	14
Liberal Democrat	10
Independent	3
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Total	48
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Key issues and problems

The council's social inclusion strategy includes significant work to reduce crime and disorder and antisocial behaviour, particularly in areas of high deprivation such as the Benn, Newbold and Brownsover wards. The strategy aims to improve security by working in partnership with key agencies including Positive Futures, YOT and PRU to support young people.

One of the key areas of the social inclusion strategy is to support the provision of reparation projects in the local community. One of the locally determined performance indicators for RAGM is to measure the success of the YOT and PRU projects by evaluating the outcomes against key aims. A number of themes are relevant to all the projects, including raising self-esteem; enabling young people to gain new skills; encouraging young people to have greater understanding of the RAGM; adding value to all partners by working together; and challenging the public perception of young people.

What we did

This case study outlines three individual projects undertaken over three years. All the projects were based on an exhibition at RAGM and included young people who were being educated within the PRU. Many of these young people were also known to YOT.

The first project was conceived quickly to capitalise on the positive initial meeting held by RAGM, the PRU and YOT. This project was evaluated and the lessons learnt from it were incorporated into the second project. Evaluation has been a continuous theme of the partnership working. The success of the projects has grown alongside the success of the partnership.

First Project: 'Made in Rugby'

January 2004 to March 2004

Inspired by the 'Made in the Middle' exhibition, a craftspace touring exhibition

This was a 14-week project involving hard-to-reach learners aged 12 to 16. A total of 13 young people worked with a local textile artist, Barbara Fidoe, to create artwork for inclusion in the 'Made in the Middle' exhibition. This was then displayed in the RAGM.

Successful outcomes included the young people experiencing success in the public domain. In addition, all participants who completed the project achieved an AQA accreditation for their work. Two of the participants used the project as part of their GCSE art coursework.

Second Project: 'Middle England'

October 2004 to March 2005

Inspired by the Exhibition 'Another Country' by Andrew Cross

'Middle England' was a 12-week project involving 14 young people. Two regional artists worked with separate groups of young people. The first group were GCSE students who worked with photographer, Mark Stammers travelling in and around Rugby photographing the landscape. They produced a series of photographs that formed part of the exhibition. The second group were primary school children. They worked with video artist, Nicky Cure. Here the emphasis was on the exploration of materials as a means of expression and communication. This work was also used in the exhibition.

Successful outcomes included the young people exhibiting in a public gallery. What is more, a third of the young people involved had never visited an art gallery before. Afterwards 80 per cent of them said they would visit again.

Positive comments from the visitors' book included: "An excellent idea! I'm sure the project will encourage young people to see ordinary places differently."

Third (and current) project: 'Scrap to Wrap'

January 2006 to March 2006

Inspired by the exhibition 'The Balance of Being' by David Kefford

'Scrap to Wrap' is a project spread over 21 half-day sessions involving up to 18 young people. Young people taking part in the project are working with artists to create large sculptures made from recycled materials. As in the previous project, one group is of primary school age. Two groups are working towards their GCSE's and the work carried out in this project will count towards their final coursework.

Two artists are working alongside the students, including one who previously worked in the Middle England project. The second is the sculptor, David Kefford who is responsible for the exhibition the project is based upon. The young people's work will be shown in the RAGM in April 2006.

While the overall aims of all the individual projects are continual, each project works in media appropriate to the exhibition offering new areas of artistic teaching to the PRU art classes. 'Scrap to Wrap' adds value to this year's scheme of work through sculpture with recycled materials

This project will be evaluated in May 2006. The outcomes will be fed into the 2006-07 project.

Key Outcomes

One important key outcome of all the projects is the recognition that partnership working is an evolving process. Each project presented challenges, which all the partners were keen to evaluate and learn from.

At each stage of the project, evaluation has led to further learning points. The following improvements have been made for the completion of the current exhibition.

The 'Scrap to Wrap' workshops will be held alongside the actual exhibition to make the link between the workshops and the gallery. This link was not clear at the 'Made in the Middle' exhibition as the workshops happened beforehand. This meant that many of the young people who worked on the project did not see the link between the two.

The 'Scrap to Wrap' project is offering an experience and range of techniques that is not normally available at the Pupil Reintegration Unit.

Artists have been selected according to experience, rather than through open application, to match the requirements of projects and ensure greater success.

Resources

Project One: 'Made in the Rugby'
£5,616 from the following sources: Esme Fairbourne Foundation; 'Made in the Middle' Developing New Audiences Fund; resources and in kind support from RAGM and the PRU.

Project Two: 'Middle England'
£6,400 from the following sources: The Building Safer Communities Fund: the RAGM and the PRU.

Project Three: 'Scrap to Wrap'
£4,500 from the following sources: The Building Safer Communities Fund and the PRU.

Staffing resources were supplied by the PRU. Staffing and materials were supplied by RAGM.

Who was involved?

A planning team was made up of staff from the RAGM, the PRU and the artists engaged in the individual project.

A timetable was developed that set out the key milestones of the project.

PRU staff, young people and the artists attended the workshops.

All those involved in the project set up the exhibition.

The mayor opens the exhibitions. All those who took part in the work and the local dignitaries are invited. The PRU is given invitations to send to relevant partners.

Barriers

The project depends on funding from external resources if it is going to continue. The plan is to seek a longer funding arrangement and to plan in advance of the financial year. This will allow the PRU to develop workshop content and plan national curriculum work around forthcoming projects.

One potential barrier to success would be if the designated artist and PRU staff could not work together. To ensure that this does not happen the PRU staff are fully engaged in making the decision about which artist to use, and both parties (artist and PRU) are clear about their respective roles and responsibilities.

Success from the project is hard to measure in each case. Many experiences contribute to a child's overall achievement in the long term.

Critical Success Factors

To work in partnership with the PRU to encourage young people to work creatively in an environment that they have never visited.

The young children are part of an exhibition that is viewed by hundreds of people and can take pride in that.

The young people produce valuable work towards their GCSEs.

How would you do it better?

The three projects have evolved over the time. Each has been evaluated and this has helped to identify valuable lessons.

Confidence in the process has allowed larger numbers to take part in 2006. However the success of the project is linked to experience (quality) not the numbers taking part (quantity).

In order to stay focused on the partnership, a formal partnership statement between RAGM and the PRU is currently being written and will be adopted in 2006.

Key contact

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(Please contact Wendy for information on detailed evaluation studies on the partnership between Rugby Art Gallery and the Pupil Reintegration Unit)

