

case study

LiveWire at
Cornerhouse



location:

Manchester

young people:

Mix of young people from socially excluded, culturally diverse, low income neighbourhoods from Greater Manchester

context:

Cornerhouse is an international centre for contemporary visual arts and the moving image. The organisation presents a year round programme of exhibitions, film screenings and education events across three galleries, three cinemas and two education spaces. Other facilities include a Café, Bar and Bookshop. Cornerhouse has undertaken a review of education provision within the organisation as part of the Stabilisation Strategy for Change, resulting in a new education department and strategy. One of the key aspects of the review identified the need to develop a new strand for the 14-18 age group. The en-vision action-research project formed the beginning part of an exploratory 3-year lottery funded programme named 'LiveWire', targeting young people aged 14-18.

en-vision research question:

How can a skills based project be applied to a new audience of young people including those who are socially excluded, culturally diverse and/or from low income neighbourhoods in Greater Manchester?

Cornerhouse wanted to find out how to access young people effectively, how to sustain a long term development, how to use the knowledge from this action research and apply it to the main programme

project proposal:

To develop a pilot project of visual arts activity for 14-18 year olds across film, photography, installation, animation and audio through LiveWire. The projects aim to create a steering group of 15 young people who will then self manage larger visual arts, film or new media projects for a year.

project aims:

- Use taster sessions as a testing ground in assessing how Cornerhouse accesses young people
- Develop new audiences for Cornerhouse within the 14-18 age group
- Create steering group of young people who will direct LiveWire at Cornerhouse
- Work towards greater social inclusion
- Introduce young people to training / careers in the arts

summary of activities:

- To facilitate a series of taster sessions in Aug 2003 creating a LiveWire website and feeding into a launch event in Oct/Nov 2003 which will attract further young people, youth services, creative professionals and other user groups
- To facilitate three 8-week projects between Jan and Jul 2004 to develop the 14-18 audience at Cornerhouse and to develop the steering group. The project art-forms are animation, sound recording and editing and filmmaking
- These activities hope to encourage active participation and generate interest for a steering group of 10-15 young people who will self-manage two subsequent projects
- The first project will be devised and managed by the Youth Projects Officer, but will serve as an induction / training period for the steering group to manage the two following projects

summary of outcomes:

- LiveWire has developed mailing / emailing lists which include past participants, youth and community centres / groups / services etc

- LiveWire projects are well attended with very low drop out rates and are always over subscribed
- The LiveWire steering group were consolidated over four Summer Schools (Jul-Aug 04) and an 8-week music video making project. The steering group have devised their own 8-week website project working with a professional artist, a web design company and the Youth Projects Officer. The group have also helped prepare a successful First Light funding proposal
- We have been able to advertise and include more young people in underexposed (the under 18's section of the 'exposures' student film festival held at Cornerhouse each year)
- Young people from LiveWire projects have attended careers masterclasses at exposures
- LiveWire has toured the ten authorities in Greater Manchester with a LiveWire filmmaking Roadshow targeting groups that have had little or no experience with film making. The Roadshow produced a documentary and also a LiveWire 'sting'; these were premiered at the Warrington Young people's Film Festival. The Roadshow participants also took part in a live TV interview at The Lets Go Global studios in Old Trafford where the work and interview were streamed live online
- The projects, en-vision questionnaires and LiveWire steering group have informed future LiveWire projects in respect of planning and subject choices
- A LiveWire website and branding was developed with young people initially, this is currently being re-developed by the LiveWire steering group

changes from original proposal:

- Accreditation wasn't given because of the complexity involved in many accreditation structures
- Young people didn't manage one of the first three projects due to staff changes; however a steering group has recently been developed (please see above)

learning outcomes / success factors:

- Young people enjoy leading and making key decisions on their own projects. Young people feel a greater sense of ownership and responsibility when involved in a steering group
- It was only possible to set up a steering group after more workshops had taken place, establishing a core group of regular attenders
- Young people leaving school and college want more creative careers support and feel they are not getting it from school and college
- The young people working on the development of the LiveWire website are developing a careers section for the site which will include interviews of people within the creative industries. The website project is ongoing, with the young people taking responsibility for updating and creating new content
- The young people attending LiveWire projects were from all over Greater Manchester however the majority were from Manchester; more work is needed to attract young people from Greater Manchester
- The development of the new Cornerhouse Education Department and Strategy has been integral to the success of LiveWire

challenges:

- Over ambitious with trying to establish a steering group from taster sessions. It is only now at this stage where LiveWire has regular attenders and has now formed a steering group
- We now have an Education Director, Sarah Perks and an Education Department. There has been two Youth Projects Officers, firstly Sarah Sayeed and then the current Youth Projects Officer Rebecca McKnight. Before and between the posts other Cornerhouse staff members have helped with LiveWire in addition to their workloads. This has had an impact in the communication aspects of the project

outcomes for young people:

- The young people enjoyed the taster sessions and have since attended LiveWire sessions
- Questionnaires – Many young people felt they did not know what was on offer to them within Galleries in Manchester
- Questionnaires – The young people were interested in participating in a wide range of projects and enthusiastic and confident about participating
- Questionnaires – Most young people felt that Galleries could have a wider appeal to young people within Manchester
- Questionnaires – Young people mostly felt that they could influence what goes on within galleries by participating in projects such as this one
- Some young people from the taster sessions now form part of the LiveWire steering group

outcomes for the gallery:

- Developed long-term strategies within Cornerhouse for LiveWire to use the galleries and cinemas as project spaces
- Integrate LiveWire projects with specific exhibition / cinema topics and use exhibiting artists as workshop leaders. For example a group of young pupils from an inner city school in Manchester participated in a LiveWire project with a Cornerhouse artist in residence. The young people worked with the Ghanaian artist for a week on a sound recording project. The work they produced will be exhibited during the Step Up youth arts festival in July 2005
- Use a diverse range of artists to deliver workshops
- We are providing opportunity for young people to gain more knowledge of the creative industries through the LiveWire website and exposures masterclasses
- LiveWire has a core group of young people attending projects and informing the steering group
- We are reaching more young people as LiveWire develops and are reaching young people who would not usually attend a project in a gallery by doing outreach work.

Such as facilitating a documentary filmmaking workshop at The Urban Music Event in Oldham in Nov 2004 and the LiveWire Filmmaking Roadshow

what next?

- Cornerhouse continues to develop LiveWire and a range of arts and New-Media projects / events for 14-18 year olds and has a number of young people that attend projects regularly with projects being filled to capacity. Cornerhouse Education Strategy targets 14-18 year olds across its programme of LiveWire projects and formal education programme Cinefile
- The LiveWire steering group successfully helped to secure funding from First Light to make four short films between June and December 2005. The films will be premiered at Cornerhouse during the exposures film festival in December 2005
- The website team continue to develop the site with the aim of launching it to the world in October 2005 in a grand opening at Cornerhouse

More information from Rebecca McKnight,
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