



Art of Regeneration:

Evaluation summary report

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Introduction

The evaluations of the Summer Arts College were extremely positive, highlighting that young people had learnt new skills, increased their confidence, made new friends and had fun in the process.

A wicked course. ... I would have been gutted to miss it.
Summer Arts College Participant

Art of Regeneration (AoR) was an arts-based community development and educational initiative funded primarily through a four-year Single Regeneration Budget 6 grant between 2000 and 2004.

In essence, Art of Regeneration was a vision for unlocking the creativity of a community that was operationalised as a four-year experiment in one of the most deprived areas of South East London. Its achievements are impressive: the Albany Arts and Community Centre has been transformed, and over the four-year period hundreds of children and young people have enjoyed high-quality creative arts experiences. Art of Regeneration reached young people from some of the most materially and culturally underprivileged neighbourhoods in England, while maintaining the highest pedagogic and production standards.

The vision of Art of Regeneration was to use the arts as a catalyst for community regeneration, and specifically to:

- enhance the employment prospects, education and skills of local people
- address social exclusion and entrance opportunities for disadvantaged people
- promote sustainable regeneration.

However, no initiative on this scale is without its difficulties and challenges. Winning the trust of local communities and ensuring long-term sustainability and participation, is something that takes time and continued effort. The original vision was for six years, but as the first arts-led Single Regeneration Budget funded project, funding was granted for four years. This summary report draws upon the evaluation conducted by Barnardo's Policy and Research Unit, and highlights the key achievements, and some of the limitations, of the initiative.

Key findings from the evaluation

1. The demographic profile of participants

Art of Regeneration aimed to reach children and young people in some of the most deprived wards in London, especially those who were underachieving at school or at risk of social exclusion.

Of the children and young people who participated in Art of Regeneration creative workshops, courses and arts activities:

- one in three lived in wards that fall within the ten per cent most deprived wards in England.
- almost half lived within the eleven wards in Lewisham and Greenwich, specifically targeted by Art of Regeneration.
- approximately 75 per cent of the children and young people were of black, minority ethnic or dual heritage.
- two thirds of participants were girls and one third boys.
- however, the typical Art of Regeneration participant was not at risk of school exclusion or significant underachievement.

I've gained new skills, I didn't know I had. Really enjoyed learning new things that I will use again.

Thanks

*Summer Arts
College Participant*

It was so much fun – u best b open next year.

*Summer Arts
College Participant*

2. The regeneration of the Albany

Art of Regeneration aimed to regenerate the Albany physically, and to transform this neglected community facility into a focal point for learning, creativity and social activity. This involved establishing an audience base and a creative programme that appealed to local people, as well as London-wide audiences.

The refurbishment of the Albany

- The physical refurbishment of the Albany has been extremely successful, transforming the building into a vibrant space suitable for professional and community events. The Albany now houses excellent facilities and

resources that enable it to develop its central position as a community arts centre.

This workshop was good. I learnt a lot. I hope to build on my new found skills.

*Summer Arts
College Participant*

- Undertaking the physical transformation of the building, while simultaneously delivering the first 12 months of a multi-faceted community arts initiative, was ambitious and caused some difficulties for staff and participants.

Programming at the Albany

- Art of Regeneration was ambitious in its programming and commissioned a number of new productions specifically for the Albany.
- Performances organised by Art of Regeneration for the Albany Theatre were attended by both local people and a wider London-based audience.
- A high number of black and minority ethnic people regularly attended performances at the Albany. However, the children's theatre was mainly attended by a white audience.
- Audience members described the Albany as a welcoming place that caters for everyone.

A survey of the Hubble Bubble club night found that one in five people attending had arrived at the Albany on foot or by bike.

[Young people] see the Albany as a potential venue for performing.

*Local arts
organisation*

The Albany as a community-owned resource

- Art of Regeneration's creative workshop programme for children and young people encouraged community familiarity with, use and ownership of the resources available to them at the Albany.
- Art of Regeneration established an organisational culture that welcomed children and young people into the Albany.
- A small number of children and young people developed a high level of attachment to and ownership of the Albany.
- The Albany and its facilities are well used on a daily basis by a range of local people, including local disability and arts organisations.

Capacity building

- The relationship between Art of Regeneration and the Albany has been problematic, and at times the two organisations competed rather than co-operated.

- Respective responsibilities of Art of Regeneration and the Albany were not clearly delineated at the outset of the partnership.
- Other AoR partners overestimated the structural, organisational and financial ability of the Albany to host such a complex regeneration programme. The near organisational collapse of the Albany in 2002 could have jeopardised Art of Regeneration's programme delivery and hence its ability to deliver some of its longer-term outcomes.
- Despite the capital investment and improved facilities, the Albany continued to be financially vulnerable directly after AoR's funding came to an end. However, the Albany significantly increased its annual turnover in 2004-2005.

3. Children and young people's involvement with the arts

Creative work with children and young people was a core element of the Art of Regeneration programme. By offering access and pathways into the arts, Art of Regeneration aimed to improve children's key skills and artistic appreciation.

Working with children and young people

- Creative workshops that led to positive outcomes for children and young people were well-structured, with clear ground rules, run by skilled tutors who provided reliable and respectful instruction. Taken together these factors ensured the provision of 'safe spaces', a precondition for the development of children and young people's creative and social skills.
- Children and young people who attended the Art of Regeneration's creative workshop programme at the Albany displayed high standards of behaviour, with no recorded episodes of vandalism or anti-social behaviour.
- Children's and young people's selection of creative workshops was influenced by their gender, ethnicity and levels of motivation. When Art of Regeneration refocused its activities and subsequently discontinued the urban arts in 2003, this impacted on the profile of participants in AoR's creative programme.
- Observations by AoR staff and evaluators highlighted that despite referrals from local Youth Offending Teams and Connexions for specific courses, AoR did not actively target the *most* deprived, underachieving or at risk

I believe that this workshop has helped me in some ways because I am going to take my funky head to school and put it towards my coursework.

*Funky Heads
course participant*

**Summer Arts
College getz
youth off da
streetz!!! Plez do
a next one – u
made my
summer!**

AoR participant

Summer Arts College (yearly since 2001)

Summer Arts College (SAC) was a three-week summer holiday scheme that offered young people aged 13 to 17 the opportunity to take part in creative courses. A variety of art forms were offered, including visual arts, performance, dance, media and new media, music and theatre. The courses generally lasted a week with students attending five hours daily, but most young people took part in all three weeks. A team of peer motivators aged 16-20 were recruited and trained prior to SAC. The peer motivators participated in courses, but were also available to help tutors and artists with practical issues and to motivate students.

The courses would begin each week at the Albany with Monday morning registration and finish with a 'sharing' on Friday afternoons. During the sharings each course presented what they had been working on during the week. Presentations included dance performances, short plays, reading of film scripts and digital work. The excellent technology available in the refurbished Albany Theatre made 'sharings' look cutting edge and incredibly professional, using contemporary music and film projection that appealed to young people. The evaluations of Summer Arts College were extremely positive, highlighting that young people had learnt new skills, increased their confidence, made new friends and had fun in the process.

All the 56 young people interviewed during Summer Arts College 2003 said they would like to come again next year.

children and young people in the community, and hence overall worked with those who were already relatively 'doing well'.

- Art of Regeneration did not begin to develop a child protection policy until two years into the programme, during which time staff employed were not routinely checked via the Criminal Records Bureau. This was a serious oversight for an organisation that employed a large number of adults to work directly with children and young people.

Gateways and pathways into the arts

- Art of Regeneration organised a range of successful arts workshops in partnership schools and at the Albany. These were warmly appreciated by the children and young people who took part.
- Children and young people who encountered Art of Regeneration in a school setting did not often become involved in community-based arts activities at the Albany. No children were recorded as attending AoR out-of school workshops from half of the partnership primary schools. The creation of a progression route from school to voluntary community participation was not as effective as had been hypothesised.

- Over half of the children and young people that Art of Regeneration worked with were one-off participants, as they attended, and overwhelmingly enjoyed, one course only. This suggests that many children and young people did not perceive arts activities as an entry point to the Art of Regeneration pathway or a career in the arts, but as an enjoyable leisure opportunity that was available to them at a particular time – eg during the summer holiday.

- Approximately 13 per cent of children and young people who took part in AoR activities became 'moderately' or 'intensively' involved with the Art of Regeneration programme by participating in four or more courses over

the duration of the programme. These were the young people who saw Art of Regeneration as an opportunity to expand their horizons and develop skills for the future.

Outcomes for individual children and young people

- One-off participants achieved positive outcomes in terms of increasing their social networks, improving their confidence and their ability to work in groups. The majority of children and young people said they enjoyed the opportunity to try something new, socialise with other children and young people and work in teams.
- Young people who engaged with Art of Regeneration over a longer period, generally strengthened their communication and interpersonal skills, their motivation and commitment, and their ability to work co-operatively.
- Some of the hoped-for individual outcomes identified by Art of Regeneration were too ambitious to be achieved during a short series of arts workshops. Outcomes such as 'problem solving' and 'self expression' represent 'higher level' skills that may be developed through more intensive long-term creative training. However, short-term funding made such longer-term outcomes difficult to achieve.
- Young people who engaged intensively with Art of Regeneration's traineeship increased their aesthetic appreciation and understanding of the arts. While most are pursuing a career within the creative industries, trainees also developed administrative and computer skills transferable to other sectors.
- Following the Art of Regeneration pathway immediately improved access to education and employment for some young people, while others are still hopeful that it will do so in the near future.

Isaac, 17 years

Isaac was 13 when he first became involved with Art of Regeneration. He lives in Deptford and remembers the Albany from when he was younger. He previously attended another local drama group, but says that before AoR there was very little for younger teenagers to do. Isaac eventually took part in all four Summer Arts Colleges, trying out a huge range of arts activities, including script writing, TV production, henna art, singing and web design. The opportunity to experience different art forms was for Isaac one of the best things about AoR. Isaac also became a core member of AoR's Youth Forum and spent much of his free time at the Albany. When AoR advertised for young people to take part in a play, he auditioned and was given a role in two plays, both performed at the Albany. During the final year of AoR, Isaac was busy taking his GCSEs and therefore downscaled his involvement. Now at college, Isaac is thinking about becoming a journalist, as he loves writing. 'I am a very creative person, but at the same time I'm not the kind of person who is going to paint a masterpiece.' Isaac's younger sister turned 13 just before Summer Arts College 2004, and had, according to her older brother, been waiting to try it out for herself.

I learnt that it's hard in this business, this profession, but I also got a few contacts through AoR.
AoR trainee

4. Community participation and sustainability

Art of Regeneration's relationship with the local community was intended to be one of 'mentoring' rather than 'marriage', and hence the sustainability of the initiative relied on its ability to transfer skills and provide information and encouragement in order to develop community participation and ownership.

It was dope – coming next year – big up Summer Arts College.

Summer Arts College Participant

I had just about finished college, but didn't know what direction to go. I knew I wanted to do music, but wasn't sure how.

AoR trainee

If I put my mind to something I think I can do it now ... I think they [AoR] gave me the confidence to be able to try everything.

AoR participant

Participation and community ownership

- Local attitudes towards Art of Regeneration were affected by the Albany's long history in Deptford.
- Art of Regeneration inherited an ambivalent relationship between parts of the local community and the Albany.
- A number of community activists believed Art of Regeneration was insufficiently rooted in the locality and that the National Theatre (the lead organisation in the partnership) was 'parachuting cultural troops into the Deptford desert'. However, some of those local residents and activists who in 2001 were highly critical of Art of Regeneration expressed far more positive views in 2004.
- A participation strategy was not prioritised by Art of Regeneration. Participation was largely seen at the level of 'taking part' in arts activities, rather than an opportunity to shape the overall programme. Some respondents believed senior staff were worried that too much community influence and control would distort or dilute their vision of Art of Regeneration's potential.
- The establishment of four forums (parents', young people's, teachers' and artists') was key to the potential development of community ownership and the sustainability of the Art of Regeneration programme. However, the forums' exact role and responsibilities were never clearly formulated, and structures to ensure that the views and opinions of those involved fed into the Art of Regeneration partnership were underdeveloped.

Sustainability and community regeneration

- A history of disadvantage and failed regeneration initiatives in the area meant that much preliminary work had to be undertaken by Art of Regeneration to gain acceptance within the community.

- The successful refurbishment of the Albany encouraged positive associations with Art of Regeneration, however as funding was coming to an end community development work was again at risk.
- Short-term funding always runs the risk of raising community expectations, while failing to generate sustainable, long-term improvements.
- Art of Regeneration never developed an exit strategy. Maintaining a 'we will continue as we are' position, affected the Albany's ability to replace the revenue from Art of Regeneration. Regular workshop participants and their parents were not warned in advance that the workshops were coming to an end.
- Some projects within the AoR programme, such as Summer Arts College, Head for Business and the Youth Theatre are still ongoing, as new sources of funding have been generated by Art of Regeneration.

We'd done it...That videotape was our story. It's title Somebody Someone cries out in the same way we did. We hope that it may cause some change or just open some people's eyes to how hard it can be being an individual...
AoR Participant

Chantelle, 24 years
 Chantelle was a peer motivator with Summer Arts College in 2001 and 2002. She enjoys acting and mainly chose AoR's performing arts workshops. In 2003 she was offered a place on AoR's one-year trainee course, which gained her an NVQ level 2 in Arts Administration. As a trainee Chantelle had a number of placements with AoR staff and with other arts organisations. In the evenings she worked as an usher for the Albany Theatre to supplement her trainee allowance. She was also very active with AoR's youth theatre, having a role in most of their plays. Following her NVQ qualification Chantelle got a full-time job as a trainee project administrator with the arts and disability organisation where she did her placement. Getting a job was something Chantelle was particularly pleased about and she highlights that 'I have learnt that I can do mostly anything'.

'If AoR has done one thing, it is [to] change the building, it is buzzing now'
Community member

Art of Regeneration and its programme structure

1. The partnership

The Art of Regeneration partnership consisted of:

- The Royal National Theatre Education and Training Department as the lead body
- London Borough of Lewisham Directorate for Education and Culture as the accountable body
- London Borough of Greenwich
- Lewisham College
- Goldsmiths College
- The Albany Arts and Community Centre.

Overall the partnership worked smoothly and effectively, although it was well into the programme that more co-operative projects developed (eg between Goldsmiths College and Art of Regeneration). Some partners described their initial perplexity at the scale of the programme, and some scepticism about how certain areas of activity could contribute to Art of Regeneration's longer-term regeneration outcomes.

2. The funding

The programme was primarily funded through a four-year Single Regeneration Budget 6 grant of approximately 2.5 million pounds. Other funding contributions came from:

- The New Opportunities Fund (NOF)
- Private sector/non-public sector (including Lloyds TSB, Trusts and Foundations)
- Public sector (including the London Arts Board, the London Development Agency and the Arts Lottery Capital).

3. The programme structure

The Art of Regeneration programme comprised five strands, each of which stood alone, but all of which were interrelated and intended to contribute to the achievement of the programme's overall aims.

- **In-school** (primary and secondary schools) – supported the delivery of the National Curriculum through creative workshops, performances and storytelling in local partnership schools
- **Out-of-school** (primary and secondary age groups) – focused on providing workshops, performances, training and advocacy groups for children and young people at the Albany. Opportunities to work with professional artists in a range of different art forms were offered during term time and holidays
- **People infrastructure** – worked on capacity building within the community by offering educational and training opportunities within the arts to young adults, artists, teachers and creative businesses
- **Digital arts and media** – provided specialist skills training and technical support to the community, aiming to bridge the digital divide
- **Arts animation (the arts infrastructure)** – refurbished the Albany and developed an audience base to which a new creative programme of plays, shows, concerts and events could be promoted.

4. The setting and local context

Art of Regeneration specifically targeted eleven wards in North Lewisham and West Greenwich, four of which fall within the ten per cent most deprived wards in the UK. The needs of these communities are recognised by the number of other agencies, such as Sure Start, Single Regeneration Budget 5 and New Deal for Communities, all working to improve and regenerate the area.

The population of Lewisham is ethnically and culturally very diverse, with over 200 different languages spoken within the borough. Black and minority ethnic groups currently constitute approximately 30 per cent of the population of Lewisham. The Borough's economy is primarily driven by the public sector, which is the largest employer. The unemployment rate in Lewisham is high compared to other London boroughs, while almost double the national rate. Lewisham also has one of the highest levels of teenage pregnancy rate in England and Wales.

The Albany, a keystone in the Art of Regeneration programme, has a long history as the centre of community activism and aspiration in Deptford. It was established in 1894 with the aim of improving 'the poor part of the population of Deptford, religiously, intellectually, morally and socially'. During its turbulent history the Albany has moved, burnt down and been rebuilt. At its present site on Douglas Way, in the heart of Deptford, the Albany houses a range of services, ranging from arts and disability organisations to drugs information services and a nursery.

5. The evaluation

The evaluation of Art of Regeneration was based on the Theory of Change model (Connell and Kubisch, 1997), which highlights the need to establish clear short- and longer-term outcomes, against which the success of a programme can be measured. The evaluation team used a variety of methods, including interviews, questionnaires, participant observation and focus groups to gather data for the evaluation. As Art of Regeneration engaged with a multitude of stakeholders, so did the evaluation, and information was sought from parents, artists, audiences, community organisations and community members, as well as Art of Regeneration partners and staff. The views of children and young people played an important role in the evaluation, and the evaluators also engaged with Art of Regeneration's Youth Forum, which assisted them in evaluating certain aspects of the programme as peer evaluators.

The full evaluation report is available from Barnardo's Publications, Tanners Lane, Barkingside, Ilford, Essex IG6 1QG, or www.barnardos.org.uk

Reference

Connell, JP and Kubisch, AC (eds) (1997) *Applying a Theories of Change approach to the evaluation of comprehensive community initiatives: progress, prospects and problems*. The Aspen Institute, Washington, DC.



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