

## Gallery of Dreams: Children in Need and Young Enterprise Refugee Gallery Project

A new initiative has been created by Young Enterprise and funded by Children in Need for young people in London. The project has the overall aim of helping refugee students in London integrate and form friendships in their schools whilst identifying areas of misunderstanding with local students through an enterprise and citizenship programme. Year 10 and 12 students from a variety of schools have been working on an innovative art-inspired project based on the Young Enterprise Masterclass Programmes which aims to help young people learn from skilled people who work in the world of business or creative arts.

*“it was an open minded workshop, people got show their different points of view”  
Student, Acton High school after a workshop where they became artists for the Gallery of Dreams*

The project had two strands – the first strand of the project was delivered in bulk at CLC in Acton and worked with a core group of students who formed the enterprise team and developed roles in an art gallery, working towards a final exhibit. A second strand of the project involved working in schools with small groups of refugees and their local school peers, as a more intimate way of developing the projects overall aims and outcomes.



Students in the core group participated in workshops and undertook research which helped them understand the issues surrounding refugees in the UK and displaced children all over the world. The students aimed to create a gallery which would help people understand more about these issues and give young refugees a chance to express themselves and look to their future in this country. These 20 students from Acton and Villiers High School worked from a base at Ealing City Learning Centre once a month. They were assisted in their gallery enterprise by the project manager, Beth Anderson and artists Daniel Wallis, Maria Sletbakk Berge and Marianne Holm Hansen. The delivery included building an effective team through games and workshops and included a very muddy activity weekend at Phasels Wood scout camp with World Challenge! They also participated in a trip to the TATE Britain where they learned more about the curator's role and the different roles in a large gallery.

Aims of the first strand were to establish a project which makes a difference to young people at a critical stage in their development, to raise their aspirations and celebrate achievement. The project also aimed to identify paths which people can take through the arts and creative media industries and demonstrate effective teamwork and collaboration.

Additional aims in the second strand were to foster cross communal friendships with young people in refugee and local communities through team building, entrepreneurial projects and personal development. Also to identify areas of mistrust and misunderstanding which can be tackled through an ongoing programme of interaction and relationship building, making a difference to the communities in which they live.

15 schools in areas of social and economic deprivation from across London were involved in the project. Of the core group, 20% were refugees who had arrived in the country in the past 5 years from Sri Lanka and Afghanistan. 270 Key Stage 3 students participated in the remaining 13 schools. In every school at least 60% of the group were EAL (English as an Additional Language) and recently arrived students who had sought and gained refugee status with their families. The majority of these students were from countries in North Africa or the Middle East. However in 2 schools 20% of the students were from Eastern Europe.

**“I learnt that refugees sometimes have a hard life and that's why they seek to come to countries like England to have a better life.” – participant, Villiers High School**



By engaging in a creative enterprise, participants developed new skills, built relationships and fostered new understandings of issues faced by refugees around the world. The children had one of their first positive and engaging experiences in a British school, they gained confidence in their own abilities. Students worked with new people in their school and from different schools across London and formed new, positive ways of speaking and communicating ideas and feelings to the group and to each other.



The students were able to come off their school timetable and work in a different way with professional artists, curators, business people and facilitators, something they would not have been able to do without external funding. The project provided a safe space to explore difficult and challenging issues without feeling threatened or dismissed. All of the students opinions were counted and heard, students who had not had the confidence to speak in a roomful of strangers gained communication skills – evident by the tour which they organised for the viewing of the gallery. The project has established relationships with schools across London which will be positive and beneficial to the students, staff and people at Young Enterprise.

With over 60 people in attendance, the final gallery was very successful and the addition of a piece of theatre from 'iceandfire' theatre company complimented and highlighted the issues faced by young people in secondary education in this country, refugees and local students alike. The Gallery is being displayed in two schools this term and one school next term. It will be displayed for a day at the Young Enterprise offices

and will be a continual resource for all the schools involved to use as a way of instigating discussion and work on issues surrounding refugees and displaced children in the UK.