

Akademi South Asian Dance in the UK
Final Evaluation Report: Project Title: Aspire
December 2007

London Central Learning and Skills Council

Introduction

Akademi established Aspire to support the retention in mainstream education and training of 1500, sixteen to nineteen year olds by engaging them in intensive issue based arts workshops designed to help address their disaffection, raise their awareness of the opportunities available and increase their motivation to learn.

This creative experience offered young people the opportunity to experience a range of South Asian art forms and other art forms which interested and engaged a wide sample of London's young people. Akademi programmed the sessions to coincide with various events on the cultural calendar in London, for example, Black History Month in October 2006, the London-wide festival promoted by the Mayor's Office, called The Big Dance in July 2006, the Bengal Season at the British Museum from August – December 2006, Refugee Week both in 2006 and 2007 and India Rising in the Summer of 2007.

We also acknowledged and contributed to the main festivals in the city which celebrated contemporary Asian life, such as the Divali 2006 and the London Mela in August 2006. The projects developed group reflection through theatre, dance and music on the barriers to accessing mainstream learning. Working with professional artists, we worked to increase self esteem, confidence, aspirations and we successfully raised the sense of achievement with our learners. Akademi is based in central London and we worked across all the central London Boroughs by programming arts workshops into partner organisations and venues; in other words, we took high quality arts learning programmes into the areas of most need.

Rationale for the Project

For Aspire, The target group for this project was 1500 young disengaged, disaffected people including ethnic minorities between the ages of 16-19. Some of the younger age group either experienced marginalisation at school or had been excluded from school and as a result without positive and innovative intervention they were at risk of long-term disaffection and economic exclusion as they left school.

The older age group had been unable to gain employment as a result of their educational exclusion, low morale, poor qualifications, inadequate Key Skills and ICT skills and consequent poor employability skills. The need was to access support that helped them build their self-esteem, confidence, aspirations and sense of achievement. The major barrier to their accessing such support was the absence of local provision that is sufficiently innovative to reignite their desire for participation. Our project was designed to directly address the issue of non-participation, by utilising dance (and other art forms) production and performance as a 'hook' to draw in those young people who were at risk of permanent marginalisation through their non-participation. By building on individuals' enthusiasm for dance, we re-engaged the target group with learning.

Executive Summary

Project Rationale

- The creative content of the Aspire programme was designed to be attractive to disengaged young people.
- This provision was designed to help raise awareness amongst the beneficiaries of the barriers hindering their progress.
- Our project was designed to directly address the issue of non-participation, by utilising arts education as a 'hook' to draw in young people who were at risk of permanent marginalisation through their non-participation.

Inputs and Activities: Learning Programmes

- The learners took part in intensive, two day (a total of 12 hours) creative arts courses providing training in performing arts, visual arts, media and fashion subjects.
- Akademi integrated delivery of personal and social skills, with the aim of preparing young people for more formal types of education and training, or employment.
- The project was delivered by a team of education professionals – all established performing artists and visual artists, experienced in working with disaffected young people.

Inputs and Activities: **Innovation in the Activities**

- Specialised training for artist tutors based on working with highly challenging young people and in particular, excluded young people.
- Arts education partnerships and networks provided good recruitment routes
- Links with numerous agencies and support groups to provide arts based activities in their own 'safe' settings
- Worked alongside the 'cultural calendar' to ensure good enrolment
- Each session completely tailored to precise needs of learners and their issues
- We worked with two media artists on a new artistic project using mobile phones as creative tools, to enhance technical skills.
- Worksheet in resource pack on how learners could be encouraged to be more green and aware of their role in sustaining the environment.
- Attendance at a specialist dance seminar: A Symposium on Dance Interventions Within Pupil Referral Units and the Criminal Justice System. This helped us in specialist recruiting
- Presentation to a group of Camden agencies at a meeting hosted at the British Museum: connecting with estate projects, families, play and children's services enabled us to recruit from new, difficult to reach communities.

Project Management and Marketing

- A highly experienced Education Manager was appointed to work on the LSC projects for Akademi and remained throughout the duration of the Aspire programme end.
- A dedicated administrator was also appointed to work on the pro forma collation and data entry
- Specialist youth culture and e-marketing some striking publicity to appeal to learner target group – flyers and postcards
- A member of staff attended each workshop to explain the use of pro forma and support young learners to fill in correctly
- Education Officer completed a project management course and implemented good practice into management processes we use to control the LSC projects
- Steering groups resulted in good referral system set up across project for recruitment

- Revised procedures on ensuring beneficiaries are eligible and drew up a new checklist document.
- Refined the spreadsheets we use for analysing the data for our required outcomes and tracking our progress on targets.
- Attended child protection training and updated awareness and built capacity in the organisation.
- Specific e-letter developed to interested education and learning stakeholders.

Overcoming Barriers to Training

- Resource packs made up, distributed to learners, including accessible literature about the arts and youth arts activities, and Connexions services.
- Role models provided and culturally-specific work introduced to support inclusion
- Workshops held successfully with particularly challenging young men and women within exclusion units.
- Street culture and youth arts – media, street dance, DJing and rapping used to involve the most challenging learners
- Work with refugee group adapting elements of the street dance to allow young women in cultural dress (burkas) participate in the workshops.
- Webpage went live to coincide with distribution postcards to learning sites, arts venues and young people’s services in the Central London area
- Non mainstream delivery achieved for homeless people, with homelessness organisations

Softer Outcomes

- Increased confidence was the most overwhelmingly successful element of our work this year
- Heightened sense of achievement, well being, self-image, communicating with others, both peers and new people, e.g. artists and audiences
- A marked development in participants’ level of skill, both creative and technical.

- Learners gaining life skills: attendance, punctuality, collaboration, talking different roles, working with peers and also those in authority successfully.

Equality of Opportunity

- A strong focus on inclusion and social cohesion
- Overwhelming success on full achievement on the ethnicity target volumes
- Increasingly diverse profile of participants as programme awareness built
- New work in settings which previously had no accessible provision and limited cultural infrastructure.
- All our artists carried a strong ethos of mutual respect and engendered this through all the workshops.
- Many learners showed a positive response to the different aspects of South Asian dance and culture which was presented.

Sustainable Development

- Developed a series of visual arts workshops around the use of recycled and found objects and the theme of how 'disposable' objects are becoming in our society
- Designed an environmental quiz for the 13-17 year old learners, to start to provoke debates about their role is in protecting and sustaining the environment.
- Introduction of adding a 'green statement' to email flyers and newsletters to encourage individual recipients to not print out emails
- Promote use of public transport to learners rather than private travel to programmes and workshops.

Use of ICT

- A very striking web presence to engage the interest of young people; e-newsletters with an education focus as well as e-flyers with rich imagery
- Use of latest software to plan and manage our data.
- Ran some innovative arts workshops which encourage the positive use of media.
- Incorporation of audio visual equipment and software, including filmmaking and editing, as well as computer based music making and processing, as well as DJing, and MCing, as positive ways of using technology to create projects.

- Introducing young people into technology-based skill development and training in ICT and perhaps considering employment routes in technology-based industries.

Lessons Learned

- Important to pace projects and targets over the length of the contract
- Look at monthly performance in the context of overall progress
- Spend a good period of time planning delivery, so in some months, volumes may be down because as a result of outreach and marketing, the team had to deal with many meetings from interested partners and that gave results in terms of delivery later on in the contract.
- Some partners and organisations will need more hands on support and development with the use of submitting the correct evidence and completing the forms correctly.
- A good use of resources was to have a member of the Akademi team at projects alongside the tutors and artists, to support young people with forms.
- The audit process was not always fully linked to the project's development and history and relationships with our LSC officers.
- Crucial to have a supportive Contract Manager and to have the good, consistent, dialogue with the LSC and we recognised that the LSC saw and understood the uniqueness of Akademi as a provider.

Future of the Project

- Akademi has developed a good model for delivery and are comfortable with the working methods established to deliver future LSC contracts.
- This was the first LSC contract bringing many interesting learning opportunities as we set up different systems to plan manage and monitor the provision.
- We saw through feedback that we directly met a need and have been highly effective in bringing many learners back into mainstream training and education
- Championed work with ethnically diverse communities and achieved good results in working with marginalised groups.
- We see the future of the project as having potential to build on our successes and are very pleased to be running an extension of Re-Act to June 2008.
- We would like to pursue further LSC funding in order to continue this delivery, with similar outputs and learners profiles.
- We have now developed an innovative creative workshops format which allows great flexibility and responsiveness to the learners.
- We would like to look at a model which allowed for slightly longer contact time with learners and could be centred on more production or presentation of work.

Aims and Objectives

On Aspire, our target group was 1500 London Central non-participating young people including minority ethnic people, ex-offenders, people with disabilities, lone parents and those with Basic Skills needs. Beneficiaries participated in 2 day workshops. The content of the programme was designed to be attractive to disengaged young people and to sustain their engagement beneficiaries actively participated in the development of the content/structure of the programme; they were provided with access to individual counselling and support for up to three months to sustain their progress.

Inputs and Activities

a) Learning Programmes

We worked by using creativity to reveal the young person's ambitions and through supporting them in attaining high quality artistic work.

As well as the arts training, we integrated the delivery of personal and social skills, with the aim of preparing young people for more formal types of education and training, or employment.

Learners took part in an intensive, two day creative arts course providing training in performing arts – dance, theatre or music; also in media such as video, music recording and editing, DJing; or visual arts, such as crafts, fashion, design, and mosaic.

The project was delivered by a team of performing artists and visual artists, experienced in working with disaffected young people and providing positive experiences, eliciting the best the young people could bring to the sessions.

We made films of some workshops. This documentation of the delivery of provision, was turned into movie clips for the Akademi website and YouTube. This included footage of the practical workshops and interviews with the learners and artists too. It was focussed on appealing directly to learners and to provide positive role models, of learners who are directly relating their experiences of the programmes. We received excellent feedback about this innovation from partners and learners.

b) Innovation in the Activities

A specialised training day for artists based on working with young people and in particular, excluded young people was held. We also looked at how to use the LSC pro forma correctly and also updated our artists and tutors on child protection issues.

We have attended many LSC training initiatives including the environmental workshop and we wrote a worksheet for inclusion in our resource pack on how learners can be more green and aware of how they can protect the environment. We also attended project management, child protection, self assessment and marketing-related training courses via the LSC to build our capacity.

We worked with many festivals and initiatives, including the Campaign for drawing, the British Museum, refugee Week, the Place Youth Dance and a wide range of partners.

Our team attended a specialist dance seminar called Real Life Real Dance, called A Symposium on Dance Interventions within Pupil Referral Units and the Criminal Justice System. This helped us in specialist recruiting and planning partnerships with harder to reach learners.

We presented to a large group of Camden agencies at a meeting hosted at the British Museum with several colleagues from across the departments and services in Camden Council. They represented estate projects, disabled young people clubs, families, play and children's services. This enabled us to recruit from new, difficult to reach communities. We worked with two media artists on a new artistic project using mobile phones as creative tools, which will be piloted in September. We also arranged to work with a group of young mothers and their children in a specially devised programme of dance to respond to our lone parents' target.

We also met with Chelsea Football Club and worked with them to make a mosaic at their training ground and targeting young boys to participate in education again, via sport and the arts.

We worked on a special project with the 7 o'Clock club, with young people with Severe Learning Disabilities. This included both physical and learning

issues. We worked in a Refugees Centre in Brixton, using a lunch club initiative to support retention and recruitment.

From June 2006, all e-communication has a green text notice asking people not to print out to save paper as part of the implementation of our sustainable environment policy.

c) Project Management and Marketing

In November 2005 a highly experienced Education Manager was appointed to work on the LSC projects for Akademi. This resulted in better systems and improved internal and external communication of the projects. A dedicated administrator was also appointed to work on the pro forma collation, data entry and general administration issues for the LSC work. Immediately, an analysis was carried out on the progress on specific target groups. The Education Manager made contact with various homelessness agencies and refugee agencies in order to establish some targeted provision for these groups.

Also in November 2005, a meeting was held with a designer who specialises in youth culture marketing to come up with some striking publicity for the projects and we commissioned postcards targeting young people and support workers.

By December 2005 the administration of the project was really improving as we established a system and staffing resources for sending a member of staff to each workshop to explain the use of pro forma and collect them at the end of sessions. In mid –January 2006 a set of postcards with strong, positive visual imagery of young people enjoying dance and media activities was distributed to referral agencies and support workers in the Central boroughs.

We also held our quarterly steering group in January 2006 hosted at Akademi and attended by partners including Badejo Arts and Camden Community School. We discussed the profile of the programmes, the achievements of the learners, swapped ideas for referral, looked at some of the evaluations and planned for the summer period. We also noted that the administration and management of Re: Act had greatly improved and noted positive feedback from all our partners and delivery sites. Akademi attended a Skills for Life development session and we were trained in house on how to write SfL criteria into the learning programmes. The Education Officer also completed a project management course provided by another LSC funded provider. We implemented some of the good practice we learnt at the event, onto the management processes we use to control the LSC projects and associated information.

In March 2006 we revisited our procedures on ensuring beneficiaries are eligible and drew up a new checklist document. We also refined the

spreadsheets we use for analysing the data for our required outcomes and tracking our progress on targets.

By March 2006 we had attended many LSC training initiatives including the environmental workshop and we wrote a worksheet for inclusion in our resource pack on how learners can be more green and aware of how they can protect the environment. We also went to a child protection event and updated

our awareness on these issues and built capacity in the organisation to share with each other. We have continued to attend LSC training initiatives in April 2006. The Education Manager had gathered extra resources within Akademi to help recruitment and data entry. This accounted for an extra half day per week to support the LSC projects from April to the present.

In April we planned to re-leaflet sites we initially leafleted in September 2005 including job centres and arts venues, and summer schemes.

In May, a new initiative started, the Akademi Education Newsletter, a specific e-letter going to interested education and learning stakeholders. Also, distribution of flyers at the key Foundation for Community Dance national network meeting in Leicester helped our profile in the wider dance education world. In June we revisited and completed new risk assessments for our work with Camden Summer University.

Also in June the second edition of the Akademi Education Newsletter was published. We carried out a major distribution of Flyers at Cultural Co-operation festival in Regents' Park. Extensive coverage was achieved via all the media coverage of the Big Dance publicity, the London wide dance festival in programmed for July.

We also revamped the education pages of the Akademi website and created a page on the MENCAP website Arts Spider. Our work was also captured in copy for the British Museum brochure planned for September 2006.

For the term of September –December 2006 we ran projects relating to Black History Month and Divali, as well as linked the project tri cultural celebrations in many community groups. We also built on relationships within schools from the period of January-March 2007 and worked with the Campaign for Drawing, Children Art Day, Asia House, Refuge Week leading up to celebrations in June 2007, and marketed the projects relating to the summer of India Rising 2007.

d) Overcoming Barriers to Training

Resource packs were made up at the start of the project and distributed to the first cohorts of learners, and were received with great enthusiasm by the learners. They included literature about the arts and youth arts activities, flyers, brochures, information about other training opportunities, arts festivals and shows. It also contains Connexions details and how to get in touch with their local advisors; and 'goodies' from Connexions such as a pen, torch or

bus pass holder. We also distributed information from our partners to help cross-referral systems with other providers in London. It also contained our contact details for young people who want ongoing advice and guidance about other provision once they have been through the Akademi programme.

We successfully developed an enrichment programme which led to the cohort re-engaging in mainstream learning programmes.

. We worked with one refugee organisation in January 2006, adapting elements of the youth dance called street dance to allow those young women in cultural dress (burkas, worn by women who follow Islam) to participate in the workshops. We also worked with a special unit in one school, to which young people go to as the last point of contact before exclusion. We achieved full participation with these young people and each beneficiary was retained in the learning environment.

A webpage with the Aspire Projects went live to coincide with the distribution of full colour postcards to learning sites, arts venues and young people's services in the Central London areas, as well as to local arts services and conferences/seminars that staff from Akademi attended.

Also in February 2006, web-based and email based newsletters were distributed with details of our LSC work to an education e-group of several hundred readers.

We sent Youth Dance England information on the Aspire projects. We programmed Aspire work into youth clubs and also mainstream learning sites into the target boroughs. We also started talking with faith-based youth groups to spread the recruitment strategy. We had good development on the targeting of one parent families in April 2006 and met with Gingerbread and Working Links to set up workshops.

Non mainstream delivery was achieved again in April 2006 for homeless people, with the New Horizons centre and at Holborn Youth Centre we have reached some very challenging young people at severe risk of exclusion.

We set up and attended a performance sharing at a learning site in Southwark with almost all young female British Afro Caribbean learners at risk of exclusion. Many tough issues such as body image and domestic violence were dealt with successfully and there was incredibly positive feedback from teachers, learners and artists.

In the summer of 2006 we set up relationships with Camden Summer University. We repeated this relationship for July 2007 and also had new summer schemes with Islington and Southwark Summer Universities. In October 2006 we used the festivals, such as Divali and Black History Month, to market the projects and had many new learners and worked in new settings, allowing more access to more diverse learners. We had a positive

collaboration with Refugee Council up to June 2007 to celebrate Refugee Week at the River Thames festival.

e) How Partnerships have developed

The Education Manager was appointed in November 2005 and made contact with various homelessness agencies and refugee agencies in order to establish some targeted provision for these groups.

As a result of planned intensive proactive marketing of the LSC project, a large learning site in Lambeth partnered with Akademi and became established as a long term partner with us. We established contact at this learning site in Lambeth and created partnerships for delivering good volumes work to the following groups: refugees, disadvantaged young people who attend a centre for those not fully thriving in mainstream school; and pupils at risk of exclusion.

Akademi's strong marketing campaign was noted for its impact on developing partnerships. Following our postcard and flyers campaign, we received a good range and number of referrals, including refugee organisations and homelessness organisations, and we began a potential partnership with the British Museum, as part of a Bengali season in August – December 2006, which encouraged young people including young Bengali Londoners to visit the museum for the first time. We supported them to access our workshops both in the BM and within their local communities. We are also undertook planning for summer 2006 and started to chart out how we would work in the summer, when many learning centres closed down. We met with partners including Camden University Summer School and the Mayor's Office on a city wide festival called the Big Dance to be held in July 2006, which Akademi launched at the London's Living Room at the GLA.

Throughout the life of the project, we attended ESF provider network meetings hosted by London Central LSC. Partnerships based on the provider network attended at Centrepont developed well and we used the network meeting to provide flyers about our project.

By March 2006, Akademi had agreed the details of the large scale project with the British Museum, which will take place in August-December 2006, ensuring we had coverage on the delivery numbers in the summer holiday period and beyond. This included Secondary Schools Workshops, Community Outreach Special Needs groups and Workshops as part of special Family Day programmes.

We also confirmed dates for workshops linking with the GLA initiative called the Big Dance for workshops with at risk of exclusion young people in Southwark, Westminster and Lambeth, key target boroughs in our contract.

In May 2006, a real boost to the level of partnership working occurred, as a result of good feedback, knowledge spreading about the work and re-recruitment strategies. We had fruitful planning meetings with Working Links, a refugee group in Brixton, Cape Play, Copenhagen Youth centre, The Place dance venue in Bloomsbury, CandoCo dance company (a project with young disabled dancers) and Razors Edge, a theatre company for young people with learning disabilities. In June 2006 we attended FLYA – Festival of Youth London Arts launch, and made more partnership connections.

We worked with Corams' Fields for summer activity and had links with Chelsea Football Club, on a graffiti art project. An interesting link was with the 7 O' Clock group, in Kentish Town, who had young disabled youth club. We delivered work in September and October 2006 to full capacity, on the basis that it was Black History Month and we had many African dancers and artists booked into schools and learning sites.

In November 06- February 07, we worked with partners including Hurricane Dance and The Shift Youth Dance Company. In conclusion the Partnership building and working was very strong.

In January we received many direct referrals from partners who were keen to work with Akademi. In particular, Eurostar, at Kings Cross partnership and the Kings X regeneration company asked us to plan some outreach work, alongside the opening of the new station, so we looked at partnerships with homeless groups of at risk young people who lived in the Kings Cross area.

In March 2007 we met with new partners to plan Aspire at St Thomas's Hospital; The Place Dance and Generate youth disability group in Southwark.

The Aspire workshops in March and April 2007 this month covered Bollywood dance workshops, Physical theatre, African music and hip hop street dance in these new partner sites. These also took place in learning centres and youth projects in Southwark, Camden and Westminster.

We met with the Roundhouse, Fairbridge, Asia House and Streets Alive Theatre Company to discuss possible collaborations. In May 2007 we planned more workshops for the Spring and into Easter and were in touch with a new initiative, the Southwark Summer University, to promote the possibility of dance workshops. We were successful in setting up a relationship with Islington Summer University, a new initiative. In June, July and August 2007 re-Act took place in many summer schemes and summer universities in Southwark, Camden, Westminster and Islington.

Aspire continued to recruit new learners via the positive response to cultural calendar events from many partners across London. For example, we sent out a targeted email which related to the abolition of slavery anniversary; with a set of workshops celebrating cultural diversity and booked in workshops across several learning sites for July 2007 and beyond.

We set up a poetry workshop project with a hospital group at St Thomas' and Guy's NHS for June 2007.

We set up a project with excluded young people in a youth centre in Islington. We have been finalising our activities relating to Adult Learners Week in May 2007. We worked with Westminster Adult Education Services and the Working Men's College on Skills for Life and ESOL projects.

We were also busy with requests for workshops relating to India Rising, the anniversary of Indian Independence of 60 years in 2007.

We worked on collaboration with a circus company to set up workshops looking at skills around communication, trust, collaboration which were very suitable for our beneficiary target group.

**Reprofiling to the end of the project :
August –October 2007.**

The last few months of Aspire were challenging. We re-profiled so that we could achieve a more realistic contract profile and worked with a strong recruitment focus and planned large scale projects with partnerships across the city.

The following refers to August through to October 2007 which was intensive and challenging in terms of planning and delivering but highly successful and motivational.

We also facilitated inclusive work in other organisations: we set up partnerships with organisations with shared aims, for example, City and Islington College; Millennium Dance, which was about enriching and comparing traditional classical dance education with South Asian Dance. This worked to employability skills in more dance production markets.

We worked with the events team at Camden Council and Baseline Circus to make a performance for Kings Cross, using parkour (a French physical art/sport/dance form relating to walking and performing acrobatics on buildings), contemporary, circus skills, touret (acro – balance) ; with young Aspire participants taking part in a large scale public circus art performance; with additional specialist learning in health and safety taking place as an extra benefit.

Aspire learners at Charles E Brooke School learned about the culture of South Asia and Africa as part of cultural enrichment for all sixth formers, all having four art forms workshops for Black History Month – drumming, storytelling and African dance and Bollywood.

At Generate Youth Club for those with severe learning disabilities Aspire workshops led to wall hangings created within the Black history celebrations. In Youth Inclusion groups in Southwark and Islington drama workshops looked at conflict resolution. Huge workshops took place in storytelling around slavery and imprisonment and at Agincourt House PRU excluded learners did graffiti art as part of their studies and we ran workshops in how to make a film on a small budget. In Camberwell we set up an innovative partnership to help challenging learners find a pathway into HE.

Finally, the Roundhouse collaboration was an excellent project – we worked with young people at the Roundhouse, combining our summer production of Dreaming Now in Trafalgar Square by running workshops in filming and editing experience of a large scale production.

Outputs and Outcomes

Non-data outcomes or ‘softer’ outcomes discovered.

As we were targeting young people who were at risk of being excluded from learning, increased confidence was the most overwhelmingly successful element of our work. These were especially noticeable within young people who have suffered from issues that really impacted on their self- confidence, e.g. refugees and homeless young people.

Learners at the workshop sessions displayed high standards of dance skills and from this, their sense of achievement, well being, self-image and opening up in front of others, both peers and new people, e.g. artists and audiences, was well observed.

Artists, teachers, Akademi staff and learners all observed a marked development in participants’ level of skill, both creative and technical. We also documented good development in choreographic skills and the ability to improvise and work with a range of artists and art forms across the programme. An important element of our programme targeted life skills. We integrated these skills through our workshops very successfully and have much evidence of learners gaining skills in discussion, collaboration, talking different roles, working with peers and also those in authority successfully.

Equal opportunities

Akademi saw it as fundamental that the Aspire programme had a strong focus on inclusion and social cohesion. It has been an overwhelming success in terms of overachievement on all the ethnicity target volumes, together with an increasing diverse profile of participants, as Akademi took participatory workshops out of mainstream settings and into Foyers, Homeless groups, youth projects, Migrant and Refugee communities and young people with challenging behaviour. Many of these settings had no accessible provision and limited cultural infrastructure. All our artists carried a strong ethos of mutual respect and engendered this through all the workshops.

All our learners showed a positive response to the different aspects of South Asian dance and culture which was presented. Many requested further information on our work and we provided over 1500 learners with resources packs to support them in extending their learning. Learners were very respectful of the different aspects of cultural and build good relationships with our artists.

We ensured that our artists were aware of how to work with young people with challenging behaviour, so that we could extend the workshop offer into the very hardest to reach sectors in London Central. We had a strong will to meet any cultural need and have staffed the project with people who want to offer an equal opportunity to participate in the arts. This can be seen in the profile of groups we have worked with, a much dispersed group rather than easy to access sites. So we worked on estates, PRUs, exclusion units, youth groups, refugees, homeless people and many other groups that could not traditionally access arts education.

One training course for artists was set up to assist our artists to deliver education workshops covering respect and bullying, with a focus on challenging behaviour. Akademi arranged this training for our artists which we called "Working with Hard to Reach Young People" in October 2005. The course was led by Tony Dallas, an Akademi artist at the forefront of this type of work.

We have worked with the statutory sector, via schools, youth services and Connexions services for young people, as well as with Pupil Referral Units. We collaborated with many local authorities. We have also worked with the GLA on the London wide initiative called The Big Dance.

We have also worked with voluntary groups, charities and agencies, arts organisations and festival organisers, support groups, such as the Foyer Federation, New Horizons, the Refugee Council, the Anchor (Youth) project in Brixton; Camden and Islington Play and Youth Organisations. We worked with Weekend Arts College, Badejo African Dance, the Oval House, Camden Peoples Theatre, various Melas, Development for Education in Asia, Asia House, NHS settings, Chisenhale Dance Space, Refugee Week, Shobana Jeysingh Dance Company and several others. This demonstrates the breadth of networking we are carrying out to reach those most likely to benefit from the projects.

Sustainable Development

Akademi felt it crucial to promote the concepts of sustainable development via the medium of the workshops. With this in mind, we produced resource packs for all our learners and a key element of that was an environmental quiz which was designed for the 13-17 year old learners, to start to provoke debates amongst themselves about what their role is in protecting and sustaining the environment. Akademi designed a quiz which is relevant to young people living in London to try and get young people to consider the scale of the issue and how it effects their environment.

As a company, we minimise waste by recycling materials such as paper, plastic and printer toner cartridges where possible. Recycling bins are available for these purposes for use by staff and the contents of which are forward to recycling companies by our Administrator. The company endeavours to perform business electronically, to reduce paper usage. We will always seek to purchase products that are environmentally friendly, re-usable, and recyclable and that do not damage the environment.

We introduced the policy of adding a 'green statement' on the bottom of our email flyers and newsletters to try and encourage individual recipients to not print out emails unless really necessary.

The company will continue to encourage modes of transport by staff, such as public transport which minimises environmental impact. We encourage our learners who need to travel to workshops to use existing public transport services rather than organise private transport and promoted the travel costs which can help learners attend workshops.

Use of ICT

Akademi used a range of innovative ICT based tools to promote and manage the projects. We used very striking web presence to engage the interest of young people and organisations and have various e-newsletters with an education focus as well as e-flyers with rich imagery. To reduce costs we carried our much of our communications via email and used latest software to plan and manage our data.

In terms of promoting ICT to learners, we have ran some innovative arts workshops which encourage the positive use of media.

For example, we incorporated the use of audio visual equipment and software, including filmmaking and editing, as well as computer based music making and processing, as well as DJing, and MCing, as positive ways of using technology to create projects.

We are also worked with two cutting edge artists to devise workshops around the use of mobile phones, partly to offset the use of the phone as a weapon,

e.g. the inappropriate use of phones to video attacks on people. This project was called Positive Mobile Media and it was devised in response to youth workers who see young people using mobile technology in negative ways. We explored how to create music, moving image, poetry, rapping and storytelling on mobile phones and created a montage of this work, projected onto large screens and amplified.

This positive element of communication technology was very important to evaluate as a way of introducing young people into skill development and training in ICT and perhaps considering employment routes in technology-based industries.

Lessons learned

Akademi ran this as our first ever LSC project and we learnt an enormous amount as an organisation and as a result we agreed as a company to extend our project by way of the ESF 'top-up' at the time of writing. The most obvious sign of our success at running re-Act is the offer and acceptance of an additional year of funding for 2007-8.

We have learned that it is important to pace projects and targets over the length of the contract and that if one month is slightly over or under target, we need to look at that in the context of overall progress, and to spend a good period of time planning delivery, so in some months, volumes may be down because as a result of outreach and marketing, the team has to deal with many meetings from interested partners and that will reap results in terms of delivery later on in the contract.

We also acknowledged that some partners and organisations will need more hands on support and development with the use of submitting the correct evidence and completing the forms correctly, so we saw early on the programme that it is highly valuable method and a good use of resources to have a member of the Akademi team at projects alongside the tutors and artists, to support young people with forms.

We value regular communication with contract managers and administration staff at the LSC and welcomed additional opportunities to meet with LSC staff if possible. In particular, where there have been specific issues on data or CMR work it has been most beneficial when we have been able to speak directly to an officer or manager and talk through the right way to approach the data management aspect of the project.

Future for the Project

Since the early months of the re-Act contact, we have developed a good model for delivery and demonstrated to ourselves, our partners and funders that we are now adept with the working methods we have established to

deliver LSC contracts. This is the first LSC contract that Akademi has won and we have had many interesting learning opportunities as we set up different systems to plan, manage and monitor the provision.

Following the feedback from all stakeholders, we saw that we have been directly meeting a need and have been highly effective in bringing many learners back into mainstream training and education that were most at risk of exclusion. We have also championed work with ethnically diverse communities and achieved good results in working with marginalised groups.

As we have had this overwhelmingly positive success, we would see the future of the project as the 'top-up' period, in which we will build on the successes of the first contract. We are happy to continue to collaborate and to pursue further LSC funding post 2007-8 in order to continue delivery, with similar outputs and learners profiles. We have now developed an innovative creative workshop format which allows great flexibility and responsiveness to the learners.

We would like to work with the LSC London Central on a long term basis and be involved as an outstanding provider who delivers excellent provision, with the support of our colleagues at the LSC and our many partners in London who would all like to build on the valuable work provided via Re-Act.