



**ArtBOSS**  
Case Study

Dr Sophie Mamattah CCSE/UWS

## Background & Introduction

ArtBOSS is an innovative arts and creativity programme for young people. It focuses on the provision of arts and creativity opportunities for care experienced young people and young carers (primarily 14-18 age group) with the aim of enabling participants to develop their skill set while also supporting them to access activities with which they may not otherwise engage. This partnership model was devised to combine arts programming with a youth work approach to sustain engagement with the young people who attended. This model aimed to safeguard young people, improve health and wellbeing, and develop personal and social skills which could be bench marked against Youth Work outcomes.

A range of activities, including regular meet ups, workshops, artist engagement, mentoring, event planning/delivery and field trips comprise the dynamic and diverse approach taken to programme delivery. ArtBOSS aimed to provide a setting within which participants might:

- Develop a set of transferable competences, including project management, communication, marketing, contracting, evaluation and risk assessment.
- Enhance their soft skills, such as team-working, problem-solving and communication/ relational skills.
- Cultivate a network of contacts within and across the arts and cultural realm, potentially leading to valuable volunteering and career development opportunities.
- Increase their awareness of wellbeing and mental health.
- Benefit from increasing their awareness of the importance of good mental health and, potentially, to experience improvement in their own wellbeing and mental health.<sup>1</sup>

Initially developed through the Culture, Health and Social Care (CAHSC) group, ArtBOSS derives from a partnership between OneRen, Renfrewshire Council Youth Services and Children's Services. ArtBOSS is part of the Future Paisley programme.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See: Future Paisley 2021 Reporting Template— Art Boss (29th October 2021).

<sup>2</sup> As the programme progressed, management and reporting were conducted through Youth Services and OneRen with a joint report submitted to Future Paisley on a quarterly basis.

Future Paisley, a 'programme of cultural events and activity based around Paisley and Renfrewshire's unique and internationally significant story which uses targeted investment to deliver positive change'<sup>3</sup> has supported ArtBOSS with funding of £87,781 over three<sup>4</sup> years. ArtBOSS was initially intended to run from March 2020 to January 2023<sup>5</sup>. The first ArtBOSS cohort that began activity in March 2020 graduated in March 2022 to become Yo! Producers, (AKA: Yo! Producers or Creative Young Producers). A new ArtBOSS group also started at this time, running concurrently with the Yo! Producers and, for which members of Yo! Producers had the opportunity to fulfil mentoring roles, passing on—and further enhancing—their knowledge and experience.<sup>6</sup>

In this case study, we draw on published reports and key stakeholder interviews to explore the contribution that ArtBOSS and associated activities have made to the Future Paisley programme. Part of the Future Paisley Evaluation Framework, ArtBOSS is an excellent representation of Step Change 2 [Raise Prosperity and Increase Wellbeing in our Communities], Outcome 5: Children and young people thrive through everyday access to arts and culture. The aims and objectives that have underpinned the approach taken within ArtBOSS contribute to a range of outputs correlated to Outcome 5. These findings are set within the relevant parts of the outputs, outcomes and indicator frameworks developed as part of the Future Paisley evaluation process. Furthermore, ArtBOSS outcomes contribute to Step Change 1 [Radically change Paisley's image and reputation in Scotland, the UK and internationally], Outcome 1: Increased Civic Pride.

Reviewing the data provided, we can evidence the ways in which the activity supported through ArtBOSS has facilitated access to arts and culture for those who are often found to be under-represented in this realm. Furthermore, involvement with ArtBOSS has enabled participants to multiply the benefit accruing from their involvement.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.renfrewshire.gov.uk/futurepaisley>

<sup>4</sup> Initially Y1—£16,000; Y2—£24,500; Y3—£30,000. Y1 & Y2 recorded underspends on their available budgets (see: Future Paisley Reporting Template—ArtBOSS (May-October 2022)). An additional £17,781 supported the extension of the programme from April – September 2023. These funds were reassigned following the closure of another project (correspondence with Micaela Levesque, 31.10.2023).

<sup>5</sup> ArtBOSS has been funded until September 2023 and have applied to the National Lottery Community Fund (Young Start) for external funding to continue their activities (interview with Marie Collins, October 2023). See: <https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/programmes/young-start>

<sup>6</sup> A core group of 12-14 young people attended the first iteration of ArtBOSS regularly. Approximately 8-10 of them have progressed to Yo! Producers. ArtBOSS II has about 6 new starts attending consistently (interview with Marie Collins, October 2023).

Renfrewshire has a coherent, diverse and accessible cultural offer for children and young people, which meets their needs.

<sup>7</sup> Initially, the majority of referrals were made by Children's Services. Gradually, the process has evolved. Most referrals now come from social work area teams, schools and their Wellbeing Officers and from other groups within Youth Services (interview with Siobhan Gray, October 2023).

<sup>8</sup> Correspondence with Siobhan Gray & Fiona Taylor, 30.10.2023.

<sup>9</sup> ArtBOSS programme Report October-December 2022.

ArtBOSS set out to provide arts and cultural opportunities for care experienced children and young people and young carers. In so doing, the programme is specifically aimed at a group which might otherwise encounter barriers to participation or, to accessing arts and culture through conventional channels. ArtBOSS is a targeted programme<sup>7</sup>, every effort is made to understand a young person's needs before they join the programme and, to identify any barriers that they may need support to overcome prior to attending the group.<sup>8</sup> ArtBOSS offers clear avenues through which participants can access arts and cultural activities within their communities.

The activities undertaken within ArtBOSS encompass a diverse range of opportunities, incorporating a variety of arts and cultural types. For example, the programme of meet ups from October through December 2022 included Halloween workshops, pumpkin carving and costume making, photo shoots, event planning (for Frosty Festive Town Christmas event), a Christmas gift drive and pantomime attendance.<sup>9</sup> Across its full timeline, ArtBOSS has provided the opportunity for the young producers to:

- Work with a professional artist to create and publish their own graphic novel,<sup>10</sup>
- Contribute their views on the reconfiguration of Paisley Museum (working with Museum staff to highlight their preferences for the space and develop a social media),
- Work with Lateral North<sup>11</sup> as part of the Townscape, Heritage & Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme 2 (TH.CARS2). ArtBOSSes were the main producers of a new walking tour app charting Paisley's musical history,<sup>12</sup>
- Visit cultural spaces and review exhibitions, activity which also contributed to ArtBOSSes completion of their Bronze Art Award.<sup>13</sup>
- Participate in film-making workshops with artist Seamus Killick.

The programme of activities that comprises ArtBOSS is designed and developed in close consultation with participants. This co-productive approach has intensified over time. Initially, ArtBOSS co-ordinators<sup>14</sup> concentrated on providing a wide range of taster opportunities. With time, the young people have been increasingly involved in deciding where to focus their attention with due consideration to the obligations of their Art Award portfolio and, available budget.<sup>15</sup> Such an approach allows for the fulfilment of external requirements while simultaneously ensuring that participants are interested and engaged in their programme and, have an awareness of factors that contribute to its realisation.

<sup>10</sup> See: The Attic [https://issuu.com/artboss/docs/graphic\\_novel\\_art\\_boss\\_5](https://issuu.com/artboss/docs/graphic_novel_art_boss_5). Workshops with the artist Charlotte Cabrie contributed to the graphic novel's development.

<sup>11</sup> See: <https://lateralnorth.com/>

<sup>12</sup> See: <https://paisley.is/visit/paisleys-musical-history/>. This work involved weekly sessions alongside Lateral North and local musicians, charting local musical history while also learning about sound recording, app integration and the Paisley music scene. Sessions contributing to this output included work with Fèis Phàislig (<https://feisphaislig.com/>), songwriter Michael Cassidy (<https://www.musicglue.com/michael-cassidy/about>) and a tour of – and recording session at – Bricklane Studios (RL Arts Team – Project Evaluation & Monitoring Framework, July – September 2021).

<sup>13</sup> RL Arts Team—Project Evaluation & Monitoring Framework, July–September 2021. Bronze Art Award, see: <https://www.artsaward.org.uk/site/?id=65>.

<sup>14</sup> the Arts Programme Coordinator and Community Learning Officer.

<sup>15</sup> Interview with Marie Collins, October 2023.

# Participation in the arts and culture by the most disadvantaged children and young people is sustained

<sup>16</sup> See: Bronze Art Award Qualification Specification.

<sup>17</sup> The Bronze Art Award requires 40 hours of guided learning and an additional 20 hours of independent learning time. The award is of the same standard as GCSE grades 1-3. In order to achieve the award, learners are required to 'create an individual arts log or portfolio that demonstrates how they meet the following [criterion]: 1) Development of interests, knowledge and skills through active participation in any art form; 2) Experience of at least one arts event/ experience as an audience member; 3) Research into the work of an artist/craftsperson that inspires them, and; 4) Experience of passing on an arts skill, (see: Bronze Art Award Qualification Specification).

<sup>18</sup> Correspondence with Siobhan Gray & Fiona Taylor, 30.10.2023.

<sup>19</sup> See: <https://www.artsaward.org.uk/site/?id=66> for outline and, for qualification criteria: <https://tinyurl.com/bdhwdnmr>.

<sup>20</sup> Interview with Marie Collins, October 2023.

<sup>21</sup> Interview with Siobhan Gray, October 2023.

<sup>22</sup> RL Arts Team Project evaluation and monitoring framework— ArtBOSS (May–October 2022).

Through participation in ArtBOSS, young producers have had the opportunity to undertake their Bronze Art Award which aims to enable 'learners to develop a basic understanding of arts practice and some knowledge of arts provision in the community' and, through this process, 'to grow their arts and leadership talents'.<sup>16</sup> A qualification such as this requires the awardee to present their achievements in a systematic way.<sup>17</sup> In turn, this process assists them in recognising and— potentially—utilising their skills. In order to deliver and verify the Arts Award, Youth Services staff completed training with Trinity College. This approach facilitated the provision of an award that matches the arts and cultural experience.<sup>18</sup>

When, in March 2022, those participating in the first ArtBOSS cohort were able to proceed to the newly inaugurated Yo! Producers programme, they were in the process of completing their Bronze Art Award. Continuation to Yo! Producers came with the prospect of progressing towards completion of the Silver Art Award.<sup>19</sup> The creation of Yo! Producers has ensured that there is an onward pathway for those who have completed the initial programme and wish to continue their creative skills development. Further, the Silver Art Award, places greater emphasis on encouraging volunteering, mentoring and leadership qualities<sup>20</sup> and, 'finding out about professionals; arts professionals and what they do and how you can [...] go to university [and] do any kind of arts career.'<sup>21</sup> A number of Yo! Producers identified the achievement of their Silver Award as a primary goal in programme feedback.<sup>22</sup>

The initiatives undertaken through ArtBOSS have often created networking and steppingstone opportunities for widening knowledge of the local cultural and arts offerings and furthering participation in arts and culture in a variety of ways. For example:

- Work on the walking tour app developed to contribute to THCARS2 brought ArtBOSSes into contact with Fèis Phàislig, an arts organisation specialising in 'promoting interest, education and participation in the traditional arts and Gaelic culture across Renfrewshire'.<sup>23</sup>
- The music walking trail app launched at Paisley's Spree Festival, 2021.<sup>24</sup>
- Participation in artist facilitated workshops to construct giant creepy crawlies displayed at Paisley's Halloween Festival contributed to Bronze and Silver Art Award qualifications and, provided opportunity for some ArtBOSSes to volunteer as event stewards.<sup>25</sup>
- Graphic novel, The Attic, was launched at the Paisley Book Festival.<sup>26</sup>
- Collaboration with researchers at UWS on the Paisley School of Arts<sup>27</sup> project placed ArtBOSSes at the intersection between art, creativity and knowledge creation; using photography, video and sound recording to create artwork generate new ways of thinking about 'Paisley, people, arts and education'.<sup>28</sup>

Notably, feedback from ArtBOSSes highlighted the genuine enjoyment they experienced from the degree to which they were able to participate in the Fèis Phàislig led workshop. Further, one ArtBOSS observed 'through my experience at ArtBOSS, it has given me the confidence to volunteer at other creative groups.'<sup>29</sup> This latter point is underscored by ArtBOSS's Co-ordinator and Producer Marie Collins, who observed that involvement in ArtBOSS has led participants to discover additional groups of interest and, whereas previously lack of knowledge or confidence may have held them back, now 'they've got friends [...] they can go along with'. Furthermore, a wide range of trips and visits has opened up the local cultural landscape which has, in turn, been a catalyst for exploration.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>23</sup> See: <https://feisphaislig.com/>.

<sup>24</sup> See: <https://paisley.is/visit/paisleys-musical-history/>.

<sup>25</sup> ArtBOSS Programme Report October–December 2022.

<sup>26</sup> See: Artistic Youngsters Create a Graphic Novel—Paisley Daily Express.

<sup>27</sup> See: <https://sites.google.com/sbe.uws.ac.uk/psa/home>.

<sup>28</sup> RL Arts Team Project evaluation and monitoring framework – ArtBOSS (April–June 2022). See: Fresh Expeditions, <https://sites.google.com/sbe.uws.ac.uk/psa/community-projects/fresh-expeditions>

<sup>29</sup> See: Future Paisley 2021 Reporting Template: ArtBoss.

<sup>30</sup> Interview with Marie Collins, October 2023.

Taking part in arts and cultural activities on a regular basis enhances young people's mental health and wellbeing.

<sup>31</sup> For example: Woodhouse, (n.d.).

<sup>32</sup> Correspondence with Siobhan Gray & Fiona Taylor, 30.10.2023.

By way of helping care experienced young people and young carers to find pathways towards art and cultural endeavours, ArtBOSS has sought to enhance their mental health and wellbeing. The value of arts and culture for health and wellbeing outcomes is widely acknowledged.<sup>31</sup> Through provision of such activities, ArtBOSS opened a route towards the recognised benefits of such engagements. Furthermore, there were a wide range of settings in which ArtBOSS was delivered (workshops, both in-person and—as necessary through the Pandemic—online, day trips, events and other happenings), creating environments that functioned as safe spaces for social interaction—underpinned by a youth work pedagogy—and, when appropriate, discussion of worries, concerns and accomplishments and joys of day-to-day life.<sup>32</sup>

Among reported benefits, ArtBOSS participants described making new friends, being inspired by others, increased confidence and self-esteem, improved teamwork, communication and problem-solving skills.<sup>33</sup> ArtBOSS involvement also helped young people—for whom circumstances at home could be challenging—to counter social isolation and, participate in a positive community setting.<sup>34</sup> By late 2021, group sessions were 'opened [ ... ] half-an-hour early for the young people to come in, chat and have access to support from youth workers before the session [began].<sup>35</sup> This allowed [the young people to feel validated/supported].<sup>36</sup> In turn, such support ensures that participants are then able to concentrate on, and engage with, the arts programme.<sup>37</sup> The explicit inclusion of a 'youth work' aspect of the ArtBOSS offer has—in the view of Community Learning Officer and ArtBOSS co-coordinator, Siobhan Gray—been significant for achieving good, regular attendance for a core group of ArtBOSSes as 'the young people are not just getting an arts club. They have the youth work element attached to it, so they know there's the role models to go to [ ... ] young people experiencing issues or needing support with anything can come to us outwith [the ArtBOSS] sessions. So, there's a lot more support there for them than just once a week.'<sup>38</sup>

In addition to the opportunity to validate the ArtBOSS experience through the achievement of a Bronze or Silver Art Award, recognition was also accrued when ArtBOSS received the accolade of the Young Scots Arts Award.<sup>39</sup> This success was both thrilling and effort affirming, imbuing group members with confidence and self-esteem; indeed it is something that members of that group still recall with pride.<sup>40</sup> An additional dividend has been 'put[ting] ArtBOSS on the map, even just locally' which brought benefit with regard to partnership working and negotiating local opportunities for ArtBOSSes as potential collaborators now knew of the group.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>33</sup> RL Arts Team Project evaluation and monitoring framework—ArtBOSS (April-June 2022).

<sup>34</sup> RL Arts Team Project evaluation and monitoring framework—ArtBOSS (April-June 2022).

<sup>35</sup> This is part of the youth work self-evaluation approach, initiated to further support young people's social and wellbeing needs (Correspondence with Siobhan Gray & Fiona Taylor, 30.10.2023).

<sup>36</sup> RL Arts Team Project evaluation and monitoring framework—ArtBOSS (October-December 2021).

<sup>37</sup> Correspondence with Siobhan Gray & Fiona Taylor, 30.10.2023.

<sup>38</sup> Interview with Siobhan Gray, October 2023.

<sup>39</sup> See: Craggins, (2021).

<sup>40</sup> Interview with Siobhan Gray, October 2023.

<sup>41</sup> Interview with Marie Collins, October 2023.

## Young people develop new skills, both arts and culture-focussed skills and transferable skills

ArtBOSS has striven to provide participants with both knowledge of, and insight into, 'all the skills that they would need to be a young producer [...] understanding of all the things you could do [...] and [with experience and skills] to put on their CV.'<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, the emphasis on provision of high-level opportunity, working alongside sector professionals on many occasions, has been a crucial contributor to participant retention while also ensuring that ArtBOSSes are enabled to grow their skills set and networks to the greatest extent.<sup>43</sup>

Witnessing positive progress in the development of participants' soft skills and the way in which they are able to better manage their interpersonal relationships has been reported as one of the most gratifying outcomes of the programme.<sup>44</sup> For example, the volunteering opportunities on offer through ArtBOSS count towards Saltire Hours.<sup>45</sup> The Hours are the Scottish Government's way of celebrating, recognising and rewarding the commitment, contribution and achievements of young volunteers in Scotland, aged between 12 and 25.<sup>46</sup> Registration on the Saltire Hours portal allows volunteers to track their hours; certificates are awarded for significant milestones (e.g. 25, 50, 100 hours of time banked), outstanding contributions can be acknowledged thorough nomination for a Summit Award. Some ArtBOSSes have already achieved their 500-hour Saltire certificate.<sup>47</sup> The Youth Work approach assists young people in the process of reflecting on their experiences in order to understand their progression and have insight into their personal development.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Interview with Siobhan Gray, October 2023.

<sup>43</sup> Interview with Marie Collins, October 2023.

<sup>44</sup> Interview with Siobhan Gray, October 2023.

<sup>45</sup> <https://saltireawards.scot/>

<sup>46</sup> See: <https://saltireawards.scot/about>

<sup>47</sup> Interview with Siobhan Gray, October 2023.

<sup>48</sup> Correspondence with Siobhan Gray & Fiona Taylor, 30.10.2023.

People feel pride in Paisley and are optimistic about the town's future

Involvement with ArtBOSS has brought programme participants into contact with Paisley's broader cultural, social and historical landscape in a variety of ways. Trips and visits, activities such as developing the walking tour app, collaborating with museum staff as Youth Ambassadors and, the contribution to the recent Chimes Project<sup>49</sup> have the potential to reframe and reinvigorate ArtBOSSes' views of their hometown. Indeed, both Marie Collins and Siobhan Gray made observations in this regard. The opportunity of involvement in flagship elements of Paisley's cultural offer—such as Sma' Shot Day and the Halloween Festival—has helped ArtBOSSes to recognise that cool stuff does happen in Paisley.<sup>50</sup> Such activities have also fostered a valuable sense of ownership, whereby ArtBOSSes 'will say [that] they've created music for [the Chimes Project] and they're so proud that they want to tell their friends about it [...] and say "we've been here, we did this project" [...] there's much more ownership over Paisley [...] they are quite proud of where they come from.'<sup>51</sup>

<sup>49</sup> See: Restoring the sounds of history: The Chimes Project brings Paisley Town Hall's Carillon back to life.

<sup>50</sup> Interview with Marie Collins, October 2023.

<sup>51</sup> Interview with Siobhan Gray, October 2023.

## Insights from ARTBOSS

The ArtBOSS programme demonstrates that multifaceted benefits can accrue from creating an appropriately resourced and supported cultural space for a specific group who might otherwise struggle to access arts and cultural experiences. Crucial contributions to its success have included:

- Co-production of the project agenda alongside programme participants. Empowering ArtBOSSes to make decisions about where the group should focus has helped to ensure engagement and sustained interest.
- Provision of Youth Work support within the art space. Ensuring that attendance at ArtBOSS guarantees a safe space to talk and seek assistance with any problems or issues improves focus and increases positive associations with attendance at ArtBOSS.
- Opportunity to engage in high-level/ high-quality collaboration with sector professionals—and subsequently to see work displayed/ performed in professional event settings—means that the future possibilities offered by the arts and cultural sector, and the pathways towards them, are clearly in evidence for programme participants. ArtBOSS offers far more than the opportunity to 'do some arts and crafts.'

- ArtBOSS has adapted to meet needs as the programme has developed. It is now recognised that all new staff facilitating this programme should undergo training for working with young people who have experienced trauma before taking up their role. This has been identified as a crucial change in approach which, links ArtBOSS into the Promise.<sup>52</sup> To ensure a youth-centred approach, knowledge of safeguarding and child protection procedures are crucial element of a needs-led approach.<sup>53</sup>
- The focus on volunteering, leadership, and mentoring (particularly evident within Yo! Producers), is a significant benefit; particularly as this can be further recognised through mechanisms such as Saltire Hours.
- Progression of ArtBOSSes and Yo! Producers into other opportunities,<sup>54</sup> their involvement in supporting other young people in their communities to access arts and cultural experiences and, in planning / seeking funding to support the future of the programme is a significant success.

Going forward, it would be valuable to attempt to track the kinds of opportunities that (former) ArtBOSS participants are able to access. Ideally, ArtBOSSes will have both recognised qualifications (Silver & Bronze Art Awards), volunteering experience (Saltire Hours) and other programme derived experience and networking to build upon.

<sup>52</sup> <https://thepromise.scot/>

<sup>53</sup> Correspondence with Siobhan Gray & Fiona Taylor, 30.10.2023.

<sup>54</sup> For example: Youth Services Youth Leadership Residential Training.

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**ART BOSS**  
CREATIVE YOUNG PRODUCERS  
SUMMER PROGRAMME!

TUESDAYS  
1PM-3PM  
GLENBURN  
COMMUNITY CENTRE  
LUNCH PROVIDED

- 5TH JULY  
WHAT IS A CREATIVE PRODUCER?
- 12TH JULY  
THE GUIDE TO BECOMING THE ULTIMATE VLOGGER
- 26TH JULY  
CREATIVE WRITING & FILMMAKING
- 2ND AUGUST  
BEACH PHOTOGRAPHY (MILLPORT TRIP)
- 9TH AUGUST  
LET'S GET AN ARTS AWARD!

