

Brighton Young City Reads

an Arts Award Discover pilot project



Image: Sam Luck Photography

Launched in 2003, Brighton's Young City Reads is a simple concept: one book by one author is selected for the whole community to read, sparking discussions, debates and creativity as they come together to engage in a series of special events, workshops and performances across the city.

In 2017, Artswork supported the initiative, led by Collected Works, enabling them to pilot the embedding of Arts Award Discover as part of the ten-week project, to add value and better engage with children in the region. Vicky Tremain of Collected Works told us about the process.

The People

Collected Works
Brighton & Hove Libraries
Brighton Festival

Queen's Park Primary School
Carden Primary School
Brighton Dome

Successes

"Our aim for the 2017 Young City Reads was to run Arts Award Discover alongside what we already programme. We wanted to produce a new resource in the form of a logbook that participating children could use to track their journey", says Vicky, Project Manager at Collected Works.

The Arts Award element really enhanced the project for the children taking part in Young City Reads, Vicky explains: "Many of them said that filling in their logbook was their favourite element of the whole project (even over meeting the author!)" The school's encouragement here added to their enthusiasm, she says. "They held a special assembly about the project and showcased the booklets. A member of our team handed out the Arts Award certificates, which was a really nice way to promote the project to other teachers in the school as well."

Jason Lees, Class Teacher from Queens Park Primary School, was among the impressed: "The books were great and the children really loved working in them during any free time they had. I allowed them to be independent so they had complete ownership of what they did in their logbooks. It really got them involved with reading as a communal event rather than the more solitary activity it can often be."

A sustainable resource

Vicky believes they used their resources wisely, investing in a designer to create something that could be long lasting. "The fact we could afford to have a professional designer work on the logbooks meant that we were left with an extremely high quality resource – one we've made sure will work year on year and with any new book title that's chosen."

Training and Partnerships

Alongside the resource, Collected Works want to emphasise the value of training, and how important it was to be able to make connections with other organisations. "Being able to not only train our staff as Arts Award advisers, but also our partners, was extremely valuable – it means we have been able to hit the ground running in 2018 with regards to the Arts Award element of the project." Plus, she explains, it also ensured that everyone felt able to plan the project's logistics together: "It meant we were all on the same page. The library service took responsibility for the 'share' element of the Arts Award process, by displaying work in the library itself. The children's parents were invited to see it for themselves."

Challenges

The project was not without its challenges too. Carden Primary, who had three of their classes due to take part, had to drop out of the project halfway through. "Unfortunately, it was down to staffing issues and SATs pressure. It was too late to offer the Arts Award element to another school at this point, but we will be able to use the booklets for another school as part of Young City Reads 2018. We hope to still meet our target of 150 children achieving Arts Awards.

Another aspect that was to run alongside this work was a series of drama workshops for the children. Collected Works had previously worked with Root Experience and were hoping to be able to do so this time around too, but the funding from the publisher fell through so they weren't able to. "Instead, we were able to send in Collected Works staff to the participating classes at Queen's Park Primary, so they could support the children to finish their workbooks and take photographs of the process too", Vicky explains.

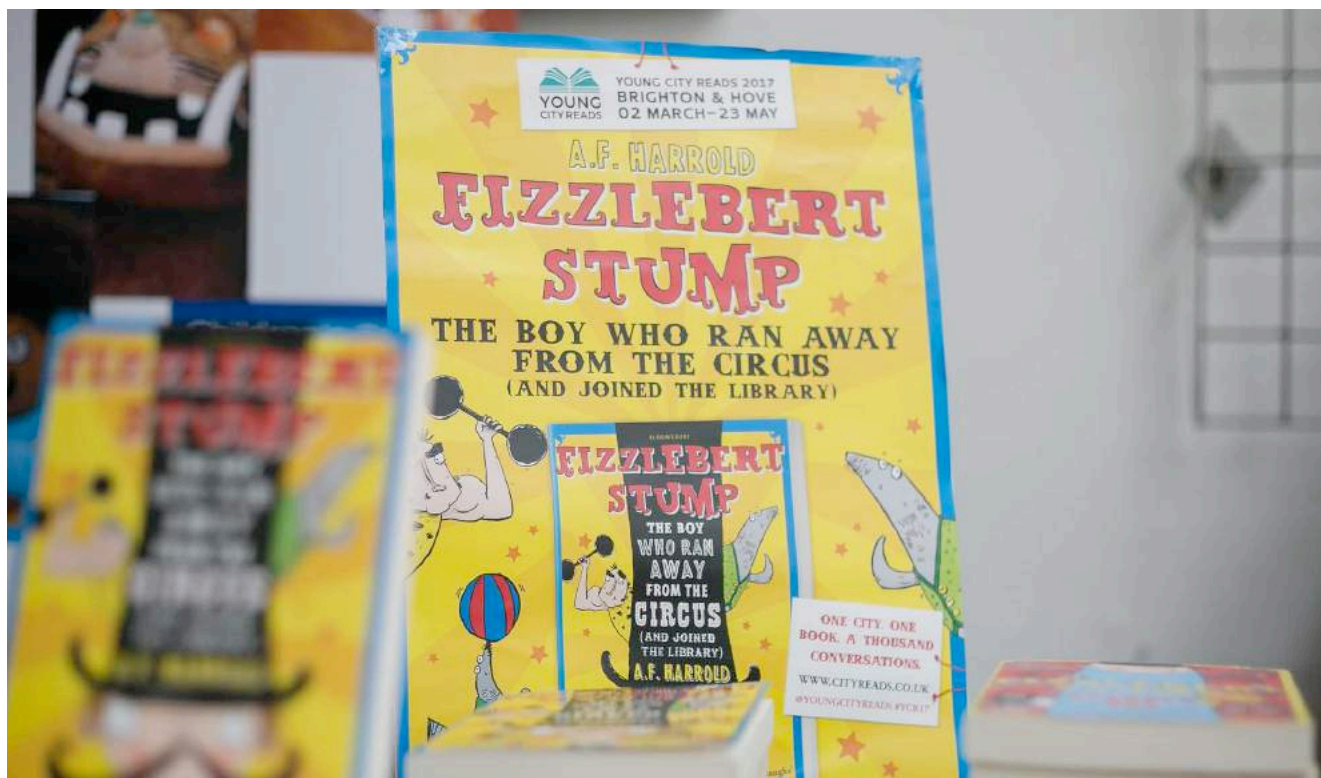


Image: Sam Luck Photography

“ It’s really nice to read the book together because we can talk about what’s happened with each other.

Pupil

Learning

“We’ve learnt a lot from trialing Arts Award as an add-on to our work”, says Vicky. “We feel it could be something tangible that schools would pay to do alongside taking part in Young City Reads.”

“There was a great mutual benefit to the library taking on the ‘share’ element of the Arts Award process”, she says. Brighton & Hove Library Service have said they would be keen to see these kinds of displays happening across all of their community libraries, so “participating schools could choose to share their work at their nearest library branch”.

Future Initiatives

“For the 2018 Young City Reads, we are going offer the remaining booklets that we had allocated for targeted schools to a school that we are keep to work with and haven’t before”, explains Vicky. “We know they have a high percentage of pupils on free schools meals, and a lot of reluctant readers. We will also be approaching schools who can afford to pay for the add-on to see if they would pay a packaged price for the booklets, certificates and the admin fee.”

When asked if she has any recommendations for others working on



Image: Sam Luck Photography

Out of this world. Bright. Fun. Interesting. Amazing. Brilliant. Epic.
Outstanding. 5 out of 5 stars. Woohoo!

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Pupil

similar projects with young people, Vicky replies: “We would recommend getting logbooks printed at a high quality if possible. Teachers were really pleased that the books were so well designed, and it got the children excited about working in them. It also meant they were durable – they lasted well despite multiple trips to and from school in bags, and going in and out of trays in the classroom.”

“There is certainly an ongoing appetite for the Arts Award add-on from children and teachers alike”, says Vicky. “Libraries will continue to support this, and the hope is that in 2018, we will have more support

from Brighton Festival’s marketing team to assist in the sharing of the work.”

Progression Routes

Vicky happily reports that the project introduced a lot of children and their teachers to Arts Award, and both schools were interested in the idea of children progressing through to other levels of the Award. “The hope is that the schools will go on to look at embedding Arts Award in other activities too.” As for the next Young City Reads, she has high hopes: “We will be offering more young people taking part in 2018 the opportunity to work towards Arts Award Discover.”

Case study compiled by Laura Smith, Communications Writer,
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From a Project Evaluation by Vicky Tremain, Collected Works CIC



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