

PROJECTS

Choices

[Newcastle upon Tyne / North Tyneside] 2003 to present

An annual programme of arts activity for young people (10 to 18 years old) in the youth justice system, devised and delivered in partnership with the North of Tyne ISSP (Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programme) and Newcastle Youth Offending Team.

Choices aims to provide young people involved with the youth justice system in the Newcastle and North Tyneside areas with an opportunity to:

- Raise their self-esteem and encourage personal and social development;
- Develop new skills and interests and experience new activities;
- Experience new life choices and help them realise their aspirations;
- Share new achievements with others;
- Explore a range of opportunities to become involved in education, training or leisure projects, based on their individual interests and aspirations;
- Raise their awareness of positive cycles of behaviour.

Choices also seeks to challenge negative attitudes towards young offenders and to present these young people in a positive light.

Working with a creative writer and Superkrush Productions, the group have produced two short documentary films, *Clamped* and *Ronnie Gets the Show On*, exploring what it is like to wear an electronic tag. Available on DVD, the films are now being used by the Youth Justice Board as part of the training of magistrates. In September/October 2005, *Clamped* was showcased at the Raindance Film Festival (London) and the Co-op Young Filmmakers Festival (Bradford). *Ronnie Gets the Show On* was screened at the Leeds Young People's International Film Festival in March 2007 and at the Cooperative Young Filmmakers Festival in October 2007.

In 2006, the group worked with a team of independent film producers, a creative writer and actors from Live Youth Theatre to produce a film, *My World* for the Newcastle Resettlement and Aftercare Provision programme (RAP). In January 2007 *My World* won the **Royal Television Society Award for Best Film for a Target Audience** and is used by the Youth Offending Team to promote the benefits and services of the RAP programme.

During 2007 the group worked with IF Films to produce a love story called *Day Trippin'* and a series of short films, and with cartoonist Suzy Varty to create a collection of cartoon portraits that explore the lives and identities of young offenders. These portraits are now on permanent display in YOT and ISSP offices across the North East. The group also completed a set of graffiti boards commissioned by Nexus that were on display at Chillingham Road Metro station between September 2007 and January 2008.

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More recently the group worked with filmmaker Kate Sweeney to create a film called *Who am I?*, filming at venues across Newcastle, Gateshead and North Tyneside. This nine-month residency ended with a three-day exhibition of audio visual work created by the young people and included screenings of the film. This work was on display at The Artworks Gallery in Byker until mid September 2008 and the film screened at the Cooperative Young Filmmakers Festival in Bradford on 9th October.

At the end of 2008 and into 2009, the group worked with three artists in residence (circus and physical theatre and animation/music practitioners), which proved to be an exciting combination. This work has been drawn together into a DVD animation and accompanying booklet and an exhibition of work was held at the ISSP during June 2009.

The Choices project also developed a partnership with Dance City to deliver a number of dance workshop programmes aimed at developing more formal approaches to identifying progression routes and encouraging young people on ISSP to access ETE (education, training and employment) opportunities.

Three of the young people on the programme are currently completing their **Bronze Arts Award, NVQ Level 1**, and you can read their arts event reviews by following the link from the Choices web page (www.helixarts.com/pages/choices.html).

The 2008/09 programme was funded by the North of Tyne ISSP, Arts Council England North East and The Northern Rock Foundation



Graffiti Board by the Choices Group



Still from the film *Who am I?* by Kate Sweeney

PIONEERING COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS THROUGH THE ARTS