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We are committed to being open and accessible. We welcome all comments on our work. Please send these to Richard Russell, Director of External Relations and Development at the Arts Council England, South East address above.

A close-up photograph of a young child with brown hair, wearing a white t-shirt and a blue and white patterned headband. The child has intricate green and blue face paint on their cheeks and forehead, including swirls and geometric patterns. The child is smiling and looking slightly to the right. In the background, another child is visible, also with face paint, but they are out of focus.

Children, young people and the arts:

South East regional strategy

Arts Council England is the national development agency for the arts in England. Between 2005 and 2008 we are investing £1.7 billion of public funds from Government and the National Lottery. This is the bedrock of support for the arts in England.

Our vision is to promote the arts at the heart of national life, reflecting England's rich and diverse cultural identity.

We believe that the arts have the power to transform lives and communities, and to create opportunities for people throughout the country.

In our manifesto *Ambitions for the arts 2003–2006* we set out to:

- prioritise individual artists
- work with funded organisations to help them thrive rather than just survive
- place cultural diversity at the heart of our work
- prioritise young people and Creative Partnerships
- maximise growth in the arts

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Cover image: Over 500 students from 22 schools took part in a term-long Creative Partnerships dance programme. This culminated in students performing alongside professional dancers to an audience of thousands at Dance in the Park in Slough.

Photo: Benedict Johnson



Arts Council England, South East

'The South East is a region with exceptional strengths. With a population of over eight million people, it's one of the largest regions in the UK and is a dynamic, creative place to live and work. The South East is home to many enormously exciting and productive arts practitioners and organisations. Arts Council England, South East is working in several partnerships to ensure that children and young people have the best opportunity to benefit from this regional creativity – increasing their learning and skills and realising their aspirations.'

Felicity Harvest

Executive Director, Arts Council England, South East

Ringmer Community College boys' dance group perform at the 2005 Artsmark awards ceremony at Sevenoaks Playhouse. The boys performing have been taking dance since Year 7 and the dance group has been running for two years. This energetic piece is based on extreme sports, in particular skydiving. It challenges the boys' technical skills, requiring good timing and cooperation.

Photo: David McHugh

The South East is the second largest regional economy in the UK and accounts for more than 15 per cent of its gross domestic product. A recent regional economic impact study identified the significant contribution of the creative and cultural industries to the economy of the South East. This is a region of contrasts, however, and significant levels of deprivation persist alongside this economic success.

Arts Council England, South East has developed and implemented a portfolio of work to increase and improve access for all children and young people to the creative activity of the region.

We have established four Creative Partnerships – in Slough, East Kent, Southampton/Isle of Wight and Hastings/East Sussex. Our regularly funded arts organisations undertake a wide range of work and we have also built a strong network of arts education and youth arts partnerships with local authorities and other agencies.

The Artsmark award continues to grow – by 2005, 421 schools in the region had achieved Artsmark status. We plan to ensure that young people across our region will have opportunities to achieve the young people's Arts Award.

We now wish to maximise the impact of our current programmes by expanding and developing work with, for and by children and young people. We plan to ensure that the voice of young people informs and influences our strategic approach – and our 2005/06 programme of work will begin this process.

Our national aims for children and young people

The aims of Arts Council England for children and young people up to 2008 are:

- to foster a world-leading arts infrastructure alongside other cultural organisations that supports and values the cultural expression of children and young people and increases their opportunities to engage in activities relevant to their needs and interests
- to ensure the arts and creativity have a place within wider Government and other policy agendas that have an impact on children and young people
- to see wide social recognition of the value and transformational power of the arts and creativity, particularly in relation to children and young people

Arts Council England will achieve a high quality of creative arts and cultural engagement for all children and young people by:

- ensuring that we hear the views of children and young people, engage them in decisions that affect them and broaden the range and appeal of our 'offer' so that it is relevant
- identifying areas of need and targeting our resources strategically
- developing the skills, capacity and knowledge within our sector
- using our programmes and initiatives strategically
- working with our partner institutions to maximise the contribution of the arts to children and young people
- advocating for the arts through monitoring, evaluating and sharing high-quality work

Our regional priorities for action

Arts Council England, South East has identified a range of activities which we will carry out in partnership – up to 2008 and beyond. In doing so, we will ensure that our regional strategy has diversity and inclusion at its heart and contributes to achieving the key Government objectives for children and young people as set out in *Every Child Matters* and *Youth Matters*.

We wish to create a climate in which a network of enterprising and creative young people can grow – facilitated by the national Arts Award – with clear progression routes to further or higher education or to employment.

From working in depth in very focused geographical areas, the Creative Partnerships, through their new sub-regional Creative Learning Hub roles, will move in a phased way to facilitate a networked and networking creative learning community across the region. This will offer leadership for the arts, education and creative learning sectors through effective knowledge and skill sharing, action-based research and the promotion of opportunities for continuing professional development.

Over the next few years we will also:

- build the infrastructure for arts education and youth arts, in partnership with local authorities, to ensure strong local partners to work with the Creative Learning Hubs. This will enable more children and young people to access the arts, particularly in the most deprived areas, as well as those young people at risk of offending or re-offending
- work with regularly funded organisations to increase their leadership role and facilitate implementation of effective, innovative and integrated education and creative learning programmes
- ensure continuous professional development and capacity-building for the arts, cultural, education and youth sectors, as they are key to sustainable improvement. We will do this through the work of the Creative Learning Hubs and arts education and youth arts partnerships

In order to achieve our aims effectively and in strong partnerships, we will:

- develop a South East Creative Learning Forum to act as an advisory and advocacy body. Working with the wider regional and cultural agencies, it will provide regional leadership and overview
- ensure that the regional strategy delivers appropriately against key Government objectives relating to all children/young people and those who work with them
- lead an ongoing process of consultation and dialogue – including with young people – to ensure that our strategy is meeting identified needs
- establish a full, ongoing and reflective monitoring and evaluation process
- lead an effective advocacy campaign, highlighting examples of excellent practice

The full regional strategy is available from Arts Council England, South East.

M3 by M4 – Making, Meaning and Material was a year-long programme run by Creative Partnerships Slough and Making It Work. Professional craftspeople, including textile artists, wood carvers and jewellery and furniture makers, worked with art, design and technology teachers and students from 16 Slough schools.

Photo: Anne Brown



Regularly funded organisations and initiatives in the region

Arts Council England's regularly funded organisations already provide a wide range of opportunities for children and young people to enjoy and participate in the arts. We wish to enhance the capacity of these organisations to act as leaders in arts education and creative learning, and to become increasingly effective champions in the communities within which they are based.

We will build a strong regional framework to deliver our strategy and embed its principles of inclusion and diversity. To do this, we will develop four sub-regional Creative Learning Hubs (ensuring a legacy for Creative Partnership practice in the region) and work with local authorities and other agencies.

We will strengthen the network of arts education and youth arts partners, enhance our partnership with the Specialist Schools Trust, develop new relationships with the early years, further and higher education sectors and work in increasingly effective partnerships with the creative and cultural industries of the South East. The Creative Learning Hubs will act as central pivots to ensure effective, joined-up regional working, thus creating the environment for increased learning and innovation.

We believe this regional framework will also increase engagement by schools with the Artsmark award and will extend the reach of the young people's Arts Award, creating a large cohort of enterprising young people.



Collaboration

We value our well-developed partnerships and want to increase their effectiveness.

The regional cultural consortium, Culture South East, is a primary route for bringing together regional cultural agencies and this will be complemented by the new South East Regional Creative Learning Forum that we will establish.

Our links with local authorities are supported by our local authority partnership agreements and we believe the local area agreements will facilitate partnership working across the cultural sector. We have excellent relationships with the Government Office of the South East and with the South East England Regional Development Agency and we wish to continue to work with them. In order to embed the role of the arts and creativity in the educational, social and economic development of the region, we will also work with the Learning and Skills Councils, the Youth Justice Board and other agencies.

Year 11 GCSE dance students at Yateley School perform *Ghost Dances* at the 2005 Artsmark awards ceremony in the Corn Exchange, Newbury. *Ghost Dances* is based on a true story of political oppression in Chile, where thousands of innocent civilians were killed, tortured or kidnapped. The students recently took their practical examination and received the highest accolade of grade A*. Photo: David McHugh

How to work with us

Arts Council England, South East's strategy for children, young people, the arts and creative learning is a dynamic and flexible work plan for the next five years. It will be a 'living' document, subject to regular monitoring and evaluation so that it stays relevant and responds to change and opportunity. We want to work with you. If you would like more information about any aspects of the strategy, please get in touch with us:

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