



Equi-Art

Project Report

January - March 2020



Changing Lives with Art-Based Activities

Sirona Therapeutic Horsemanship CIO



Equi-Art Project

at Sirona Therapeutic Horsemanship – January to March 2020

Introduction

During January to March 2020 Sirona ran a pilot art project to make some mosaic and clay signs for our buildings. The project was supported by a grant from Devon County Council small grants fund for disabled children.

A local community artist Jan O'Highway provided 12 Equi-Art sessions to disadvantaged and disabled young people as a weekly artist in residence where young people and volunteers supported by Sirona practitioners could drop in as they wished on an informal basis. The young people and Sirona team helped design the signs, choose the colours and layout, and made clay artwork figures of equine-related objects from around the centre to decorate and illustrate the mosaic signs. Young people also collected natural objects from the environment around Sirona for inspiration. The clay objects they made included snails and leaves, tack room items such as stirrups, riding boots and brushes, Ginger our resident yard cat and Elsie the dog, horse heads, rosettes and hearts. Young people chose the colour glazes they wanted and the objects were then glazed and fired back at the artist's studio.

The Equi-Art project ran from January to March and we were lucky to complete the main sessions just before the COVID-19 lock-down. The only difference we had to make to the project was that due to the COVID-19 crisis the artist had to complete the mosaic part of the project in her studio which initially the young people were going to be involved in.



Aim of the project

Through participating in the Sirona Equi-Art project we hoped that through being involved in creating new mosaic signs for our buildings and seeing their creative contributions publicly displayed, young people would in addition feel a sense of involvement, value and belonging at Sirona and lead to a feeling of self-worth and increased self-esteem.

Benefits & Outcomes



There are many reports into the benefits of participating in art activities including a large study which stated that, "early exposure to the arts greatly improves future achievement". The biggest study into arts education in secondary school ever undertaken, Arts Education in Secondary Schools: Effects and Effectiveness*, found that pupils studying art, music, drama and dance accrued heightened enjoyment and fulfilment, an increase in skill and knowledge, advances in personal and social development, development of creativity and thinking skills and the enrichment of communication and expressive skills."

(Study published by the National Foundation for Educational Research <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2000/oct/10/schools>).

Another study reported that participating in art education is especially valuable for 'at-risk' young people, stating; 'At-risk students who have access to the arts in or out of school also tend to have better academic results, better workforce opportunities, and more civic engagement'. This study claimed that arts education resulted in;

Better academic outcomes -- Teenagers and young adults of low socioeconomic (SES) status who have a history of in-depth arts involvement ("high arts") show better academic outcomes than low-SES youth with less arts involvement ("low arts"). They earn better grades and have higher rates of college enrolment and attainment.

Higher career goals -- There is a marked difference between the career aspirations of young adults with and without arts backgrounds.

(*The Arts and Achievement in At-Risk Youth: Findings from Four Longitudinal Studies*. <https://www.arts.gov/news/2012/new-nea-research-report-shows-potential-benefits-arts-education-risk-youth>).

Feedback from the participants and parents/carers.

Young people and their carers/referrers completed scaling questionnaire forms at the start and end of the sessions. In addition, we asked for feedback questionnaires at the end of the sessions. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 outbreak we were unable to gather all of the end session feedback questionnaires but include some of the feedback collected below;

*'Helped me feel calmer
and not so anxious'.*

Young person attending

*'When I'm at Sirona I feel
like I can be who I want to
be, I can wear what I
want, look how I want and
I won't; get judged for
who I am. Its like (a) safe
place to go'*

Young person attending

*'(he) He's soooo happy,
relaxed and can't wait to
go every week. I've never
seen him so excited to go
somewhere every week,
he loves it!*

Parent of young person on the
Autistic Spectrum



*'It has helped me be calmer
and less stressed out'.*

Young person attending

*'Everyone is in agreement
about how much she is
benefitting from what you
provide and it is definitely
the highlight of her week!!'*

SENCO



An unexpected positive outcome of the Equi-Art project was that a number of young people who attended had never had the opportunity to participate in clay work and pottery previously. One of these young people who is in residential children's accommodation, was identified as possessing a real talent for clay work. He was able to focus and be calmer whilst engaging in the Equi-Art sessions. As a result, he was provided with some clay to take home to his residential accommodation and encouraged by his children's home to nurture this talent.

Conclusion

The Equi-Art project was a great success and in addition to young people contributing to the creation of beautiful new signage for our centre there were the additional benefits of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds being given the opportunity to participate in a new activity which may open positive new opportunities in the future. Having an additional activity to offer young people attending Sirona also provides an alternative option to equine activities for young people who may need an indoor, calming activity especially during adverse weather for example. There are also further opportunities for more formal Art Psychotherapy sessions at Sirona which we hope to explore in the future.

Artist in residence: Jan O'Highway <http://janohighway.com>

Master Blacksmith: Richard Bent FWCB www.redanvilforge.co.uk .



Sirona is a registered charity (Charitable Incorporated Organisation; CIO) and would not be able to operate without help from many people, companies and organisations. We would like to thank Devon County Council for helping fund the Equi-Art Activities at Sirona.



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