



Platform Thirty1

Let's Craft



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a Q&A with Sam Whelan, Director at Platform Thirty1

can you tell us about the Let's Craft packs?

We work with real artists and creative practitioners to design and create the packs, and the activities inside, for the children and young people. There are so many layers to the packs and so much to consider. For example, we may have some children who have never used a pair of scissors before or even held a pen, so we have to ensure the activities, materials and instructions are accessible. The artists create instructions for the art activity, differentiating them for various age groups – we don't want any of these young people feel excluded.

Generally, these families are given generic items when they are rebuilding their lives following domestic abuse – they don't even get to choose their clothes, for example. Our aim is make the young people feel special, so the packs aren't just a standard box. The boxes are decorated with stickers and filled with confetti, so it feels exciting and luxurious when the young people open them. They are wrapped up like presents!

Our vision is to inspire children and young people to harness the power of arts, creativity and culture for positive change.

background

Platform Thirty1 is a non-profit based in Derbyshire, specialising in enabling others to **cultivate social change through creativity.**

A strand of Platform Thirty1's work involves working with **women, children, and men who have experienced domestic abuse.**

Find out how Platform Thirty1's 'Let's Craft' packs, supported by funding from The Mighty Creatives, have helped to **support vulnerable families living in refuges** across Leicester/shire through the power of creativity.



Decorating their spaces in the refuge or in their new flat – just having that thing they've made put up on the wall – is so powerful for these children. The families often need to move very last minute and are placed in refuges or accommodation in an unfamiliar community. It helps to make their new surroundings feel like home.



what impact have the Let's Craft packs had on children and young people?

They've helped to make these children feel visible. It's become part of the rehabilitation process. It really gives the children a chance to discover what's possible, to develop new talents and interests, and work on a task from start to finish. Their lived experience and backgrounds mean that they don't often have spaces where they can shine. One of our outcomes for these young people is Pride and for them to feel happy. Trying something new and enjoying something in the moment is huge for these families.

Staff at the refuges we work with have told us that the children will excitedly tell them what they've made; the young people want to celebrate their creations. We've also heard that the mums will go out and buy new hooks so that the children's artwork can be put up around their spaces in the refuges or other accommodation they have been placed in – like garlands and pictures.

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can you tell us about the wider impact?



These families have a lot to contend with. In the refuges, they will have shared kitchen and living facilities, ongoing appointments with social services, but living essentially in one room. There is a massive demand for spaces in refuges, so many families end up in independent accommodation out in the community. In these cases, the families will only see the refuge workers a handful of times a month. The children may have to start a new school or face long journeys to attend their existing school. Therefore, they're also really isolated, so we asked ourselves the question: How do we reach these young people with creativity?

We've armed the refuge workers with the packs, so they can take them along when they visit the families in the community. The service workers working with these families have given us great feedback on the packs. They've commented on the quality and shared that they have helped them to have better conversations with the children, who struggle to open up.

The packs have been a great opportunity to mobilise activity, reaching those families both in the refuges and in the community, while empowering service workers to communicate more deeply with the young people. Through the packs, they can talk about the activity, the amazing art they've created, and build better relationships. It's a really nice way of connecting with the children and the family but is also a great way for the families inside the refuges to make connections too! We've heard that they will all talk about what artwork the young people have created.

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what's next?

We're hoping to secure extra funding so that we can continue supporting families as they move from refuges into independent accommodation. Even though these families go on to start the next phase of their lives outside of the refuges, they are still going through trauma. We know from our delivery in refuges the amazing outcomes creativity can have on entire families.

how would you describe your relationship working with TMC?

We feel reassured working with TMC, because of their work with children 'in need', which is very much aligned to our vision and values. We know that TMC advocate for these young people, and we know that TMC values and trusts our models of work and experience. TMC also understood why we wanted to commission artists for this work, rather than supplying an out-of-the-box pack. Like us, TMC values artists and their expertise. That's what makes our offer different.



what advice would you give to other organisations?

Really know your community – and be ready to get to know them before you do anything. The more vulnerable the group of people you're working with, the more complexities you will face. Stay curious and don't make assumptions about anything. Also, really think about quality of experience for the young people. Test your ideas and be open to changing and adapting them. You'll probably find that they develop over time into what's truly meaningful for your target community.



how would you sum up your experience?

It's amazing what can be achieved with small, but targeted, investment. It's had a powerful impact not only on our working relationship with refuges, but crucially, on children and young people within dispersed families.

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