

cultural entitlement for care experienced children and young people

A best practice guide for Virtual Schools









exciting



empowering

partnership

uplifting

{wow}



engagement

rewarding

challenging



inspiring

consolidating

reflection

worthwhile



motivating

thought-provoking







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about this guide

Between 2022-2024, 8 Virtual Schools from across the country embarked on an Artsmark pilot for Virtual Schools. The aim of the pilot was to explore whether the Artsmark Framework supported Virtual Schools in developing and demonstrating their commitment to arts and culture.

The Virtual Schools involved were:

- Birmingham
- Derbyshire
- Dudley
- Leicestershire
- Staffordshire
- Telford and Wrekin
- Waltham Forest
- Wolverhampton

what is artsmark?

Artsmark Award is the only award for arts and cultural provision in England. Through Artsmark, schools and education settings are recognised for their exceptional commitment to arts, culture and creativity through the award, accredited by Arts Council England.





Each Virtual School spent just under two years working on developing, deepening and measuring the impact of their arts and cultural offer for their children and young people. This resulted in participating Virtual Schools receiving their Artsmark awards, recognising their exceptional commitment to creativity.

This guide is a culmination of the learnings and examples of best practice from the pilot, informed by real work and achievements of participating Virtual Schools. It focuses on the creative practices within Virtual Schools identified throughout this pilot.

The aim of this guide is to support Virtual Schools to develop an exceptional arts and cultural offer for their children and young people, that makes real and long lasting impacts on their lives.

This arts programme saved my life. Thank you for everything, we are like a family.

Young Participant





It is likely that, as a child, whoever introduced us to a hobby, pastime or creative experience was a parent, grandparent or other family member.

Is this always the case for our care experienced children?

There is a recognition that each care experienced child or young person's early experiences would most likely have been adversely affected by trauma and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). Because of this, we know they're less likely to have accessed inspiring and high quality arts and cultural opportunities.

We know that arts, culture and creativity can have several positive benefits, especially for our care experienced children and young people, some of which are evidenced in this toolkit.

increased confidence

improved resilience

a sense of belonging

exploration of identity

teamwork and collaboration

a world of opportunities

The arts has improved my mental health, I feel a sense of belonging and I love that I can try new things and I am learning in new ways.

Young Participant

the artsmark framework

Artsmark is a development programme which empowers teachers and educators with the skills they need to embed arts, culture and creativity within their school or setting.

Settings who register for Artsmark go on a two-year journey of development, using the Artsmark Framework as a guide.

The framework has eight Artsmark award criteria which sets out the types of activity and practice that exemplify a broad and high-quality creative offer for children and young people. This clear and flexible framework supports schools to embed creativity across their whole curriculum and to address school improvement priorities.

This framework also includes Arts Council England's Quality Principles, which act as a touchstone of what quality looks like when developing creative and cultural work with and for children and young people. As part of their Artsmark journey, each school or setting has access to world-leading teacher CPD and support delivered by Goldsmiths, University of London, as well as resources available on the <u>Artsmark website</u>.



Settings who complete their journey receive the Artsmark award, which demonstrates their exceptional commitment to creativity at Silver, Gold and Platinum level. Artsmark is accredited by Arts Council England and is the only award for arts and culture provision in England.

















Artsmark Silver AwardAwarded by Arts
Council England





How can the Artsmark Framework support you to develop your offer?

The Artsmark Framework will support you to:

- Review your current provision and strategic approach to arts, culture and creativity with colleagues and senior leaders.
- Set aims and objectives for your Artsmark journey in your Statement of Commitment, which acts as your roadmap or plan for change.
- Monitor progress towards achieving your objectives throughout your journey.
- Identify appropriate evidence of impact to collect along the way.
- Evaluate your journey and the impact it has had on your whole setting when writing your Statement of Impact.

The team of Artsmark assessors award schools and settings against the framework criteria at the different levels, highlighting their successes and achievements.



Each criterion is just as important as the next. There is no hierarchy or specific order to these.

The Arts Council's Quality Principles underpin the Artsmark criteria and should be embedded in the planning, delivery and evaluation of each Artsmark journey.

This section offers you insights into how you can develop your arts and cultural offer at your Virtual School, providing practical top tips on steps you can take, as well as taking inspiration from our Artsmark Virtual Schools.







The partner having a clear understanding of the needs of care experienced young people has proved highly successful.

Virtual School Head Teacher

developing your offer:

power of partnerships

We know capacity is a challenge within Virtual Schools, but finding partnerships with arts and cultural organisations is a great way to lessen the load.

how have other virtual schools embedded partnership working?

Leicestershire Virtual School and Care to Dance

Leicestershire Virtual School has worked alongside <u>Care to Dance</u> for several years. Care to Dance, a **trauma-informed** organisation, aims to improve the wellbeing of care experienced children and young people through dance. As part of the partnership, children and young people have participated in dance projects, as well as achieved their dance leadership qualifications.

Together, they built a **collaborative and long-term relationship** by identifying **clear methods of communication** as well as clear roles, responsibilities and expectations. The Virtual School also worked with Care to Dance to **capture the impact** of the work, to encourage **advocacy and impact-sharing**, of which all went into Virtual School Head Teacher annual reports.

"It has provided children and young people with a variety of opportunities [...] They have gone on to see the benefits and 'why' their education is an important stepping stone to the next stage of their journey, to meet meaningful future aspirations"

Donna Chapman, Leicestershire Virtual School Head Teacher

power of partnerships



practical top tips

from virtual schools to develop partnerships

- Understand what's out there
 - Work with your wider arts and cultural community to understand what's on offer and who to reach out to.
- Advocate for the arts within your team

It's important staff understand the importance of what we do and why we do it. This will help them feel motivated to develop an offer.

- Share your expertise
 - Work with partners to understand the lived experiences of care experienced children and young people. Encouraging a trauma-informed approach will also be beneficial.
- Develop agreed methods of communication

Find the right communication and monitoring mechanisms to ensure your partner organisation is working towards clear and shared goals.

- Support consistent data collection
 - Enable arts and cultural partners to feed into your internal reporting mechanisms to advocate for embedded arts and cultural opportunities.
- Diversify your offer
 - Do not just rely on one partner, diversify your pool of offers to accommodate for your diverse groups of children and young people.





Not sure where to find a partner organisation?

Why not check out <u>Artsmark's website</u> for further ideas in your area, or visit <u>Arts Council</u>

<u>England's website</u> for more information.



The music team have a better understanding that change can be difficult for children in care, and have improved their approach to secondary transitions.

Virtual School Head Teacher

developing your offer:

youth voice

Building a relevant offer, responsive to the needs of children and young people will ensure arts and cultural experiences are meaningful and of interest. Engaging children and young people in informing the arts and cultural offer will increase engagement, retention and attendance.

how have other virtual schools embedded youth voice?

Birmingham Virtual School

Birmingham Virtual School worked closely with <u>Birmingham's Services for Education</u> to extend their music provision for care experienced children and young people in education settings.

Across their Artsmark journey, their provision had grown to working with over **100 children and young people in 70 schools** across the city, including SEND settings.

To create a more meaningful offer, children were asked to share their voice in the form of termly feedback forms. Here, they were able to rate their enjoyment of the service and also reflect on their progress. They scored their enjoyment at an average of 4.6/5 and they regularly demonstrated ownership over their work and continuous progression of skills. Because of this feedback, music teachers were able to develop and embed a range of teaching styles which engaged, inspired and motivated diverse groups of children.

youth voice



practical top tips

from virtual schools to develop your youth voice

• Embed with current provision

Your youth voice activity does not always have to be big, new and shiny. Think about where you're currently delivering activities and how you can introduce youth voice activity as part of this delivery.

• Start to consider

How are you collecting feedback? Where are children and young people influencing the work? What are you doing with their thoughts and feedback to make change?

Consider who isn't in the room

Sometimes we see familiar faces who come forward to share their perspectives. Consider how you're connecting with those groups and individuals who are less forthcoming and confident.

Embed creative youth voice within the Personal Education Planning meetings

Utilise your arts, cultural and creative activity as a way to embed youth voice within your PEP meetings. Creativity is a great vehicle for expression and sharing your voice.

Connect with existing groups

Explore how you can connect with participation, engagement and rights groups within your Local Authority. This is a great way to utilise existing systems but also gain support and knowledge from your LA colleagues.



Want more support with your youth voice work?

Why not join The Mighty Creatives' FREE Youth Voice Network.



The Artsmark journey has positively affected the virtual school, it has raised the profile and benefit of engagement in the arts and culture across the system. Virtual School Head Teacher

developing your offer:

advocating for the arts

Advocating for the positive impacts that arts, culture and creativity can have on our lives is an important component to encourage engagement. If we don't know WHY it's important and valuable, how can we expect others to trust in what we deliver?

how have other virtual schools advocated for the arts?

Telford and Wrekin Virtual School

Like most of the West Midlands Virtual Schools, Telford and Wrekin have a nominated Arts Ambassador member of staff within the Virtual School staff team. This network of Arts Ambassadors across the West Midlands is hugely beneficial for sharing arts and cultural opportunities, approaches to developing creative offers, sharing the impact of our work and championing a collective voice to advocate for arts and culture.

Telford and Wrekin lead the Regional Arts Lead Development Days, where Arts Ambassadors from across the West Midlands Virtual Schools network come together. They have used this network to advocate for arts and cultural opportunities and to communicate with the broader community, offering and sharing inclusive events to any children and young people from the West Midlands.

This has built confidence and fostered strategic relationships amongst professionals and Arts Leads from across the region, providing a platform for a collective and embedded approach.

advocating for the arts

practical top tips

to advocate for the arts in your virtual school

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Want to find evidence into the impact of the arts for children?

Why not take a look at <u>Cultural Learning</u>
<u>Alliance's website</u> for information.



Work as a team (with virtual school colleagues and cultural partners) to understand what will help both the adults and the children and young people to engage.

Virtual School Arts Coordinator

developing your offer:

communicating your offer

Communicating your arts and cultural offer to children, young people and their supporting adults is a big part of the puzzle. It takes lots of time, persistence and trial and error to get your communication methods right for everyone involved.

how have other virtual schools communicated their offer?

Derbyshire Virtual School

Derbyshire Virtual School work very closely with other teams within Children's Social Services to work **collaboratively and communicate their offer**. They involve Fostering Teams, Education Support Officers, Social Workers, Leaving Care Teams and Residential Homes within their planning and discussions where appropriate, to help communicate their offer, increase understanding and to **encourage engagement**.

They do this by holding baseline, midpoint and endpoint review meetings across projects, involving key professionals in planning. They also develop a diverse range of recruitment materials to support communicating opportunities, including introductory films, flyers, pocket guides, posters for children and young people as well as briefing documents for professionals to understand the project and their responsibilities.

"Our termly meetings with The Mighty Creatives are then used to identify any actions and targets within PEP meetings which may be used to support any progression routes for a child" Education Support Officer, Derbyshire Virtual School.

communicating your offer



practical top tips

from virtual schools to communicate your offer

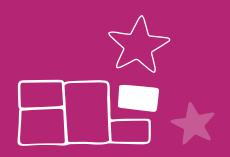
- Build relationships with other services

 Building relationships with other services who work more directly with children and young people will ensure that they are fully appraised of the offer and understand what is available.
- Consider the diverse needs of audiences
 Consider what each audience group needs to fully understand what is on offer. What do Foster Carers need to know to support engagement?
 What might children and young people need to know to help them feel confident? What would be helpful for Social Workers to know to support the child/young person to engage?
- Diversify your communication methods
 Explore HOW you share your offer and whether they work. For example, do you need to translate your project flyers/written copy?
 Would producing short films about projects support uptake? Does communicating by text message to Foster Carers support engagement?
 Do you have a Social Media platform that could be a place to communicate your offer? Does your website reflect what you deliver?
- Consult with audiences
 Consult with your supporting adults and children and young people on how they best receive the information you share. This will help you develop an approach that they find engaging and accessible.



Want support to market and communicate your offer?

Why not connect with your marketing team in your Local Authority to get some bespoke advice.



It's important you have champions or leaders within your setting, but there does need to be whole team effort not just dependent on one person.

Virtual School Deputy Head Teacher

developing your offer:

building capacity

Developing an embedded arts and cultural offer will be near impossible without dedicated staff time and capacity. We know this can be difficult to find, but take a look below for how this can be made that little bit easier.

how have other virtual schools build capacity?

Staffordshire Virtual School

Over their Artsmark journey, there have been numerous staffing changes within Staffordshire Virtual School, but **arts and culture has remained at the heart of their dynamic leadership**.

For example, a newly appointed Deputy Head Teacher was previously the Arts Ambassador for the team. Following her change of role, a Wider Learning Manager has been recruited, an Engagement and Participation Officer contract was extended, and a new link with a Governor for the Arts was established.

A key element to this has been training. **Evidence-based formal training** has been delivered by the Virtual School to Social Care Teams, Schools, Foster Carers and other professionals to **upskill their approaches** and understanding of the positive impact of the arts.

Building this capacity has supported the **growth of their ambitious arts and cultural offer**, embedding positive cultural changes within the team, as well as supporting the development of a diverse and inclusive arts and cultural offer, which has seen an increase in engagement from children and young people.

building capacity



practical top tips

from virtual schools to build capacity

- Find capacity within existing roles
 - Consider where you have the most capacity and time within existing roles, and who is best to lead on the development of an arts and cultural offer. It doesn't always have to be a new role for this purpose!
- Identify methods of communication

Whilst having a lead staff member is important, ensure you have ways they can communicate with the broader team. Is there space in your team meetings dedicated to arts and cultural opportunities?

- Identify support from SLT and Governing Bodies
 - Consider how you can build a strategic arts and cultural lead within your senior leadership team or governing bodies. How are they holding you accountable? What and how do you report back to them and share your progress?
- Consider training needs for your team

You may want to do a training audit with your staff team about what they currently know about arts and cultural opportunities, and importantly, how they feel about them within the contexts of their roles.

Develop your partnerships

Consider how your arts and cultural organisations and freelancers can support with building capacity. Do they have time they can offer to help with reporting and training? Are there existing resources you can tap into?



Want to explore how to develop capacity within your team?

Why not explore contacts through **NAVSH** who can offer up examples of practice?



As a team we looked at our interests and how they fit with arts and cultural offers and confidence to lead activity.

Virtual School Head Teacher

developing your offer:

staff training

As well as finding and developing capacity for your staff team, developing a meaningful and embedded arts and cultural offer will always benefit from additional training and expertise to up-skill staff and provide them with the knowledge they need to support the work.

what training do other virtual schools provide for their staff?

Wolverhampton Virtual School

Throughout their Artsmark journey, staff at Wolverhampton Virtual School spent a lot of time **reflecting on their own personal arts and cultural interests and experiences** in engaging in the arts. They began this journey by promoting the activity they have been involved in within the team, to advocate for the arts in their meetings.

From this, they spent time **upskilling the team** to support and in some cases facilitate their own arts and cultural offers for their children and young people.

Examples of the training they provided are below:

First Aid Training

Members of the Virtual School team were trained in First Aid to ensure that they were able to cover first aid and health and safety support in sessions where needed.

Arts Award Advisor Training

They ensured two members of the staff team were trained as Arts Award Advisors to support children and young people through their certification process.

Lego Based Therapy and Drawing and Talking

Some members of the team were trained in these areas to support children and young people to build their emotional literacy and communication skills.

staff training

practical top tips

from virtual schools to provide training opportunities

• Conduct a skills and training audit

We may not know what skills, expertise and knowledge our staff have outside of their role. Why not start by conducting a skills and training audit to better understand the skills your staff have? This will help you identify gaps in practice, to be able to provide a responsive training offer.

Assess the skills needed

You may want to look at what skills and expertise are needed to deliver your arts and cultural offer. For example, are there more practical training offers you need to consider like Health and Safety or First Aid training? Or, are there more direct delivery needs to consider, like training in workshop facilitation?

Explore multiple training providers

There are many training providers out there delivering similar programmes of work. Look for multiple options of providers to compare what's on offer and costings to ensure value for money and the right expertise.

Connect with other Virtual Schools

It might be worth considering connecting with other neighbouring Virtual Schools to share the costs for training and CPD. For example, could you bring your teams together for a training day or opportunity?



Want to find training opportunities?

NAVSH offer multiple training opportunities, but you may also want to keep an eye on **Arts Professional**.



My music lessons help me to concentrate better because I get to work on my own. When I go back to lessons I am more prepared to concentrate.

Young Participant

developing your offer:

finding funding

Finding funding to provide arts and cultural opportunities can sometimes be challenging. Over their Artsmark journey, our Virtual Schools explored various ways of securing new funding, but also utilising current funding streams to support arts and cultural provision.

how have other virtual schools found or utilised funding streams to support arts and cultural provision?

Dudley Virtual School

Dudley Virtual School have committed significant investment into their music offer for their care experienced children and young people. This offer has been contributed to by multiple funding streams, including **funding grants** from the West Midlands Virtual School Foundation (WMVSF) as well as children and young people's **Pupil Premium** and **Pupil Premium Plus**.

Over 2022-2023, 100% of Dudley's Year 4 cohort received instrumental and vocal tuition from **specialist teachers** from Dudley Performing Arts. Initially, these were funded by the WMVSF. 100% of these children continued instrumental lessons into Year 5, where schools accessed their **Pupil Premium entitlement to cover costs**.

This intervention and commitment has resulted in children achieving their **Arts Award qualifications**, partaking in ensemble memberships, performing in assemblies for the first time and performing at concerts, including at Symphony Hall in Birmingham.

finding funding



practical top tips

from virtual schools to find and release funding

• Utilise current funding streams

Consider how you can use your Pupil Premium and Pupil Premium Plus allocations to contribute to arts and cultural opportunities for children and young people, if of interest to them.

Work with partners

Work with your arts and cultural partners to apply for and secure other funding offers outside of our Local Authority. They will often have experience of applying for additional funding and they can share their expertise and support with capacity.

Upskill staff

Explore potential training opportunities that you can provide to upskill staff to develop their confidence in applying for and securing additional funding from grants, trusts and foundations.

Develop your impact and storytelling

Without knowing what positive impacts you are having, it will be difficult to demonstrate why you should be given funding. How can you work with the data you already collect to share your impact story? What further data can you gather through existing mechanisms, like PEP meetings and reporting?



Want help to find funders?

Why not start by taking a look at Arts Council England's website for some ideas for additional funding.

targeted support

This section offers you insights into how Virtual Schools have targeted specific groups of children and young people through their arts and cultural offer for you to take inspiration from.

unaccompanied asylum seeking children

How have other Virtual Schools approached supporting UASC young people through arts, culture and creativity?

Derbyshire Virtual School

Derbyshire Virtual School in partnership with Adverse Camber, combined their ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) provision with their 'Culture Cafe Tells Stories' project. The project supported co-delivery and skills development for young people, and created space for improved sense of belonging. Tying their ESOL provision into the cultural offer increased engagement and ensured language was not a barrier.

The days when I went to this place were special... I was very happy those days, and I met new people, we played and had a lot of fun telling stories.

Young Participant

The engagement from UASC pupils at our annual event has been a huge success. Our team ensured that the events are open and inclusive for all.

Virtual School Head Teacher

Telford and Wrekin Virtual School

Due to an increase in UASC young people in Telford, the Virtual School needed to ensure their offer was inclusive. They spent time building relationships, developing communication methods, increasing visibility of offers at PEP meetings and ensuring that interpreters attended to break down any barriers. As a result, they had a representation of UASC young people at their annual celebration event.

targeted support:

residential homes

How have other Virtual Schools approached supporting children and young people living in residential homes?

Leicestershire Virtual School

Leicestershire Virtual School have coordinated residential home network events where they have offered targeted support. They have worked alongside Leicester City in the Community to run forest school activities for children and young people in residential care, with an arts and cultural focus. They have also offered funded 1:1 Creative Mentoring to this cohort. Twenty residential home professionals came to their first residential home petwork event, which was a huge success.

We were able to focus and highlight where our reach was more limited and this allowed us to reflect as a virtual school on our offer.

Virtual School Head Teacher

(S) I wish I could do this two days a week instead of just one, it's very fun and calming.

Young Participant

Staffordshire Virtual School

Staffordshire Virtual School have committed time to embed skills and understanding of arts and cultural opportunities in residential settings, so they are confident to deliver arts and cultural sessions in their own environments. As part of this, they secured a Creative Mentoring package with The Mighty Creatives, funded by Department for Education. They also provided Arts Award qualification programmes within residential homes as well as funded arts boxes for each child in residential homes to ensure they have the right resources at home and can access many different arts opportunities.

targeted support:

post-16 young people

How have other Virtual Schools supported their Post-16 cohorts of young people?

Dudley Virtual School

Dudley Virtual School, at the time of completing their Artsmark journey had 94 16-18 year olds under their care. To ensure the arts and cultural provision was inclusive and accessible, they worked alongside other West Midlands Virtual Schools to develop a calendar of arts activities, including for Post-16 young people. Time was spent considering how best to share the calendar to ensure maximum participation and engagement, especially for those young people who are educated outside of Dudley (47% for Dudley Virtual School).

CC This enabled staff to discuss arts opportunities with all involved in PEP meetings, directly linking to our arts and cultural strand of work. Virtual School Head Teacher

30 I feel that the virtual schools involvement in the Artsmark journey is wonderful both for staff and young people's development. Virtual School Assistant Head Teacher

Derbyshire Virtual School

Derbyshire Virtual School utilise lots of their projects to target Post-16 young people. They have engaged young people aged 16-18 to start thinking about their future aspirations, supporting their aim to reduce risk of young people becoming NEET, and reducing risk over the Post-16 transition. They've done this by providing 1:1 targeted Creative Mentoring to this cohort, where their journey has been focused on their futures and next steps. They have also developed their group Creative Hub work and have partnered up with Derbyshire Adult Community Education to

thank you

Thank you to all of the Virtual Schools who took part in this pilot.

A huge congratulations on your achievements.

















Artsmark Gold Award Awarded by Arts Council England Birmingham Virtual School

Dudley Virtual School
Staffordshire Virtual School
Telford & Wrekin Virtual School





Artsmark Silver Award Awarded by Arts Council England

Wolverhampton Virtual School

A big thank you also to:

- Our colleagues at A New Direction and Arts Connect for providing support to all participating Virtual Schools across their Artsmark journey.
- Arts Council England and the Artsmark team for supporting this innovative pilot.





Are you a Virtual School and want to embark on your Artsmark journey?

Just visit the <u>Artsmark website</u>.

social justice for young people

through arts, culture and creativity



themightycreatives.com



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the mighty creatives