**Community Arts North West**

***Kamosi Juniors***

***Children’s Performing Arts Programme***

**September 2015 to July 2018**

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**Community Arts North West**

Community Arts North West (CAN) is a Manchester-based arts development organisation that encourages, develops and produces new and original creative work with the people that live in Greater Manchester.

CAN works in partnership with: communities; artists; mainstream, voluntary and independent sectors. Drawing upon the rich heritages and contemporary cultures of its people, CAN’s work aims to create voice, expression and visibility for the changing, complex and diverse communities of the region, bringing people together to explore, share and create their own work.

The right of artistic expression is a first guarantee of human rights. CAN believes that access to cultural production is critical to a healthy and vibrant society and should be the entitlement of all.

CAN works with its partners to develop new programmes that will create access to resources, support people’s ideas, skill development, opportunity to work with inspirational artists and to share work with audiences through specially created live events and digital platforms.

CAN is a National Portfolio Organisation of Arts Council England and a Manchester City Council Cultural Partner.

**CAN Youth Arts Programmes**

As a specialist youth arts provider, CAN offer unique programmes where young people from diverse heritages can work together, are valued and encouraged in their creativity, and can become part of exciting production processes.

CAN’s Children and Young People’s projects involve new young migrants, working collaboratively with young people from Greater Manchester host communities, often from other BAME and white British backgrounds. The programmes support personal and creative development, build self-esteem and confidence through creative-skills development and group-work, where young people are able to share, explore and shape work as part of creative teams led by inspirational artists. The projects engage some of the most vulnerable young people from the region in young-people centred, innovative work with the chance to create high-quality artistic outcomes of which they can be proud. Evidence suggests that the work can also have a dramatic positive impact on their personal development. The programmes also create safe and welcoming environments where difference and diversity are celebrated and encouraged.

We aim to:

* Focus on the creative development of children and young people, through a range of artistic opportunities, where they can help determine creative outcomes.
* Create platforms for children and young people to voice concerns, express interests, share experiences, develop creative expression and receive public recognition for their work.
* Encourage children and young people’s unique creative energy through the distinct contemporary art forms that are part of youth culture.
* Ensure learning/best practice influence existing and future programmes.
* Ensure that all workshop-programmes have high standards, through high-quality processes and good local infrastructural support.
* Work in safe and supportive environments that value the children and young people’s diversity.
* Create opportunities through our programmes for children and young people to develop their Leadership skills.
* Work with other providers and partners to develop progression routes.

**Background to the Kámoši Junior’s Project.**

CAN’s main long term partners in Wigan (originally Wigan Youth Service), was reorganised/ restructured in 2011 as Wigan Voice and Engagement Team.

CAN’s relationship with the service which stretches as far back as 2005 has focused on supporting their creative project work with culturally diverse young people from the borough originally through the Rafiki Group, comprised of young refugees and asylum seekers and other BAME young people. The work was funded through a variety of sources including Big Lottery Reaching Communities Fund, AGMA and Children In Need.

Wigan has seen significant increases in the number of new communities resident in the borough since the compulsory dispersal of asylum seekers was introduced in 2001. In more recent years there have been growing new communities of predominantly EU migrants including Eastern European Roma heritage people, many of whom have settled in Leigh.

In 2011, the youth service was restructured into the Wigan Voice and Engagement Team, amalgamating a variety of young people’s provision. Youth work support for the Rafiki group was moved to support the newer migrant young people of Eastern European Heritage. Despite the fact that many Rafiki members had grown up and moved on, the new Kámoši group (meaning 'Friends' in Slovak) remained open to members of the original Rafiki group and as a result, many continued to access and contribute to the group’s activities.

Between 2012-15 with continued Children in Need support from CAN, the project successfully engaged over 140 young people aged 12 to 18 years in a total of 6 projects that created original and new mixed-media performances with 3 annual programmes taking place in Leigh which resulted in a local annual performance for International Roma Day including: ‘Fusion’, ‘Message from Zarko’ and ‘New Beginning’. All productions featured music, poetry, spoken-word, photography and film, dance and theatre in what can be best described as a soulful fusion of Hip Hop and Afro- Roma music, dance and spoken word.

Members of the group were also able to work with young people from CAN’s Manchester programme in the creation of two original productions for Royal Exchange Theatre’s *Truth About Youth* festival in 2012 and 2013 (‘The Machines Speaks to Rafiki/Kamosi’ and ‘Citizen Change’). In addition, some of the young people successfully worked with one of Europe’s most well-known Serbian based, Roma band *KAL*. The project was created in partnership with Satellite State Disco who had brought the band to Britain. The band delivered a workshop programme in Leigh, helping the young people to develop arrangements which were showcased to great acclaim at KAL’s Manchester Academy gig in 2013.

**Kámoši Junior Group**

Kámoši Junior group supports the needs of young children aged 7-12, who are mainly from Slovakia and the Czech Republic and to a lesser degree, Romania and other EU countries. From January - April 2014, for CAN’s third and concluding Kámoši project, we introduced a new strand of work targeted at younger Roma children through their regular Saturday Club.

The Kámoši Junior group was developed as an early intervention approach to combat issues faced by older Roma heritage young people resident in Leigh. The group is supported by parents, local schools and volunteers. It was formed in 2012 by Wigan Council’s Voice and Engagement Team (WVET) and Ethnic Minority Achievement Service (EMAS)

It aims to reinforce positive choices through enjoyable activities working across community, home and school. The group aims to work with the under 12’s to support and encourage their integration within their local community to help reduce the problems faced by their older siblings.

Following an extremely successful pilot, it was felt by all partners that Kámoši Junior group would benefit from being part of a longer-term project linked with local schools and other communities within Leigh. It was agreed by all partners that opportunity to work in a positive learning environment where they would be able to express themselves, have fun and be encouraged in their interests would be of immense value to their future development.

Performing arts is also integral to this development as music and dance are central to Roma culture, making it an accessible way to engage the children. This is also evident through the natural talent and enthusiasm expressed by the group. The programme also includes drama which the group love and helps greatly with their confidence and language skills.

**Aims and outcomes**

The project aims to develop the well-being of EU-Roma heritage children in Leigh through:

• Provision of high quality music making activities that develop their music-skills/musicality/natural music talent.

• Supportive learning environments that values diversity- particularly Romani cultural heritage; equally the children’s developing local identities.

• Partnership development to create better integration and positive-profile through opportunities to showcase music work in community events (school, local-festival and Music-Hub concerts), and the opportunity to work with other local children.

We aim to achieve 3 major outcomes:

* Outcome 1: To increase self-confidence and self-esteem amongst children resident in Leigh. (Personal Outcome)
* Outcome 2: To develop the music skills and musicality of children resident in Leigh. (Musical Outcome)
* Outcome 3: Increased positive-interaction with the wider-community in Leigh. (Social Outcome)

We aim to achieve the outcomes through:

• Working with 25-30+ male and female children aged 5-12 of Eastern European heritage, white British and other cultures relatively new to Leigh.

• Creating opportunities to share the children’s skills and talent through performances within schools, community settings and local events.

• Increasing musical skills amongst Roma and other children in Leigh through providing opportunities for the children to learn a musical instrument as well as develop their musicality and skills in the Saturday club activities.

* Strong local partnerships with schools, the Music Service other community focused organisations.

• Delivering 35 weekly arts-based workshops in music, singing, dance, drama during 3 terms as part of the Saturday Club- it is likely that there will be multiple activities taking place at any one time.

• Opportunity for at least 10 children plus per year to achieve an Arts Award Discover and Explore certificate in the first year.

CAN recognises the challenges and barriers the children face as a new developing community with limited English language skills, some stigmatisation, and negative portrayals of their community in national media. This often contributes to a lack of self-esteem, a rejection of their culture which often results in challenging behaviour and greater difficulties in integrating in the local community.

The programme therefore places great emphasis on encouraging

• The children to artistically connect within their local community.

• Language skills.

• Connecting to shared popular music cultures, presently though their love of Hip Hop and other musical styles.

• Positive conversations around Roma Culture with participants and audiences.

• Building confidence, self-esteem and pride by performing at different events to diverse audiences.

**The Programme**

**The 2015-18 programme** has mainly focused on developing this work through provision of quality music, dance and drama activities, supported by Children in Need over the three years and Youth Music in the first and final year of the programme. The children have so far created 6 original new productions including: Hudba, Musica, Music; The Wizard of Leigh, and Alice in Leigh.

**CAN’s Children and Young People’s Arts Manager** is responsible for the management of the programme including the partnership development, delivery of the Arts Award programme, and dance/drama facilitation for the Saturday morning club. As well as the Principal Music Leader who leads the Youth Music funded part of the programme, the project also employs a range of other guest Music and Arts specialists.

The project has established successful working partnerships with the following **Partners**:

* **Wigan Music-Service**, provide the instrumental tuition music offer in the three local primary schools as part of the project. Since October 2015, 22 children have received weekly term time based instrumental tuition in their schools with the project also enabling the children to retain instruments for home practise. Children have been learning the following instruments: Keyboards and piano, violin, flute, guitar, voice and percussion and Chaos pad sampler. The music tutor also contributes to the diversity of the music curriculum for the children, attending training and induction sessions for the whole creative team and is involved in the end of term performances.
* The **three local primary schools** support the children in taking part in the programme through hosting the music tuition and helping with home/school/project liaison at the start of each term.
* **EMAS (Ethnic Minority Achievement Service)** who originally helped set up the programme; provide regular support through provision of volunteers.
* **Parents/carers** over the course of the project have been incredibly supportive of the programme and have played a critical role supporting of their children’s involvement.

The project has so far successfully brought children together from all communities in Leigh. All have been able to benefit from the opportunities in a positive learning environment that promotes diversity and inclusion, skill development, creativity and enjoyment.

It has benefited the well-being; educational and musical development of the children through an integrated programme of quality music making spanning Eastern European folk traditions, Hip-Hop – another great love – and other music genres as well as dance and drama activities through the Saturday morning arts club.

20 children have also had the opportunity over 2 years to learn an instrument at school with support from Wigan Music Service’s tutor Thomas Griffin.

The children have also been able to benefit from guest artists who have run specialised workshops which included; Music story-telling by Romanian Romani maestro composer and double bass player Michael Cretu who increased awareness and knowledge of Roma-music and culture. Children were able to watch, listen and join in with their own musical contributions. The group were also very taken with Satellite State Disko, two Manchester DJs who play Balkan brass, Gypsy, Slavic music and vintage Bollywood. Both girls and boys fused electronic beats from traditional music with Hip Hop, mixing tracks and creating new and exciting music. Hip Hop artist, Remi Adefeysian also worked with young musicians creating lyrics over beats and encouraging the up and coming young beat-boxers.

The project which started in September 2015 originally aimed to help the Roma children integrate better through the development of a socially integrated group. As a result, the group comprises of a mix of local children from the Roma community, local white British and children from other communities relatively new to Leigh. The project has to far successfully brought children together from all communities in Leigh. All have been able to benefit from the opportunities in a positive learning environment that promotes diversity and inclusion, skill development, creativity and enjoyment. The project has since the start, been a beacon of social cohesion and works because all the children have the same cultural offer and strong support from parents of all communities. All children have also benefited significantly from the diversity of music genres that are now integral to the programme.

As the second year of the programme draws to a close, we can report dramatic increases in the children’s confidence and creativity also evidenced in both school and home. However, the music offer for the Saturday club was severely reduced in the second year due to no second year of youth music funding. We have been fortunate however because Wigan Music Service have continued the music provision in schools as well as supporting end of term performances which has provided much needed continuity on music skill development. We are delighted that we have a third year of Youth music funding and are ambitious and confident where the project can now go in terms of the artistic ambitions of the children and creatives team.

**2017-18 Timescale**

The Saturday Club project takes place in term-time only, at a central venue in Leigh town centre, Sacred Hearts Church Hall and run from 10.30am-1.30pm. Each workshop event begins and finishes with whole group activities and offers multiple (2 ) different workshop activities plus breakfast and refreshments. Each term-time programme culminates in a showcase performance and as well as short music performances in the schools often as part of school assemblies.

The 2017-18 programmes will run during the following terms:

**Autumn Term 2017:** 4 September - 20 December

**Spring Term 2018:** 2 January - 29 March

**Summer Term 2018:** 16 April - 18 July

**Monitoring and Evaluation**

At the start of the programme CAN will put in place a thorough and detailed monitoring and evaluation framework. As an NPO of Arts Council England we subscribe to their Children and Young People’s Quality Principles as part of Goal 5 in Great art and culture for everyone , which is embedded in our work programmes and form an integral part of our evaluation processes.

One of the immediate priorities underpinning this goal is to raise the standard of work being produced by, with and for children and young people.

 The seven quality principles are:

* Striving for excellence
* Emphasising authenticity
* Being inspiring, and engaging
* Ensuring a positive child-centred experience
* Actively involving children and young people
* Providing a sense of personal progression
* Developing a sense of ownership and belonging

We have also amalgamated into the framework, the excellent Children and Young Peoples centred Youth Music Quality Framework criteria, which greatly help us to put together an outcomes approach framework to effectively evaluate the music education programme.

Evidence is gathered from a variety of sources using a range of evaluation tools including: comparing progression at the close of programmes with initial baseline evaluations with participants; and the reflections and opinions of the children and young people, partner organisations (cultural and community-based), contracted artist facilitators, CAN staff team self-evaluation, including the Children and Young People’s Arts Manager, parents and carers, and where it is possible to gather such information, audiences.

**Learning from 2015/17 project**

* Most young people are very responsive to music through dance, vocals, and Mcing/ Rap. Some are very keen to learn instruments. Most are particularly encouraged by opportunities to connect with traditional cultures and the children are also big fans of Bollywood music, but just as important are contemporary and popular music such as Hip Hop.
* Shorter workshop delivery times work best to maintain concentration
* Working intensively with small groups when possible really worked well.
* Thorough consultations with the children on what we are going to be working on each term

really works and as a result the children have played a large part in helping to steer the direction.

* Where we are able to, ensuring that some guest artists/educators are role models of Eastern European heritage has helped to empower participants either as workshop leaders or performers.
* Providing an environment that both values cultural heritage and also supports development of work that is reflective of their need to be part of modern British culture.
* Create an environment where young people can voice their opinions and share ideas and their culture.

Principle Music leader for 2015-16, Ellie Sherwood was invited to present a paper on the project at an international conference titled the Romani/Gypsy Arts and Letters Symposium, on 23-24 April 2016, New York University, presented by the initiative for Romani Music at NYU. It was a major gathering of scholars of Romani culture who work as academics, activists and/or performers.

The title of the paper was ‘Using Music to Integrate Roma Children into Wider Society: An Interim Report’, and its main aim was to discuss how the project has enabled participants to explore and learn about Roma music and how this has developed musical confidence and understanding of Roma culture.

These reflection and observations of the project were then used in two ways: to highlight the potential of music workshops in mitigating the social and cultural challenges faced by Roma children. Also to explore how the same results can be achieved elsewhere to help to combat social isolation and to encourage cross-cultural integration between Roma and non-Roma communities.

The theme of Roma identity was prominent, as most papers discussed how and why Roma people are gradually ‘taking back’ the image and identity given to them by dominant culture, who have stereotyped and marginalised Roma for centuries.

Another important discussion throughout the conference was how educational and creative opportunities are breaking down barriers between Roma and non-Roma people.

People commented on the importance of the *Kámoši Performing Arts Project*, because of its empowerment role for Roma children and their families whilst also educating others about Roma history and contemporary Roma traditions. People at the conference were also impressed with the quality of musical opportunities, particularly in relationship to the diverse range of styles explored and the instrumental tuition provided throughout the project.

