



The Playhouse piloted Street Talk Youth Art project in 2012 with a small grant from the PSNI.

The project started when a police officer who was visiting The Playhouse, recognised some of the young people participating in a Playhouse graffiti project. At that point the officer realised The Playhouse had the ability to get young people off the streets, and deter them from committing crime. The PSNI committed to funding a pilot project. After its completion young people's attitudes towards the PSNI had changed, they began to see officers as people with families and hobbies, they also understood the impact of crime on their own life, their family and community.

In 2014, after delivering the successful pilot project The Playhouse gained support from BBC Children In Need to deliver a project which benefits 50-80 young people annually.

Like the PSNI, BBC Children in Need recognised the power and influence of the arts in engaging those young people in our communities who are most 'hard to reach' and, 'at risk' of becoming involved in anti-social, sectarian, or paramilitary behaviour.

The Street Talk project offers young people a non-judgemental space where they can express themselves, speak freely and learn new skills. Working with experienced facilitators the young people's opinions, prejudices and ideas are challenged.

CASE STUDY

Young residents from the Protestant Unionist Loyalist community of Clooney estate in the Waterside, Derry/Londonderry were identified and engaged through The Street Talk project. The group choose graffiti art to help explore community issues. One issue they quickly arose from group conversations was that once, they considered St Columb's Park as their 'back garden' regularly enjoying the space, and now they feel intimidated, unwelcome and displaced.

With the erection of the Peace Bridge in 2011, movement began to improve throughout Derry/Londonderry and encouraging residents of the City side to enjoy the beautiful space and facilities St Columb's park has to offer. As a result, groups of young people from both communities began to gather in large number and use the space. Fear of 'the other' community meant that meetings between groups of young people could quickly and easily escalate into intimidation and violence, with community wardens and PSNI officers regularly called to manage and diffuse the situation.

Over a period of 15 weeks, our young Clooney residents began to consider and explore the issue; this included considering their own identity as well as 'the other' and, the meaning of 'shared space.' 10 young people completed and OCN qualification in Young people and youth justice and learned

graffiti arts skills which were put to good use! The group spent time, where they considered to be the most contentious part of St Columb's park, the running track, and with support and supervision from our team they took their ideas and designed and created a park mural reading 'It's everyone's park.' The group began to feel more comfortable in the park and their confidence grew as they considered what they would've done differently in the past and what they can do in future to avoid and diffuse contentious situations.

The Street Talk Project is funded by BBC Children in Need.

For more information about The Playhouse Street Talk Project contact Caroline at The Playhouse on (028)71268027.



Playhouse Core Funders

