



Youth Arts Open Fund

Case studies



Impact Arts

Glasgow | £15,000



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Impact Arts

About us

Impact Arts is an established Scottish community arts charity founded in 1994. The organisation works across Central Scotland to tackle inequality through creative engagement, delivering programmes that support young people, older adults and communities experiencing disadvantage.

Impact Arts' work with young people focuses on building confidence, wellbeing and aspiration through participatory arts practice. The organisation supports young people aged 14–25, many of whom experience additional barriers including poor mental health, low confidence, neurodiversity, care experience and exclusion from education or community spaces. Creative activity is used as a consistent, relational tool to support expression, connection and personal development.

Our Project

Project Drag was a multi artform, youth-led creative programme delivered for LGBTQ+ young people aged 14–25 in Glasgow. The project was designed to provide a safe, inclusive creative space where participants could explore identity, build confidence and express themselves freely through drag as an artform.

Across the programme, young people took part in weekly workshops that explored performance, costume, character development, movement, music and make-up. Sessions were delivered in an accessible studio environment and were shaped by participants' interests, confidence levels and creative ideas. This flexible approach ensured young people could engage at their own pace, whether attending regularly or joining individual sessions.



Activities included designing headpieces and costumes, learning performative and special-effects make-up, developing drag characters through improvisation, and taking part in movement, dance, lip-sync and music sessions. Many participants used sewing machines for the first time, while specialist guest artists introduced skills such as wig styling, prosthetics and rhinestone work. These sessions encouraged creative risk-taking and supported participants to test new ideas in a positive, non-judgmental environment.



Over time, participants described a shift in how they viewed themselves creatively. One young person reflected, "I didn't think I was a creative person, or someone who could do art, but coming here I've realised maybe I am." Others spoke about growing confidence and willingness to take part in performance, with one sharing, "I never thought I'd actually want to do this, but this has really helped me come out of my shell."

The skills developed across the programme were brought together in a professional photoshoot, where participants curated portraits of their drag personas. Working with a professional photographer reinforced a sense of pride and achievement, and printed portraits were gifted to each young person as a lasting record of their creative journey.

The project concluded with a public showcase that celebrated the young people's work and development. Participants led runway walks, performed dance routines and lip-syncs, played instruments and facilitated audience participation. All creative content and performance ideas were developed by the young people themselves, with artists and youth workers providing support that prioritised emotional safety and encouragement. Reflecting on the experience, one participant shared, "That was so fun, I'm glad I did decide to do the runway... definitely feel more confident too."



The showcase highlighted the value of giving young artists space to trial ideas publicly, supported by peers and trusted adults, and played a key role in building confidence and self-belief.

Throughout delivery, Project Drag emphasised inclusivity, kindness and mutual support. By bringing together young people who might not otherwise meet, the project fostered friendships and a strong sense of community. One participant described the space as:

"A community that made such a positive impact on my life in a difficult time."

Barriers to participation in arts experiences

LGBTQ+ young people often face higher levels of social isolation, discrimination and poor mental health outcomes, alongside limited access to safe, affirming spaces where they can be open about their identity. Many participants experienced intersecting barriers including anxiety, low confidence, neurodiversity and previous exclusion from education or community activities.



For some, fear of judgement or previous negative experiences in public or group settings had limited their willingness to engage in creative or social activity. Project Drag responded to these barriers by creating a consistent, supportive "third space" where young people could explore creativity without pressure, develop relationships at their own pace, and feel valued for who they are.

Impact

The project supported 30 young people facing additional barriers to accessing artistic and creative activities.

All 30 young people reported:

- Feeling better connected to their peers and communities
- Feeling better able to express themselves through involvement in arts activities
- Improved mental health and wellbeing through participation in creative activity
- Feeling empowered through youth-led activity and having their voices amplified

One young person reflected, "This project was so amazing... it made such a positive impact on my life in this difficult time." Another shared, "I am really grateful for your supports and the amazing folks hyping me up. The vibes there are just unmatched."

Overall, Project Drag demonstrated the transformative role that inclusive, youth-led arts practice can play in supporting wellbeing, confidence and connection for LGBTQ+ young people.

