

Youth Arts Open Fund

Case studies



Options in Life

Fife | £12,500



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Options in Life

About us

Options in Life delivers a social inclusion and skills development programme for isolated young people with learning disabilities in Fife. We work primarily with young people who are withdrawn, NEET, excluded from mainstream provision, or living with significant barriers to participation, including autism, Down syndrome, and other learning disabilities.

Our aim is to improve social and economic prospects for our beneficiaries by providing supported access to continued learning, skill-building, and meaningful social engagement. We deliver a community-based programme five days and evenings per week, supporting young people to take part in educational courses, accredited training, work experience, and confidence-building activities designed to reduce isolation and support progression after school.

Our Project

The project delivered a year-long programme of arts and crafts activity for young people with learning disabilities, building creative opportunities into the core offer of the new Education Centre. The programme was delivered in partnership with specialist arts organisations, including East Nook Studio, Dundee Contemporary Arts (DCA), Forgan Arts Centre, 4Arts, the Murton Trust, and NatureScot.



Activities began with pyrography workshops, where young people designed and created wooden plaques. Over the summer, outdoor arts sessions were delivered at locations including Craigtoun Country Park, Tentsmuir Forest, and Kinshaldy Beach, focusing on the use of natural materials. Activities included clay printing, press printing, sun printing, rock painting, shell art, and mosaic work. Young people created both individual pieces and collaborative

artworks, including a large "O.I.L." plaque now displayed in the organisation's café.

Further sessions included foraging-based arts with the Murton Trust, lino printing workshops with DCA where participants designed and printed their own tote bags, and two four-week blocks of glass fusion workshops with 4Arts, where young people designed and created decorative glass pieces.

Autumn and winter activities included wreath-making, paper-based crafts, Christmas decorations, stockings, crackers, and an ongoing six-week programme designing and painting lampshades. Creative activity was also embedded into weekly cookery classes, where participants designed and created their own cookery books to showcase their learning.

"I have really enjoyed that we have had a focus on arts and crafts this year. I really enjoy crafting and it's been great to learn new skills – and especially to be doing it with friends."

Young People

The project worked with young people with learning disabilities living in Fife, many of whom experience significant barriers to participation in mainstream education, employment, and cultural activity. Participants included young people with autism, Down syndrome, communication difficulties, anxiety, medical needs, physical limitations, and high levels of vulnerability.



Many participants experience social isolation and limited access to regular social environments, particularly at school-leaving age when structured education ends. The project provided continued access to learning, creativity, and social engagement at a critical transition point.

Young people's voices were central to shaping the project through Options in Life's "Your Voice Heard" committee, which supports young people with

learning disabilities to influence organisational decisions. Accessible consultation methods, including visual and participatory tools, were used to ensure all young people could meaningfully contribute.

"Working with the young people from Options In Life just fills my heart with joy."

Impact

The project supported 72 young people facing additional barriers to take part in sustained, accessible arts and crafts activity.



All participants reported the following outcomes:

- The mental health and wellbeing of children and young people improved through participation in artistic and creative activities (72)
- Children and young people developed wider transferable skills through involvement in youth arts provision (72)

The programme supported increased confidence, pride, and willingness to try new activities, helping young people with learning disabilities to access high-quality creative experiences within a safe and supportive environment.

