

# Sculpture Workshops for Visually Impaired Children September - July 2018

**EUREKA!**  
the national children's museum



**RNIB** Supporting people  
with sight loss



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Inclusion Manager



# Background to the project

## November 2016 initial survey

58 responses from  
parents and teachers of  
children with visual  
impairments

There was an almost even  
split between YES/NO when  
asked if their child could  
access art successfully at  
school and in museums,  
galleries etc.

However, comments revealed  
experiences of exclusion  
from arts in both cultural and  
educational settings

**"I would like to be  
able to get closer to  
the exhibits and  
maybe even be able  
to touch them. Also,  
it is difficult for me to  
see when things are  
inside glass."**

**"I had to fight so hard to get  
school to allow my visually  
impaired daughter to take  
textiles as an option... They said  
she should take a different  
course as easier to pass. I said  
teaching her that her disability  
shouldn't stop her following her  
dreams was more important  
that any gcse grade. I want her  
to follow her passion."**

**"When my child was  
choosing Art as a  
subject at schooling  
they was told that  
they may not gain  
the grades due to  
their impairments."**



# SCULPTURE WORKSHOPS for visually impaired children

Eureka! The National Children's Museum is located in Halifax, West Yorkshire and has provided award-winning interactive learning opportunities for children aged 0 - 11 since 1991. Since 2012, Eureka! has won 6 national awards for its inclusive approach, and in 2017, the museum expanded its offer further with the introduction of a temporary digital arts gallery called Spark. This started us thinking about how we could improve access to the arts for disabled children, which finally led us to the development of the Sculpture Project for visually impaired children. The aim was to give visually impaired children aged 5 to 15 years, an opportunity to appreciate and create sculpture. Workshops and activities were led by visually impaired artist Lyn Cox, and facilitated by partners RNIB Leeds and the Yorkshire Sculpture Park. Inspired by their favourite toys, the children produced a collaborative artwork "Favourites" which has been permanently installed in the Eureka! grounds. The project identified 3 main outcomes, or differences, we hoped to achieve:

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## DIFFERENCE 1

Children will develop new creative skills through increasing their understanding of visual art and learning techniques to create artworks themselves.

"Mia was able to weave the wire...which was a struggle previously...she has looked at (and commented on) more of her surroundings since beginning the project."

## DIFFERENCE 2

Children will have increased confidence in their own abilities and higher expectations about what they can achieve in future life.

"Charlie was surprised by what Lyn can do despite being blind. I think he is more aware of what can be achieved, even with a disability."

## DIFFERENCE 3

The emotional health and well-being of children will be improved through participation in this arts project.

"She is showing more confidence at school and home."  
"I have really enjoyed it, making lots of new friends."  
"I'd love to do it all again!"

# SCULPTURE WORKSHOPS for visually impaired children

## WHAT WE DID - APPRECIATE

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After our 2016 survey of arts opportunities for blind and partially sighted children, we began to look for local partners who could help us shape a programme, and approached RNIB Leeds and the Yorkshire Sculpture Park to ask for their support. Both were very enthusiastic about our idea of introducing blind and partially sighted children to sculpture, encouraging them to engage with materials, texture and form as well as creating their own sculpture which would go on public display in the museum grounds.

Taking on advice from both partners, we devised a programme that would take place over several sessions, beginning with a day at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park where the families could meet each other and start to build friendships and connections. All that remained was to find a sculptor who could understand the needs of our families and help us develop an activity programme to support the children's artistic development.

One of Eureka's regular visitor families told us during the initial consultation about a partially sighted sculptor, Lynn Cox, whose workshops they had attended in London, and who they thought would be ideal for the project. When we looked at her work online, we thought so too!

Between us we came up with an activity outline, and once we knew our bid had been successful, Lynn came up to Halifax to familiarise herself with Eureka's layout and meet our other partners. We all spent a day at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park whose Family Learning Co-ordinator, Emma, briefed Lynn on the sculptures in preparation for the family day out the following week.

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# SCULPTURE WORKSHOPS for visually impaired children

## WHAT WE DID AT YSP- APPRECIATE

We sent a flyer about the project to families who had attended Eureka! clubs for children with visual impairments and RNIB Leeds promoted on our behalf as well. This brought along 9 families to the day at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park (YSP) - a mix of sighted and visually impaired children, aged from 5 to 14 years. Lynn and Emma led a tour of the sculptures, encouraging the children to feel texture, pattern and form in new ways.

**September 2017**

finding the families



Lynn directed the children to pay close attention to a sculpture which had small objects, including toys, embedded within it. The children had been asked to bring along their favourite toys which they shared with the group, as an introduction to the idea of creating a sculpture with a toy theme.



# SCULPTURE WORKSHOPS for visually impaired children

WHAT WE DID at YSP - CREATE AND COLLABORATE

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Families then spent an hour or so in the outdoor sculpture workshop area. This area is stocked with all kinds of scrap materials to inspire the imagination.

Drawing on their experiences earlier in the day, families created their own sculptures - collaboratively and individually.



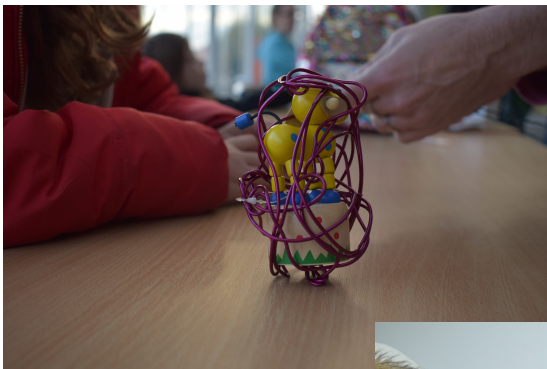
# SCULPTURE WORKSHOPS for visually impaired children

WHAT WE DID at Eureka! CREATE & COLLABORATE

Between September and November, Lynn ran a series of 3 hour workshops at Eureka! in a large workroom called the Conservatory. The room has lots of natural light and plenty of space to work. During the first session the children were introduced to the weaving techniques with thin, easily manipulated wire, making small sculptures which they took home. Lynn led discussions with the children about the kind of sculpture they'd like to make and this led to the decision to make a single collaborative piece which would reflect individual favourite toys. The sculpture began to take shape over the following weeks as children captured their chosen toys in a wire "cage" which were then wired together to form a single structure.

**September -  
November 2017**

workshops at Eureka!



SCULPTURE WORKSHOPS FOR VISUALLY  
IMPAIRED CHILDREN AT EUREKA!

SEPTEMBER -  
DECEMBER 2017

# SCULPTURE WORKSHOPS for visually impaired children

## WHAT WE DID at Eureka! CELEBRATE

In December, the sculpture was complete and ready for installation in the grounds of Eureka! It's colourful, flexible (the 3 "branches" can be repositioned) and musical, incorporating several bright pink cow bells. Installation was postponed due to bad weather, but the celebration event went ahead and families and partners came together to celebrate the children's achievement. Eureka!'s Chief Executive, Leigh-Ann Stradeski, unveiled the sculpture and the event was attended by all our partners and VIP Pudsey Bear. A Braille plaque was fitted and the sculpture was installed in the museum grounds in February 2018.

**December 2017**

celebration!





# SCULPTURE WORKSHOPS for visually impaired children

WHAT WE DID at Eureka! CELEBRATE

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SCULPTURE WORKSHOPS FOR VISUALLY  
IMPAIRED CHILDREN AT EUREKA!

SEPTEMBER -  
DECEMBER 2017

# Meeting the Challenges

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**Lynn, the sculptor, needed more time to become familiar with the museum layout which meant an extra night's accommodation, travel etc.**

**We hadn't realised that we would need to protect the flooring in our conservatory, where the workshop took place- this meant an extra cost.**

**We hadn't realised the large scale of materials involved which meant additional costs for storage trunks.**

**The sculpture's flexibility is very popular with visitors, and repairs are frequent to ensure the structure remains safe for little fingers.**

**Our funder didn't feel it appropriate for us to move underspend in other areas to meet these costs. But we knew how important these elements were to ensure the best experience for the children, so our FD agreed to cover the extra spend. And we were delighted when our funder agreed to our proposal to put the remaining underspend to a one day workshop called Weaving the Future - more of that shortly!**

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# EVALUATION

*Evaluation was a vital part of the project. We wanted to know if the children were benefiting creatively, emotionally and socially. The challenge lay in developing an approach that would work for children and additionally, for children with visual impairments.*

We decided to include both adults' and children's perspectives.

We began with a simple baseline questionnaire for parents about their children's creative skills, confidence and emotional well-being. Parents completed this themselves, and the questionnaire was repeated at intervals throughout the project.

The children's questionnaire was much more open and began at week 3 once they had become familiar with the museum Enablers. Enablers sat alongside the children as they worked and asked simple questions about how they felt, using terms based on the UCL Museum Wellbeing Measures Toolkit (2013). The questionnaire was supplemented by the Enablers' own observations. (later in this report)



We also asked one of the families to provide us with a case study, which parent and child wrote together. (next page)

And of course, we took loads of photographs throughout the project!



# SCULPTURE WORKSHOPS for visually impaired children

## CASE STUDY

### Charlie Wightman-Smith

**" Charlie and I both agree that the most surprising and inspirational part of the project was seeing what Lyn could do and how her disability has not stopped her from creating wonderful art."**

Charlie lives with his Mum, Dad and older brother, Georgie (10). Charlie describes himself as enthusiastic, caring, funny, creative, clever and curious. When he grows up he would like to be either an author or a scientist, but an author most of all.

Charlie showed an interest as he likes to try new things. My only reservation was that it would mean a commitment of six full days but as Charlie pointed out it was 'only six and there are plenty more!'



**He told his teacher all about the project he was doing and ... he created a booklet with pictures from the sculpture he made at the Sculpture Park through to the Celebration Day with writing describing each step of the process. He enjoyed sharing this at school.**

# CASE STUDY

## Charlie Wightman-Smith

**Charlie got a physics set for Christmas and suggested to his Dad about using wire to do different experiments and twisting/coiling it in different ways which he may not otherwise have thought of.**



Charlie is quite a quiet boy around other children but enjoyed chatting to the other children particularly Constance.

We both enjoyed meeting all the other participants and the lovely helpers from Eureka! and Lyn and of course Danny. The cherry on the cake was getting to give Pudsey a hug! Many thanks to you too for arranging the project. Please let us know of any further projects as we would love to be a part of them.

**I remember (Lyn) saying how having a disability was not an excuse for not doing things and I think that was a very important message to give to the children.**



# AN ENABLER'S VIEW

*Claire Graham is a Fine Art graduate with a specialism in Early Years at Eureka! She supported the families from start to finish and was thrilled to see the way the children grew in confidence and skill.*

"All of the group found the sculpting difficult to begin with but they really enjoyed the challenge. Each individual family worked extremely well together showing problem solving skills and fantastic creativity. It was a real family learning project! The children's art skills definitely improved; they all found it tricky to begin with but really enjoyed weaving the wire and threading on the beads.

Their confidence and independence also grew, for example; at the beginning... the children always had their adult by their side when selecting resources but by the end all were choosing them on their own. They also showed fantastic concentration and determination.



Around the third week, I noticed that the families really started to communicate with each other. It was...really nice to see them interacting as a group and sharing tips.

The children kept wandering over to see each other's progress and were definitely establishing friendships. It was especially nice to see Charlie engaging with others because in previous sessions he had been very quiet.

As always the children were very keen to pet Danny the dog but ... I saw a change in how they communicated with Lyn; (by week 3) they were less reserved around her and very keen to talk to her about their artwork. Mia was particularly interested in learning about Lyn's family and her hobbies, so much so that they were recommending theatre shows and films to watch to each other!"

# WEAVING THE FUTURE

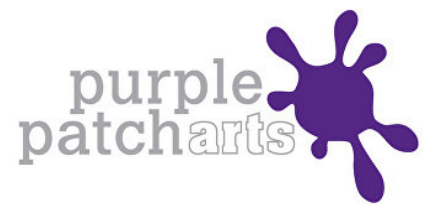
## an additional one-day session

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The children and their parents told us that they wanted more arts activities, so we knew another activity would be popular. This time we wanted the children to be able to take their artwork home. And we also wanted the activity to focus solely on the children with sight impairments. With this in mind, we started to look for a local and experienced delivery partner.

**March 2018**

some funds left over!



**Together with Purple Patch we came up with a proposal for a one day weaving workshop solely for children with visual impairment. Children in Need agreed that we could fund it with the underspend from our original project.**

Our search led us to a Leeds based disability arts organisation- Purple Patch Arts. Experienced and enthusiastic, they were exactly the kind of people we needed to help us design and deliver an activity which would develop the children's creativity and confidence.

**We gave first refusal to the families who participated in the sculpture project and RNIB Leeds helped to put the word out too. 9 families signed up, and it was lovely to welcome some new faces to Eureka!**

# WEAVING THE FUTURE

## an additional one-day session

Purple Patch started by using tactile activities to encourage the children to express their feelings. They rated their emotional state using a sliding scale of a bead of their choice, threaded onto strings stretched across a tray.



**June 2018**

Sensory Evaluation



Responses to other questions were shown by filling a container with scented granules

A fantastic array of sensory resources added to the enjoyment





# WEAVING THE FUTURE

## an additional one-day session

Scented sticky playdough, wet and sparkly spheres, tactile and glittery textiles, scented herbs and spices were all on hand



**June 2018**

A sensory experience

The children experimented with sensory elements before starting on their woven sculptures



# WEAVING THE FUTURE

## an additional one-day session

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It was great to see new conversations opening up

"It was interesting listening to my daughter talk to the members running the workshop"

"I didn't know that my son wanted to be a film maker"

"It (career aspirations) is something we have not talked about before."

"I'm surprised about what she would like to be."



# WEAVING THE FUTURE

## an additional one-day session

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The hanging sculptures reflected the children's strengths and aspirations - parents enjoyed getting involved too!



**June 2018**

Woven Sculptures



# The numbers

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**30 children**

20 with visual impairments

**29 adults**

**3 partner organisations**

**7 sessions**

**10 months**

## RESULTS - SCULPTURE PROJECT

**77% of children reported significantly improved emotional health and well-being (feeling excited, happy, making friends)**

**87% of adults and 90% of children felt creative skills improved significantly**

**50% of adults and 62% of children said their confidence was significantly greater**

## RESULTS - WEAVING THE FUTURE

**Q1. How confident do you feel in making a piece of artwork?**

**Q1. How much do you think you'll be able to do the things you want to do in the future?**

**100% had increased emotional health and wellbeing. Average increase = 30%**

**100% had higher expectations about what they can achieve in future life. Average increase = 27%**

**60% had increased confidence in their ability to make a piece of artwork. Average increase = 20%**

# WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

That there are few opportunities for tailored creative activities for children with visual impairments.

That participating in creative activity alongside others brings real benefits in terms of:

- improved artistic skills
- increased confidence
- higher aspirations for the future

That creative activity can be a great conversation starter between parent and child.

That to be effective, activities need to be developed and delivered by professional and experienced creatives.

## NEXT STEPS

In **July 2018**, we were thrilled to hear that the children's sculpture had been shortlisted in the national Unique Art Awards.

We've built good partnerships with families, arts practitioners and organisations who will help us to develop similar activities in the future. We've already set up a meeting in **September 2018**, to explore ways of doing this.

Eureka! is committed to supporting the participation of disabled children in all art forms, through clubs and co-curation of digital art in our temporary exhibitions gallery. We shall work towards supplementing these core activities with another funded project which will further improve disabled children's access to arts activities.




**MFPFA Trust Fund for the Training of Handicapped Children in the Arts**  
 Registered with the Charity Commission No: 328151  
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30th June 2018

**C O N G R A T U L A T I O N**

We are pleased to tell you that your entry into our Trust Fund 'Unique Art Awards 2018' has been selected as one of the finalists in your category. Well done!

We received over 200 entries for the competition and we were amazed at the quality and variety of work we received.

We are holding a 'Presentation Evening' at the Copthorne Tara Hotel in South Kensington on Monday 29th November at 6pm. We do hope you can join us for the event which will consist of a sit down three course meal and then the presentations.

