



The Agency - Southampton

2021



The Agency

The Agency is an incubator for bright ideas, running in cities across the UK. We empower young people to become makers of change in their communities – helping them to turn their ideas into a reality.

The programme is led in the UK by Contact Manchester and Battersea Arts Centre. It was set up in Southampton in 2021 by Energise Me and we have just delivered our first full programme. Six young people from Northam, Newtown and St Mary's have successfully delivered four social impact projects, making their communities a better place through sports, arts and poetry, dance and environmental action.

Our belief is that young people know best what their communities need. Through a series of exciting, creative activities, we inspire young people to express their ideas for social change and gain the tools and mindset to put them into action.

We aim to support lasting social change through our investment in young people and their futures.

We are proud to reflect that in 2021 ...

- Six young people delivered four projects in Northam, Newtown and St Mary's
- This added up to 27 sessions of sports, arts, poetry, dance and environmental action
- Over 70 children and community members benefitted from taking part
- The young people delivered their projects with Energise YOUTH grants of £2,000 and £1,000
- Many Southampton organisations actively supported the young people gain the skills to deliver their projects
- Two of the projects are continuing in 2022 with further funding and support





Eco Kids

About the team

My name's Yulu and I am 17 years old. I am currently in college. I am passionate about social and environmental issues.

The first time I ever heard about climate change and the environment was at secondary school. It really hit me getting to know about it all. Before I was oblivious and knowing about it was just shocking.

That's why I have been trying to think of ways to try and help the environment. I want to help us others learn like I did. But no opportunity ever seemed to come up. That's until The Agency.

The Agency came into the youth club I go to and spoke to us. I joined as it was an opportunity for me to make a difference.

About the project

My project is called Eco Kids and I work on it with a partner, Patricya. The project is about the environment. We just wanted to encourage the community to be more compassionate about the planet.

We decided that the best way to do this would be through the youth club. Northam is pretty big, with blocks everywhere. The youth club members are from all over Northam so we thought it was a good place to teach young people so they can share the message further across the area. We decided that young people were in a good position to influence others, especially their parents, to change their lifestyles to be more eco-friendly.

I also experienced my first litter pick at the youth club and that really inspired me to incorporate one in the project. The aim was to teach young people about repurposing rather than just recycling. This is because it's more important to repurpose and reuse than to keep buying more.



Litter Rush

One of the ways we taught young people about being eco-friendly was through a game I made up called 'Litter Rush'. I place plastic bottles, cans and cardboard around the area and then split the young people into two teams. The teams compete to see who can collect the most recyclables in a set time. But there is a twist as they can steal from each other.

The winning team get a prize and the game teaches them that it's important to not leave litter on the streets but in a fun way. It also gets the young people up and being active. It's also like practice for the litter picks we have held in the community.

Repurposing

One of the main aims of the project was to teach about repurposing rather than just recycling. We have done this by repurposing some old tyres that were thrown away. With the young people, we painted them, to make them look nice.

The plan is to turn them into planters and place them in the Northam Community Centre grounds. There is an area where a lot of rubbish is thrown where we want to place them. Hopefully, by placing the planters there we will discourage people from littering as they will take pride in the area looking nice.

My experience with The Agency

Being a part of The Agency has been a real eye-opener for me. I thought there weren't any opportunities like this for young people. I thought we had to wait until we were older to make a difference, that you couldn't make change whilst you were young.

I feel like a part of something, and everyone is really encouraging. They support us in every way they can. It's been a really enjoyable experience.

I've networked with many people; learnt about jobs I didn't know existed and grown in confidence. I used to be very closeted and isolated but now I feel like I can make friends with people easily. It's been so inspiring meeting other people. I didn't know about things like social enterprise and other jobs like that before. It's been a good learning experience and my eyes have been opened to opportunities for my future.



Cultural Kidz

About the team

My name's Christine and I am 17 years old. I am very passionate about dance and music. Both have got me through so much. When you listen to music you feel like a completely new person and you feel the stress that you had in your mind goes away.

I like to move around and dance and music is a big element of that. It's part of me and I want to share that joy with others.

I am particularly passionate about Afrobeats dance. It's about celebrating our culture and having pride in it. Growing up I felt I never really got the chance to explore my culture. It's pushed aside. What you're doing or the music you listen to isn't considered normal and it's thought to be weird.

A lot of people are so integrated that they forget where they come from. They don't know what's part of their culture and they don't celebrate it. Southampton is a very culturally diverse city but there aren't many diverse options out there for kids. When I first did an Afrobeats dance session I had to travel all the way to London. In Southampton it's all ballet or contemporary dance, which is nice but it's important to showcase the dance styles of different cultures.

About the project

I joined The Agency as I knew it would allow me to make a difference. I would be able to be creative, and if you have an opportunity to be creative why not use it. I had an idea and The Agency gave me the opportunity to actually make it happen so I just wanted to grab the chance.

My project was an after school Afrobeats dance classes for years five and six. I held them at the school in my area, St Mary's Primary school. I wanted to do the classes so that I could share my culture with the children but also give them the opportunity to explore their own heritage through music and dance.

The sessions ran every Wednesday from 3:15pm to 4:15pm for four weeks. It was so much fun seeing their smiling faces and how much they enjoyed the sessions.



My experience with the Agency

It's been really fun to be a part of The Agency. I am dyslexic and everyone has been so supportive. They help me with my writing.

Everyone is very understanding. Sometimes I would be late as I look after my little brother in the mornings, or he would need to come with me as I was looking after him and everyone understood. They were all friendly and welcoming to him.

No matter what problems you have you can always go to The Agency and relax. All your problems are forgotten for a few hours, and you get a break from it all.

I think that being part of The Agency has helped me to become more mature. I had to be responsible for my project. Sometimes I could be laid back but I always had a handle on the things I needed to. I have learnt not to give up so easily. If something has gone wrong you have to keep pushing through.

I think the skills I have learnt will help with my future. What you learn at The Agency will help you no matter what career you have. The little workshops at the start helped us learn about ourselves and our emotions. We learnt how we can handle things professionally.

We also presented at the community centre and did lots of networking. It helped me to know I can network with anybody. You just have to have the confidence to talk to them.

My advice to others thinking of joining

Don't doubt yourself. Don't worry about what other people are thinking, just do it for yourself and know that you are helping your community.





Northam and St Mary's Art Collective

About the team

We are Abs, 17, and Billie, 26. We both wanted to engage more people in art so they could feel the benefits of being creative.

We both had very different reasons for joining The Agency. Abs decided to join as he wanted to use his craft to help people in a meaningful way. He wanted to take the chance when he found something that allow him to have an impact on others.

Billie was in a bit of a different place when she joined. She was in a bad place in her life and struggling with her mental health. Billie joined very much just to give it a go. She didn't think much of it before but soon realized that she had the opportunity to actually make things happen and got excited.

We both appreciate the benefits of being creative. Art has supported both of us to look after our mental health. It gives you space. We wanted to share this with other young people.

About the project

Our Art Collective project is called Space 2 Create. To start with we both had different ideas for the project. Billie wanted to create a collective. She was keen to find other young people who made art and work out some way to either make it together or inhabit a shared space.

Abs wanted to replicate a project he'd volunteered for a few years ago. They painted a wall as a community. We liked the idea of public art. It makes everyone take more pride in the area and it allows everyone to access and enjoy art.

We ended up merging our two ideas. We set up the collective as the two of us and then created our project Space 2 Create.

Space to Create consisted of 6 weeks of art workshops for 11 – 18-year-old. We also had a two-day intensive visit to Golden Grove Park where we painted a mural with 11 – 14-year-olds. We have been lucky to have access to a space at the Hidden Wardrobe, an art studio where we held the workshops.

It was great to see young people doing something productive. We all know that sometimes young people can go off on the wrong path. Our project helped to take their minds off the stress of things going on. Space to Create taught them ways to look after their mental health and clean their minds through art.



Our experience with the Agency

The Agency has been an interesting experience for both of us. Our partnership took a little bit of getting used to. Mainly because of the age gap between us. However, we are quite well suited as social partners as we both like using art to help people.

Abs

I have really enjoyed being a part of The Agency. For the first few weeks, I was clueless. I had never done anything like this before. It has been really good. I have built my confidence, my communication skills and everything else.

To start with it felt like a teaching environment to me but as we got more into it, it became more social. It's like you are part of a team. The Agency staff are working with you not teaching you.

Working with a partner has been a great experience too. I'd never worked in a team or partnership before. It has all been a good experience having to schedule with someone else.

I'd say to anyone considering being a part of The Agency in the future, just do it! Join The Agency as you never know how many young people's lives you might impact. Someone could be on the verge of giving up and your project could mean so much to them.

Take the chance, it could be huge!

Billie

When I first joined, I was a bit unsure. I didn't think much of it. Then there was a point a few months in when it suddenly just clicked for me. I started to feel more engaged and started to feel excited that I could actually make things happen. Being a part of The Agency has been with me through a difficult time.

I remember really having to let myself go and give up a little bit. You have to let them lead the sessions and trust that you'll get to the point where you have an idea or a project. You can't force a good idea; you have to trust the process.

The Agency has shown me that people are actually interested in helping get projects off the ground. You have to push for it but you can actually make change. I've learnt about working in a partnership and how to engage with other organisations working across the city.



Energise Me

Northam + St Mary's

ART COLLECTIVE

present

SPACE 2 CREATE

Age 11 - 18?
Want to make street art?
Have something to say?

Space to Create is a project to provide an art space in our area for the street art and poetry of local young people.

- 4 weeks of sessions in the studio
- 1 week painting a street space
- workshops with artists
- art materials provided

£1
NSM ART

Visit us on socials to find out more and sign up!

@nsmart NSM Art Collective nsmart



Area Elites

About the team

I'm Ismaeel and I am 15 years old. I have always loved sports. I started playing football when I was around 5 years old and cricket at 8 years old. When I was growing up I remember I used to always have to travel to play sport. There wasn't really anything on offer in my area.

I know that not every family can afford to travel out of the area to play sports so I wanted to do something to help. Since lockdown I haven't had the ability to go and play sports as everywhere has been shut. I decided to come to the Agency and see if I could create my own project and start running some sport in the area.

I saw The Agency as my opportunity to do something.

About the project

My project is called Area Elites and is aimed at 14-16. The moral statement of my project is to transform the lives of people in and around Northam and Golden Grove through sports. It consisted of 4 weeks of sports sessions, made up of football, cricket and basketball. The last week was then a tournament for all the sports together.

I hoped that me doing something in the area means everyone is welcome to come. We could get the community involved and offer something they might not have had access to before. Everyone was able to come and have fun for free.

Even if people didn't like sports, it was just a way of people being themselves. You don't need to be good at something to enjoy it. As long as you come along, get involved and play as a team you're learning either way.



Delivering the sessions

I delivered the sport session with help of a shadow coach. Planet Education supported me and gave me the shadow coach after they heard about my project and wanted to get involved. I presented to them, and they liked what they heard.

The shadow coach was just there as an extra set of eyes. If someone had a better ability and needed a different task to do they could tell me. It was great to have support of a semi- professional coach. They are someone who has coached professional players!

Coaching isn't a path I have ever wanted to take. I had coached a practice session before, but I just wanted to get involved and play. But it was a new experience for me to try and I like to keep myself learning new things.

My experience with The Agency

The first few weeks of The Agency weren't really for me. I was a bit shy, and I didn't know anyone. I didn't find the activities we were doing enjoyable, but I stuck with it. I persevered and after the first 12 weeks, I was a changed person.

I think a lot of people knew me as someone who didn't like to try. But now they see me differently. They see me as someone who is trying and giving a lot of attention to their project. I see myself differently too.

I enjoy it now a lot more than I did at the start. I think this experience will help with my future. During my time at The Agency I have had my first few interviews and I delivered a presentation to 50 people at Central Hall. These things made me nervous at first but now I know I can do them. Everything was just new to me and I needed to get used to it.





THE AGENCY
Change Makers