



EMBRACING ARTS

Workshops Programme at Livity SEND School
Impact Report

Embracing Arts (EA) believes the arts should be accessible for all and enhance the lives of young people with complex and individual needs & disabilities through interactive performance, play and the shared experience of inclusive creative arts. EA delivers specially designed shows, events and workshops in children's hospice, SEND school and community venues.

EA Workshops are designed for SEND schools and mainstream schools which offer SEND provision, who receive little support from skilled external practitioners. These are story-based sensory adventures focussing on a chosen theme or curriculum topic. Sessions can be tailored towards the needs of individual pupils and classes, and usually last 45 minutes. Our workshops are often delivered as one-offs to explore a particular topic or celebrate an event (eg. World Book Day) but are also delivered in a five or six week workshop series, where returning and longer-term engagement with the same pupils and staff can bring about meaningful and lasting impact and change.



PARTNERSHIP WITH LIVITY SCHOOL

Livity School in Lambeth is a primary special school for children aged 2 to 11 with severe learning difficulties, profound and multiple learning disabilities and complex medical needs. Many of their pupils have autism. Livity aims to provide a creative and practical learning environment where pupils are motivated to achieve ambitious goals in all areas of their learning.

Livity School and Embracing Arts have a long-standing relationship, spanning several years. We have collaborated with them on our facilitated Digital Christmas for Kids and Live Christmas for Kids shows, presented at Streatham Space Project - a community theatre venue which is easily accessible for Livity staff & pupils. We have also delivered sensory storytelling workshops on the theme of 'Jack and the Beanstalk' to their Discover pathway. This pathway focuses on communication skills and supporting pupils with diverse diagnoses including ASD and Down Syndrome (65 pupils).

Ivan Luptak, Livity's Assistant Headteacher, has consistently requested more workshop experiences for all pathways within the school since our partnership began, as he can see the impact the work we deliver has on the Livity pupils. However, the school does not have the budget to provide our sessions on a regular basis. **We are hoping that by showing the benefit of this workshop programme, more funding will be available to support the creative arts within the school curriculum.**

THE ACTIVITY: EMBRACING ARTS WORKSHOP SERIES AT LIVITY SCHOOL

In **January & February 2026**, thanks to funding from **M&G Prudential Community Fund** and **Sir Walter St. John Education Charity**, Embracing Arts delivered a fully-funded 5-week series of workshops in Livity School. Two EA facilitators worked with 30 pupils across four classes for 45-minutes per session each week. The school elected that we work with its **Explorer Pathway**: 30 pupils labelled with Profound & Multiple Learning Disabilities (PMLD). The pupils on this pathway have the most complex learning disabilities and medical needs. EA's Creative Director, **Claire Sundin**, designed, observed and oversaw the project.

Livity School requested **Personal, Social & Health Education (PSHE) workshops**. The project focused on building confidence and a sense of community with its beneficiaries. The main topic during the term for this pathway was '*Me & My Community*', which focuses on children being involved in their community via external trips and visits, visits in-school, as well as understanding their own sense of self within their community.

PROGRAMME OUTCOMES

The following outcomes apply to the 30 pupils of the Explore Pathway at Livity School:

- 1. Development of Communication and Engagement:** for Livity's primary learners who are predominantly non-speaking, through embracing skills that underpin early communication. Examples include: shared attention, responding, turn taking, anticipation, showing preferences and making choices.
- 2. Building trust and the ability to enjoy a shared experience:** Laying the foundations for Livity pupils' future experiences with visiting practitioners alongside an increased ability for them to engage in group classroom activities.
- 3. Livity pupils develop an increased understanding of identity:** Both as part of the classroom community, and their own identity within the school environment as capable learners. Finding and exploring a sense of belonging within a range of activities.
- 4. Pupils develop their own autonomy & choices:** To encourage the development of choice, agency, creativity and play, exercising autonomy over their environment and their own body.
- 5. Pupils display increased participation skills:** Displaying increased attention, perception, cause & effect and memory. Development of skills which can be taken into classroom and external activities and environments after the programme has ended.



HOW EMBRACING ARTS WORKS: A CHILD-CENTERED APPROACH

Meeting our Beneficiaries where they are: On arrival, we would approach each session with a 'soft opening': introducing ourselves to each young person, finding out their names and communication preferences. Creating a safe space and building trust.

Repeated but Flexible Framework: We kept to the same framework each week of an opening Welcome Song, then a simple narrative to link sensory offers that accompanied each section of the workshop. Keeping to the same framework allows for routine, familiarity, repetition and anticipation.

Individualised sensory interaction: Over the five weeks, we made rich and relevant sensory offers. We learnt about each individual and tailored the sessions, props and approach to each class and each child.

“During these sessions, I noticed that our children developed anticipation, persisted in their exploration, and communicated through intensive interaction with the facilitators, initiating strong responses that supported the foundations of communication”

- PMLD teacher and Pathway Leader

We saw a marked increase in pupils' readiness to communicate their preferences and to make choices. Within every interaction, due to its individual nature, pupils are offered opportunities to engage which they can receive or reject. Rejected offers were made three times in different ways which could lead to a change in preference. The pupil's choice was always respected and this led to their increased confidence and willingness to participate.

Development of Communication & Engagement

We explored how friends protect us using water sprays, umbrellas and a foil blanket to create a storm that the young people could shelter from together.

"I would see that children were very engaged in the activities performed by the facilitators. I have noticed they have developed a greater interest in exploring sensory items and in responding with gestures and vocalisations"

- Teacher

Building Trust & Enjoying a Shared Experience

Throughout the session we explored what it means to be a friend, how our friends make us feel happy: using the colour yellow and material 'sunset' fans for wafting. The fans were an immersive experience. They were wafted to produce wind which drew the attention of many of the young people and elicited big responses of laughter and smiles.

"I have noticed some children are notably happier in class, always laughing and enjoying every minute of being at school and I believe these workshops have supported this to happen" - Teacher



Understanding of Identity

We would then show each young person themselves in a **mirror**. This was to give context of who they are and who the facilitator is. It is not always easy for those labelled PMLD to recognise themselves and understand where they are in space, otherwise known as **proprioception**.

“The Embracing Arts workshops are very meaningful for our children as they clearly encourage communication, exploration and are highly beneficial for the children to create connections to the world, promote social skills and develop body awareness.”

- PMLD Teacher & Pathway Leader

Development of Autonomy & Choice

To symbolise Unity, **snap bracelets** were offered to each young person who would choose between two colours. Each session concluded that we are all part of a community and we are all different, but **we are all different together**. We took the bracelets from each young person and linked them to form a chain. This was an opportunity to work on fine motor skills and dexterity, removing the bracelet and linking it with another is a complex task which many achieved over the course of the programme.

“One child would throw the resources as soon as they were offered to them, however by the end of the session block they were more willing to explore the props and interact with the team.”

- Teacher

Participation Skills

We explored how friends bring colour and light into our lives: **using light stimuli** for tracking and focus as well as creatively engaging with these tools. For the lights we used torches, infinity lights and lights that could be spun in a ‘salad spinner’, a great home-made sensory tool. By the end of the programme 90% of the pupils were able to physically control the spinning lights themselves, compared with an estimated 65% at the start.

“The children seem more willing to explore a variety of resources offered to them in class now.” - Teacher





IMPACT BEYOND THE PROJECT

Over the course of the five weeks and reported beyond the end of the project, the following developments were observed by teachers and EA facilitators:

Increased anticipation of what is coming; excitement from facilitators entering the space; familiarity with the 'Welcome Song'; anticipation of each section of the workshop; allowing facilitators to make new offers; development of language, children verbalising or speaking new words; increased creativity and freedom to explore props in new ways; a sense of community; increased sharing, turn taking and tolerance.

"My learners benefit from the workshops as they continue to work on targets set, as well as having an opportunity to explore a variety of resources and have fun! The children really love these workshops and look forward to them every week. This is something we would love to have across the school year." - Teacher

The following are short CASE STUDIES exploring the impact of Embracing Arts taking a child-centred approach to play in the classroom setting with young people with developmental conditions.

EMMANUEL

This is Emmanuel, a wheelchair user. He is selective with his language but will use words to confirm his enjoyment.

He was one of our most confident participants. It was exciting to see his play engagement with his peers develop and grow over the five weeks: actively including them in his games or jokes and continuing this long after the facilitator had ended their 1:1 engagement with him.



Observations made by Embracing Arts Facilitators and supported by Livity staff:

Week 1 - Emmanuel loves to play and making a game out of things works well for him. He was holding up a pompom and Claire was pretending to reach for it but it was too high for her. He found this very entertaining and repeated it many times.

Week 2 - Lots of water play. Holds the spray and spends a lot of time wetting Robyn's face and smiling.

Week 3 - Very engaged. Likes the game of dropping things while the facilitators look for them. Enjoyed a tug of war over the material.

Week 4 - This is the first time we heard Emmanuel singing along to the Welcome Song. He put his own bracelet on and knew how to snap it on. Lots of waving the pompom as independent play when not with a Facilitator. He remembered the linking activity at the end of the session and went straight to it. Emmanuel enjoyed banging his drum in time to the music of the Goodbye Song.

Week 5 - He came into the room with excitement and anticipation. He says "Hello" to the facilitators and as soon as the game is introduced he is smiling. He decided to engage another child next to him. There was lots of copying and cheekiness - moving chairs each, and laughing at each other pushing the boundaries.

VERA LUNA

This is Vera Luna. A strong character, non-speaking individual labelled PMLD. We really enjoyed getting to know this tenacious young lady, who became very decisive in her choices and showed great agency and autonomy in our sessions.



Observations made by Embracing Arts Facilitators and supported by Livity staff:

Week 1 - Vera Luna was a little timid and unsure, although she did reach out to touch the facilitator's hand. She seemed to like the wafting sun material as she was smiling a lot, we noted she enjoys things that move. She was very definite in wanting the umbrella, and showed a strong interest in the bracelet chain at the end of the workshop.

Week 2 - She seemed to enjoy the immersive elements of the session, and enjoyed the interaction of getting covered in paper by her 1:1 staff member. Vera Luna took a huge interest in the lights: holding them and trying to see how they worked.

Week 3 - She enjoyed the sensation of the pom poms up and down her arms and would demonstrate on herself, then signalled to Claire to do it for her. She used the tambourine with good dexterity.

Week 4 - Bouncing with the music, engaged, pulling the mirror to touch her face. She took a bracelet herself when offered which was new.

Week 5 - Vera Luna was very playful today, interested in all the props, especially the tambourine and lights. This is the most connected we had seen Vera Luna with the group, as she would often play independently. There was a shared element of engagement with peers which we hadn't seen before.



**CLAIRE
SUNDIN**

Creative Director of Embracing Arts and Project Lead

Claire is a sensory theatre practitioner. She graduated from the Liverpool Institute of Performing Arts (LIPA) and is one of the founding members of Embracing Arts. Prior to becoming a full-time sensory theatre practitioner, Claire toured theatres all over the UK, and has performed in the West End & in New York. Claire has always had a love of play, engagement and connection and this forms the basis of her work as EA's Creative Director and Lead Facilitator. Claire develops, writes and directs the live and digital sensory Christmas show, Christmas for Kids, offered to young people across the UK each year. She creates all of the content for Embracing Arts Parties and Workshops delivered in Schools, children's hospices and community venues across Kent and the South East. Claire is trained in playwork, sensory storytelling, intensive interaction & sensory engagement and Makaton.



**ROBYN
OLIVIA**

Facilitator

Robyn is a children's theatre maker, sensory artist and community arts facilitator. She specialises in collaborative ensemble-based theatre with devising and playfulness at its core. In all her projects, she uses a combination of puppetry, clowning, storytelling, music and sensory theatre to create work that is forward-thinking and inclusive, inspired by and working with the communities it is made for. As a disabled and neurodiverse artist, Robyn is a passionate advocate for inclusivity, ensuring it is a central part of all her projects. She is the director of The Flying Seagull's Sensory Circus Programme, where she has led sensory theatre projects across five countries - reaching isolated disability communities and training local communities in sensory techniques. She regularly facilitates for Embracing Arts, and Create and has previously worked with Angel Shed, Polka Theatre and Kiln Theatre.

THE EA WORKSHOP TEAM



**CHLOE
BRADBURY**

Facilitator

Chloe is a sensory theatre performer, producer & facilitator. Chloe's work predominantly focuses on working with vulnerable communities, particularly those labelled with a variety of additional needs, adults in recovery and/or with experience of the prison system, and women with children at risk of homelessness.

Chloe is the Founder, CEO & Artistic Director of Little Wild Theatre, whose work focuses on supporting children's wellbeing through theatrical experiences of the natural world. Inclusivity, sensory-led storytelling, sustainability and play are central to Chloe's ethos as a performer and producer.

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