



The Clean Break Access to Creative Industries Project: An End of Term Evaluation

January 2008

1.0 Introduction and Context

- 1.1 This report evaluates the success of the Clean Break Access to Creative Industries project, which was developed and managed by Clean Break in partnership with Creative and Supportive Trust (CAST). The project, which ran between January 2005 and September 2007, received £510,000 worth of funding from the London Development Agency - European Social Fund Co-Financing Programme.
- 1.2 The project was managed from the Clean Break centre in Kentish Town, Camden. The centre provides arts education, basic skills training and general support for women from all over London who have experience of the criminal justice system (as ex-offenders, for example) and women at risk of offending who may also have drug, alcohol and mental health issues to contend with.
- 1.3 All of the course teaching and student support services took place in the centre's studios and classrooms (and at CAST's premises). However students were also assisted in taking up work experience placements at external arts venues across London.

2.0 Methodology

- 2.1 This end of term evaluation of the project has been researched and written by Greater London Enterprise (GLE). The report has been informed by:
 - Data on project outputs and outcomes
 - A face-to-face interview with the two project managers, Anna Herrmann (Head of Education) and Helen Pringle (Administrative Producer) who have been leading the project since January 2005
 - A face-to-face interview with Imogen Ashby, Education Manager of Accredited Courses, who has been involved in managing and delivering the courses since 2005
 - A face-to-face interview with Ella Bullingham (Student Support Worker)
 - 15 master evaluation forms collating the responses of 106 completers of ten courses between September 2005 and September 2007
 - End of project questionnaires completed by 18 students
 - 12 beneficiary files documenting individuals' progress on the project, including initial assessment forms, individual learning plans, exit strategies etc.

3.0 Project Overview

3.1 The main aim of this project was to give women with experience of the criminal justice system the chance to gain confidence and move on with their lives through learning in a safe, supportive and creative environment. The creative arts training courses, offered by Clean Break, were designed to address the needs of these women whilst training them in the sector. Gaining a qualification was by no means the sole aim; in the classroom the women developed personal, social and literacy skills as they worked to improve their creativity. The range of courses included:

- Acting
- Access to Higher Education
- Writing for Theatre
- Costume and Make-up
- Technical Theatre
- Self-Development
- Stand-up Comedy
- Workshop Skills
- Life Stories
- Summer Writing School
- Performance Poetry
- ICT and photography (delivered by CAST)

3.2 Students who completed Clean Break's Acting for Life courses, the Access Course to Higher Education and CAST's ICT and photography courses gained qualifications in line with the National Open College Network. These can be used by students wishing to go into employment or further education.

4.0 Project Management and Partnership Working

Clean Break team

- 4.1 The project was delivered by the Clean Break team, co-managed by Anna Herrmann, Head of Education and Helen Pringle, Administrative Producer. Anna was responsible for managing project delivery, making sure that the student files were up to date and that Clean Break produced all the beneficiary information required by the LDA every quarter. Anna also managed the partnership with CAST.
- 4.2 Helen Pringle managed project systems and finance. She negotiated the financing of the project and managed the evidencing, claims and reports to satisfy the LDA. Helen was responsible for the building itself and related Health and Safety issues, as well overseeing Personnel.
- 4.3 Imogen Ashby, Education Manager, was in charge of all accredited courses such as the year long Access to Theatre and Acting for Life courses to which external qualifications are attached. She managed the project tutors and was also a tutor herself. Imogen ran study support sessions and ensured that the education programme addressed beneficiaries' needs. Her job share partner managed the shorter, internally-certificated courses and work placements.
- 4.4 Jackie Stewart, Student Support Manager, was in charge of outreach and recruitment, the initial assessment of Clean Break beneficiaries and student's emotional welfare.
- 4.5 Ella Bullingham, Student Support Worker, worked with Jackie to ensure the students' emotional welfare. As part of her wider student support responsibilities, Ella ran a mental health support group.

Clean Break – CAST Partnership

- 4.6 The Clean Break project was delivered in partnership with CAST. Clean Break and CAST are two very similar organisations and Anna noted that they have a 'shared ethos'. They have a long-term relationship with each other, having once shared an office, and they have worked together on numerous projects over the years.
- 4.7 The partners shared the course delivery according to their experience. Clean Break delivered courses in performing arts while CAST ran courses in web design, photography and other non-traditional courses in the creative arts sector. As Lead Partner, Clean Break managed CAST's delivery of courses and ensured that they completed the quarterly return forms. Helen Pringle noted that 'CAST always delivered their quarterly reports and copies of invoices to us on time and this was excellent'.
- 4.8 In view of the similarities between the two partners and the division of responsibility, it was an 'ideal partnership' according to Anna Herrmann. Practically however the relationship between the two companies was more challenging. CAST underwent a change of leadership between putting in the bid for the funding and starting the project. The incoming Director was left to deliver outputs that she had not agreed to and without accurate records of how they were reached.

- 4.9 This made managing CAST's side of the partnership more difficult from Clean Break's point of view. Clean Break reworked the budget twice to accommodate CAST's inexperience with the procedures required by European funding. It was the first time that Clean Break had acted as Lead Partner in a project, although they had experience in sole delivery. Anna commented: 'We would have liked some supportive guidance from the LDA or elsewhere on being a lead partner for the first time'.
- 4.10 With this experience behind them the Clean Break managers will ensure in future that they fully understand their partners before a project starts. They commented: 'It is very difficult to gain a practical understanding of the partners' needs and roles during the rush to send in the bid. We want to set out clearer parameters in future so that both partners know what to expect'.

5.0 Recruitment

Outreach

- 5.1 The recruitment procedure for this project was in line with Clean Break's ongoing recruitment activities. Clean Break runs an outreach programme with which Jackie Stewart, Student Support Manager, is heavily involved. She visits prisons, rehabilitation clinics and day centres, giving presentations, leading drama games and showing videos. Representatives from Clean Break also meet groups of women returning to London after time in prison.
- 5.2 The annual production tours the country and further raises awareness of Clean Break's work. It plays in prisons as well as theatres and is a dynamic and engaging way to attract beneficiaries and support.
- 5.3 Three out of the 18 women who completed questionnaires at the end of the project were either in prison or in a rehabilitation centre when the Clean Break outreach team visited and encouraged them to apply on release. Two were especially inspired by the student performance.

Information Days

- 5.4 Clean Break runs information days twice a year to which organisations working in the fields of criminal justice, drugs/alcohol and mental health are invited, as well as potential beneficiaries. Here the work of Clean Break is explained and students' work is exhibited or performed.

Prospectus and website

- 5.5 The centre publishes a course prospectus every year, which it sends out to 300 organisations on its database. This includes drug and alcohol rehabilitation centres, as well as potential employers and further education institutions. All of the information contained in the prospectus is also available online at www.cleanbreak.org.uk. Four out of the 18 questionnaires made reference to these recruitment methods.

Word of Mouth

- 5.6 Word of mouth is another effective way to recruit; roughly half of the questionnaires mentioned this method. Indeed out of the 106 beneficiaries to complete feedback forms, only one said she would not recommend the course to a friend with the vast majority of the other 105 'strongly agreeing' that they would do so. All 18 project questionnaires supported this view, with many saying that they had already told others about Clean Break.

Referrals

- 5.6 Clean Break's partner, CAST, referred beneficiaries to the project and referred at least one of the 18 women who completed an evaluation questionnaire.
- 5.7 Another six women who came to Clean Break this year were referred by the

Vision project at East Sutton Open Prison. The project finds training and work placement opportunities for women and has contacts with many different organisations for this purpose. In the words of Maureen Fraser, the Education Manager, 'Clean Break offers something a little bit different'. Jackie from Clean Break visited the prison to talk to the women about their options and she 'made it very easy' for the women to find a suitable placement. Indeed Maureen emphasised the good working relationship she has with all the Clean Break staff: 'they are very proactive and are simple and straightforward to deal with'.

- 5.8 The support given to the women once they start attending Clean Break courses also impressed Maureen. For example one of the Clean Break tutors once asked her if a woman serving at the prison could stay longer at the centre and attend a networking lunch event with representatives from the London School of Fashion. This attention to the needs of individual students means that Clean Break is 'well ahead of other companies with which Vision works. She concluded: 'I have nothing but praise for Clean Break'.

6.0 Quality of the course: meeting beneficiary needs

6.1 All the beneficiaries were women who had had some contact with the criminal justice system through cautions, the probation service or prison. Some were at risk of offending; others had drug or alcohol addictions to recover from. Mental health issues were also common. Caused by or linked to these issues were a range of needs with which the Clean Break staff dealt with from day to day. These included:

- Poor physical health following drug and alcohol addictions;
- Depression and other mental illness;
- Emotional distress stemming from abuse, losing children to care homes, a lack of support in their lives;
- Low levels of literacy;
- Lack of education or experience of education; some had dropped out as young as 12 or 13. Many had very bad experiences of school and learning environments which led to feelings of low self-esteem and a lack of confidence;
- Problems with housing; many beneficiaries were living in supported-living facilities or were in the process of moving into independent-living facilities. Some were in temporary secure housing and a few were sleeping on the streets. The students often faced financial or security problems associated with where they lived.
- Most women were in their 30s or 40s, and many had children. Clean Break paid for their childcare but they often needed more advice and help.
- Those whose children were in care hoped that this course would help them prove that they were getting their lives back on track and that their children would be returned to them. They sometimes asked the staff to write a reference or vouch for their personal development, so that they could have access to their children.
- Nearly all the beneficiaries had financial worries or problems;
- Many needed advice on claiming state benefits;
- Problems with commitment; some women found it hard to adjust to the new environment;
- Low levels of confidence and a lack of self-esteem.

7.0 How the project responded to these needs

Tailored Student Support

- 7.1 Clean Break offers an intensive level of support to students. The staff team has experience of working with women with these problems and backgrounds. They can adapt their approach to the needs of the students and provide them with a balance of support, skills, daily structure and direction in their lives. For women with troubled lives, the centre is a safe environment for them to share their experiences and learn new skills in a women-only space.
- 7.2 The student support team offered emotional support wherever possible and referred students to external agencies when they needed extra support. In most cases students refer themselves to Student Support but sometimes tutors or other students let the team know that someone needs additional support. Occasionally it becomes a condition of a student's learning agreement that she regularly visits the Student Support Service, for example if her personal issues are leading to problems in class.
- 7.3 All 18 women to return the questionnaire responded positively to the question: 'Were project staff a good source of support during the project? Why/why not?' 17 students had asked staff for advice or support. The one student who did not, commented: 'I never asked them for support but I noticed they were always approachable'.
- 7.4 Students particularly appreciated the advice they were given about issues outside of Clean Break and many felt they could talk to staff about anything. Comments included:
- 'Even outside the CB courses the staff here are very helpful (advice about computer courses). Someone to talk to about whatever is happening in our lives'.
 - 'Good support – friendly, approachable. Helped with form-filling. A listening ear'.
 - 'Yes very much so – not judgemental, helped me with court case'.
- 7.5 Clean Break also started to run sessions in arts therapy, whereby students' problems were dealt with on a one-to-one basis and in a creative environment. Arts Therapy explored students' emotional needs. Students who perhaps found it hard to express themselves with words could do so with music or actions. In doing so they built up their confidence and self-esteem.

Mental Health Group

- 7.6 The Student Support Service also runs a weekly Mental Health support group. Here, students can share their problems and help each other to cope with depression. It is a peer-supported group, although Ella facilitates the discussion or workshop. Between four and 10 participants attend voluntarily and it was set up after Clean Break saw that there was not enough external support available to students, due to shortages in counselling services. Sometimes the students do meditation or relaxation exercises and an aromatherapist came once to give a presentation.

- 7.7 Fundamentally, though, the content of the sessions reflects the needs of the participants. Five students listed poor mental health as one of the reasons for applying to Clean Break in the first place. They wrote:
- 'I was suffering from depression and the course was recommended to me'.
 - 'Coming out a breakdown – saw prospectus in local library – all women, out of mainstream, safe'.
 - 'Was in mental health crisis centre; as a trained actress I thought CB courses would help my mental health'.
 - 'I gave it a try to try and help myself change how I was feeling – angry, pain, depression, low self-worth'.
 - 'Hoped my mental health would improve; I would go back to the drama world and I did go back to being a professional actress'.
- 7.8 While there is much student feedback about the student support team in general (see Retention) in which the group is included, hardly any students commented on the quality of the mental health support group in particular. This can be explained by the fact that it was not included as a topic on the course evaluation forms, which 106 students completed.
- 7.9 However one student mentioned the group in her comment about staff support on the general project questionnaire:
- 'Yes – staff are great. The mental health support group is good – great to have student support, inspirational women'.

Drug and Alcohol Free

- 7.10 Clean Break is a clean environment where no drugs or alcohol are allowed in line with the strict policy in these matters. This supports the women in their own fight against addictions or relapses.
- 7.11 Two students were in 'rehab' when they heard about the course and a third was recovering from an addiction when she applied. She described how the environment at Clean Break helped her recovery:
- 'I was working on my recovery after years of addiction – someone suggested drama. Walked through the door and I felt very comfortable – this was a place I wanted to be'.

Suitable learning Environment

- 7.12 The staff respond to the educational needs of the students by creating a suitable learning environment for the women. Some tutors are trained to teach Basic Skills and address learning difficulties. They take into account the low levels of literacy, dyslexia (some undiagnosed) and feelings of shame associated with a lack of education when training the women. Imogen explained: 'We include basic skills training and study skills in our creative arts courses. This way, the women receive the help they require whilst learning new skills and confronting their problems in creative surroundings.' For some students a Basic Skills course might not be very attractive or interesting, but the combination of arts and literacy training engages them more successfully. This policy enabled students to develop their skills and 'see themselves as learners for the first time in years', working towards qualifications and

receiving their first certificate. Anna commented on the great sense of achievement which this brings.

- 7.13 Low levels of confidence and self-esteem are addressed through Clean Break's work. Imogen explained that the courses involve lots of group work and performance which encourages students to be more confident. She said: 'Working towards a performance during a drama course makes beneficiaries more confident and gives them a sense of real achievement. Those who would never have believed they could speak in public, find themselves able to perform in front of others.'
- 7.14 The project questionnaire asked students 'What were you worried about at the beginning?' Only two said they had had no worries at all. Common to nearly all the other responses was a lack of confidence, in both a social and learning environment. Comments included:
- 'Whether I'd be good enough; whether I know enough; would I fit in; would people like me?'
 - 'Mixing with people; don't normally work in a group'.
 - 'Panic attacks – what if I have one? Will I be able to cope?'
 - 'People's reactions towards me – how to socialise, how to deal with people if they had issues'.
 - 'Worried about my academic abilities and short term memory messed up by drinking'.
- 7.15 The course tutors therefore had a range of students' concerns to deal with in their classes and the success of their approach is best shown again by the students' responses to the question: *What new skills have you developed as a result of the project?*
- All 18 students described skills which involved growing in confidence (this was the most common worry at the beginning of the course);
 - Five said their English had improved;
 - Five were now comfortable speaking in public;
 - Six had developed academic skills, especially essay-writing;
 - Three were happier working in groups or teams;
 - Two could control their anger better; and
 - Four said they could now run warm-up games for a group.
- 7.16 Specific comments included:
- 'It is more than skills development. It has given me self value...the sense of 'I can'. The self-development course motivated me to be even stronger... move back into society after prison. Acting courses taught me to speak up more confidently'.
 - 'Speak publicly, write and perform poetry, run warm-up games; improved literacy (esp. spelling thanks to feedback from tutor); writing scripts – thinking of characters, constructing dialogue'.
 - 'Confidence; more able to approach people less aggressively'.
 - 'More outgoing verbally; join in socially'.
 - 'Confidence; realise that I have integrity and initiative; be part of a team and realise that I have something to offer'.
 - 'Confidence, self-esteem. I'm not afraid of eye contact or speaking anymore'.

Flexible Courses

- 7.17 The courses offered by Clean Break can be adapted and made more flexible to suit individuals. This involves offering short courses or allowing students to collect credits over a period of time which contribute to a qualification. Clean Break offers a combination of accredited and non-accredited courses on various topics so that different needs are met by different types of courses. In Anna's words, 'We are able to tailor the courses we offer to the specific needs of the students'.
- 7.18 Imogen expanded on this and explained that the students are introduced 'incrementally' to the courses, starting with one day per week and progressing to two, then three. This way they 'get used to having a routine again in their lives'.
- 7.19 Although this approach suits women who need high levels of support to help them adjust to Clean Break, others have expressed a desire for longer courses, with fewer gaps between short courses. Anna and Helen said that some women complained that courses were too short and the time in between them was too long i.e. they struggled to fill their days without Clean Break courses. Similarly many women asked on the course feedback forms for the courses to be extended. Comments included:
- Summer Writing School 2006: 'I felt the course was a bit rushed at times.'
 - Self Development 2, 2006: 'I felt the course should have been 4-5 weeks long. This would have given us time to take in information and raise questions.'
 - Funny Women 2005: 'The course should run for longer in order for us to further develop our skills.'
- 7.20 Similar opinions were voiced in relation to the Access courses (see below).

Financial Support

- 7.21 The financial situation of the students is improved by the fact that Clean Break pays for the students' travel to and from the centre, for their childcare (if they need it) and provides them with lunch. This proved to be especially important in ensuring that students committed to the courses. For more on this, see Retention.

Access to staff and premises

- 7.22 The Clean Break centre is situated on a side street just off Kentish Town Road, between Kentish Town and Camden Town underground stations. There are also overground services and bus routes nearby. The centre is accessible for wheelchair users.
- 7.23 None of the students to fill in questionnaires or feedback forms reported any problems with the transport links. Two students mentioned that they had a long journey from home to Clean Break, but both said that this was acceptable because their travel was paid for.
- 7.24 The only criticism to be made by students focussed on the same problem, the difficulty of contacting staff on the telephone. Two students commented:

- 'I found making the initial contact difficult – the answerphone is on a lot – but otherwise good'.
- 'Excellent – only problem is trying to get hold of someone on the phone – nearly always on answerphone and messages can get lost'.

Library and IT facilities

- 7.25 None of the members of the Clean Break staff team mentioned the library or IT facilities in their interviews with GLE and the project evaluators did not ask them about these facilities. However students were asked to comment on three statements related to the library and IT facilities as part of the course feedback forms, completed by 106 students. The three statements were:
- The library is well-equipped
 - There was clear information about the library facilities
 - The support offered as part of the IT provision was very useful
- Students were asked to say whether they 'strongly agree', 'agree', 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' with these statements. There was also a 'no comment' option.
- 7.26 Compared with the responses to the other statements in the questionnaire, evaluations of these particular facilities were unfavourable, with students more likely to disagree with these statements than with statements regarding the quality of the teaching. Even when students responded positively, they were more likely to just 'agree' than 'strongly agree' with these statements. Out of 106 forms, each comprising 31 statements to which students had to respond, only seven 'strong disagreements' were voiced. Two students strongly disagreed that the library was well-equipped and another strongly disagreed that the library information was clear.
- 7.27 These negative responses indicated that improvements did need to be made to the library and IT facilities so that they met the needs of more students. However a high proportion of students also declined to comment on these facilities. This implies either that many students did not make use of these facilities and, therefore, had nothing to say or that they did not think that commenting on these facilities was important.
- 7.28 Clean Break staff duly responded to student's responses in September 2007 and since then, new computers have been fitted and an improved collection in the library has been obtained.

Opportunities for beneficiary feedback

- 7.29 The Clean Break staff encourage students to make suggestions about how their work can be improved and in a number of cases they have responded to these needs. Key examples include:
- Offering Arts Therapy sessions to support students with no access to counselling;
 - Decreasing the length of 'time off' between short courses to keep students more occupied; and
 - Rewriting the course programme so that each part of the course stands alone as a qualification (rather than credits) in line with the National Open College Network.

- 7.29 Students are also encouraged to complete course evaluation forms and an end of project questionnaire was circulated around students who had benefited from the LDA-funded programme.
- 7.30 Course evaluations forms were filled in by most of the completers of 10 courses between September 2005 and September 2007. A total of 106 forms were returned by 111 completers of the following courses:
- Acting for Life (Stage 1)
 - Writing for Theatre (Stages 1 & 2)
 - Costume and Make-up
 - Tech Theatre
 - Self-Development (September 2005, 2006 and 2007; March 2006 and January 2007)
 - Funny Women
 - Workshop Skills
 - Life Stories
 - Summer Writing School
 - Performance Poetry
- 7.31 The form was drawn up by the Clean Break Managers and consisted of six sections:
- A. Course content, planning and organisation
 - B. Teaching and Learning
 - C. Assessment (if applicable)
 - D. Resources
 - E. Student Support
 - F. Summary
- 7.32 Under each of these headings were listed between three and eight positive statements (32 in total) about the work of Clean Break with which the respondent had to 'strongly agree', 'agree', 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree'. A fifth option was 'no comment'. Statements to which students were asked to respond in this way included:
- A. The course was well planned and organised
 - B. The teaching I received was interesting and varied
 - C. The tutor(s) gave regular feedback
 - D. Clean Break staff were friendly and helpful
 - E. Careers Advice was available to me
 - F. Overall the course met my expectations
- 7.33 In many ways this is an effective way of gauging students' opinions about the course, the centre's facilities and the overall impact of Clean Break on beneficiaries. The form covers a wide range of aspects of Clean Break and the grading of responses builds up a detailed picture of students' opinions.
- 7.34 There are limitations of this method however. Everyone to fill in a feedback form had completed a course at Clean Break, there was no feedback from the 89 women who left the project early for various reasons. Indeed there is little feedback available for women who did leave early and their reasons for doing so, except in their individual files.
- 7.35 Similarly the range of statements on the form is somewhat limited; it does not cover all aspects of Clean Break's work. There is no statement, for example,

which relates directly to the quality of the Student Support Service, even in section E on Student Support. One statement deals with student rights, another about course information, which are addressed by the student support service. The remaining four statements however deal with the library facilities, careers advice and travel and childcare costs, which are perhaps less relevant to the success of Clean Break than the Student Support Service.

- 7.36 Given the fact that the project managers, the students and Clean Break's partners (e.g. East Sutton Open Prison) all identify the Student Support Service as a very important aspect of their work, it is surprising that the managers did not ask for feedback about this service on the form. Students did make comments about the support they had received at the end of the form, so they clearly want to share their opinions about this service. For example one student wrote on her end of project questionnaire in response to 'What it is about the service that has been most useful to you?':
- 'The holistic approach; fantastic pastoral care; unique support system; the additional culture of Clean Break was more important to me than the actual subject'.

8.0 Retention

- 8.1 Clean Break staff felt that it was important to address particular beneficiary needs to ensure the students' continued commitment to the courses. The areas in which most support was offered and their effects on the students are described below.

Lunch, travel and childcare expenses

- 8.2 Clean Break encourages student attendance and participation through offering students food and paying for their travel and childcare costs. 14 out of the 18 students to return questionnaires commented that this financial help was essential to their attendance. One student said she'd 'never eaten so well' and half said that without travel money, they could not have attended. This was reflected in the course evaluation forms in which most of the 106 course completers strongly agreed that they were 'satisfied with travel and childcare costs being met'. Only three disagreed.

Student Support Service

- 8.3 To ensure the long-term commitment of beneficiaries to the courses at Clean Break, the Student Support Service, delivered by Jackie and Ella, offers personalised support to those who need advice or help in any way. Each student undergoes an initial assessment of her support needs: assessing her physical and mental health; learning difficulties (if any); history of drug and alcohol (if any); risk of offending; and her need for housing or benefits advice. She then develops an individual learning plan with Ella or Jackie and sets personal goals. This is followed up every six weeks by an individual review which looks at her progress towards these goals or whether a re-assessment is required.
- 8.4 The staff send out a very clear message regarding support services: 'we will listen to any problem, no matter how small it is perceived to be'. Anna and Helen explained that those who avoid support tend to be those who drop out of the course. As such, ensuring that students are engaged with the service is vital.
- 8.5 In line with this policy, the team keeps in regular contact with students and monitors their attendance so that they can pick up on students who might be on the verge of dropping out. There are about 20-30 students in the centre per day and the staff know them very well so they find it fairly easy to tell if people are struggling.
- 8.6 The success of this approach was confirmed by the questionnaires returned by 18 course completers. 10 of them admitted that they had considered dropping out of Clean Break at some point, but all 10 stayed thanks to the support they received from the staff and often from other students. Comments included:
- 'I stayed due to support of tutors'.
 - 'Had a couple of one-to-one sessions with Student Support Workers. I never felt like dropping out of CB overall. Having Student Support really helps'.
 - 'Everyone was supportive and listened to how I felt'.

- 'Had thoughts [about dropping out] but used student support and support of peers'.
- 8.7 Commitment to courses is a special challenge for women who have just come out of prison. They often have other priorities on their minds such as housing and financial concerns. Student Support is holistic, and can help students to deal with the following issues: Housing and benefit advice, Trouble with neighbours, Shortage of housing, Mental and emotional health, Criminal record worries and Health/nutrition.

Attachment to Clean Break

- 8.8 Everyone we interviewed at Clean Break acknowledged the potential risk of offering successful student support, namely that beneficiaries can come to rely too heavily on Clean Break and do not want to leave the project. Although this could be seen as proof of Clean Break's success, the managers stressed: 'our work is fundamentally about giving women the chance to move on'. Imogen (Education Manager) advises students on Higher Education and employment opportunities. The staff team has also run 'moving on' days to encourage students to enter the world outside of Clean Break.
- 8.9 However Anna explained that sometimes harsher measures are needed to encourage students to leave: 'In rare cases we even refuse to allow students onto courses if we feel that they are ready to make this transition'.
- 8.10 Ella said that one way of making the transition easier for Clean Break students would be to form more links with other organisations. Clean Break could then refer students to other places where they might find a suitable level of support.

9.0 Employment and Further Education support

Qualifications and Access courses

- 9.1 Students who complete Clean Break courses gain qualifications in line with the National Open College Network. These can be used by students wishing to go into employment or further education. A typical route for beneficiaries of this project was to:
- Start with a self-development course to build up their confidence;
 - Go on to Introduction to Drama courses: Performance Level 1 and 2;
 - Then begin the Access course for three days a week for one year; and
 - Build on this training and experience and apply for university courses.
- 9.2 Twelve students progressed down this route this year and are applying through UCAS in autumn 2007. Another student hopes to follow them down a similar route, as she wrote on her questionnaire:
- 'Doing short courses could get me a place on Access courses...I feel there is a real possibility of getting into university/drama school and if not, I can set up my own company'.
- 9.3 After Access students have progressed to Higher Education they are entitled to three further meetings with the Clean Break student support service per year to help them with the transition. This gives them the chance to chat through new challenges they might be facing with people who have known them for a while and have seen them progress. The transition from the centre to the real world can be very difficult, so this support is important. As Anna explained, 'succeeding in this environment is very different from succeeding outside'.
- 9.4 Five students, out of the 18 to fill in the questionnaires, had benefitted from Imogen's advice when applying to Drama school or for other university courses through UCAS. One commented on 'the really useful support on the access course e.g. careers advice, help doing UCAS, group facilitated support'.
- 9.5 However the Access course and this level of support did not suit all of the students to whom it was available. One commented on her questionnaire: 'Not much [support] – I started the Access course but it was beyond my capabilities. My confidence increased though through other courses, which helps.'
- 9.6 This student was not alone. When asked to suggest improvements to the project, three out of the four students who commented, focussed their responses on Access and suggested that the course be made longer.
- 'We need more education, more funding, more subjects, longer courses rather than just tasters. City Lit do a year after the Access course doing touring – this would be good'.
 - 'More courses in IT, Maths – more academic courses e.g. to prepare people for the Access courses. I think the Access course should be longer and more flexible e.g. evening classes'.
 - 'Make the Access course a two year course and make it less pressurised'.
- 9.7 Clean Break staff have already responded to these suggestions. Imogen explained that the Acting for Life course used to take 18 weeks and now it takes a year. The students clearly want it to be extended even further.

Need for more professional careers advice

9.8 Clean Break staff acknowledged that there are not sufficient resources to offer the kind of educational support given to the Access students to everyone after they have left Clean Break. Imogen explained that some students decide to follow alternative education or employment routes, which have little or nothing to do with Clean Break's focus on the arts sector. She therefore did not feel qualified to help with one student's application for a course in Criminology, for example. Since no staff member is a trained careers advisor, they could do no more than refer students to other organisations.

9.9 In some respects, the students agreed with the staff that the careers advice was not sufficient. Two of the statements with which students were more likely to disagree or strongly disagree on the course evaluation forms concerned careers advice:

- 'Careers advice was available to me'.
- 'The careers advice I received has been very helpful'.

Two of the seven 'strong disagreements' with any statement were voiced in response to the first of these two, and both of these were made by students from the same course: Workshop Skills, December 2006. Five students in total over the ten courses disagreed with the second statement.

9.10 Some students added further comments on the course evaluation forms and the project questionnaires about the need for more careers advice:

- 'There could be more information on other courses outside Clean Break'.
- 'People did come to talk about progressions routes but I felt it was inadequate; I would have liked a one-to-one outside of CB'.

9.11 When asked what changes she would make to the course, one student wrote:

- 'Incorporate more specific support for students about where they go onto after the course'.

9.12 However other students were complimentary about the support which they received about further education, training and employment. Comments included:

- 'Really useful support on the access course e.g. careers advice, help doing UCAS, group facilitated support'.
- 'Lot of support re university options, lots of encouragement to get over psychological blocks; setting personal goals with Student Support'.
- 'Did a work experience placement with TAPS – helping to teach young people technical theatre; having help to think through career options, which courses to apply for as part of TAPS placement'.

Careers advice for Access students

9.13 Clean Break students can access external careers advice through City and Islington College, which is involved in delivering Clean Break's Access courses. However this is not always suitable for Clean Break students and is only available for those taking the Access course. Imogen explained that the students do not know the advisors there and the college can feel 'male-dominated', which some women are not comfortable with. They are not set up to deal with the extra needs of the students.

- 9.14 Anna also explained: 'We would like to work more closely with IAG providers and organise workshops for CV writing and interviews.' This would help address one of the concerns communicated by students during the project, namely how they might use the training they received at Clean Break in the 'real world'. The 'moving on' sessions run with the help of external companies such as Red Kite Learning go some way to address general careers needs, but they are not specific to individuals.

Work experience placements

- 9.15 Work experience placements offer students the opportunity to put into practice what they learn at Clean Break. It shows them the relevance of their training in the outside world and is an important part of returning to 'normal life'. For some women at Clean Break this takes on extra importance, as this student explained: 'I expected that the work experience would move me towards a positive legitimate future'.
- 9.16 Clean Break liaised with employers in order to offer work placements for their students as part of the Theatre Arts Placement Scheme (TAPS). Usually these were arts organisations which were happy to offer work opportunities. With nearly 30 years of experience in the sector, Clean Break has many contacts which it could use. In total 15 women took up work experience placements as part of their training at Clean Break.

Case Study – Hampstead Theatre

Two beneficiaries of this project benefitted from twelve week work placements at Hampstead Theatre. Tracey Anderson from Clean Break worked with Eric Dupin, the theatre's Creative Learning Director, to design each work placement to suit the woman concerned. Like the team at East Sutton Park Open Prison, Eric was impressed with the level of support offered by Clean Break. He described Tracey Anderson as 'really involved and very efficient.'

Eric explained that the women were 'very different individuals with different needs, levels of confidence, backgrounds and experience'. In order to make sure the placements were well-suited to the women, Eric met with them at the beginning of the term and carried out a mid-term evaluation of their progress. That way, the women were given more responsibility as they developed.

Both women helped with the theatre's youth work programmes. For example, one of them worked in a team of directors and offered one-to-one support to young people. Eric noted 'having these women work with our youth groups created an interesting dynamic and really worked well'.

Contact between Clean Break and Hampstead Theatre has developed beyond offering work placements to Clean Break students. The theatre runs 'script in hand' projects and script readings where young directors have the chance to develop their skills. Eric said that the theatre needs to recruit a high number of actors for these projects and Clean Break is one of the organisations which helps him find actors or provides some of its own students.

- 9.17 Imogen acknowledged that in general TAPS worked well. It was evident from the 18 questionnaires that work experience placements were successful and that the support given by Clean Break staff was appreciated. Three students particularly mentioned that staff had accompanied them to the first day of their work placements. However Anna explained that sometimes the work opportunities did not match students' expectations because students were 'not able to fit into current employer frameworks and they need more support or security'. She said, 'It requires a lot of work on our part to match students and organisations successfully'.
- 9.18 Despite the challenge of finding a suitable placement for a student, the Clean Break staff are very keen to develop more courses which include a work placement or some time in a studio. Imogen mentioned that they would benefit especially from some more contacts in theatres for students to undertake work experience, especially in technical theatre support.

Clean Break contacts

- 9.19 The support offered by Clean Break extends beyond organising work experience placements. The staff write references for students applying for jobs and further training and at least two students mentioned that references had helped them succeed. Another explained how the Clean Break courses had led to further opportunities outside the centre: 'through the support of the Education manager, I got a place at Dress for Success. Having done the make-up course helped me get this placement.' A third said: 'I got my first job as a result of contacts I made on the course. It took about a year to get this work but I was then able to go on to work with other companies.' In total 23 beneficiaries (2 more than the staff had originally profiled for) of this project progressed to employment, either full-time or part-time.

10.0 Outputs and Outcomes

10.1 A summary of project outputs and outcomes is presented in the table below.

Description of targets	Target Outputs	Outcomes
No. of women starting the course	200	223
No. of women completing the course	140	137
No. of women gaining qualifications	34	37
No. of early leavers	60	89
No. of women going into employment (p/t and f/t)	21	23
No. of learning opportunities (completing a 30-hour course)	200	133
Progression to another positive outcome	137	137

10.2 This project came very close to achieving all of its targets as laid out in the table above.

10.3 In three areas, the project exceeded its targets:

- 23 more women started the course than had been anticipated;
- Three more women gained qualifications; and
- Two more women progressed to employment.

10.4 Clean Break exceeded its recruitment target by over 10% which demonstrates the effectiveness of the outreach services and the strong reputation of the centre. Many women came to Clean Break on the recommendation of a friend or were referred by other organisations.

10.5 In total 37 women, three more than expected, gained qualifications accredited through the National Open College Network. Success in this area provides a strong base for meeting targets in other areas, such as 'achieving positive outcomes' and progressing to employment or further education.

10.6 Despite staff and student comments about the lack of sufficient careers advice and job support in some cases, 23 women in total found part-time or full-time work after they finished their training at Clean Break. This amounts to over 16% of the 137 women who completed the course at Clean Break and who progressed to positive outcomes.

10.7 The project achieved one of its targets exactly as planned:

- 137 women progressed to another positive outcome.

10.8 The fact that all 137 who completed the course at Clean Break progressed to positive outcomes shows the positive long-term effect of Clean Break's work upon the lives of the beneficiaries, all of whom had been in contact with the criminal justice system. The high levels of personal development support offered to the women resulted in very positive feedback from the students and a noticeable growth in self-confidence.

10.9 In three areas the project missed its targets:

- Three fewer women completed the course than anticipated;

- 29 more women left the course early; and
 - 67 fewer women achieved a learning opportunity (defined as one person completing one 30-hour course and gaining a qualification).
- 10.9 The project managers expected that 140 women would complete the course but in fact this target was narrowly missed, bringing down the total to 137. This variance represents 2% of the total number of women concerned and all 137 who did complete, progressed to a positive outcome, including employment and further education.
- 10.10 A larger variance of target outcomes is obvious from the numbers of women who left the course early for a range of reasons. Despite the fact that 23 more women started a course at Clean Break than expected, 89 women in total left the course before it ended. This demonstrates that Clean Break needs to continue to build on its student support services, which have proven very successful at retaining students and encouraging them to commit to courses at the centre.
- 10.11 The largest variance between any profiled target and its real outcome refers to the number of Learning Opportunities achieved by the beneficiaries of this project. In fact, out of a target of 200 Learning Opportunities achieved, the project has obtained an output of 133. From the table it is clear that this target has been set too high, given that there was only projected to be 140 course completers.
- 10.12 The project managers explained that there had indeed been a misunderstanding of how Learning Opportunities would be measured. Anna Herrmann commented: 'We did not understand that one 'learning opportunity' meant one 30-hour course completed per person and so we set ourselves a very high target and we have not reached it. Some students completed more than one course and gained numerous credits and qualifications but they still only count as one learning opportunity.'
- 10.13 The comparatively low success rate in this area therefore conceals some major achievements on the part of some students who gained multiple qualifications and proved themselves to be highly dedicated to the Clean Break training course. Anna further commented: 'We do not think it is fair to measure the number of learning opportunities in the way described above. It is not a fair way of recording the success of the project because the figures presented do not take into account the students who have excelled.'

11.0 Summary points

Where could improvements be made?

11.1 In order to build upon the successful work of Clean Break and maximise the organisation's potential, two areas for improvement have been identified by the project managers and the beneficiaries.

- **Develop a greater understanding of the needs of delivery partners and define roles accordingly:** This project was Clean Break's first experience of acting as Lead Partner and the project managers recognised that the project partnership could have been managed more smoothly. In future, the Clean Break managers will ensure that they fully understand their project delivery partners before a project starts so that they define roles more clearly and set the parameters of the partnership.
- **Offer more careers advice, or refer more beneficiaries to careers advisors, so that more students access this guidance:** Both staff and students acknowledged the need for more careers advice to be made available at Clean Break. One of the more common complaints made on the course evaluation forms referred to the quality and availability of guidance in this area. Strengthening links with existing partners, such as the City and Islington College and Red Kite Learning, and referring more students to careers advisors would improve this service.

Success factors and examples of good practice

11.2 Several aspects of Clean Break's work have been marked out by the evaluators as particularly strong examples of good practice.

11.3 **Recruitment and outreach:** Clean Break's outreach methods proved to be both innovative and highly effective. From the student feedback forms, it was clear that the tour of the annual Clean Break production to prisons and rehabilitation centres inspired a number of women to apply for courses. Information made available through the prospectus and online was another decisive factor in recruiting beneficiaries. Indeed Clean Break exceeded its recruitment target by 10%.

11.4 Clean Break's recruitment and outreach activities also involve attracting support from over 300 organisations, through sending them the course prospectus and inviting them to the biannual information days. On these occasions, students' work is exhibited or performed to promote the work of the centre. The growth of Clean Break's network has worked to raise the profile of the centre, resulting in more referrals and increasing the potential for developing work placements for students.

11.5 **Student Support Services:** Students spoke very highly of the holistic support and advice that they had received from the Student Support Team, which can cover a wide range of issues, such as housing and benefits. They were also very positive about the level of extra support they received from staff who were not working in this team, such as the class tutors.

11.6 Noticeable about student support services at Clean Break is the high level of support given within the student community itself. The mental health group is

a particularly good example of this. The group was set up to address the health needs of students, and is primarily a 'peer-supported' group.

- 11.7 Impressively, Clean Break seems to have succeeded in creating an atmosphere at the centre, in which everyone feels responsible for the welfare of others. Indeed some ex-students voluntarily return to Clean Break in order to offer advice to the women currently training, demonstrating how this ethos continues in the longer term.
- 11.8 **Integration of creative learning with Basic Skills training and therapy:** Clean Break specifically designs its courses to accommodate the needs of its students, all of whom have either had contact with the criminal justice system or are at risk of offending. Many expressed concerns when starting the course about being in a learning environment again, due to a lack of education, bad experiences at school or low literacy levels. Others had poor mental health or were recovering from drug and alcohol addictions. However the most common worry was a lack of confidence.
- 11.9 In order to address this range of needs, the course tutors at Clean Break integrated literacy training into creative arts classes and focussed on building the self-esteem of the women using mediums such as acting. One-to-one arts therapy was also offered, in which students could explore their concerns in a more creative setting if they found it difficult to talk to staff. This integration of basic skills training and therapy, within an artistic context worked particularly well. Some women might have been put off attending a Basic Skills course on its own, but they were happy to cover the same topics as part of a drama class.