

Investing in Creative Communities

WORK-LIVE ARTISTS' STUDIOS as facilitators of creative communities

A Guide for Local Authorities, Planning & Regeneration Professionals and Developers



nfasp



ArtReach
David Hill

Salt Bridges

Handwritten notes on a card, including the name 'Hannah' and other illegible text.

stencils

Bow Arts, East London studio. Photo: Bow Arts

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This guide illustrates different examples of how the creation of work-live studios for practising artists can bring benefits to residential areas and local communities. The main focus is on how vacant residential properties in housing schemes undergoing change and redevelopment can be used effectively on an interim basis as work-live studios. The guide also refers to other examples of the successful development of permanent work-live projects and communal workspace for artists, and signposts the reader to existing guidance dealing with this subject. In addition, the guide explores more temporary forms of work-live space, such as Visiting Artist and Residency programmes, as a means of integrating new thinking and creative techniques into local artistic communities.

The **National Federation of Artists' Studios Providers** (NFASP), the professional body that supports, connects and represents all those who manage and develop affordable studio space for visual artists, has produced the guide. It forms part of an advocacy project sponsored by Arts Council England's Grants for the Arts programme. It is one of five documents in a suite of guidance notes for local authorities, planning and regeneration professionals, housing specialists and developers. The other titles are:

- Financing Artists' Studios
- Renovating Buildings for Artists' Studios
- Artists' Studios and the Housing Sector
- The Provision of Affordable Artists' Studios: a role for spatial planning

More information, advice and case study examples developed by NFASP, may be found at www.nfasp.org.uk

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Bhajan Hunjan at work in her work-live flat she helped bring back into use with Bow Arts. Photo: Bow Arts.

Work-Live studios as solutions to complex housing issues

The main case study example in this guide sets out the case for housing providers to consider using artists' studio providers as a solution for housing decant schemes. We focus in particular on a Bow Arts scheme developed in partnership with Poplar Housing and Regeneration

Community Association (HARCA) in East London, in which short life residential properties were renovated and managed as artists' work-live accommodation. We set out a brief synopsis of what has been achieved to date, including the impact of the initiative on meeting the strategic objectives of a major social housing provider and regeneration company.

We then look at examples of the successful development of work-live studios in other contexts. Acme Studios demonstrate what has been achieved by one of the longest established and largest providers of work-live work space for artists in England; WASPS provides examples of how the sector responds to the needs of visiting artists in urban and rural Scotland; and The Bothy Project demonstrates further examples of self-directed artist residencies in rural locations.

The aim is to encourage Councils, Housing Associations and other housing providers to consider the advantages of this approach to managing vacant properties as a viable strategy that can support housing decanting processes and other agendas.

Case Studies

About Bow Arts Trust

Set up as a arts and education charity in 1995 it has over a 20 year history of providing affordable workspace for a wide range of visual artists and creative practitioners. They currently manages over 100,000 sq. ft. of artists' work space housing approximately 400 artists in over 200 studios at four sites across East and South East London. The Trust also manages over 70 work-live flats across 8 sites in east London, and this aspect of their work is explored below

About Poplar HARCA

Poplar HARCA is a registered social landlord which owns and manages around 8,500 homes spanning 11 estates in Poplar, East London. Most of these were transferred from the London Borough of Tower Hamlets between 1998 and 2009. The rest have been built with HARCA's development partners. HARCA's role is to help bring about the social, urban and economic regeneration of Poplar, an area of long-standing social and economic deprivation with high levels

of social exclusion. Their aim is to meet the need for good quality affordable housing. HARCA, a non-profit organisation and a registered charity, has spent over £250 million refurbishing homes, bringing them up to the decent homes standard. They actively promote community regeneration through programmes that link housing to training, jobs, education, health, sports and the arts. Residents from estate boards are involved in decision making at all levels of HARCA's work.



Bow Arts Open Studios attract up to 2,000 visitors annually.
Photo: Bow Arts

A brief history of the project

Poplar HARCA and Bow Arts have, over six years, created homes and studio space for artists in properties that would have otherwise been void. The scheme provided affordable homes to over 100 artists in 70 flats spread over 8 buildings in 6 estates (approximately 50,000 sq. ft. of managed property). This groundbreaking scheme has proved hugely popular, encouraging young professional artists to relocate and contribute to communities in one of the most deprived wards in the UK.

They have taken over the management of over 70 flats for HARCA. Two separate agreements established the terms of use of the flats and conditions for their return to HARCA. They took responsibility for the empty properties, undertaking works to make them safe, secure and habitable. The flats are let to practising artists as work-live studios. The artists are carefully selected as suitable, responsible tenants and the project continuously managed to ensure the circumstances work both for the artists and for their neighbours. Two models have been used to let the units to artists: either an assured short



Bow Arts, Balfour Tower Live-Work project in East London.
Photo: Bow Arts

hold tenancy or a license to occupy. On an agreed date, or alternatively on a date decided by HARCA within the terms of the agreement, the units are vacated and returned to HARCA ahead of their redevelopment.

The terms of the agreement

The project is based on two agreements: the first (Project A) is for approximately 25 flats, for which Bow Arts pays HARCA service charges only; the second and later agreement is for approximately 45 flats, for which they pay a target rent plus service charges. In reality, the second tranche of the scheme is heavily subsidised by the first, so that the management costs are successfully met within the overall package.

They use the income from lettings to artists to pay the rent and service charges to HARCA, to bring the flats to habitable use, and to pay for staffing, maintenance, insurance, legal costs and emergency out of hours cover. Through a four-week rent-free period and a £2,000 allowance offset against rent per flat (Project B only), Poplar HARCA also contributes to bringing the flats back into habitable use.

How this contributes to the Housing Trust's objectives

HARCA sets out its aims and objectives in its strategic plan. The table below indicates how the presence of artists in the area and the activities of the Trust have helped meet a selection of the

aims and objectives for the current strategic plan (2011-2016). The examples demonstrate the symbiotic nature of the partnership and how the project activities are pursued in Poplar HARCA's neighbourhoods at and near to the work-live schemes. They demonstrate how the presence of artists in local communities can make a positive contribution to physical, economic, and social regeneration. The breadth of activity reflects Bow Arts' commitment to using a portion of its rental income from artists to reinvest in educational and community activities.



Bow Arts education project with young people from the City of London Academy. Photo: Bow Arts

HARCA OBJECTIVES	HOW BOW ARTS CONTRIBUTES
Key Aim 1 – Housing and services that are high quality and delivered to an excellent standard	
The HARCA strategic plan has a number of objectives that relate to governance and staffing	Provides effective management of short life properties
	Supports resident involvement in governance
Key Aim 2 – Areas that are clean, safe and attractive	
Improving the public realm and communal areas on our estates	Artists deliver public realm projects, engaging residents in the process
Residents feeling safe in their home, on their estates and in their neighbourhood	The scheme has made a demonstrable impact on security
Fostering greater community cohesion (encouraging volunteering and wide demographic involvement)	Building collaboration and engagement through art
Embedding environmental sustainability in all HARCA activities investing in green initiatives	Developing a major focus on environmental issues, responding to its own and to Arts Council priorities.

EXAMPLES
<p>Scheme wide: After 5 years, the scheme has delivered responsible and effective management of otherwise vacant properties; artists, carefully selected, have proved to be good neighbours. As a consequence, the scheme has been well received by residents.</p> <p>One completed scheme (Leopold Estate), the properties were successfully decanted and returned to Poplar HARCA on time.</p> <p>Artists work with residents to build their confidence and promote active involvement in management and delivery of projects.</p>
<p>Leopold Estate Sculpture (Entwined Histories) St Paul's Way Streetscape Poplar Boys and Girls Club graffiti workshops Burcham Street art in communal gardens</p>
<p>At Warren House the interim use has stopped visible prostitution and drug dealing</p>
<p>The 'Indy Media' film making project engaged young people perceived as the cause of anti-social behaviour, working to deter the formation of a gang</p> <p>Burcham Street intergenerational work</p> <p>All public realm projects</p>
<p>Fairlie Grow - see project example below</p>

Project Illustrations: Bow Arts' work in Poplar

Public Realm, Environmental Sustainability: Fairlie Grow

Fairlie Grow is a project run by a work-live artist that has transformed a previously unloved communal area at Fairlie Court in Bow, East London into an award-winning garden. The project secured over £1,000 set-up funding via an '02 It's Your Community' grant. In 2009, it won 'Best Newcomer' in the Tower Hamlets in Bloom Competition. Its success has been further rewarded with first prize in the Capital Growth Bee Friendly Food Garden. The judges were very impressed both by the amount of wildlife that the garden attracts and the sense of community engendered since its inception.

Skills, Empowerment, Business Development: Mohilla Creations

This social enterprise run by and for women goes from strength to strength. The venture is extremely popular and is run by a Leopold Estate work-live artist with parents whose children attend St Paul's Way School. Sessions range from practical workshops to make textile-based products for sale, to business development sessions to enable the

HARCA OBJECTIVES	HOW BOW ARTS CONTRIBUTES
Key Aim 3 - Regeneration of Poplar	
Creating new homes, reducing overcrowding, improving retail	Artists add to local spending and bring skills in enterprise and rebranding local centres
Expanding the commercial and cultural sector in Poplar - the outcome of which is that 'Poplar is seen as a place of culture and the achievements of its residents are well known and celebrated'. Success is measured by the set-up of a 'tech city', 6 artists' studios, a community festival and the development of a cultural strategy with LBTH.	<p>Delivery of artists' studios; bringing people into the community able to develop local cultural activities</p> <p>Raising charitable funding and cross subsidising community and educational work</p>
Key Aim 4 - Communities that are empowered through health, financial and social inclusion	
Priorities to assist people into employment and provide support for health and work issues, including setting up 2 new social enterprises with a view to them operating independently within 2 years.	Artists promote economic development. As young aspiring professionals, artists are often pursuing other careers to support their work as practising artists. As well as being good neighbours, their presence brings skills and spending to the locality. They generate enterprise.
90% of the activities in our centres will be delivered by the community rather than by HARCA staff	The scheme introduces active citizens into local neighbourhoods
Create Volunteering opportunities	The community and educational programmes delivered by Bow Arts encourage volunteering
Key Aim 5 - All our resources are used efficiently to obtain maximum value	
Value for money	A commitment to efficiency and value for money

EXAMPLES
Scope for use of arts and culture to regenerate local centres including Chrisp Street
<p>Extended the breadth of the educational offer with St Paul's Way School and now works with 20 out of 23 schools in the area</p> <p>Over 5 years has delivered nearly £1m of arts educational activity across schools in Bow and Poplar</p>
<p>Mohilla Creations is one example of a start-up business formed supporting local residents back into work</p> <p>Several schemes across all properties</p> <p>Several schemes across all properties e.g. Leopold Estate Sculpture</p> <p>The ability to leverage charitable funding into the areas in which it is active</p>

group to develop a viable, sustainable creative business. This venture has now branched out and has recently won the franchise to manage a sixth form cafeteria at the school.

“This class has taught me how art can be used in different ways and also how to bring in money. Holding stalls gave me more confidence and communication skills.” - Participant

Lessons for the future from the case study: Financial considerations

The experience of developing work-live studios in partnership with Poplar HARCA has encouraged Bow Arts to seek to extend the scheme and the Trust is now actively seeking other opportunities across London. The case study provides a good example that could be replicated elsewhere by studio providers and other organisations. We can use this scheme’s financial background to offer some broad principles that may make the scheme applicable to others.

Over the past six years, it has cost on average £130,000 per year to manage approximately 75 flats. The Charity is not VAT registered and

therefore has to bear the additional 20% cost on all services. Obviously, economies of scale would increase for a larger portfolio, and the unit cost of management and administration goes up with fewer flats.

Below 50 flats, the scheme is extremely difficult to manage without some form of cross subsidy or sharing of management costs as part of a wider portfolio: at this level, they would not be able to engage a member of staff to administer the scheme. For a scheme of 50-100 flats and upwards, particularly if long term, the prospect of engaging a dedicated manager becomes viable.

In setting the levels of rent, both the fee payable to the Housing Company and the rent charged to tenants, they seek to generate a small surplus to support the delivery of charitable outputs, including the delivery of educational and community activities, in addition to its core charitable aim of providing affordable space for artists. It sets a target of 25% of rental income to be reinvested in community benefit. Practically, its ability to meet this target is affected by rental income, outgoings and management costs.

In making the case to the housing provider, Bow Arts seeks to sell both the direct and the indirect benefits of the project: the rental income, the community benefits given informally by the presence of artists in an area and the projects organised and delivered by them. They emphasise the fact that artists are good neighbours and carefully select prospective artists from a large pool of applicants; some other managers of short life property are less able to guarantee that their occupiers will be as active or independent in local civic life.

Bow Arts is planning to develop a guardian scheme for end of life estates; this can provide extra security for housing through a form of agreement such that the property is easily vacated at short notice. Essentially, the occupier of the unit is engaged to look after the property by virtue of their presence, deterring vandalism, squatting, theft and other crime. Maximum flexibility is achieved because the space is licensed to its occupiers as a secure interim occupation. However, the insecure terms for artists mean that the scheme is only attractive to tenants on the basis of lower rents. This proposal, if pursued, should be considered separately from any wider main scheme, to take account of the different cost implications.

Acme Work-Live Artists' Studios: enhancing mixed-use schemes

Acme is a London based charity which recently celebrated its 40th anniversary as a provider of affordable studio space and residencies and awards for non-commercial fine artists. Acme provides 552 studio units, runs work-live and studio residency schemes and manages an international residencies programme for visiting artists.

Acme provides an advisory service on studio provision to a wide range of organisations and individuals including funding bodies, local government, other studio organisations, development agencies and artists. Extensive case study material and access to Acme's advisory service is available via the website at: www.acme.org.uk/support.

Acme has established itself as a charitable housing association. To date this is a unique model among artists' studio providers. They provide affordable properties for artists who seek to practise and/or live in a space. Acme's core work, in pursuit of its charitable aims is to act as a building developer and manager.

Work-live for artists is difficult to make viable, given that the creation of studio spaces involves a higher specification than other forms of work-live space, so the properties are more expensive to develop. However, the model, as implemented by Acme, has proved to be more authentic than other work-live experiments in that many other schemes have tended to gravitate towards becoming 'Live' only spaces, despite attempts to avoid this through the planning regulatory framework stipulating that the 'Work' element should be the primary use. Acme has been particularly successful at using work-live properties to support fixed artist residency programmes as part of a wider mixed-use scheme.

Examples of Acme's work-live schemes include:

- The Fire Station, London E14: The project is run as a special residency project, providing 12 residencies, each for up to five-year tenancies. The rent is very cheap compared with residential values in the area, and is set at rates comparable with non-residential artists' studios. Residency participants share the space with 6 permanent artists' studios (non-residential). The building also caters to the needs of disabled

artists. Four rounds of the programme have already been awarded, supporting over 40 artists on 4-5 year residencies. ACME has a wide pool of applicants interested in joining the scheme.

- Purfleet: Acme has created a wider mixed-use scheme, incorporating a production facility with 40 studios and 4 work-live units.
- Stockwell Green: This is a student accommodation project developed in association with the University of the Arts.

Insights from Acme's experience can be gained via the website and through that to the group's publications and advisory services. Illustrative practice insights include the following:

- Aspirant work-live providers need to try to build up an asset base, as this makes borrowing for further development more possible.
- Organisations must be ready and prepared to rigorously pursue capital availability from public sources, such as the Lottery, when such schemes return post recession and post Olympics.
- Aspirant providers should encourage planning authorities to be as specific as possible in

their Planning Gain documents, for example specifying clearly that work-live space must be for artist studios at affordable rents, along with other rigorous specifications.

- Developers invariably drive the process, so artists' studio providers should choose the developer who is striving to meet similar goals and talks the same language. But, developers can be hard to deal with, driving hard bargains. It can be a tough business, requiring speed and tenacity on the part of the studio provider, who should be prepared to walk away if the terms are not right.

WASPS Studios, Scotland: Supporting visiting artists in urban and rural communities:

WASPS Studios is Scotland's largest providers of affordable artist studio space with properties located across the whole of the country from Kirkcudbright in the South West to the Shetland Islands. Studios are housed in a wide variety of renovated buildings in cities as well as rural locations.

Even in the larger cities, the housing market is not as over-heated as it is in London and some other

towns and cities south of the border. Housing costs and the demand profile for work-live space is very different in London in particular; there simply isn't the same level of demand to provide work-live space for large communities of artists at the scale needed to make schemes viable. It is not at the top of the agenda for artists, hence WASPS focus on continuing to deliver affordable studio space only. That said, there is potential for demand to grow in the more expensive cities of Edinburgh and Aberdeen in the future. Any decisions on the provision of larger scale work-live developments in these locations will be dependent on economic circumstances and significant shifts in demand.

Living space for visiting artists

There has, however, been an increase in demand for living space as part of a structured residency programme for visiting artists. The driving force behind the current schemes varies and is highly driven by location and whether there is any suitable space available. Many international artists seeking a residency programme are inspired by the peace, solitude and landscape of rural Scotland in particular.



WASPS, The Steeple, Newburgh, Fife, artists' studios, residency and project space.
Photo: Andrew Lee.

WASPS Studios currently provide three locations for visiting artists in a combination of self-contained work-live space and 'Live only' accommodation (studio to be rented separately). Facilities are offered as part of a converted tobacco factory in east Glasgow (Hanson St); an award winning arts centre in Newburgh, Fife (The Steeple); and a refurbished fisherman's store in Scalloway, Shetland (The Booth).

Each place offers a unique environment and character with all spaces being well equipped with cooking and washing facilities, bedding, towels, TV and internet connection. Fully inclusive monthly rental costs are charged ranging from £375 pcm for the live only property to £450 pcm. Tenancies range from 1-6 months in length. Interested artists are asked to provide a CV and statement about the artist's practice, images of recent work and an outline of how they proposed to spend their time in their chosen location.

WASPS Studios are also due to launch a new facility on the Isle of Skye; there is currently no dedicated work-live provision in this area and there is clear demand for this as a popular rural location for artists to draw inspiration from the stunning landscape. Space will be provided for three visiting artists through the programme. A house has been donated to the project and WASPS is partnering with Atlas Arts to deliver the project locally, including setting up educational workshops for local schools. The sprawling geographic coverage of WASPS properties makes partnerships an essential feature of successful local delivery of the Visiting Artist scheme as well as the wider package of artists' studio provision.

Hanson Street Studios, Dennistoun, Glasgow

Housed within a converted tobacco factory and opened in 2001, this was Scotland's first purpose built studio and events complex for artists. With space for up to 200 artists per year, the building offers 77 studios, a 4,000 sq ft project space, shared kitchens and showers and an open plan workspace with dedicated kiln room. WASPS were opportunistic in providing the two, 3-bed self contained flats within the complex; the original building had a couple of caretaker flats which were easily convertible and appropriate to the locale. The configuration of space in the rest of the building offers any visiting artists a range of options for studio space to rent alongside the flats. Short and long-term leases are available to tenants.

The Steeple, Newburgh, Fife

The picturesque harbour town of Newburgh has cultivated a reputation as an artists' town. It has an active cultural scene with many artists and makers living in the town. In 2008, WASPS renovated the old Town Hall into a multi-faceted arts centre including studios, project, performance and gallery space. Given the growing popularity of Newburgh, there was considerable

international interest from potential visiting artists. It made sense to include a work-live unit within The Steeple for this purpose. This required a debate with planners to negotiate a change of use (as the original use was non-residential) but this did not pose a problem. The Steeple has become the focal point of the town's artistic and cultural life and has stimulated new creative businesses in the High Street including shops and galleries.

The Booth, Scalloway, Shetland Islands

The Booth provides self-contained work-live space for visiting artists in a converted fisherman's store, the oldest building in the town. Again, partnerships have been key to this project; the renovations were completed by Scalloway Waterfront Trust in 2001, and The Booth is managed by WASPS in partnership with the Shetland Arts Trust. This property is extremely popular, with visiting artists from all disciplines applying to use the facility for a month at a time. Artists have the chance to access other facilities on the island including ceramic and textile facilities and printmaking. The Booth provides a 'clean' working area and living space with a stone-walled basement for more 'messy' studio

work. Since the scheme began, three artists have located permanently in the area.

Small scale artist residency locations:

The Bothy Project, Scotland

Founded in 2009, the Bothy Project's aim is to provide a network of small-scale residency locations in unique (and often remote) locations around Scotland. Spaces for artists will be provided through either existing or purpose built buildings. A commitment to sustainability is a key feature of The Bothy Project's work by using sustainable materials, building techniques and renewable energy methods.

Inshriach Bothy

The Inshriach Bothy is a modern facility designed specifically for short term, self-directed artist residencies. The building was constructed as part of the RSA Residencies for Scotland programme in 2011. It was subsequently moved from Edinburgh to its current site on the Inshriach Estate near Aviemore in the woodland of the Cairngorms National Park. The 'off-grid' facility is well insulated with sheep's wool, is heated by wood burning stove and has a rainwater harvesting system installed.



WASPS, The Booth, Scalloway, Shetland, Work-Live space for visiting artists. Photo: David Cook

Artists can rent the bothy in the walking 'off season' between October and March. The Estate makes the bothy available for rental to the general public for the summer season. In the winter months, one-week blocks are offered for artists to enjoy the surrounding landscape as inspiration for painting, drawing, writing, photography or sculpture. Residents are encouraged to blog about their experience, providing a written and/or photographic account of their experience. Facilities include a kitchenette, desk and library, mezzanine sleeping area, outside shower system and composting toilet.

Lighting is provided via solar panels. There is also a solar panel phone charger and wind-up radio and torch. Studio space is small with floor space of 1.5x2m and wall space of 4 square metres.

Further information, photographs and the most recent artist blogs can be found at thebothyproject.blogspot.co.uk

Impact of the Visiting Artist Scheme

The fact that there are cases of visiting artists choosing to locate permanently in Scotland once their residency ends is testament to the success of the programme. There are many examples of visiting artists having a social impact on the areas they move to; having new creative people in the environment brings new ideas to indigenous artists, particularly in more remote areas. The creation of international links with a variety of countries has led to a new exchange programme being formed between Glasgow, Shetland and Dusseldorf. The partnerships that have been set up between WASPS and local agencies on the ground to support the programme have been instrumental in optimising the social, economic and cultural impact within local communities.

Making it work financially

Work-live space does not follow the same financial model as straight artists' studio provision; this is certainly the case for the Visiting Artist schemes run by WASPS who plan for an occupancy rate of 80% in these properties. They price work-live space on this basis - and hope that it balances out evenly across the year. There are less instances of the Visiting Artist scheme contributing to the overall management costs of the wider property - but it may break even if the 80% occupancy rate is reached. Historically, artist residencies always need external funding of some kind. Whilst a differential pricing structure could potentially bring in higher rents (i.e. charging more for more established artists with a track record of commercial success), this would go against the ethos of supporting up-and-coming artists; WASPS is keen not to compromise the quality of the output from the Visiting Artist programme and values the social and cultural impact demonstrated in the locations supported so far.

Further help and advice

NFASP is the professional membership body for all those engaged in developing and managing affordable studios for artists in the UK. For further help and advice, visit the National Federation of Artists Studio Providers (NFASP) website:

www.nfasp.org.uk

On the website, you will be able to access the following help:

- Perform a site search related to your enquiry.
- Access an extensive library of resource and guidance documents.
- Review the Frequently Asked Questions section.
- Join NFASP and access tailored support for members.
- Use the members' pages to ask a question online, or secure advice via the local and national networks.

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National Federation of Artists' Studio Providers
November 2014

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Cover:
Artist Beatrice Boyle in ACAVA's Parkham Street Studios.
Photo: Justin Piperger.