

barbican



Coney x Barbican
Barbican Box

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Introduction from the Barbican

Barbican Box is a portable Box filled with the ingredients for making and creating original artistic work. Teachers are supported to develop their own teaching practice through training, access to new activities for the classroom, and collaboration with an Artist Mentor – a professional artist working in the creative sector. The project culminates with an opportunity for all participating schools to share documentation of their journey and work at a Barbican Box Showcase, supported by each regions' respective partner venue.

In 2021, we were delighted to run Barbican Box for its second year in Harlow, in partnership with Harlow Playhouse, and for its fifth year in Manchester, in partnership with HOME. This pack provides a taster experience of the 2021 Barbican Box process created by Coney, with activities which can be delivered independently in your classroom, wherever your school is, and without requiring access to additional resources.

For more information about Barbican Box, please visit barbican.org.uk/barbicanbox

About the Barbican Box Partner Venues

Harlow Playhouse

Harlow Playhouse is a leading creative hub and venue in the East of England. It provides enjoyable cultural experiences for everyone, working in partnership to support healthier, happier and safer communities; and to stimulate opportunity, creativity and innovation. It has a programme of quality music, comedy, spoken word, dance, and circus arts events across its 400-seat and 120-seat theatres, as well as other reach-out locations, and provides space and support to many artists, groups and companies throughout the year.

HOME

From gallery to screen to stage, via café bar and bookshop, HOME redefines the idea of an 'arts centre.' It's a shared space and a creative space, where what's new is what matters and what matters is that you're always made to think, to question and to feel... at home. Whether you want to see work that challenges and astounds or get closer to directors, writers, filmmakers and artists, or just drink the best coffee in town, we hope you love HOME.





You Have Found Coney

Coney's mission is to make play to spark change, following our key principles of adventure, curiosity, and loveliness. Our work is always centered on the people we're making play for, by and with, and is inspired by the belief that the world can be a magical place where ordinary people can do extraordinary things.

Sometimes this play looks like interactive or immersive theatre. Sometimes it might feel like an adventure, a good conversation, or an exchange of gifts between strangers.

We often use common digital technology cleverly, to meet audiences wherever they are: in theatres, schools, museums, workplaces, on the streets and online.

The experience starts when you first hear about it and only ends when you stop thinking about it.

Recent Coney pieces include: *Telephone* - a live and gently interactive storytelling performance for remote audiences, all about conjuring connection from a distance. *We Are Shadows: Brick Lane* - an immersive smartphone adventure, made in partnership with Tamasha and community performance company, Rightful Place. And *We The People (of this place)* - a game show about a particular community with questions set by its people (most recently Margate and the Barbican & Golden Lane Estates).

Our programme for, by and with young people and families features the Young Cones, a company of young people aged 7-13 who make play for others. Highlights include: *The School For Grown-Ups* - an online learning adventure for grown-up audiences, designed by children, and *Codename: Violet* - a playful intervention at a car industry dinner gala in collaboration with Greenpeace.

We were delighted to curate the 2021 Barbican Box and hope that this resource supports your group to **spark change through play.**

Your Mission

Create a playful, lovely, adventurous gift that improves wellbeing in your school

Over three stages you will be introduced to Coney's practice in Playful Activism through a mission to make a gift for your school. Students will explore how art can spark change through play. They will be offered a creative toolkit for planning, creating, and delivering a piece of playful activism, framed as a gift for your school. They'll map the emotional health of the school, create a responsive piece of art for a specific audience, and deliver a positive impact on their school.

The delivery of a gift demonstrates the power of a piece of art for others, how we can impact audiences and how we can activate conversations. **The best art is made as a gift to others.**

The gift is defined by your group depending on the skills you have together, the resources among you, and the recipient(s) you want to reach. As the teacher, you may have an idea on the best type of gift your group might create, as you know them best, but some examples, in case useful, might be: a mural; some kind of performance; a flash-mob dance/happening; a sculpture...or something else!



The Process

The following pages will introduce you to three stages of Coney's practice; **LANDING, GIFT MAKING** and **DELIVERY AND REFLECTION** that resemble the process of Research, Development, and Production in the cultural sector.

This process can develop students' learning in **Key Stage 3 PSHE, Citizenship, Theatre and Visual Arts**. It could also be used within tutor time or after-school arts clubs, and supports students to practice **teamwork, speaking and listening with confidence, critical thinking** and **problem solving**. We hope it supports you to explore how being 'in-play,' and playing games, can enable learning and create change. We also hope you have fun. Throughout the process we have highlighted where it links to Fusion Skills.

Fusion Skills are a combination of creative, technical, educational, and emotional skills that have become increasingly important in the 21st century workplace. Fusion is a person-centric approach, equipping future and current workers with technical expertise that is necessary for success. Fusion brings together different industries and technologies to spark innovation and create economic growth. Fusion skills use interdisciplinary work as a driver for creativity and innovation. Fusion skills are about the so-called 'soft skills' as well as the technical, creative, and academic skills needed for success.

Bonus Content

Coney have built a bespoke website for this version of the Barbican Box. This website will introduce the class to the exercises and the context behind the practice.

Within each stage, we've offered an opportunity for teachers and their groups to dive deeper into the experience by using our Online Platform to setup and facilitate the session - found here - youhavefoundconey.net/PlayfulActivism

This link remains the same throughout the process, and you will always start from this address regardless of where you are in the project. Here you'll find text and audio content. This is best viewed on a big screen where possible (or by the teacher sharing their screen if running online), as you begin each stage.

This element isn't necessary for running the project in your school, but can add an additional layer of mystery and fun to the experience.

The content for each stage is accessed using a codeword, and the codewords can be found in this document.

Stage 1: LANDING

Codeword to enter landing stage on the website - LANDING

Landing is how Coney begins to make a project for a particular place with a particular set of people

We spend time in a place; talking to people, exploring all the things that exist there, the facts and the stories, the systems that operate in it - the written and unwritten rules. We also try to land in the making space by understanding who will be making the gift and what skills, interests, and everyday superpowers they have.

The two activities in this stage will help to understand what is 'in-play' to make a gift together at your school, through understanding what we individually bring and what we are working with in the school.

You will be landing in your school - a place you all know well. These exercises are designed to encourage you and your group to be playful and curious. It's about discovering, and revealing in new ways, the things you see every day.

By the end of this stage, you will have:

- Discussed the concept of art as a gift, and the potential for this to have a positive impact in your school.
- Developed an understanding of the mental and emotional health of your school.
- Created an understanding of students' unique skills as humans to bring to the room as artists.
- Created a collaborative map of your school and thought about where a gift could most benefit the school community.
- Developed students' understanding of the role of consultation and collaboration when creating content for different audiences.

Key Fusion Skills this stage supports

- Interpersonal skills
- Creativity and imagination
- Flexibility and adaptability
- Oral, visual, and written communication skills
- Social responsibility, perceptiveness, and ethics
- Initiative
- Curiosity, ability to question and to research

Landing Games & Activities

Mundane Superpowers

Objectives

- Learn more about each other
- Discover the interests and skills of the group

Time: 20 - 30 mins

You need

- A group, in person or online
- A way to record everyone's mundane superpowers. That might be a list - there are some more creative suggestions at the end of the activity.

Preparation

- Read How to Play (on this page)
- Think about two examples of your own mundane superpowers - include one that might be seen less positively, encouraging students to think about how they can bring all of themselves.

How to Play

- Introduce the idea of a mundane superpower - something you are really good at but would never be able to win an award for, or something that would never save a life. Toby at Coney HQ thinks washing up is his everyday superpower. Other examples that Coney have encountered are: building excellent Lego models; always being able to find your way back, after only having been somewhere once; always being exactly 5 minutes late.
- Split the group into pairs and ask them to share with each other at least one mundane superpower. You can then ask the group to share back at this point.
- When the students have identified their superpowers, you can ask them why they think they are good at their superpower, and how it makes them feel.
- You can ask each pair to introduce the other person's mundane superpowers, and how they experience them, to the rest of the group.
- End with a short discussion: what have the students learned, noticed, or discovered? What is it like discovering each other's mundane superpowers? How could these skills be used in the making of a gift? What characteristic or artistic interest underpins the mundane superpower?

Mapping Activity

Objectives

- To gather intelligence about wellbeing in your school

Time

- Part 1: 20 mins setting the task
- Part 2: Some time for the group to undertake research determined by you, this could stretch over several days or within one session/one part of a session with your group
- Part 3: 45-60 mins to make and share back

You need

- A group, in-person or online
- Some materials to document the intelligence gathered - these could just be a paper and pencil

It's nice to have

- A selection of art and making materials e.g., paper, paints, glue, masking tape, boxes, tubes, pots, Lego, plasticine
- Ways to document - take photographs, record film, record sound
- A way to share virtually e.g., Google classroom, Jam Board, Miro or Padlet
- A way to share in-person e.g., noticeboard, table

Some example questions to get you started are included on the map in **Appendix 1**

Preparation

- Read How to Play (below)
- Gather resources. If working online explore how to get resources to students, or actively manage the group's options for recording intelligence
- Prepare the sharing space options

How to Play

- First begin with a discussion on wellbeing in your school and what wellbeing means to the group
- You will be making a map of the school, and this can be done in many ways depending on your group. You could map out the school across your whole classroom, break students into smaller groups to draw the school or go outside to the physical places to answer to the questions found in the example map.
- Ask the group how they can record the intelligence they gather. Create a big list together, suggestions include
 - Interviews - written or recorded
 - Surveys - written, using counters in a jar to agree, or online
 - Photographs
 - Film
 - Drawings, paintings, or collages
 - Models
 - Songs
 - Stories
 - Objects
- Put your students in groups of 3-4, with questions from the example map.
- After the students have gathered their intelligence, encourage them to plan the most playful way to share that intelligence with the rest of the group. Then allow some time to make their presentations e.g., models, a song, a story.
- Ask each group to present their intelligence to the rest of the group.
- As a whole group reflect on this task, discuss what you have learned, noticed, or discovered. You can discuss with the group how this intelligence will be used to make the gift together.

Stage 2: GIFT MAKING

Codeword to enter Gift Making stage on the website - GIFTING

Developing a gift you can make together, that will have the biggest impact on your school

Gift making describes the playful, lovely, adventurous things that Coney make, drawing on everything that we've learned in the landing phase.

You will be making and giving a gift in your school. The stages within Gift Making are designed to encourage you to be playful and adventurous in doing this. Lovely gifts have the power to change the world.

Coney gifts are usually a mixture of things and experiences, often we create playful games as gifts. We always plan how the gift is given or discovered. We love gift giving celebrations, and all the different ways these celebrations can happen. Coney enables the person, or people, receiving the gift to join in as much or as little as they would like.

By the end of this stage, you will have:

- Discussed the power of a gift and impact it can have - how will this gift spark change through play?
- Designed and agreed on a gift together that will respond to the research from Landing and what we want the gift to do. What is the gesture of this gift? What do we want this gift to do? What conversations or actions do we want our gift to provoke?
- Developed an understanding of how we make art for specific audiences and how we design to influence them. Who is this for - who is the audience?

Key Fusion Skills this stage supports:

- Collaboration, cooperation, and teamwork
- Innovation and problem solving
- Creativity and imagination
- Flexibility and adaptability
- Oral, visual, and written communication skills
- Social responsibility, perceptiveness, and ethics
- Designing and making

Gift Making Games & Activities

This Is For You

Objectives

- Explore gift giving
- Develop playfulness
- Warm up imagination and adventure
- Practice storytelling

Time: 15-30 mins

You need

- A group, in-person or online

Preparation

- Read How to Play (below)
- You may want to project the script or write it on the board

How to play

- Ask for a volunteer to play A, and you take the role of B to demonstrate how the game is played.
- A takes an imaginary box to person B
- A - 'This is For You?'
- B - 'For me?'
- A - 'Yes for you!'
- B - 'Thank you'
- Person A then returns to their space and watches as person B opens the box and takes out what is inside
- Let the game run until everyone has had a chance to give and receive the imaginary box. It is important that the players only use the words in the script.
- To adapt this game to online play you could play Go Fetch. Go find the most unexpected item you can find in your house in 30 seconds.

Next

- You can develop this game to explore how A delivers the gift and how that influences what the object B takes from inside is.
- You can push your group to really play with what might be in the box, but keep to the script if you can, though they can play with how they say the words.

Five Lovely Pieces

Objectives

- Explore how to make and give a good gift

Time: 30 - 40 mins

You need

- A group, in-person or online

It's nice to have

- A way to record the lovely pieces of information that you discover and the gifts you design

Preparation

- Read How to Play (below)
- Consider who in your group would be a good informant, or if you as the session leader takes that role

How to Play

- Someone takes the role of informant. This is often the facilitator, but if your students see each other in everyday life, you might choose someone at the centre of that group.
- The informant picks someone they know quite well to be the hypothetical recipient of a gift. They keep the identity of the person you are creating a gift for a secret, trying not to reveal their identity indirectly.
- Everyone in the group asks the informant questions about the recipient to build up a profile of intelligence about the recipient. The questions should help with planning, making, and delivering a good

gift to them. What might you need to know? Likes/dislikes/allergies?

- If the informant judges that answering a question would cross any line, they pass. There is no shame in passing a question, nor in asking a question that is passed. In fact, they are to be encouraged because they help us find out where the lines are.
- You end up with several lovely pieces of information about the recipient.
- Divide the larger group into smaller groups. Each small group has a little time now to devise a good gift - both the gift itself and the method of delivery. Some plans might be too ambitious to be practical but that's ok. These are hypothetical gifts. The informant is not involved in the devising of gifts.
- Each small group pitches their plan to the informant, who offers feedback to help develop the gift and delivery so that it ends up on the right side of the lines.
- Reflect on what makes a good gift. A gift is good if it's personal, but too personal becomes creepy. There's a line you don't want to cross here, but perhaps get close to. A gift is good if it's delivered magically, but too magical becomes freaky. Again, mind the line. A gift is good if it has value, but too much of the wrong kind of value might oblige you to reciprocate. For example, here's a very expensive computer from someone you don't know very well - you might think, 'what do they want?' A gift appears in your bedroom from someone who is not in your family - how did they get in here?
- You can now use Five Lovely Pieces as the basis to design your gift for the school.
- Decide on whether you are going to make the gift for a specific person or the whole school.
- Use the information you have developed in LANDING as the intel from the Informant.
- Break into small groups to come up with an idea of how you could make something for the Recipient. Use the skills you have in the group to design the gift
- Each group gets to pitch their idea back to the rest of the class
- Build from these pitches into one feasible Gift you give to your Recipient.
- You may want to make the Gift over an hour or several lessons depending on the plans you have come up with. It can be flexible to your needs.

Delivery And Reflection

Codeword to enter Delivery stage on the website - DELIVERY

The delivery of the gift for the school and reflection on the impact

Coney always considers the gesture of a gift. How will our gift spark change? What conversations might happen or what action might people take when they receive the gift? We also think carefully about the impact of the gift we give, what might happen because of the new conversations or actions that our gift sparks?

This section is mostly about delivery and giving you the space to finish the Mission. Before you embark on the Delivery you may want to discuss what risks may be involved in how the Recipient responds when they receive the gift and to ensure you are making the gift for them, not yourselves.

Once you have delivered the gift it is time to reflect on what you have done. Reflection is an important part of developing ourselves as artists, makers and humans. We use this as a space to learn about our own practice, how we have levelled up on the project and how we want to move forward.

By the end of this stage, you will have

- Delivered the gift that you have designed and created as a group to the recipient you have chosen.
- Reflected on the process of the making and delivery of the gift and how it impacted the recipient, and whether it had the desired impact.
- Discussed how this act of making a piece of art can be used as a piece of Playful Activism.

Key Fusion Skills this stage supports:

- Creativity and imagination
- Collaboration, cooperation, and teamwork
- Analysis and evaluation skills,
- Coping with and learning from failure
- Autonomy, learning how to learn, and lifelong learning

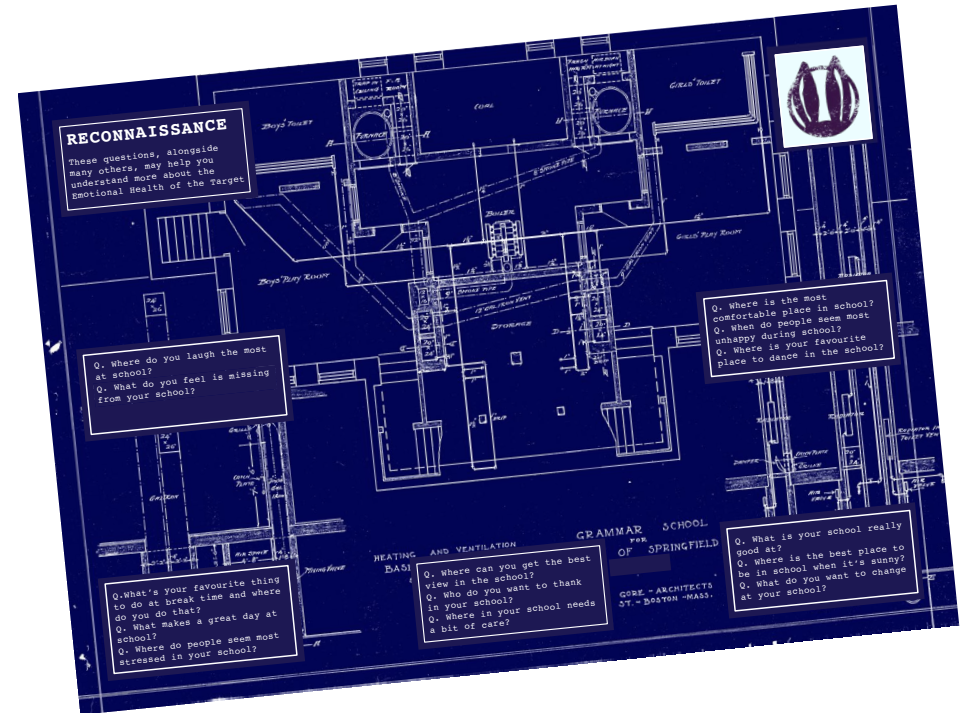
REFLECTION

After you have given your gift and celebrated, it's time to reflect on each stage of the process and how the group felt about how we create Playful Activism. Reflection also gives space for personal reflection on how participation influences your life beyond the project. Some useful questions might be

- What have you enjoyed?
- What happened as a result of making and giving our gift?
- What have we learned, noticed, or discovered through landing, making, and giving our gift?
- What is the power of play? Why do you think that?
- Coney believe that the arts can create change - what do you think? Why?
- What will you do next?

Reflection is always good over a cup of tea.

Appendix 1: Example Map for Mapping Activity



Appendix 2: Bonus content — message transcripts

Landing Message 1

Hello,
I work for Coney. Nice to virtually meet you.
Coney are interactive experience-makers.
We create games, adventures and play
where people can choose to take a
meaningful part.
Our work takes place anywhere that people
gather. It could be in theatres, schools,
museums, the streets or online.
Our work always follows the principles of
adventure, curiosity, and loveliness.
We make play with ideas that resonate in
the world around us; From the everyday to
the extraordinary.
We make play that aims to spark change.
Some might call it Playful Activism.
Over the years we've sparked play in
palaces and classrooms, led people
through streets, fields, and made work
everywhere from Tasmania to Berlin.
We're now working with you.

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Landing Message 2

I'm sure you have noticed but this past year
has been a tricky one. Full of difficulties
for many people, particularly people in
schools. In fact, nearly 73% of students
have reported that their mental health
has declined because of lockdown. It has
drastically affected people's wellbeing.
I mean, let's be honest, you'll know that.
You don't need me giving you stats about
that.
You'll have seen it yourself.
We know that lockdown impacted mental
health;
That anxiety has risen, people experienced
loss, faced difficulties at home and
depression. And all of this, and much, much
more, has affected our mental health.
Again, you know this, I'm sure.
In fact, you are experts.
More so than I am.
And that is why we are here working with
you.
You are experts in your school's mental
health and wellbeing and how it has been
affected.
And you are in the perfect position to
understand it...and change it.
It. Wellbeing. In your school.
So, I've sent your teacher some games and
exercises to run Reconnaissance.
Recon missions are an opportunity to
understand what's in play.

Gift Making Message

Hello, this is Rebekah. From Coney.
You completed a session on
'Reconnaissance.' Understanding what was
going on in your school, in the place where
you are making a piece of art. Some would
call that 'Research.'

Let's see what you will be working on
together – your mission.

Your mission is to create a gift.
A gift to spark change in your school.
Use the intelligence you built from the
Reconnaissance Training.
Your aim is to make a gift that will positively
affect your school's mental wellbeing.
How you do that is up to you all.

--

There's a line when we are making gifts for
others.
A line that you don't want to cross but
perhaps getting close to is exciting.
The sweet spot.
That makes the gift electrifying – makes the
impact greater.

//

A gift is good if it's personal, but too
personal becomes creepy.
A gift is good if it's delivered magically, but
too magical becomes freaky.
A gift is good if it has value, but too much of
the wrong kind of value might oblige you to
reciprocate -

//

Risk is important to remember.
Because it may need to be embraced but
must not be taken for granted
when we are making something for others
Something to make a change in a life or
in lives.
A gift to spark change.

Delivery Message

Hello, this is Rebekah. From Coney.
When we make art for others, we are doing
so to have an impact.
To have a conversation about something we
believe is important as Artists.
There'll be conversations you want to have,
things you want to change in the world,
I'm sure.
That is what art can be about.
Finding a way to change someone's world.

You are nearly ready to deliver your gift.
I wonder how you are feeling right now.
Nervous, excited or maybe just content?
It is just part of a school project, I guess.
Just a set of creative challenges set from us
at Coney with little stakes.

Here we are then everyone.
Ready for the delivery

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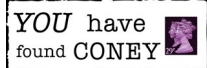
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barbican



HOME



Barbican Creative Learning pioneers new models for creative and cultural learning across the art forms. Our mission, **Creative Skills for Life**, underpins all aspects of our work and approach in the design and delivery of meaningful and impactful learning experiences across three strategic pillars: **Education**, **Employability** and **Enrichment**.

In 2020/21, we delivered 20 digital and physical programmes with over 200 partners, engaging 2,400 participants and reaching an audience of more than 50,000. In order to achieve this, we build partnerships with teachers, artists, young people, schools and community organisations locally, nationally and internationally.



The City of London
Corporation is the founder
and principal funder
of the Barbican Centre