## The Bunker Art Exhibition

On Thursday 3rd April an exhibition took place at Shambles Art Café in Derwent St. The exhibition demonstrated how creative art is helping teenagers who've been in trouble, and who've experienced or been exposed to drug-related problems, to get their lives back on track.

Art from the exhibition

Sunderland Youth Offending Service, Resettlement and Aftercare Programme (RAP) is working in partnership with Jungle Bricks Street Art Project, local photographic artist Nicola Maxwell and The Bunker studios with the aim to provide young people active to the service the chance to learn new skills.

The Bunker, based on Stockton Road, opens its doors to youngsters who are known to the RAP programme giving them the opportunity to express themselves creatively through the media of art and photography.

The Bunker is better known as a professional recording studio that offers a wide range of services to the local music scene including training in industry skills. It has now widened its remit to accommodate more diverse creative projects. The project aims to give young people skills that will help them to secure future education or employment as well as providing them with a hobby and opportunity to learn in a structured environment.

Young Person designing a piece of art

Kenny Sanger of The Bunker, believes the drop-in sessions play a vital role in helping young people who have been in trouble with the police and said: "This project is free to anyone who is participating in the RAP programme and is on a voluntary basis. This means the young people choose to come here to learn new skills and as a result often choose to avoid their past bad habits. Many of the young people who attend this scheme discover a real passion for art and as a result they begin to think about new directions in life. Without this project many of these young people would not have the support to prevent them from being caught in a cycle of committing crime."

One 16-year-old who became disengaged from mainstream education has now decided to pursue a career in art since participating in the project.

They said **"Since I started coming to the Bunker I've learnt how to take and develop my own photos and create images using the computer. I can't wait to see the reaction of my family and friends when they come to the exhibition – I don't think they'll believe that it is actually my own work!"**

Gary Roberts, RAP Team Manager states, "Youths who attend RAP programmes see their confidence soar. They meet new people and discover new things. Once they have been on this scheme they regain their appetite for education or training and we are then able to signpost them towards further education. Crucially, RAP is proving effective in keeping youths out of trouble which, above all else, is the primary purpose of the scheme."