

# darts



## Case Study

Art Club family

# Lydia and Becky's Art Club Journey

## Art Club

Art Club is a programme of creative activity for children and their families in Doncaster, funded by Global's Make Some Noise between 2024-6. Weekly sessions take place at The Point – darts' Centre for Creative Health & Learning in the centre of Doncaster. Art Club is free and accessible to all families with children aged 5-11, with a particular focus on those facing barriers to arts engagement, including low-income families, families who speak English as an additional language and Disabled children and young people.

Lydia\* and her mother, Becky, have been attending weekly Art Club sessions at The Point for around two years. From their very first session, the consistency of the artists helped Lydia feel at ease.

***"The first time we came, Lucy was the artist, then in the next block she was the support artist – that consistency at the start, of people Lydia recognised, was really helpful,"***

Becky explains. Knowing who to expect each week allowed Lydia to build trust and feel confident in the space, supporting her engagement in the sessions. For both Lydia and Becky, Art Club provides much more than a creative outlet, it's a space where they can both express themselves in ways that work for them.

***"It really helps me to relax,"*** Becky says. ***"The activities support Lydia in regulating herself, because she can express herself here. It doesn't have to be verbal."***

Lydia has situational mutism, and the gentle approach of artists in Art Club, meeting participants where they are, enables her to communicate comfortably:

***"They've all been so good at adjusting the way they run a session to give Lydia more processing time or repeating their instructions."***

Artists are also flexible in adapting activities. While some sessions—such as those involving drawing faces—can be more challenging, Lydia is always supported to approach them in a way that works for her.

***"Mandy's [artist] activities are a bit more challenging... but she is always really inclusive and adapts things for her or is encouraging when she suggests doing something else."***

Becky also described how the approach in Art Club differs from other settings:

***"We go to lots of different groups and activities, and this has been the one where Lydia has settled best."***

She explains that in Art Club, she can support Lydia in ways that are sometimes discouraged elsewhere:

***"If she's struggling, I can hold the brush or pen and follow her instructions. Other groups have been a bit snappy about me doing this. That doesn't happen here."***

Since attending Art Club, Becky has seen significant growth in Lydia's confidence and communication:

***“When she first came, she wouldn’t talk to anyone and would prompt me to ask questions for her. Now, she recognises the artists and she’ll ask questions for herself.”***

One moment stood out in particular:

***“She said to Mandy, ‘This is too messy for me. Can I have some paper so I can draw a picture instead?’ I was so blown away by her having the confidence to say that to an artist!”***

This development reflects improvements in Lydia’s ability to advocate for herself and make independent choices, an important milestone in her personal growth. For Becky, one of the most valuable aspects of Art Club is the non-judgemental environment, not just for Lydia, but for herself as a parent and carer.

Becky is a full-time carer for several members of her family, leaving her with very little time for herself. Within this context, Art Club provides a rare opportunity to feel at ease.

***“I can relax. You’re not judged here,” she says. “If Lydia gets dysregulated and we have to leave the room, it’s never commented on when we come back in. The artists just pick up where they left off. I don’t have to hide or explain anything.”***

This approach allows Lydia to regulate without added pressure and ensures Becky does not feel scrutinised during challenging moments. The inclusive ethos extends to how creative work is valued:

***“No matter what the work is, everyone’s work is celebrated. The artists are always insistent that ‘we have to get a picture of EVERYONE’S work’—not just the ‘best’ ones.”***

This practice plays an important role in building self-esteem for the young people in sessions and reinforcing that every contribution matters.

The skills and confidence Lydia has developed at Art Club have extended into other areas of her life. Becky shares:

***“A couple of the activities we’ve taken into other groups that we go to. Lydia has been able to support other children to try things she knows a bit about.”***

Although Lydia has found it challenging to attend with friends due to changes in routine, Becky has been happy to recommend the group to others, demonstrating her confidence in the programme and its impact.

After two years, Art Club remains a vital part of Lydia and Becky’s lives. The combination of consistent staff, inclusive delivery, and a welcoming environment has created a space where Lydia can thrive creatively and personally. For Becky, the sessions offer something equally important: reassurance, support, and the chance to relax in a community that understands and values her family’s needs.

This case study demonstrates the transformative impact of inclusive, community-based arts provision—not only for young people, but for their families. With continued support from funders, programmes like this can ensure more families have access to safe, creative spaces where they feel supported, valued, and able to grow.

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*\*Names have been changed.*

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