



One World Final Year Report

Jul 2011 – Jul 2012

- Aims
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- Learning

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Esmee Fairbairn Foundation Progress Report-Year Three, Final Year

Summarise what we funded you to do. Include the aims of the funded work during the past year and the activities undertaken to achieve these.

AIMS

ARC was funded in June 2009 to develop a youth theatre group engaging (in the first instance) young asylum seekers and refugees, and also some of the indigenous community, in partnership with North of England Refugee Service (NERS) and Stockton Borough Council Asylum Support Team. The project was designed to integrate young asylum seekers and refugees into their host community through engagement with theatre and performance.

In Year three the aim was to focus on integration, raising aspirations and performance development, with the over-arching aim of the group identifying pathways to exist independently beyond the life of the project.

Due to the absence of Stockton Borough Council Asylum Support Team (YR 2 Report) ARC launched a new marketing campaign and developed/renewed partnerships to recruit new young people to the group and to establish avenues for the group to become independent.

To meet our aims we continued to work with Scott Young, an established theatre and film practitioner who worked with the group weekly to create 2 theatre productions. The first production was a film piece devised by the group which aimed to tell their group story and also acted as a promotional tool. The second production ***The Bird and the Fish*** a devised piece of theatre which explored themes of cultural difference in relationships – this was performed at ARC in autumn 2011.

In spring 2012 a new practitioner – Mike McGrother was brought in to lead the project through the final stages. With a strong reputation for working across the Tees Valley with asylum seekers and refugees we brought Mike in to support the on-going recruitment process, artistic process and to identify ways with the group that they could become independent.

Meeting weekly the group continued to develop artistically by working with Mike and 4 young artists (aged 16-25) in music, drama, dance, writing to create a vocal production for the Stockton Infinity Festival 2012, ***Infinite Voices*** and performances for national dance programme ***Big Dance 2012***. Through this dance activity the group noted their desire to develop their skills as a dance theatre group in the longer term.

The group also undertook visits to other performances both at ARC and beyond to raise their aspirations and inspire their own work.

Working with Mike and the support assistant the group had a number of sessions to identify their next steps after the project and the initial actions they could take to continue creating work and raising their profile in the local community.



Have you achieved what you set out to do? Did you encounter any difficulties and how did you overcome them?

AIM: To engage 15 young people in the project to raise integration levels and create stronger community cohesion

- With the steering group a new series of relevant flyers were created to support recruitment
- A renewed partnership with All Points North (North of England Refugee Service) enabled us to attend and deliver a workshop at 2 of their refugee and asylum sessions to recruit more young people – this engaged 2 more young people to the group
- The partnership with All Points North also enabled us to access 1 young refugee – Daniel Nouri (Lebanese) who became an ambassador for the group, creating a Facebook page and recruiting 1 additional person to the project. Daniel also completed a consultation with the group to identify ways in which the group could promote themselves and engage more people.
- Contacts were made with the Department of Public Health (Health Improvement) and Justice First – an organisation working with people searching for sanctuary in the Tees Valley. Both organisations distributed information about the theatre group

Success

Through the new partnerships, the ambassador work and new marketing campaign we engaged 24 young people in the project - 12 of whom were from indigenous backgrounds or seeking asylum and 2 of whom were refugees; this met our integration levels creating stronger community cohesion.

Challenges

Although the project engaged 24 young people in the project this was not a consistent group - new recruits attended and other members left at different points in the project. To avoid this having a detrimental effect on the development of the group dynamic, productivity and performance we put in place an assistant worker Laura Lonsdale who was there to support new recruits coming to the session and was a contact point for the group. Having an assistant meant that we had more ability to integrate new people to the group, provide additional support where needed and remain more informed about who would be attending and who wouldn't on a weekly basis.

AIM: To encourage group decision making, ownership of the project and raise self esteem

- In July 2011 5 young people formed the steering group, meeting with the Practitioner and the Project Manager weekly for 6 sessions to devise the plan of action for the final year.
- In May 2012 2 representatives from One World spoke with ARC to inform them of their post One World ambitions and support requirements
- All performance work devised by the young people
- Group collectively selected 2 performances they wanted to see

Success

The final year was really strong in supporting the group to make decisions and increase their ownership of the project. This was essential due to the group taking the project further as an independent group.



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The steering group highlighted in the early stages of this year that they '*wanted to know more about the people they worked with*' (jasmine, age 12). The group began to address through performance these themes, directly finding out about each other's stories, backgrounds and life, raising their understanding of not only asylum seekers and refugees but also the backgrounds for all of the young people involved. Steering group leader Sarah Dobson took an active lead in designing session tasks throughout autumn 2012, reflecting '*It's good to feel like I'm helping and bringing cultures together*'

In June 2012 group representatives Tino and Dennis actively took on the role of the final performance piece making us aware of a local dance practitioner that could be worked with to deliver the performance work with the group.

Challenges

The steering group members did change in the project and this responsibility shifted to different participants throughout the final year. This did present the problem that the group often indicated that they were starting something new and for 3 months from Nov 2011 – Feb 2012 the group did not have a steer, performance focus or regular meeting date. We overcame this by doing a re-launch with Mike where they came together and looked at the next focus date, rearranging together when they would meet, how often and why. The re-launch was a result of 2 meetings with Mike, the assistant, the 4 young arts leaders and ARC Project Manager

AIM: To create new, exciting, innovative and varied pieces of theatre for performance at ARC which develops artistic and performance skills

- In August 2011 One World devised and produced a film which hinted at their own stories, reasons for joining One World and acted as a promotional tool:
- In September 2011 One World devised and produced a script for informal performance entitled ***The Bird and the Fish*** which tackled issues of cultural difference in relationships. Throughout the remainder of the year they continued to develop the script and performance
- In February 2011 One World began filming for an intended film project based on life in Stockton. Unfortunately the group went through a transitional phase and we lost some participants and the film did not complete. However work began in the March to write songs and spoken word performance pieces about life in Stockton in preparation for the ***Infinite Voices Festival***
- On Sat 26 May the groups vocal tracks were played from PA Systems across the Infinity Bridge in Stockton as part of the Infinity Festival, ***Infinite Voices***
- In May the group started to work on developing their dance skills with the support of young arts worker Sammy Hodgson which resulted in the group working with Urban Flo Dance Company to create 2 performance works for ***Stockton Dance Festival 2012***.

Success

By working with different creative art forms in their making of work the group were exposed to new skill development, experiences and opportunities. The experience working with the young arts leaders was a key part of this process and provided a direct opportunity to raise aspirations in the group of what opportunities can present them in the creative arts industry.





The work overall was well received by its audience with Helen Ferguson, freelance director and Programme Coordinator at ARC commenting that ***The Bird and the Fish*** was 'A poetic and interesting piece of storytelling with a lot of potential to be made into a theatrical performance with a clever way of retelling the experiences of the participants'

As a project manager, Rachael Ankers collected feedback from a selection of the participants on how they felt performing moved them forwards in their own personal development. Key comments included

**A safe way to express yourself
Gives you a voice
Help's people
Brings culture together**

One World's work has been accessed by audiences at the Infinity Festival of 2000, Stockton Dance Festival, 2000, Bird and the Fish – 21 (2 performances) and the film work was distributed online, in local neighbourhoods and at 2 events in Middlesbrough. The reach is an estimated 4500 people being exposed to the work of One World and their stories raising the awareness of cultural differences and asylum seeking and refugee communities.

Challenges

The group did not manage to produce 10 new works which was the original ambition at the start of the year. Ultimately this was potentially too ambitious and not realistic for a group that was still engaging new participants. However the work that they created was innovative, varied and exciting in the use of content and style. The content was always reflective of the young people's backgrounds which raised awareness of asylum seeker issues, personal issues and cultural difference and similar

AIM: To raise aspirations in young asylum seekers and refugees

- 12 members of One World visited a local college production of ***Hair*** in May 2012
- 2 members of One World had conversations with a Newcastle based refugee theatre group about their work and upcoming flash mob performances
- One World members participated in Stockton Dance Festival, a joint platform event where they joined in open workshops and watched other performances
- 6 One World members supported International Hullabaloo where they worked on a music stage helping out.

Success

This activity was all intended to raise aspirations and support the group to understand themselves and their own locality in context as well as reinforcing the skill development and artistic development. A key success of this activity was that after seeing ***Hair*** the group decided that they wanted to work more on dance skills and perform musically.

Challenges

We unfortunately did not get to participate in a programme of activity delivered as part of Refugee Week outside of Stockton – a challenge which presented itself due to time commitments of the young people and the overall commitment of the group at this stage. National Refugee week came at a time when the group had shifted again and were in the process of creating work for the Dance performance – much of this activity was off site and establishing communication with the group became more strained. To ensure that they did





have engagement with other refugee and asylum seekers in the national Refugee week they participated in Stockton's International Community Choir the Diaspora Vocal Collective – where the group collaborated on a song called 'Swan song'. The DVC choir is a choir which has united over 40 nationalities through song and music.

AIM: To equip the young people with the skills to apply for funding to sustain the project and become a self-sufficient theatre group

Initially we intended to achieve this by running a series of funding clinics on how to apply for funding and submit a funding application. We did not achieve this part of the project because the group did not have a large enough steer or drive to become a self-sufficient group; and subsequently there was no attendance at the first 'legacy' discussion meeting with ARC and the practitioner. The reality of the group submitting funding applications became less relevant to their need as a group so instead we took a different approach and spoke with the group members about what they envisioned they needed to support their ambitions to perform. As a result it was determined that at this stage access to space, further skills training, more opportunity to promote and showcase their work would be relevant.



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What have you learnt (for example what has gone well or how you might do things differently in the future)?

This year we have achieved a number of the aims as set out for year three in the final work plan approved end of July 2011.

Working with the group attendees to steer the direction of the programme was a great success in terms of setting achievable goals, providing a more engaging programme of activity and retaining participants.

Exposing the group to more performance and more practitioners developed a broader skill and interest base within the group which led to new avenues for participants with new outlets for their stories and new inspirations. This success has taught us the importance of keeping freelance facilitator and practitioner contracts flexible and for shorter periods of time which offers participants the opportunity to work with the person relevant to their changing needs, to access more learning, develop new skills and remain inspired.

Engaging an assistant increased access to the group by offering transportation and also encouraged stability and support within the group for new recruits and for those who felt they needed additional learning support – particularly in language and socialisation. It reminds us in the future to ensure adequate support is available within sessions and in getting people to/from sessions so that the programme is as accessible as it can be.

There were issues throughout the project that we were unable to predict and challenges that we could perhaps have thought about in more detail and would do differently in the future.

Recruitment:

We were not prepared for our partnerships to come to an end and were not safeguarded against this risk. Our recruitment to the project relied on the database that Stockton Asylum Support Team provided and we had not actively captured the individual data or looked for alternative providers. When Stockton Asylum Support Team disbanded ARC lost contact with a large database of participants and struggled to identify where we could recruit our target audience from - ultimately delaying the programme. Since this situation we have ensured that our recruitment process with young people on all projects is through a variety of channels and ARC is committed to capturing all participant data within projects and activities.

Realistic Targets:

We have also learnt that 3 years is a long period of time for change and a longer period of time for change in any young person's life, particularly that of an asylum seeker or refugee. Before the project had started it was believed that the group could become a full theatre group within this timeframe. The reality is that the project required far more flexibility to its participants needs, wants and it needed to be able to withstand the transient audience it worked to engage. The group has shifted, moved and overall produced some strong pieces of work but the end group were not the start group as originally planned.

In future we will look to establish representative steering groups from the start of the projects to ensure that advocacy is at the core of each activity and that when challenges present themselves there are always people to support, partner and further the project in





accordance with need. A key consideration in future work will be who the target audience is and how long we plan to engage that audience enabling us to draw up relevant risk strategies more effectively.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Rachael'.

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