

How to Work Creatively with Young People

A professional development programme for artists and practitioners



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Introduction

How to Work Creatively with Young People was designed to offer local artists and practitioners a theoretical and practical introduction or refresher in working creatively with young people.

The programme was delivered over a period of two months and included two days of theory combined with four days of practical delivery and observation time. By providing this mix of both practical and theoretical learning we hoped to equip six artists with the confidence and skills to deliver exciting, quality, creative activity for young people at ARC and in their own work across the region.

Background

ARC is committed to developing their creative learning offer for young people. To date the prevailing barrier to this expansion has been a significant lack of high quality and diverse artists living and working in the Tees Valley.

At times this issue has prevented ARC from being able to deliver creative learning activity that is both relevant to ARC's artistic programme and in demand; examples include young people requesting music production, spoken word, film, set design and breakdance.

In response to this we developed ***How to Work Creatively with Young People***, a professional development programme which would enable us to connect with more artists and practitioners in the area and work with them to develop their practice.

It was essential that the programme offered a chance to work with young people so that the artists could receive honest feedback, try ideas out with their target audience and work in an environment where we could see them in practice and where the group would learn together.

What we did

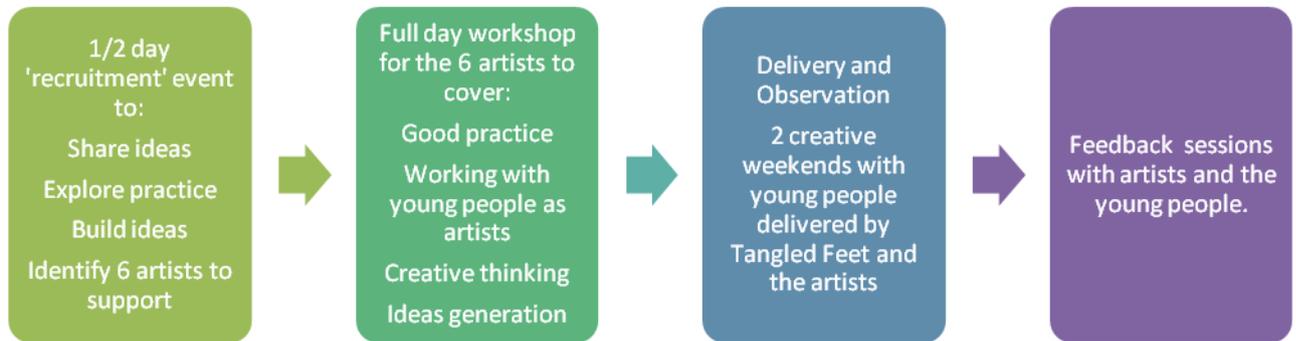
ARC invited [Tangled Feet](#) to lead the facilitation of the programme, understanding that as a physical theatre ensemble with an extensive history of working with young people creatively they could offer diverse artists a high quality learning experience.

The programme was free for the six artists to participate in and they were also given a small contribution towards their travel expenses and delivery time which totalled £120 per person.

There was an initial 'recruitment' event to identify six artists for the programme and this was promoted as a free professional development day with Tangled Feet. The idea was to bring as many artists together as possible to share ideas, explore practice and build ideas for workshops. From here we would then invite six of these attendees back to participate in the full programme.

We invited Creative Factory – a group of 12 – 16 year olds who produce their own work at ARC to work with these artists as part of this shared learning experience.

The full programme looked like this...



The programme was developed through discussions between ARC's Creative Learning Manager and Tangled Feet.

Successes

How to Work Creatively with Young People introduced us to four new artists who all have different levels of delivery experience and work in different art forms. All artists have expressed an interest in continuing their work with young people at ARC and in other places and two of the artists have accepted delivery work with young people since the programme.

We had an open conversation with the artists after the programme to talk over their personal outcomes, led by questions including:

- What has come from the programme for you as an artist?
- How did you feel (in general) when taking part, and more specifically when working with each other, planning sessions, delivering to the group, afterwards?
- What do you remember seeing?
- What did it make you think about?
- Was it important to do/have the opportunity to develop these skills?
- What surprised you about the programme?
- How did you feel about having your expenses paid?

Responses to these questions were positive, with the main highlight being the opportunity to work with a group of young people to test out ideas and to learn from it. Being with an age range they hadn't worked with before provided a good base to plan sessions in the future and all artists felt that they had a stronger knowledge of what this age range 'looked like' in terms of interest, thinking and attitude.

The artists recalled moments when they were delivering and were aware that their ideas weren't working or that the lesson plans weren't going to plan; all of which were crucial moments for them that will frame how they continue to plan activity for young people.

Importantly, people felt that the model was excellent and that development programmes should offer access to highly skilled facilitators and the opportunity to deliver to a user group that are open and willing to share in the learning process.

A particular success story is that Maria, an artist on the course has now delivered activity directly for Tangled Feet, working as one of their practitioners on a London-based project.

The artists commented that by attending this programme they discovered more about their potential to deliver alongside their own practice and also became aware of an exciting generation of young artists that needed the support of a professional arts community.

One of the key points was the financial aspect. When asked if they thought it should remain free with expenses paid, they said it would be good to charge people and instead of making payment to the artists we should provide lunch and refreshments. It is difficult to know what the charge should be and they did indicate that we hadn't explicitly stated in the promotion that expenses were paid which may have affected the intake to the recruitment event.

For Tangled Feet, this was the first time they had delivered practitioner development in conjunction with direct work with young people, and plan to adopt this model within their own company, to develop skills within their wider ensemble.

Challenges

Recruitment of artists to the event was essential as we hoped to attract people not currently in our bank of freelancers. We identified new places in the area we could go to target artists and asked people to forward information on. Our reach targeted the Tees Valley and the top areas of North Yorkshire. Invites were all sent to other areas of the North East but we were aware that the priority was to locate local practitioners.

The result was:

- Six artists attended the recruitment event, 66% Newcastle/Tyneside, 33% Tees Valley

- Four artists participated in the overall programme, 50% Newcastle/Tyneside, 50% Tees Valley

We had hoped to engage a larger proportion of artists from the Tees Valley but unfortunately this did not happen. It was excellent that we were able to support people from this area and from the wider North region but it has made us aware that to support more artists to work creatively with young people in the area there is more work to do to reach out to them.

Ensuring that Creative Factory were having a positive, useful experience with the artists was really important and we wanted to make sure that they got as much out of the programme as the artists they were working with. This did mean that we had to make sure they were fully aware of what the opportunity was, manage their expectations and ensure that the artists and in particular the lead facilitator was equipped with knowledge about the group's needs so that they could keep both parties working positively together.

Having spoken with all the group members their experience was incredibly positive and they got a lot from the experience, even delivering some of the tasks they learnt to each other in subsequent Creative Factory sessions.

Facebook feedback from the group included:

'the best workshop we've ever had' - Izzy Neish

It was amazing! The people there are fab - Andrew Lowry

OMFG the workshop was "totes amaze-balls" Really enjoyed it ! - Tamar Rafferty

Next steps

We now know that this model of developing artists to work creatively with young people works and we know how useful it has been to the development of artists in the North East, widening ARC's range of freelance practitioners.

There is a need to provide training for more artists to work with young people to both support their own development and to support the growth of the next creative workforce. So whilst we know we do need to offer this training and would want to replicate this model, we need to identify more artists who we can support and who want to develop these skills so that we can maximise the output of the programme.

ARC will also engage these artists to deliver activity with Creative Factory and Creative Future (7 – 11 years) over the next year to continue their development.