

Brighton Youth Theatre Pilot

“Excellent Youth Theatre”

Indicator Set 6: Social Intelligence

In the first instance I gave the document to my line manager Chris Parfitt to look through. Chris is the Youth & Connexions East Area Manager for Brighton & Hove City Council. Chris gave the following feedback.

He thought it was a very positive and useful scheme and he could see that it could be very beneficial as a way of demonstrating outcomes where it can be difficult to show tangible results. Also it could be a useful way of monitoring progress and ensuring that standards are upheld. As a local authority we do have our own monitoring methods and inclusion guidelines and he did express the opinion that some groups may already be working within their own guidelines etc. and that dipping in and out would be more appropriate for some groups so as not to overburden them.

Tania Banks, one of the part-time youth theatre leaders ran sessions with two of our youth theatre groups. We had been allocated Indicator Set 6: Social Intelligence. Below is Tania’s report from the sessions

I completed two full sessions with two youth groups: The Falmer group consisted of 11 girls and 4 boys aged 11–16. The Brighton Youth Centre group was a group of 15 girls aged 14–17.

Starter game: “All change if...”

You know what Social Intelligence is? You think social intelligence is important? You think you already are Socially Intelligent? You think this group is Socially Intelligent? You think the work we create is Socially Intelligent? You think the youth theatre leaders are Socially Intelligent?

Opinions

We put up the words “strongly agree”, “agree”, “strongly disagree”, “disagree” and “unsure” on the wall. Using the indicator sheet questions we then asked the young people walked to the statement they most agreed with and discussed as a group. The young people in both groups found this very challenging as they felt as if they all had different concepts of what SI is and that the questions were very complex.

They felt it was important to explore what Social Intelligence is first and were keen to have a definition. They came up with some ideas themselves.

“Social Intelligence is... Knowing what expectations of society are, communicating effectively and having respect for others. Socialising and being open to new people and new ideas. Being able to read people’s emotions and respond accordingly. Social Intelligence is to communicate effectively with other people and not judging people’s emotions, thinking of everyone and welcoming interaction.”

The young people created short improvisations based on the socially intelligent behaviour indicators. The scenes were set at a bus stop, on a chat show and in a TV studio. One was titled "Are you blue because of your social IQ!"

These performance pieces explored what Social Intelligence looks like and how people behave and interact with others. They had some really interesting debates about nature versus nurture and about how not being socially intelligent is not being shy, but is perhaps being too over confident or self-centred. They also created some work on Socially Intelligent superheroes saving the world from un-socially intelligent behaviour – they were called Mrs SI, Super SI and SSI Task Force.

The young people enjoyed debating in the sessions as sometimes there isn't time to do this. They believe that by coming to the youth theatre most people are SI and support others to be. They think SI underpins what is done in the youth theatre.

In terms of self assessment using the indicators – the young people all scored between 40 – 52 points. Nobody marked lower than a 3 for any question. Most marked 4 or 5 on every question. We filled them in as questionnaires at the end of the last session.

As a staff team we have had an initial discussion about the papers and generally feel that they will be a useful and interesting tool to develop, monitor and evaluate our work. We also felt that we would adapt some of the tables for use with young people as they were not suitable for them and that some tables might be for our use only.

From our experiences at various events over the years it has become obvious that youth arts groups are many and varied and that of course we are all at various stages of development and have different professional standards. We all felt that this scheme will be invaluable to those groups in need of support and guidance and also for people considering setting up a new group.

With regard to the future and how we might deal with the results, we are having a team meeting to discuss Tania's findings and the implications of the overall scheme to Brighton Youth Theatre in more detail. As a local authority organisation we are constantly being asked to provide evidence of learning, achievement of competencies etc and I feel that we will be able to adapt some of the tables in the Excellence and Inclusion Scheme to meet our needs and to become a useful tool in our work.