

Dundee Repertory Theatre Pilot

“Inclusive Youth Theatre”

Introduction

Context

DRYT is part of the Creative Learning Team of Dundee Rep. The Team consists of nine members of staff headed by the Associate Director who is also on the Senior Management Team of the building. The Creative Learning Programme consists of 5 strands:

1. **Creative education:** projects with the formal education sector predicated on the basis of using the whole building and staff as a resource for learning (so all staff in every department have been given facilitation training).
2. **Creative communities:** projects which take place in community settings, usually with non-traditional arts attendees.
3. **Dramatherapy:** a programme of targeted work with adults with mental health issues.
4. **Professional performances for children and young people** performed at the theatre and on tour.

And most importantly for this paper:

5. **Participate:** Our youth theatre and lifelong learning programme

The participate strand breaks down into 14 groups, 12 of which we would class as youth theatre groups (young people age 5-25 who meet regularly throughout the year) and 5 annual youth theatre projects (gatherings of young people age 5-25 we bring together for short periods of time but sustain a long term relationship with either by integrating them into regular groups or by working with them every holiday period or on regular projects). They are as follows:

Groups: 5-7s, 8-10s Wednesday, 8-10s Saturday, 11-13s Wednesday, 11-13s Saturday, 14-16s, 16-18s and Rep Young Adults (18-25 year olds). The Youth Theatre Forum, Menzieshill Satellite Youth Theatre, Mid Craigie Satellite Youth Theatre, Whitfield, Satellite Youth Theatre.

Projects: The youth marketing team, the shadowing scheme (an annual group of young people who co-direct, co-design, co-compose alongside the professional creative team etc on shows), Play in a Week 11-13s, Play in a 14-16s, the youth theatre forum.

Staff: Staff are all in house from the core staff team, we also work with at least 1 assistant or volunteers on each group.

Structures: We have a Youth Theatre Forum in place; these are young people voted in from all groups aged 11 plus who act as a consultation panel for the youth theatre and meet regularly with the Associate Director to plan the future of the youth theatre and discuss any issues.

We were asked to explore the Introduction to “Inclusive Youth Theatre”.

Stage one was a discussion held with the 16-18 year olds group on who they thought was missing from our youth theatre, it became clear they felt unable to answer the question fully and thought this should be passed onto the Youth Theatre Forum. Broadly speaking though they felt they were inclusive in terms of “class” but not in terms of culture or disability.

Stage two was a meeting with all core staff. The Associate Director (who is a member of the Senior Management Team) led the team through a workshop discussion which followed the areas set out in the EIS.

We began by looking at the statistics presented in the 2001 Census for Dundee and those given by the local authority on the population. We discovered through this what the cultural make up of the city we serve and asked the question whether very broadly we thought we were “inclusive” (see Appendix 1: Dundee facts)

Having looked at the statistics we agreed that in the Dundee area the main “excluded group” was young people who would not normally access the Rep due to socio-economic reasons. We thought we were servicing this group well.

We agreed we could do more to service the needs of disabled young people and culturally diverse groups even though they are a relatively small proportion of our population.

We then did a brainstorm followed by a long discussion on the question: “What do we mean by inclusion in youth theatre?” (see Appendix 2: What do we mean by inclusion in youth theatre?)

We pulled these ideas into the following statement: “Dundee Rep Youth Theatre actively seeks, encourages and engages young people from all walks of life in a variety of participatory activities both within and out with the theatre. We consult, act and deliver in response to young people’s voices.”

We went on to list everything we currently do to fulfil this and the things we could do more of (see Appendix 3: What do we do already?)

We then used the questions on Page 8 and 9 and considered capacity. We agreed that without more support we could not fulfil everyone’s needs so decided we are best positioned to continue to offer our “tailored Service” and target specifically those young people who would not normally access the

Rep due to socio-economic reasons but that in the long term action plan we would look at the capacity issues surrounding other groups of young people.

We agreed that as well as discussing this with the youth theatre we should each run a session with our groups and so we planned a session (see Appendix 4: A workshop on inclusion).

Action Plan

We agreed on the following immediate action plan:

1. This same discussion will be had with the Youth Theatre Forum
2. The inclusion statement will be developed by the Youth Theatre Forum and then go on all future literature
3. A workshop will be delivered to all groups (see Appendix 3) so that this becomes a whole youth theatre issue
4. We will recollect our data (currently it is only taken on admission) and update our terms of reference to renew our understanding
5. We will create with the youth theatre a support system for new members from April 2010
6. We will have a policy of initial meetings for vulnerable young people so their first encounter is with the leader not the group (to start immediately)
7. We will develop our open doors and drop ins
8. We will have as a policy a phone call next day for new members to see how they found it and if they will be returning, if they don't we will follow this up.
9. We will put in to the department plan the need for a Youth Theatre Director to address the current capacity issues
10. We will formulate our inclusion statement and Appendix 1 into 1 document: "Dundee Rep Youth Theatre and Inclusion" so it is transparent what we can and can not offer.

Next Steps

This action plan will be put into SMART objectives and RACI (which identifies who is responsible, accountable, consulted and informed) at the next EIS Meeting in November. The Associate Director will feed all of this into the wider building access policy which is currently being written.

Appendix 1: Dundee facts:

- Population: 143,000.
- 13.4 % age 5-15 (slightly more male).
- 15.6 % age 16-24 (equal male/female).
- 3 % of population from Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic and Refugee (BAMER) Communities (although we don't know what age they are).
- 6% of the population are registered as permanently sick or disabled, but we were unable to ascertain what age these people were.
- 14.2 % of population are students.
- Households in Dundee had a mean household income (gross) of £28,325 in 2008 but over 50% fall under this rate.
- 10% of households are lone parents.
- The proportion of Dundee's population whose lives are affected by poverty and who are classed as socially excluded is second only to Glasgow.
- 5.7% of the working population are claiming job seekers allowance (as oppose to 4 % national average) There are 1,486 young people aged 16-24 who are unemployed.
- 18 % of households have at least one person aged 16-74 who is unemployed (and not a full-time student or permanently sick).
- There are 300 young people under the age of 16 who are also carers in the home.

Appendix 2: Brainstorm - what does inclusive youth theatre mean?

- A place for everyone
- Ensuring everyone feels equal
- People have a say
- Their voices are listened to
- There are no access barriers physically, theoretically or imagined
- Access
- Services for all
- Equality
- Everyone together
- Group needs are first
- Individual pathways through the YT
- Price is not an issue
- Culturally aware and inclusive
- Disability aware and accessible
- All involved
- Any background or ability is welcome
- Affordable
- Young peoples ideas
- Prejudice is challenged

We agreed on the following statement:

“Dundee Rep Youth Theatre actively seeks, encourages and engages young people from all walks of life in a variety of participatory activities both within and out with the theatre. We consult, act and deliver in response to young people’s voices.”

Appendix 3: What we do already to meet our new inclusion mission

- We plan activities, sessions and projects to suit individual's needs and abilities.
- We proactively challenge any discrimination or prejudice exhibited in the groups.
- We have an ensemble approach to creating work.
- We offer a fast track service for those young people referred to us from social services and other agencies and offer free places to them
- We deliver satellite groups for young people who could not access the city centre provision and these are free or minimal charge (£1).
- We do not ask participants to apply in writing.
- We proactively recruit young people from geographic and social demographic groups that are not represented and have a number of 'postcode protected places' which are free.
- We have an ethos of support.
- We support the pastoral care of our young people through the assistants system.
- We do not hold auditions.
- We have a strong child protection policy.
- We offer two to one support with scripts, auditions for Drama schools etc
- We have an ethos of positive encouragement
- We have two accessible spaces, the one un accessible space we have is about to be refurbished with a lift.
- We offer free access places for young people who would be unable to financially contribute.
- We offer regular training for staff in the areas of inclusion – in the last year staff have attended in house disability awareness training, BSL Level 1 training provided by Firefly Arts and a session on inclusion delivered by Graeae through NAYT.
- The Youth Theatre Forum provides an opportunity for young people's voices to be formally heard.
- Additional support is given when necessary, for example a young person in our 11–13s who has Down's Syndrome has another assistant to help her.
- Changes are made to support individuals – for example the individual above felt she needed extra support in the performance so the support worker performed alongside her.
- Full evaluation is done at the end of each session including questions on how we could have better helped members achieve their personal bests. These inform the next process.

What we could do more of:

- Opportunities for under-fives
- Specific groups for disabled participants.

- Volunteer scheme so more help is available when needed.
- International links.
- More training.
- More proactive approach to recruiting disabled and culturally diverse young people.
- More targeted advertising of free places.

Appendix 4: Inclusion Workshop

Session aims:

1. To discover and explore our members thoughts on the inclusion, diversity and equality of the youth theatre. What makes our youth theatre good? How can we make it better?
2. For each group to create a paragraph which consolidates their thoughts and ideas.
3. To encourage open and comfortable discussion.

Materials

Flipchart, post-its, pens, markers, notepad, camera, music.

Session plan

1. Still image: What does DRYT mean to you? Thought track this – think or feel- a word
2. Still image: How did you feel on your first day at DRYT? Thought track this – think or feel- a word. Discussion - how could this be made better?
3. Still image: Who are the people who are not attending and why do some people not attend? Discussion – is this fair/true?
4. Still image: Dream youth theatre/nightmare youth theatre. Opinion line – where is DRYT on this line?
5. Opinion lines: Agree/disagree and discussion
 - Your thoughts and opinions are listened to.
 - DRYT is a welcoming place to attend.
 - You are treated as an individual.
 - You feel confident in putting your ideas forward at DRYT.
 - Everyone who wants to access DRYT can.
 - DRYT membership represents my local community.
6. Quiz:
 - Guess how many...
 - Languages are spoken in...
 - In Dundee? In DRYT?

Guess what percentage of...

- People who would call themselves disabled?
- People who would say theatre isn't for me?

- People who would count themselves as White Scottish?
 - People who would count themselves as... etc. In Dundee? How many in DRYT?
7. Discussion done via Big Bang exercise or via brainstorm dependent on age. What would stop people coming to DRYT if they really wanted to? How could we overcome these barriers?
 8. How do we make sure everyone knows DRYT is for them? What should we say? Create a paragraph. Where should we say it? Posters, web, etc.