



Engage North West Summary Report

The North West Engage event was held at The Phoenix, in Bolton on 16 November 2006. 25 people from youth theatres in the region attended.

The North West event was the first of nine regional consultation events across the UK. A full report including information and findings from each event will be published on completion. However to keep our communication alive with the North West region please find below a brief summary of findings from the NW event.

Training workshop: How to write a play

Jane Bodie from the Royal Court ran a two hour workshop providing participants with transferable skills in writing. The feedback from both the workshops was excellent, people found it inspiring and useful; several participants said they would use some of the skills in sessions that evening!

Round table discussions

1. **Feedback from table hosted by Richard O'Neill, NAYT's information manager.**

Participants were shown what's on offer on NAYT's website and an update on what's upcoming. Comments and suggestions were then invited on how NAYT could improve its information services.

- "The Big Youth Theatre Manual is really useful"
- "The website is a really valuable resource"
- They really help when you are working in isolation.
- "Onstage" is a really useful tool because it is regular, to the point and not by email"
- The ideas for the online toolkits and databases were welcomed as it was thought that it would create a library of really useful documents
- "I like the fact that there is a lot of white space. Less is definitely more."
- Arts awards – people felt that there was general confusion and NAYT should have this information from a regional and national perspective. This should be on website.
- Have the ability to share ideas on a regional and national basis eg regional sections to the website. Also include a place where people can include exercises and games and where people can include reviews all of which could be driven by the youth theatres
- Encourage young people to contribute. Youth theatres should take the responsibility to do this
- Encourage youth theatre leaders to disseminate Onstage to young people – include a line at the top of Onstage to say Please pass this newsletter on to your colleagues and members of your youth theatres
- Include a bookmark in Onstage or a business card to encourage people to register for the forum and state the benefits, eg part of wider network
- Have a chat room style discussion for virtual network meetings eg arrange a time for people to join in

2. **Feedback from table hosted by Lisa O'Neill-Rogan, NAYT's Project Producer.**

Participants were asked what they thought NAYT could do in the region, what the gaps were and what were their needs and aspirations.

- NAYT has 'lost its face' in the NW, people have forgotten who NAYT are, lack of profile.
- RDP work needs picking up on.
- Training is needed but there is some resistance to formalisation of skills and therefore the sector.
- Funding was big priority and more info and courses about funding needed.
- Youth theatres work in isolation, people need to make more time to interact with different groups, NAYT could facilitate more events where people could meet up at regional level.
- NAYT should raise the profile and attitude towards young people's theatre.
- Some people felt the network was not accessible and wondered what the benefits of working in a network were. They felt easier access to a more clearly defined network was needed.
- NAYT should facilitate regional events for yp.
- NAYT can help youth theatres become more diverse through training etc.
- People wanted to know how NAYT would partner with existing networks to prevent duplication.
- NAYT must communicate with networks.

3. **Feedback from table hosted by Greater Manchester Youth Theatre Network Co-ordinator Chris Sudworth.**

Participants looked at the pros and cons of sub regional networks.

- Not enough time to attend meetings as many have full time jobs and are too busy.
- Is always the same people in the same places which forms a power base of elitism. Same people doing the talking, without listening to the real issues for some of their counterparts.
- People can talk to each other about theatre problems and successes
- Newsletter is an excellent idea of communication
- Networking is an opportunity to build trust and respect and to exchange ideas
- Can bring youth theatres together and the group can then have real clout when it comes to applying for funding or decision making.
- Can undertake projects in partnership with others
- Can identify training needs and raise quality
- Sub regional networks could be revolutionary if set up and organised properly.
- Youth theatre could be a well promoted sector and a strong body able to achieve far more than it does now as so many separate units

Conclusion

One of the very clear messages from the region was that NAYT should work in partnership with existing networks and help facilitate networks in areas like Cumbria. NAYT would then be in the position to work with the network co-ordinators to 'join the dots' and fill the gaps in provision.

Remember to use the NAYT forum at www.nayt.org.uk!