



End of Project Report **Disabled Children's Services Project Week 23rd-27th August 2010**

"If I could change anything it'd probably be that we only had five days, because I really enjoyed it."

Young person's feedback

Goals and Objectives of the Project

Speakeasy were contacted by Disabled Children's Services, through Embrace Arts at the RA Centre, to provide a week of Drama activity for approximately 20 young people aged between 11-19 years with a variety of physical disabilities, learning disabilities, and learning difficulties. The project was planned as a respite activity for parents/carers as well as providing performing arts based activity for the young people in question as they had expressed an interest in performing arts activities. The major goals for the project were to engage the young people in performing arts activities across the week, and through the ideas drawn out across the week, to devise and rehearse a performance which could be shared with friends and family on the final day of the project. Disabled Children's Services also expressed a desire to ensure that less confident group members were given room for their confidence to develop across the week, and that one of the older group members was given leadership opportunities.

The group would meet Monday - Friday between 10am and 2pm, with a performance at 12pm on Friday 27th August.

"Each moment was special."

Julie Voisey



Proposed Plans for the Project

Speakeasy proposed a period of consultation with Disabled Children's Services and a sample of the potential young people who would be participating in the project before the week began. The week itself was planned to include exercises and activities to allow the young people to get to know each other, aiming to cultivate a sense of unity in the group. Speakeasy proposed to use a young person centred approach, including a series of 'provocation' type exercises, creating opportunities for the young people to input their creative ideas through movement, and physical theatre approaches. Speakeasy aimed to allow the young people to engage with the week's activities on their own terms, allowing their abilities and creative input to be the driving force behind their engagement, rather than feeling inhibited by their disability. Speakeasy put together a schedule (*see Appendix 1*) for the week's activity, giving the week a structure of ice breaker activities, ideas creation, strengthening of drama techniques and skills, creation of performance, rehearsal of performance, and performance



itself. The structure was left purposefully looser on days 3,4 and 5 of the activity to allow room for rehearsal as well as allowing room for unexpected ideas to surface form the young people.

The Project Week

The week engaged eleven young people with varying physical disabilities, learning disabilities, and learning difficulties in a week of Drama activities, resulting in a 15 minute performance, created by the young people, performed to friends and family at Embrace Arts on Friday 27th August. Each of the young people contributed during the devising process, as well as having a role during the performance itself. Due to the person-centred approach, each of the young people were able to use their own talents, abilities and interests to create the performance, with some using their verbal communication skills, and others using their movement skills to help communicate their story to the audience. One of the young people put themselves forward to introduce and conclude the piece through announcements to the audience, and the group decided it would be a good idea to record the sound effects and soundscapes that they had created with their bodies, and with instruments, which could then be used as part of the performance. The oldest group member took responsibility for props and costume and assisted other less able members of the group.

Throughout the week the young people engaged with each other, Speakeasy, and Disabled Children's Services staff in a series of activities which strengthened their skills as performers, as well as developing their confidence, and developing a sense of unity within the group. Some particular exercises became firm favourites with the group allowing them to be used with particular effectiveness towards the end of the day's work as concentration levels began to drop.

The week had a fantastically inclusive atmosphere, with all staff including volunteers taking part in activities and effectively modelling behaviour to each of the participants, assisting the young people's engagement with activities, and ultimately helping to cultivate a supportive non-judgmental atmosphere throughout the week. Each session was ended with a 'praise circle', an opportunity for every young person to say or show something they enjoyed, or something they were good at in the day's work. These progressed over the week, to allow each young person to receive praise from another group member for something that they were good at.



"I really loved it and would like to carry on doing drama."

Young person's feedback



Evaluation

The project was successful in achieving all of the goals and objectives set out in the planning stages of the project. Each of the young people were engaged in performing arts activity, and the structure of the week allowed all of the young people to contribute to the creation of a performance, which in turn each of the young people were able to be a part of on their own terms.

The young people performed their piece at the end of the week, and it was well received by the audience of friends, family and support workers.

Each of the young people visibly grew in confidence as the week progressed, evident in the increased participation from a young person with profound autism, and particularly evident in two of the young people with a background of self-confidence problems taking on leadership responsibilities and using their abilities to help those who were less able, to perform to the best of their ability.

One of the young people seemed less engaged than others in activities as the week progressed, and so took part in some visual art activity, painting a mask which would be used in the performance. Although, this young person had already contributed ideas to the performance, and did then return to the group, taking part in the final performance piece.

Feedback collected from the young people's evaluation (*see Appendix 2*) shows that 100% of the young people said that they enjoyed the week, where enjoyed was the maximum possible. When asked if they would change anything, the young people mostly said that there is nothing they would like to change, with the exception of two young people, who would have liked the project to last for more than one week. Their favourite bits of the week were making sound effects, meeting new people, being characters, wearing costumes, and playing games.

Feedback collected from Disabled Children's Services staff also reflected upon the young-person centred approach to the week.

"...the Workshop was fantastic. Adapted appropriately to the children's needs. Lovely use, and development of the children's ideas." Roisin Tear

"The team drew out ideas from the group and really focussed on the young people's individual strengths." Julie Voisey

As well as reinforcing the observations of the children's development of both performance and social skills across the week.

"...every day the young people surprised us with ideas and performance." Julie Voisey

"Children have developed their confidence & self-esteem throughout the week with the varied activities carried out." Roisin Tear

Overall there were a huge number of positives for each of the young people involved. As the week was planned to allow each individual young person room to develop and express their creativity, we were easily able to produce a personalised certificate for each group member praising their achievements. There were particular developments in confidence, and leadership skills, team-working and cooperation skills, as well as developing performance skills, voice projection, physicalising of characters, and focussed behaviour on and off stage. Through discussion with staff, young people, parents, carers and support workers, there appears to be a strong desire to continue this work, with a particular desire for longer term activities coming from the young people.



Appendix 1 - Proposed Schedule

<u>Consultation</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speakeasy staff meet with Disabled Children's Services and observe potential participants.
<u>Planning</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speakeasy staff plan the weeks activity and source any resources needed for the week.
<u>Day 1</u> 10am-4pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If young people do not already know each other the day would start with ice-breakers and name games to begin to develop a sense of unity. • Exercises would be used to explore theatrical techniques, as well as promoting creative ideas for characters, themes, and settings for a possible over-riding narrative for the final performance. • Lunch break (1 hour) • Discussions about potential ideas for a performance. • Work in smaller groups to develop ideas into potential scenes, opportunities to show ideas back to the rest of the group. • Praise circle - opportunity for each participant to have their say and be applauded for their hard work throughout the day.
<u>Day 2</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuation of team-working exercises. • Further exercises used to explore theatrical techniques. • Ideas from previous day revisited, new ideas discussed or exercises used to generate ideas. • Lunch break • Ideas developed, and idea for final performance clarified. • Scenes developed and rehearsed. • Praise circle
<u>Day 3</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuation of team-working and exploration of theatrical techniques. • Further ideas/scenes generated and developed. • Lunch • Scenes rehearsed and performance order developed. • Praise circle
<u>Day 4</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuation of team-working and exploration of theatrical techniques. • Further ideas/scenes generated and developed. • Scenes rehearsed and performance order developed. • Lunch • Full rehearsal • Praise circle
<u>Day 5</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final tweaks to individual scenes • Full rehearsal • Lunch • Performance
<u>Evaluation</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speakeasy staff meet with Disabled Children's Services to evaluate project.



Appendix 2 - Young people's Feedback

What did you think of the week?

Enjoyed - 11
Not Sure - 0
Didn't enjoy - 0

What was your favourite bit of the week?

"Where I made everybody laugh"

"Drama"

"Meeting the kids"

"Drums"

"The playing"

"Being a cat, painting the gorilla mask, dancing and playing games"

"My favourite part of the week was when we made the storm sounds and when we played the laughing game"

"Practicing the witch"

"Getting to meet new people"

"Making friends! Dressing up!"

Is there anything you would change?

"There is nothing I would change"

"Nothing to change"

"No!"

"No"

"No"

"N/A"

"If I could change anything it'd probably be that we only had five days, because I really enjoyed it."

"Not sure"

"Nothing, I really loved it and would like to carry on doing drama."

"To have longer weeks!"

"No!"



Appendix 3 - Disabled Children's Services Feedback

Feedback from Sandra Holyoake, Service Manager, Disabled Children's Services:

"I have had nothing but positive comments about the workshop and performance from young people and their parent/carers. I have known some of the young people from previous jobs and for a long time and it was wonderful to see their involvement. You tailored the performance to the individual needs of the young people and each one had a specific and important role to undertake. Their confidence and sheer enjoyment was obvious."

Feedback from Staff Evaluation Forms:

What were your overall impressions of the workshop sessions? Were they pitched at the right level for the participants?

"Think the Workshop was fantastic. Adapted appropriately to the children's needs. Lovely use, and development of the children's ideas." Roisin Tear

"The workshop was excellent. The team drew out ideas from the group and really focussed on the young people's individual strengths." Julie Voisey

What was your favourite moment of the week? Any happy surprises?

"To see what the children had achieved at the end of the week. The performance went really well, we have all really enjoyed it." RT

"It's difficult to pick a favourite moment as every day the young people surprised us with ideas and performance. Each moment was special." JV

In what ways do you think the sessions could have been improved?

"Blank" RT

"I do not think excellence can be improved on. I feel proud to have been involved." JV

What skills do you think the participants may have gained/learnt from the experience?

"Children have developed their confidence & self-esteem throughout the week with the varied activities carried out." RT

"Acting Skills, team work, confidence" JV