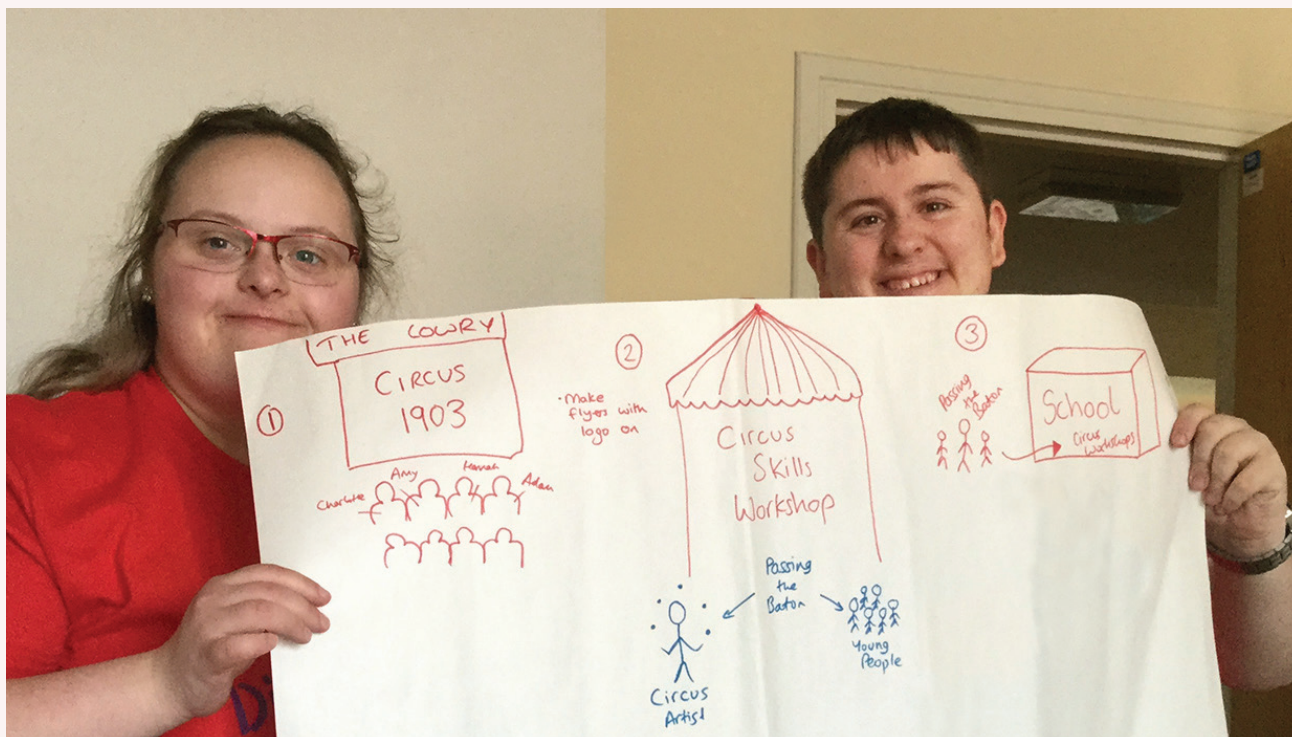


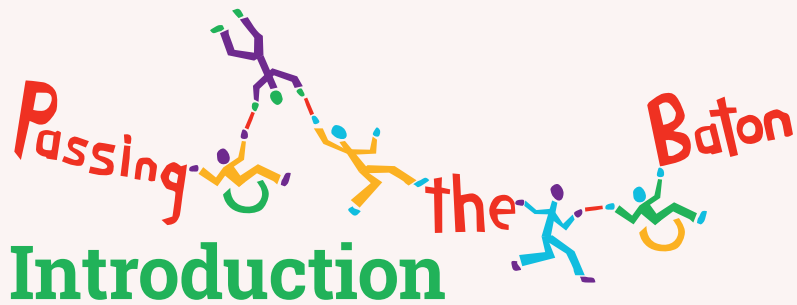


## An Evaluation of DIY's Passing the Baton Programme 2019–2022









# Passing the Baton

## Introduction

“ Please keep funding this amazing project because we are helping young people to come out of their comfort zone and make them feel PROUD that they achieved their goals or achieved their dreams.”

Passing the Baton Young Leader

The Passing the Baton Programme was DIY Theatre Company's response to the lack of support available to enable young adults with a learning disability (ypwld) to access creative opportunities and employment in the cultural sector.

It was supported by the National Lottery Community Fund for the 3 calendar years 2019-2021. The idea originated in a pilot project of 2017/18, run with the support of You Can Community Club and funded through Little Pot of Health (Salford CVS/ CCG ) and Arts Award Access Fund.

“ Our aim is to grow opportunities for young adults with a LD across the North West and build on our successful links in order to reach new audiences.”

Pilot Evaluation Report

A strong motivator for DIY Theatre's work with children and young people came from an incident in 2007 when they were informed by a special school that their members were 'too disabled' to provide a positive contribution to their students' learning. Subsequently DIY "have sought to meet such perceptions head on. We know that the biggest challenge facing young people with a learning disability will be the prejudices of potential employers, some audiences and the industry itself." [Passing the Baton Pilot Evaluation]

The Pilot provided the foundation for the Passing the Baton model to support Young Adults with a learning disability to increase their transferrable skills and gain in confidence. The Pilot used:

- ★ **Role Models** to mentor and coach
- ★ **A group** to provide peer support
- ★ **Partnership working** to give participants access to different expertise, knowledge, and resources, particularly the significant partnership with You Can who offered complementary 'work readiness' courses.
- ★ **Leadership opportunities.** A really successful and unexpected spin off of the Pilot was a project where the young adults tested their new skills running workshops in a local special school and a Discover Arts Award project at You Can Club. This way of working was developed and incorporated into the new programme.

The Passing the Baton Programme was co-ordinated by DIY's Artistic Director, Sue Caudle, Youth Arts Co-ordinator, Hebe Reilly (2019 – Jan 2021) Youth Drama Co-ordinator, Taylor Barnes (Feb – Dec 2021) and Youth Arts Worker Molly Stedman. It was supported by Emerging Artists Philip Harland and Sophie Coward. The model throughout was one of co-leadership with members of DIY's staff team and Young Adults with a learning disability working collaboratively to shape and direct all aspects of the programme.

The Passing the Baton Programme (the Programme), built on the learning from the Pilot and took the work further. The Programme's core intent was to support young adults who identified ambitions within the creative sector with the skills and experience they needed. In recognition of the difficulties preventing disabled people from having meaningful roles within the creative sector, the Programme's ambition was to challenge these barriers.

**“The challenge is breaking down barriers and prejudice, and fully equipping and preparing young adults with a learning disability with a range of transferable life skills that can lead to creative opportunities and employment. This is the foundation for our Passing the Baton Programme.”**

DIY Theatre Company 2018





DIY Theatre Company is a learning disability theatre company based in Salford.

Their work is based on the members own ideas and experiences. Leadership by people with lived experience of learning disability is central to DIY's ethos and operation on all levels, from governance to how projects are planned, developed and evaluated.

DIY's Core Company meets weekly and has been creating entertaining, accessible and thought-provoking theatre since 1994. The Company also runs regular education courses and drama workshops for adults and has been providing educational projects for children in Special School settings since 2007. It has also been supporting children and young people with learning disabilities to achieve Arts Award, a regulated qualification since 2007.

## The main groups involved:

- ★ **The Friday Leadership Group** (FLG) is a group of experienced adult leaders with learning disabilities. FLG specialise in planning and delivering arts and health projects.
- ★ **The Young Leaders Group** (YLG) was a Passing the Baton initiative open to young adults, and older children with a learning disability up to the age of 30. It was aimed at those with an interest in the cultural sector. Equipping and preparing members to access creative opportunities and employment was at the core of the programme.
- ★ **Youth Drama Club** was a Passing the Baton initiative. Weekly fun drama sessions were aimed at children and young people with a learning disability. The club provided a setting for Young Leaders to practice their new skills whilst providing accessible creative sessions for children and young people interested in drama.

## Evaluation of DIY's Passing the Baton Programme

This report presents an overview of the achievements and impacts of the Passing the Baton Programme. The report assesses how successful the Programme was in addressing its core challenge, (as identified by DIY in their funding bid). It also looks at the unexpected, the threats and opportunities, and how DIY's responses affected the outcome.

The report is divided into 5 parts, with the core challenge split into 3 areas:

- p7      **Challenge 1:** To fully equip young adults with a learning disability with a range of transferable life skills that could lead to creative opportunities and employment.
- p27     **Challenge 2:** To enable adults with a learning disability to pursue opportunities by providing real life experiences which increase aspirations, build confidence and demonstrate abilities.
- p40     **Challenge 3:** To break down barriers and prejudice which prevent people with a learning disability accessing employment and other opportunities within the cultural sector.
- p52     **Threats and Opportunities**
- p63     **Conclusion**

## Acronyms and abbreviations used

**cypwld:** children and young people with a learning disability

**LEx Leadership:** Lived Experience Leadership

**The Company:** DIY Theatre Company

**The Programme:** The Passing the Baton Programme

**yawld:** young adults with a learning disability

## Challenge 1

**To fully equip young adults with a learning disability with a range of transferable life skills that could lead to creative opportunities and employment.**





10 young adults with a learning disability benefited from membership of Passing the Batons Young Leaders Group.

During the 3 years of the programme Young Leaders went from students to leaders able to plan, manage and deliver their own educational projects.

The Young Leaders Group provided a unique space for young people to practice and develop their arts leadership and facilitation skills and generally build confidence. At the outset they were mentored by members of DIY's Friday Leadership Group, but this support grew less as confidence increased. When the Young Leaders Group was first formed, members were asked what project they would like to develop together. The group chose the theme of Circus and the Circus Tricks project began.



Music score for the song "Circus Tricks". The score is written for Voice and Piano (Pno.). The key signature is one flat (Bb) and the time signature is 4/4.

**First System:**

Voice: Wel-come to the cir-cus, Fun and spark-ly bright.  
Good-bye from the cir-cus, We hope you've had some fun.

Piano: Chords: C, C/B, Am, C/G, C, C/B, Am, C/G.

**Second System:**

Voice: Cir-cus tricks to blow your mind, What a mag-ic sight!  
Cir-cus tricks that blew your mind, Now we're near-ly done!

Piano: Chords: F, F, G, G, F, G, C.

# Circus Tricks!



Watch 'Welcome to the Circus' :

►► YouTube [https://youtu.be/NB\\_w\\_JR\\_\\_k0](https://youtu.be/NB_w_JR__k0)

'Circus Tricks!' was a Circus inspired music and drama project created by Passing the Baton's Young Leaders Group. It focussed the ambitions of the YL's to create something which would benefit children and young people and became something they were truly proud of.'

“ Thinking back to the day when we had the idea and had to do the presentation to Salford CVS for the 'Circus Tricks!' funding, I never ever thought the project would be so amazing!”  
DIY Young Leader

### **The 'Circus Tricks!' project provided a framework for Young Leaders to:**

- ★ Develop and demonstrate skills in bid writing, budgeting and pitching to funders.
- ★ Experience and be inspired by a live circus performance at the Lowry Theatre.
- ★ Gain specialist skills from professional artists in the fields of music, circus and animation.
- ★ Show off their artistic creativity with the development of a unique piece of theatre.
- ★ Develop and demonstrate the ability to plan and design workshops which support cypwld to achieve a nationally recognised award.
- ★ Develop and demonstrate proficiency in leading and delivering workshops, both face to face and online, to a range of audiences.
- ★ Demonstrate their problem-solving skills, particularly when faced with the extreme circumstances brought about by the Covid Crisis.

Inspired by earlier work DIY Theatre had done with children with learning disabilities, the Young Leaders chose to devise an in-person performance – workshop for children and young people with a learning disability (cypwld). The group wanted an uplifting theme which would engage



cypwld. “We want to learn and use circus skills to make young people with learning disabilities feel happy.” Their shared love of the film ‘The Greatest Showman’ provided the inspiration.

Recognising that there were special circus skills needed, the YL’s applied for additional funding to Salford CVS / NHS Salford CCG Youth Wellbeing Fund. The application process meant Young Leaders learnt new skills such as budgeting and presenting to a judging panel. This was the first time any of the group had delivered a public pitch. Their application was successful, a great boost to their confidence and aspirations.

The funding paid for a special trip to see Circus 1903 at The Lowry Theatre (Nov 2019) and for two full days training with professional Circus Practitioners. The Lowry enhanced their trip with a backstage tour and a meeting with the Ringmaster and Elephant puppet from the performance.

“ **This was a truly magical and memorable moment for the group.**”

Youth Arts Coordinator

Whilst developing the performance, Passing the Baton participants worked with 2 circus and 3 music professionals. They learned a range of circus inspired skills, explored Junk Percussion, Samba, Song-writing and Google Chrome Lab.

2020 began with the Young Leaders starting to create ‘Circus Tricks!’ as a live performance – workshop designed to tour schools and youth organisations. Additional funding from Youth Music meant the group were able to work with professional musicians to create a live and interactive sound scape and develop musical participatory activities for children and young people.

★ The Lead Musician identified that the Young Leaders increased their technical, ensemble and listening skills through Circus Tricks.

## Demonstrating problem-solving skills to overcome Lockdown restrictions

**“ We were going to take ‘Circus Tricks!’ into schools, we couldn’t. But we could do online!”**  
Young Leader

In early Summer, in response to Lockdown restrictions, the Young Leaders and Youth Drama groups were reformed on Zoom and together began to adapt ‘Circus Tricks!’ to suit the limitations. Young Leaders demonstrated their creativity and problem-solving skills and ‘Circus Tricks!’ evolved into an online format that could be shared safely. Young Leaders and Youth Drama participants worked remotely and were able to record voice-overs, songs and rhythms via Zoom. The participants of both groups collaborated with professional animators to transform ‘Circus Tricks!’ into a series of videos and an accompanying resource pack.

Ideas for running ‘Circus Tricks!’ workshops online were explored with Passing the Baton’s Youth Drama group as a form of pilot and as an opportunity for Young Leaders to practice and gain feedback on their leadership skills. These sessions supported Drama Club members to achieve Explore Arts Award.

**“ I got loads of positive feedback so I think I got really [much] better at them”**  
Young Leader

Young Leaders delivered interactive ‘Circus Tricks!’ workshops via Zoom to students at Chatsworth High, Springwood Primary School and at Enrich Festival 2020.

**“ The highlight was that loads of different people started doing the same tongue twister I was doing with a different body part. I’ve never had feedback on video, so it was amazing.”**  
Young Leader

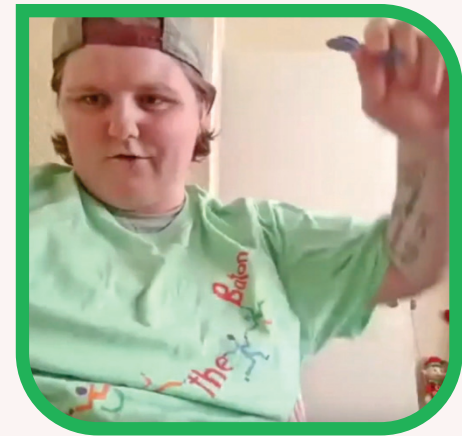
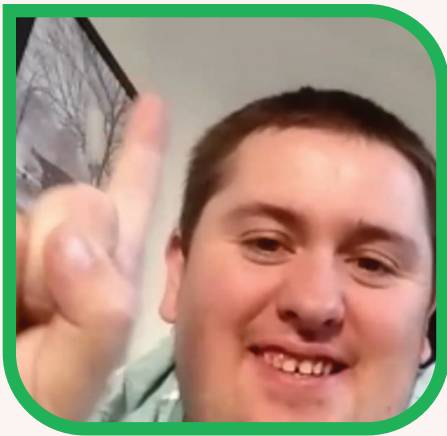
“ Due to Lockdown our learners had missed the opportunity to complete their Discover Arts Award as usual. ‘Circus Tricks!’ meant that they were able to catch up on this learning. It also gave me an idea for best practice for monitoring Discover Arts Award that I will implement during the school festival in the summer.”

Sadie Smith, Teacher, Chatsworth High School

“ It’s been great for some of our more focused learners to see the DIY young people on Zoom and in the Resource Pack. It’s really important that young disabled people have role models like this to look up to.”

Victoria Lawley, Teacher, Springwood School

In 2020 ‘Circus Tricks!’ supported 43 learners from Chatsworth and Springwood Schools on their Discover and Explore Arts Award Journeys.





'Circus Tricks!' took the form of a series of Animated Videos, and a shorter series of Supporting Videos. The Young Leaders also developed a physical resource pack including music, drama, circus, sensory and craft activities for young people with learning disabilities.

“ The flexibility has been really important – as different classroom teachers have done different things with it. It can be spread out over a full term, or be used as a really fun Circus Week where learners engage with it every day. One young boy is usually reluctant to join in with role playing, but he really wanted to be the Ring Master. Quieter students have been able to get involved”

Victoria Lawley, Teacher, Springwood School

Now a free and accessible educational resource for children and young people with learning disabilities, 'Circus Tricks!' is a major and lasting success of the Passing the Baton programme. A benefit of the project becoming an online / remote offer is that 'Circus Tricks!' can be accessed and enjoyed by other schools, groups, families and individuals.

“ The children enjoyed it so much they did it for a second week. The pupils really loved meeting all of the different characters. One pupil was enjoying it so much the class put off doing it for a day that he was absent so that he wouldn't miss out, and the parent of another pupil commented that he had been talking about the circus project at home.”

Class Teacher, Springwood School

The success of 'Circus Tricks!' led to new projects with DIY's partner schools, a lunchtime Drama Club with Chatsworth High School and a project supporting Year 6 students from Springwood primary as they transitioned to Chatsworth High School.

**The entire resource, including links to the Animated Series and supporting videos can be found here:**

►► <https://www.diytheatre.org.uk/how-to-take-part/circus-tricks-resources/>

“ I am just so overwhelmed!  
I’m really happy with  
how it’s turned out.”  
Young Leader



Enriching Young Leaders  
development through practical  
opportunities and professional input.





“What is the best creative skill I have learned? Filming for Arts Award, working with Film maker Hilary Easter-Jones, I had a taster session and then made the ‘Top Tips Film on Phone’. I used voice over for the first time and a top tip for a voice over is stand in corner of room to avoid sound interruption. Then I did a voice over on zoom for ‘Circus Tricks!’– working with Sarah Atter musician.”

Young Leader

Throughout the programme DIY succeeded in enriching the Young Leaders experiences and skill development.

This has been achieved by securing input from specialist artists and through a range of practical opportunities. Some of these were specifically for the Passing the Baton programme but the YL’s also benefited from additional DIY initiatives available across the organisation.

**Young Leaders have increased their artistic skills and repertoires with training delivered by specialist professional artists.  
This has included:**

- ★ Circus skills - 2 days training from visiting Circus Professionals.
- ★ Junk Percussion and song writing skills in a series of taster sessions with 2 visiting musicians.
- ★ Continued music and song writing support from DIY Associate Artist, musician Sarah Atter.
- ★ Animation training and further collaboration with two animators when turning ‘Circus Tricks!’ into a series of animated films.
- ★ Digital music making skills using Google Chrome Lab and further song writing to create ‘Circus Tricks Going on Holiday’ song with a specialist visiting musician.

- ★ One YL received substantial training in film-making which supported their Gold Arts Award. Professional film-maker and DIY associate artist, Hilary Easter-Jones gave ongoing support to the Young Leaders, particularly when the Covid Crisis moved creative output towards film-making.
- ★ Using Social Media, from social media specialist, not only as a publicity tool but also to share achievements and opinion.
- ★ Design, from a professional Graphic Designer, in developing a brand identity and logo and publicity materials including t-shirt.
- ★ Photography - A series of specially commissioned workshops from photographer Audrey Albert.

“ We thought about the title and the logo for Passing the Baton itself – and made t shirts!”

Young Leader

**Through practical opportunities Young Leaders have gained the range of skills needed to develop and deliver creative sessions and programmes.**

“ We think about safe spaces so everyone is welcome and we aren’t discriminating – even if you have disability you can do things – we think about how to adapt games to disabilities even if we don’t have those disabilities”

Young Leader

Young Leaders practiced and developed a range of skills:

- ★ Planning drama and music sessions and programmes for cypwld
- ★ Ensuring sessions covered the skills to support young learners to achieve the necessary requirements of Arts Award at Explore, Discover and Bronze levels.
- ★ Planning and delivering workshops for a range of audiences (including H.E. students and cultural sector professionals).

- ★ Both leading and facilitating drama sessions, learning to support different learners' needs
- ★ Being aware of safety
- ★ The ability to gather feedback and use it inform future work.
- ★ Digital skills – developing resources and workshops on digital platforms.

## **Additional opportunities provided by DIY Theatre**

Young Leaders have been encouraged to access DIY's ongoing programme of courses and additional training. Over the 3 years of the Programme Young Leaders have benefited from:

- ★ A 20 week ESF funded course 'New Skills, New Choices' which aimed to increase skills to improve employability. Four of the YL's formed a group which focussed on careers and volunteering. They developed a series of images which showed why it is important for everyone to have the opportunity to "have a job, no matter what their disability" and came up with strong proposals to encourage this. These included providing internships for young people with a learning disability and a volunteer fair where they could see what opportunities are available in Salford.
- ★ Making for theatre course, which included maths skills.
- ★ Sign language courses.

## Accreditation using Arts Award.





“What I liked best about the project was... Creating the music using Google Chrome Lab – I had never used this before!”

“On a scale of 1 to 10 my skill share was ... “10”

Youth Drama Club members on achieving their Bronze Arts Awards during lockdown 2020.

From Discover to Gold, 146 Arts Awards have been awarded because of Passing the Baton. This includes 52 which were worked on remotely during Lockdown.

“Arts Award is a unique set of qualifications that support children and young people aged 25 and under to enjoy the arts and develop as artists and arts leaders. Young people completing Arts Award acquire creativity, leadership, reflective thinking and communication skills that are essential for success in 21st century life.”

Trinity College London, (2021) Arts Award Annual Guide, 2021-2022, Trinity College London.

DIY Theatre has been working with Arts Award since 2007. The qualification is accessible to young people with a range of abilities, backgrounds and individual learning styles. It measures and supports each individual's personal progress, which makes it ideal for young people who face barriers to learning or who may not be able to access other qualifications.

Arts Awards can be achieved at five levels, from Discover to Gold. The Passing the Baton project has supported students to achieve Arts Awards at all 5 levels.

Younger learners and those new to Arts Award, were supported to achieve Discover, Explore and Bronze levels in Special Schools, via outreach and during PtB's own Youth Drama Club. Young Leaders themselves provided support, producing the

educational resources and running workshops to support these achievements, (please see earlier sections on 'Circus Tricks!' and Young Leaders for more detail).

The Silver and Gold qualifications are recognised on the Regulated Qualifications Framework. Silver is a Level 2 and Gold is a Level 3 qualification.

For these reasons, the Arts Award qualifications are ideal to support young people in securing creative opportunities and employment.

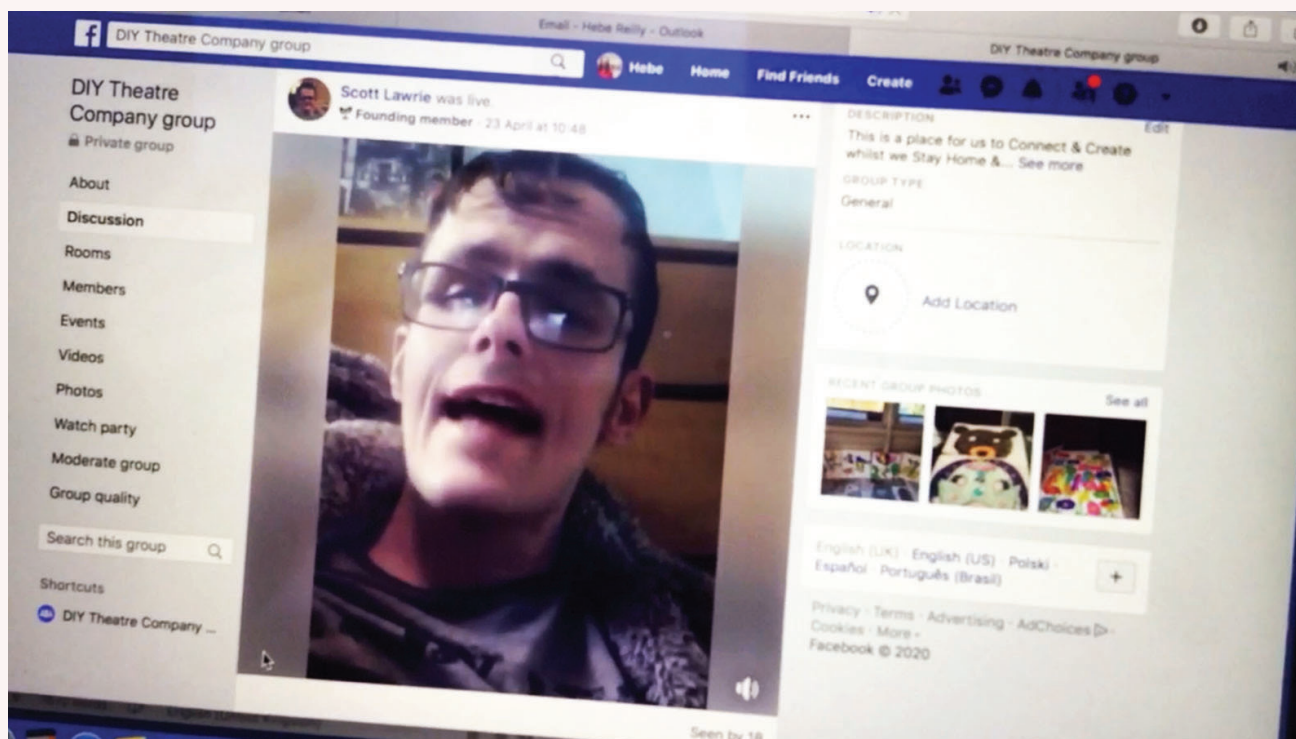
## **Young Leaders achieved Arts Awards at the highest levels and became Arts Award Advisors.**

“ I have been really impressed by Amy, Scott and Adam’s determination, patience and creative responses to the challenges they have faced. It’s been a real joy to support them and I am thrilled that they have all achieved their Arts Award qualifications. Well done!

Passing the Baton Youth Arts Coordinator

Young Leaders’ Arts Award journeys were all tested by the Covid Crisis. Each had to rethink what they planned to do to work within the limitations of Lockdown. They showed confidence and determination by being able to adapt their practice and learn additional skills. All of this additional skill development was done against the very uncertain backdrop of living during a global pandemic, with a huge change in routine and reduced ability to connect and engage with others.

Four of the Young Leaders qualified as Arts Award Advisors at Discover and Explore levels. This means they are qualified to support others to achieve their own Arts Awards – Passing the Baton on!



## Silver Arts Award

“The news today was amazing. I passed my Arts Award with flying colours and I was a little bit worried about doing it from home and everything but it seems to have paid off and I'm going to get a lovely certificate at the end of it. I feel a bit emotional at the moment.”

To achieve their Silver Arts Award, students must evidence their experiences in two key areas: Arts practice and pathways, which includes:

- ★ researching future opportunities and careers in the arts

- ★ identifying, planning, implementing and reviewing an arts challenge.

Arts Leadership, which includes:

- ★ identifying, planning and reviewing their leadership project and demonstrating the development and effectiveness of themselves as a leader.
- ★ working effectively with others

Scott, chose to focus on his hosting and presentation skills. Initially these were to be demonstrated in live performance - workshops but when these were cancelled (due to Covid) he came up with the idea of hosting a radio show. With advice from media professional Richard Easter 'Scott's Radio Show' became a joyful weekly feature on Facebook Live, bringing many DIY members together. Through organising, planning and delivering the weekly radio show Scott developed his DJing skills.

“ It feels good to get my Silver. I put in a lot of hard work. It was difficult doing it during Lockdown. Big thumbs up from me!”

Adam chose to focus on developing his music technician skills. He worked closely with professional musician Sarah Atter and learnt how to record sounds using an iPad and a Tascam. To develop his leadership skills, Adam supported the Youth Drama Group, co-leading weekly sessions. Adam wanted to support fellow Young Leader Scott by promoting his radio show so he took the lead on promoting Scott's radio show quickly learning how to produce advertisements and marketing for social media.

## Gold Arts Award

To achieve Gold Arts Award, students must evidence their experiences in two key areas:

Personal Arts Development, which includes:

- ★ extending their own arts practice,
- ★ being involved in the world of the arts through placements, volunteering, training and research
- ★ reviewing arts events/experiences and finding out about artists and their career paths



Leadership of an Arts Project, which includes:

- ★ planning a project, identifying the project's aims and outcomes
- ★ managing a public showing of the work.
- ★ finding effective ways to evaluate the project

Amy completed most of her Arts Award portfolio whilst in social isolation. She chose to extend her arts practice in the area of film making. To demonstrate her abilities Amy created three videos, organised the launch of a You Tube première, and led a weekly drama activity using



Facebook and Zoom. Her achievements were supported by specialist advice from professional film-maker Hilary Easter Jones and DIY's own Social Media Coordinator Bianca Williams.

The films Amy produced covered varied topics but all succeeded in getting their message across. 'Freedom and Confusion' is Amy's response to thinking about the effect on those who, after living their lives confined to an institution, were suddenly sent out into the world. It forms part of DIY's Following Patient 36 performance.

“ Before Lockdown, I only went out once to film – and that was a practise – we were supposed to be going out more, but then Lockdown happened, so that practice was the only footage I had so I had to use that to do the film!”

*Amy remembering making her film 'Freedom and Confusion'*

### **Watch Amy's film 'Freedom and Confusion'**

➡ <https://vimeo.com/427394931>

In response to the restrictions caused by the pandemic Amy created a 'Top Tips' film which she used to support other DIY members to capture good quality footage whilst at home. This footage was then used in the film 'I Wish Everything Was Back to Normal: DIY's views of Lockdown'.

Amy liaised with the communications team and organised the premiere to share this film with the public. (See page 55 for more about the film 'I Wish Everything Was Back to Normal')

“ Gold was hard because I was on my own doing it! If other people had the opportunity to do it, I say go for it, but not just at home alone – it's hard. I feel fantastic – I put all my work into it I feel really great. I made Hilary work and she made me work!!”

### **Amy's Gold Arts Award, was featured in the Arts Award Voice Magazine.**

➡ <https://www.voicemag.uk/case-study/8339/amy-carter-gold-arts-award>

## Challenge 2

**To enable adults with a learning disability to pursue opportunities by providing real life experiences which increase aspirations, build confidence and demonstrate abilities.**

“What will help me most to achieve my work ambitions? My confidence and team work, I am happy to work on my own but can also work in a team.”

Young Leader

“Working with DIY coming out of my shell, working with Manchester Uni students and going into schools. Online MIF festival and Creative Minds presentations about Passing the Baton and also other projects we have at DIY.”

Young Leader on becoming a better communicator because of Passing the Baton.

“Passing the Baton has provided a safe space to young adults with a learning disability to develop themselves as leaders, to share their ideas without anyone saying that's too ambitious.”

Youth Drama Co-ordinator, Nov 2021

The Passing the Baton Programme intrinsically provided opportunities for both Young Leaders and Friday Leadership Group to have real life experiences in planning, delivering and managing projects- both within DIY Theatre itself and through a range of external opportunities.

Young Leaders have been able to gain experiences, practice their leadership skills, build confidence and demonstrate their abilities. Their aspirations have certainly been increased. Some have a very clear idea of what they wish to do with their lives and are sufficiently confident in their abilities to have expectations of being paid for their work.

“ People are doing it voluntary and I think it’s important that people are getting paid for it. ...I think other people might just fancy doing it voluntary still. But because me and C do more with DIY I think it would be better for us to get paid.”

Young Leader





# Passing the Baton on

“ It’s like passing on a kind of baton, where you learn all skills and you just pass it onto someone else...it makes me feel happy because it’s like I’m showing them how to be – like a role model.”

Participant 2017/18 pilot.

The core concept of Passing the Baton was the transference of skills and knowledge from one group to another. This started with the Friday Leadership Group who passed their knowledge on to the Young Leaders Group who then passed on skills to children and young people with learning disabilities.

The process proved to be a successful way which provided members of both groups with real life experiences that allowed them to demonstrate their abilities and build confidence. It has also proved to be very valuable for the cypwld touched by this work. Passing the Baton’s weekly drama and outreach sessions have increased the creative and communication skills of many local children and young people with learning disabilities as demonstrated by 143 Arts Award Achievements.

Friday Leadership Group members (Adult Leaders) developed their mentoring and leadership skills and expertise and gained skills in recruiting new members to Passing the Baton. For example, Two Friday Group members worked with the Youth Arts Coordinator on a project at Chatsworth Futures, a Specialist College, for people, aged 19-25, with Profound and Multiple Learning Disabilities to deliver an Explore Arts Award project. The



project focused on the theme of 'Environment' and took place during the Autumn term 2019. Students explored different environments through sound, music, sensory props and movement. The project culminated in a sharing event with other learners.

“ It made me feel proud. They liked us showing them the work we’d done  
- I had to think about what I was doing. I learnt about helping people  
to make a performance. We gave them certificates at the end.”

Friday Leadership Group member on taster/recruitment project

During the Covid Crisis, when recruitment to Passing the Baton was no longer realistic, the inter-generational approach ensured that there was ample opportunity to exchange skills, knowledge and experience.

Through Passing the Baton Friday Leadership Group members built confidence through:

- ★ Leading sensory workshops with young people with PMLD.
- ★ Supporting learners working towards an Explore qualification.
- ★ Gaining knowledge about climate change and its impacts.
- ★ Gaining experience of developing activities around the theme of climate change and its impacts.
- ★ Experience of mentoring yawld
- ★ Digital skills
- ★ Film-making skills.

# Young Adults gained real life experience of planning and leading creative sessions

## **The Passing the Baton Youth Drama Club**

Following on from Taster Sessions run during the spring of 2019 at You Can Community Club, Passing the Baton's Youth Drama Club was launched in June. It proved to be both a fun and creative learning environment for its members and a valuable real life arena for Young Leaders to test out their skills.

Youth Drama Club was supported to continue online during Lockdown and the group benefited from cross generational work. An additional benefit was the fact that, after gaining in skills and confidence at the Club, some Youth Drama members were inspired to become Young Leaders themselves.

“ I can lead on games, like the 5,4,3,2,1 senses game. Which I lead on Youth Drama Club on Tuesdays.”

Young Leader on the improvement in their skills

## **Youth Drama Outreach Sessions**

Based on DIY Theatre's already positive partnerships with local schools and colleges, the Passing the Baton Young Leaders were able to gain significant experience of running outreach sessions. This experience proved invaluable when gathering the confidence to apply for a creative role.





“ I knew more than I already knew about working in special schools. I was going to ask Sue [DIY's Artistic Director] for help but I decided not to ask Sue because I already knew the answer to their questions.”

Young Leader on filling in a job application

Passing the Baton's outreach work enriched the lives of cypwld. It also provided role models which increased their aspirations and ambitions.

“ It's a really inspirational project as our young people can see that there are real and authentic opportunities for them post-education, when they work with the artists from DIY who they can relate to. It helps to give context and authenticity to the arts work they do in school and encourages them to develop their own passions and talents.”

Chatsworth High School and Community College (2019)

### Examples of outreach experience include:

★ **Working with children to support them to express themselves.** During May 2019 DIY contributed to Springwood School's Space themed week. Young Leaders designed an accompanying set of space-themed workshops for the students which they ran three times in one day. 81 children with a learning disability took part in these workshops which contributed towards their Explore Arts Awards.

**Working with older students to develop leadership skills:** Working at Chatsworth High School and Community College during the summer term of 2019, 2 Young Leaders, working with Adult Leaders, supported 12 Year 10 and 11 students to develop their own leadership skills. The students were helped to plan and prepare a workshop for younger students. This they successfully delivered during the school's Music Festival.

“ There is a really warm, supportive atmosphere in DIY sessions. Students are always encouraged to make their voice heard and feel confident in doing this in a safe environment. The workshops are also really fun and creative”

Feedback from school staff

Participants identified that they would particularly like more volunteering opportunities in schools and colleges as they are confident that they can make a positive difference there.

“Colleges and schools are going to be the first education before going out into the big wide world, so if you can get it in their brains right away then they’re going to have a different opinion when they go out into the big wide world.”

Young Leader

DIY’s Leaders also gained experience and confidence by delivering workshops to different audiences such as University students and National Youth Theatre. (See Challenge 3 for more)

## **Taking on roles within a theatre company**

A number of Passing The Baton participants have taken on voluntary positions within DIY. These have provided them with real life experiences of the different areas within a creative organisation. This has prompted increased confidence and aspiration and they have made a very positive contribution as DIY itself has inevitably been changed by the influence of this young generation.

- ★ 3 Young Leaders are now part of DIY’s governing Board. Their value is signified by one being elected Co-chair.
- ★ 2 Young Leaders have been involved in policies working group – ensuring that all DIY policies are accessible.
- ★ 3 Young Leaders are part of DIY’s Communications Group and have contributed ideas including #trainingourbraintolearnnewskills to promote DIY’s work.

## External voluntary/paid roles and training opportunities

“ The impact of Covid-19 on the creative industries, and particularly on the cultural sector, has been significant. Live performance venues and museums and galleries have been forced to close their doors for long or indefinite periods, films and television programmes have had to put a halt on production, and self-employed creatives have experienced immense job instability.”

O'Brian, D., Taylor M., Owen, G., (Dec 2020). The impact of Covid-19 on jobs in the cultural sector – part 1. Centre for Cultural Value online [viewed 14/1/2022] <https://www.culturehive.co.uk/CVresources/the-impact-of-covid-19-on-jobs-in-the-creative-and-cultural-sectors/>

This report has already evidenced that the Passing the Baton programme successfully equipped young adults with a learning disability with the necessary skills and confidence to pursue creative opportunities in the cultural sector. But, the reality is, that these opportunities are very rare, particularly during 2020-21. Even so through ensuring each individual's goals and ambitions were at the forefront, significant training experiences, volunteering and even paid roles were secured for Young Leaders. Their contact with different organisations had a real impact, opened up possibilities and thereby raised aspirations.

## Voluntary and paid roles at The Lowry

In 2019 one Young Leader secured a volunteering opportunity supporting the YES! Drama Programme at The Lowry Theatre. This 10 week course offered employability skills through drama to young people with learning disabilities. The Young Leader's role was to support the delivery of these sessions, which had the effect of increasing her own skillset and professional connections.

“ I heard about the YES Drama opportunity through DIY. [I got involved] because I wanted to work with different organisations. I felt nervous at the beginning, but I'm not nervous now, because I know the people I'm working with. I have learnt different games and working in different theatres.”

Feedback from Young Leader

At the beginning of this placement, the Young Leader was supported by a DIY staff member to attend the sessions. However, confidence soon grew and she was able to access the sessions independently and proved that she was very capable in the role.

“ [DIY’s Young Leader] has been great, without a doubt the most consistent and reliable of the team, it’s been a term of discovering the group and what direction we want it to take but the team is really settling. [DIY’s Young Leader] has been really supportive with the members of the group and is always positive about any activity, it’s really great having her in the space.”

Fraser Thomas, Youth Employability Skills Manager, The Lowry.

When the Young Leader wished to apply for a paid traineeship on the YES! Programme DIY supported her with advice on the application and on her interview technique. The Young Leader was successful and is due to begin her first paid employment in January 2022. Working for such a prestigious employer is a great achievement.

“ Never thought I’d be teaching a drama lesson at The Lowry!”

Young Leader

## Broadening horizon’s – Directing

In response to another Young Leaders interest in learning to Direct, DIY supported them to apply for and attend a two-day specialist course at Mind the Gap a leading learning disability performance and live arts company based in Bradford. The Young Leader has gained confidence in herself and her abilities and has shown an interest in gaining additional training / experience in directing.



## Ambitions to be a radio star

During Lockdown another Young Leader was supported to access a training programme in Podcasting and Radio Production based at Reform Radio. The Young Leader gained much confidence and pride in this 'work' and was soon using his skills to bring DIY members together through his live-streamed weekly show.

“ Being part of Passing the Baton has changed what I want to do for work/ voluntary work because just got the paid job at The Lowry.”

Young Leader

## Challenge 3.

# To break down barriers and prejudice which prevent people with a learning disability accessing employment and other opportunities within the cultural sector.

“ LEx leaders have limited visibility and little access to opportunity, resource and support to shape or lead population and systems-level change. Instead, technical expertise and learned knowledge continue to dominate social sector thinking, behaviour and activities. Many LEx leaders feel isolated and disenfranchised, forced to operate outside of existing support structures designed by this dominant culture – feeling side-lined, even rejected, as modern-day social leaders in the social sector”

Sandhu, B., (2019) Lived Experience Leadership, Rebooting the DNA of Leadership, V1.1, Lived Experience Leadership Report. Lived Experience Movement supported by Clore Social Leadership p5.

“ At the moment barely anyone with a disability is getting the right break they need.”

Passing the Baton Young Leader

“ Our vision is for a world where performers and arts leaders with learning disabilities are valued as part of the rich diversity of our cultural sector and our society.”

DIY Theatre Company

DIY's own work and the direction of the company is driven and produced by people with a learning disability thereby demonstrating the capabilities of Leaders with a Lived Experience of Learning Disability. DIY are evidencing that a different and inclusive way of operating is totally possible and the high level of their creative output and the feedback from their educational programmes is proof of its success.

DIY Theatre has successfully positioned itself where it can have an impact on breaking down barriers and prejudice by becoming a well respected member of the cultural sector. DIY is represented and influential within many regional and national organisations with national and international links and partnerships. This has meant opportunities for Young Leaders to be seen and heard. They have gained opportunities where they themselves become part of the process of breaking down barriers and prejudice. Through actively demonstrating their capabilities and having a voice they can make a real difference.

“ Please give us the money because we work with other organisations like NYT [National Youth Theatre] and Manchester University.”

Young Leader on the importance of Passing the Baton, why this work should receive funding

# Being Seen and Being Heard



Young Leaders leading a workshop on accessible theatre for National Youth Theatre, (using jellyfish props from DIY's 'Give me Space!').

## Sharing our experience with the National Youth Theatre

“ It was a really a big group and great to work in a new organisation, not just working with DIY working with other organisations like National Youth Theatre. NYT, ‘Give me Space’ workshop [we showed them how] to take inclusive and accessible drama workshops into schools.”

Young Leader

“ It was good because they were asking us for help, we had more experience than them and we helped. We already knew how to work PMLD workshops.”

Young Leader

In 2021 Young Leaders worked with DIY’s Artistic Director to plan and deliver a workshop for National Youth Theatre’s Inclusive Practice Collective.

The DIY team shared DIY’s knowledge of creating accessible theatre with members of NYT’s Inclusive Practice Collective. Inspired by young people engaged in NYT’s inclusion programme and their work in schools, this new Collective will offer creativity, connection and a boost to drama provision in schools for disabled young people and will provide crucial jobs for young creatives facing unemployment. Young Leaders gained in self esteem from knowing that they have valuable experiences that other organisations need to know.

## Educating those in Higher Education

“ As we were doing the workshops the people taking part in the workshop made notes from our knowledge of working in special schools.”

Young Leader



Young Leaders planned and led workshops on accessible delivery at local universities:

- ★ At the University of Manchester they delivered 6 workshops for drama students which formed part of their performance practices module.
- ★ Young Leaders also ran 2 workshops which formed part of the 'Theatre and Communities' module at the University of Salford.



DIY Young Leaders have been representing DIY Theatre at events and meetings which aim to influence and promote positive change. These have provided Young Leaders with opportunities to connect with other organisations, other artists working in the cultural sector and politicians. They are young people who are sharing their opinions, highlighting issues and contributing to sector development. Examples include:



## In Partnership with MIF

“ The MIF [Manchester International Festival] allowed the Young Leaders to demonstrate their fantastic presentation skills. They took it in turns to deliver mini-monologues and managed the Q&A at the end”

Youth Drama Co-ordinator

In February 2021, DIY worked in partnership with Manchester International Festival (MIF) to organise and present a free evening of conversation, interaction and celebration. Using Zoom DIY Leaders shared films, and experiences, interacted using chat and a participatory Q&A session. Being part of such a high prestige programme of arts events increased the visibility of DIY artists.

“ Congratulations on last night! It was a lovely, warm and friendly event – everything a social should be.”

Rosannah Jones, MIF Engagement Coordinator

## Winning Salford Equalities Award

DIY's Leaders won Salford's Heart of Salford 'Equalities' Award 2019.

This event is Salford CVS and Volunteer Centre Salford's prestigious annual ceremony to celebrate volunteering and voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations in Salford. Attendees voted live for the winner of each category, from a shortlist compiled by an independent panel of judges.

## Winning National Songwriting and Spoken Word Award 2021

DIY's song 'Always Connecting' was one of 5 winners of a new Songwriting and Spoken Word Award in 2021. 'Bread & Roses' is a new Award, supported by Culture

Matters and the Musicians Union. It aims to encourage musicians and performers to write material meaningful to working-class people and communities.

In 2021 the Award theme was 'Voices from a Pandemic' and focused on the broad theme of the global coronavirus pandemic and the enormous impact it has had on so many lives, particularly the arts and culture community. Created during Lockdown when DIY was working cross generationally and members were learning how record and create footage at home, the finished piece compliments the new song.

**Watch 'Always Connecting' ➡ [https://youtu.be/\\_kqBunraXZk](https://youtu.be/_kqBunraXZk)**

## Instigating change in Salford

One Young Leader represented DIY at 'Salford Stories' in 2019, an event for council members, Salford CCG and a range of VCSE organisations to celebrate the impact of the 3rd Sector Fund in Salford. Later in the year 2 Young Leaders were ambassadors for DIY and Passing the Baton at the Salford CVS's Seldom Heard Event. This annual event brings together Salford's young people and city leaders to discuss issues and instigate change.

## Contributing to 'Creative Minds'

2 Young Leaders have attended and contributed to regular meetings of Creative Minds – the national network of learning disability arts.

## Supporting 'Curious Minds'

(Curious Minds is Arts Council England's Bridge Organisation for the North West.)

In 2019 'Tea with...' was part of a training event for Curious Minds staff in October 2019, organised by the Curious Minds' Equality and Diversity Group of which DIY is a member. One Young Leader

engaged staff members in discussions about their experiences of being a part of the diverse cultural communities in the North West.

Passing the Baton continued to support to Curious Minds over the following years including contributing to their research into Digital Arts (undertaken by Whole Education).

DIY's Passing the Baton work with cypwld during 2020 was recognised when they became finalists in the North West Cultural Education Awards Lockdown Inclusion category.

## Influencing on Social Media

**Oct 2021** • 31 days

TWEET HIGHLIGHTS

**Top Tweet** earned 2,376 impressions

Last month we ran a Sharing the Space Workshop for @NYToGB Inclusive Practice Collective. Amy, Charlotte & Sue used sensory approaches to workshops to ensure that sensory learners & learners with PMLD (profound and multiple learning disability) could be included.

[pic.twitter.com/Hhd9NYJiaU](https://pic.twitter.com/Hhd9NYJiaU)



1 3 10

DIY's social media presence, and thereby influence, has grown over the 3 years of the programme. Members are now more likely to use social media and recognise the value it can have as a platform to get their views across.

“us being leaders with disabilities shows other people with disabilities that they can be leaders too. We'd like to say 'Listen to us... because we are all only human!'”

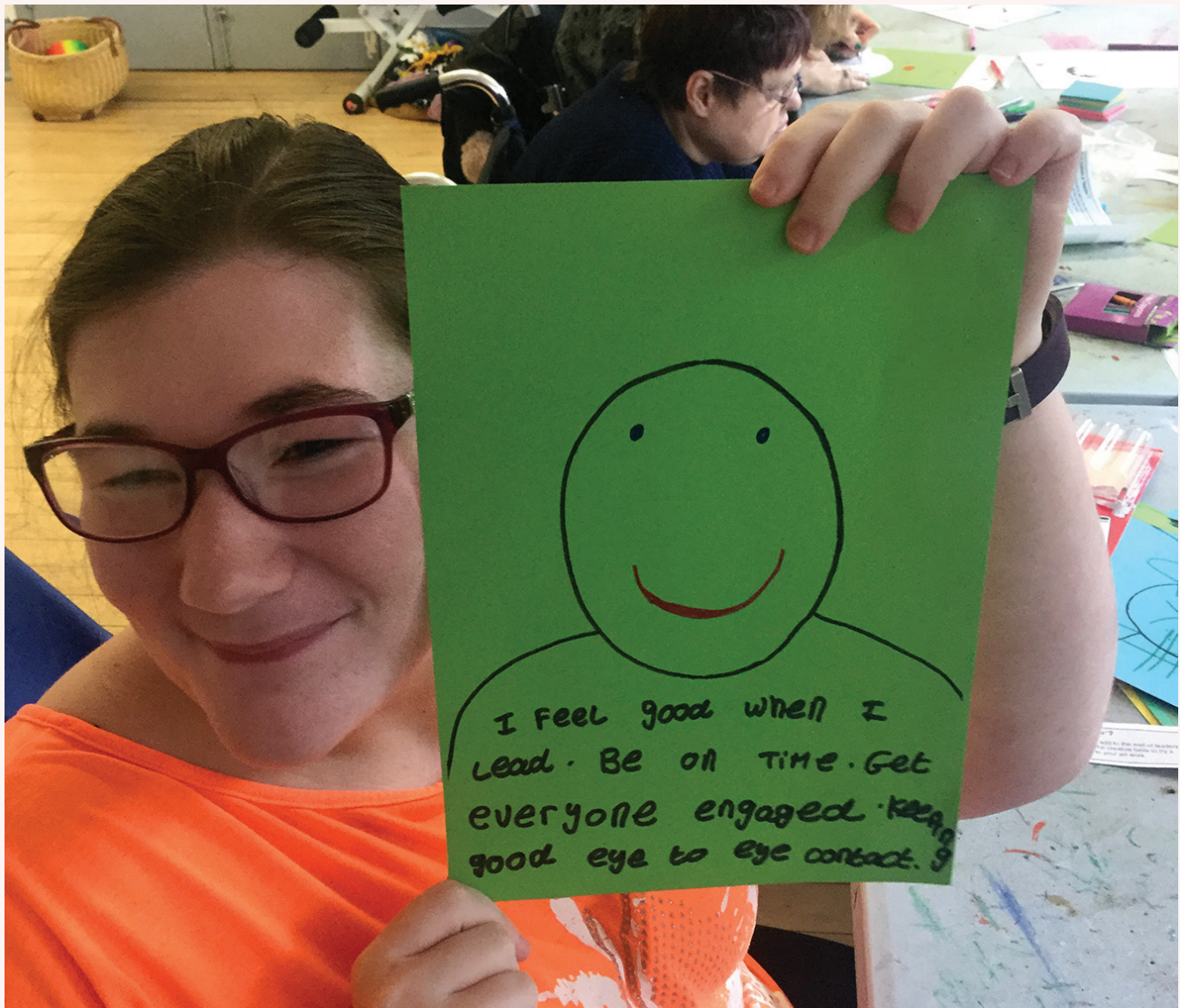
Young Leaders, posted on DIY social media, December 2021

DIY has increased its presence on all social media platforms. All have risen in terms of reach, engagement and impressions. At the end of 2021:

- ★ Over 450 followers on Instagram
- ★ Nearly 1,000 followers on Twitter
- ★ Nearly 500 follows on Facebook



# Lived Experience Leaders



DIY Theatre were one of only 48 organisations accepted onto The National Lottery Community Fund's Lived Experience Leadership (LEx Leadership) programme (2021-22).

“Lived Experience’ is a phrase that many of us have been using a lot recently, but it is not just another way to say ‘experience’. It describes how people with first hand experience of social issues and / or injustice can use their experiences to inform, shape and lead work with a social purpose.”

DIY 2021

“An experience we’ve had in the past that makes us want to change things in our community.”

DIY Young Leader

“People without disabilities might not understand the fear we feel – I think about people’s needs because I have different needs “

DIY Adult Leader

Passing the Baton’s Young Leaders have benefited from this notable opportunity. They have had specialist input and given the time and space to enable thinking around what it means to be a leader with a lived experience of learning disability.

YL’s work on DIY’s Digital Leadership project (see Threats and Opportunities section) was a clear example of how their own experiences of getting online gave members unique insight into how to help others with similar lived experiences. The Young Leaders were then taken on a journey of exploration. To begin photographer, Audrey Albert, worked with YL’s to explore their own understanding and experience of leadership using photography.

As well as developing photography skills, the YL's also learnt how to make a photographic image without a camera. They created sun prints – choosing objects which represent leadership to them. The message was that there is more than one way to make a photograph and the same can be said for Leadership.

“ Working with DIY on their Digital Leaders project allowed me to rethink ways to make both my practice and workshop delivery more accessible and inclusive. I learned so much both from the DIY workshop leaders and the DIY members. Each session was a journey of fun, discovery and learning how lived experiences are valid and important when it comes to representing ourselves as digital leaders.”

Audrey Albert, photographer

The Young Leaders went on to consider how important it was for them to see people with disabilities represented in the media. They also looked at social injustice both through their own experiences and considering the lives of others.

From this journey the group came up with strong messages they wanted to share about leadership and social injustice. This was achieved using DIY's social media channels.

“ We have learnt that having direct experience of a social injustice is so important to lived experience. We have thought about lots of different social injustices that we haven't experienced as well as social injustices we are passionate about because we have direct experience of them. An important social justice issue that the Young leaders group care about is accessibility and making sure that communication particularly is accessible for everyone – which is why we are interested in learning more BSL ourselves and making sure more organisations think about accessible communication. We think it's important everyone is accepted for who they are!”

Young Leaders posted on DIY social media message December 2021

Already shared on social media, their work will be part of another significant film, due for release in early 2022, which shows what LEx Leadership means for DIY.

# Threats and Opportunities



**We kept creating and connecting.**

“ This testing time has provided the opportunity for DIY members to explore communication online with each other and create work to encourage Learning Disabled people and their carers to join the Online World.”

Hilary Easter-Jones, Film-maker and DIY Associate Artist

# Covid Crisis

The Covid Crisis affected people with learning disabilities much more than most. Labeled as 'vulnerable' many DIY members were advised to shield or self-isolate, and to continue to do so as the restrictions were lifted for others.

DIY Theatre have succeeded in overcoming many of the problems caused by the Covid Crisis. Creativity carried on, learning continued and all of their members were supported to thrive in this new normal. Through their increased digital skills and confidence, their film making, Digital Inclusion and Digital Leadership projects all members were able to contribute to creative works which not only increased the aspirations of the contributors but also aimed to increase the digital confidence of viewers. Because of their contributions to these project Young Leaders increased their range of transferable life skills and gained confidence.

“ I like the work we've done this year. The young people can project themselves [using virtual technology and social media]. It wasn't a wasted year – they've got that extra oomph behind them, there's an extra prong on the fork of skills”

Youth Drama Co-ordinator, Nov 2021

The Covid pandemic impacted the Passing the Baton programme for almost 2 of its 3 year duration. Although much mitigated by clever changes, determination and commitment from DIY, inevitably this has had an impact.

“ People with learning disabilities with Covid-19 are five times more likely to be admitted to hospital and eight times more likely to die compared with the general population of England, finds a study published by The BMJ today.”

The BMJ, (2021). Editorial: “Covid 19: People with learning disabilities are highly vulnerable” [viewed 15/12/2021] <https://www.bmj.com/company/newsroom/people-with-learning-disabilities-extremely-vulnerable-to-the-effects-of-covid-19/>



## The show must go on

When the first Lockdown was announced in March 2020 all DIY's face to face sessions stopped. At this point in time many of DIY's members had never accessed digital technology, used the internet or sent an email. There had been no reason for them to use online conferencing (such as Zoom).

**“ I'd never even heard of Zoom at all – I didn't know what it was.”**

DIY member.

Isolation and the sudden lack of positive activity were major problems for many. DIY diverted all resources into supporting their members to stay creative and connected whilst staying safe. Supported by their funders, DIY decided to work cross-generationally for a period. This made it possible to maintain frequent contact with most members and regular participants via phone and post. DIY Theatre thoughtfully and successfully adapted delivery to ensure the best outcomes for its beneficiaries during a period of major changes to their way of life.

**“ It gets boring when you're isolating to be honest. It really does. But with Zoom more or less every day you don't get bored.”**

DIY member

The determination and creative adaptability of workers, associate artists and the members of DIY ensured that the company continued to do what it does best, what it has been doing since 1994 – 'creating accessible and thought-provoking theatre and educational projects'.

By the summer of 2020, DIY Young Leaders had contributed to two songs and a film that were shared via social media and an online festival. These had been created whilst all the contributors were separated by Lockdown, no longer in their familiar rehearsal space but having to use unfamiliar equipment and new techniques.

Film in particular became an important way for DIY to continue to make and share meaningful pieces.



## **I WISH EVERYTHING WAS BACK TO NORMAL**

'I Wish Everything Was Back To Normal' was the first of these. One Young Leader said that the purpose of making this film was to see "how other people cope at home, living alone because obviously, you couldn't live with your families, and stuff. So, that is basically why we created this film to show what we did and what other people got up to during lockdown."

'I Wish Everything Was Back To Normal' was premiered on YouTube on 17<sup>th</sup> July 2020 and was presented as part of the Connect LD+ 2020 Festival organized by The Lawnmowers Independent

Theatre Company later that year. It was also shown as part of DIY's 'Lets Connect' event at the MIF in early 2021.

DIY had the most ever views YouTube on 17 July 2020 when 'I Wish Everything was back to normal' was live premièred. It got 399 views then and the extended version released on the same day got 175 views – almost 600 views altogether.

**'I Wish Everything was back to Normal' can be viewed here:**

➡ <https://youtu.be/PuxZO45s5kw>



Fantastic!"

Access All Areas Theatre Company



Great film" "100%" "so emotional" "Wonderful film"  
"Beautiful film. Well done everyone! :)"

Feedback from MIF event in February 2021 the feedback in live chat

## **Covid's effect on recruitment.**

Numbers of attendees at PtB regular weekly sessions was understandably lower than anticipated before the Covid Crisis. The void in recruitment routes when all youth social and extra-curricular face-to-face sessions ceased had a significant impact on participant numbers, which were much lower than initially envisaged. Seeking alternatives ways to attract new members during lockdown would not have been a sensible use of resources. Maintaining the existing groups and ensuring the best possible experience for them was the priority. In this DIY succeeded, with the core members of both the Young Leaders and regular participants in the Youth Drama Club continuing to meet (via Zoom) and being offered a range of opportunities to gain experience and skills.

When DIY started to return to face-to-face sessions in Autumn 2021 children and young people were understandably reluctant and cautious. DIY needed to take things slowly and to support individuals to re-learn how to work as a group in the real world. Towards the end of the Passing the Baton programme, therefore, recruitment remained low on the list of priorities. Nevertheless there were signs that numbers were increasing as 3 new people attended the Youth Drama sessions in the Autumn of '21.

“ It isn't just a case of picking up from where we left off. Members have lost confidence because they are out of the habit of it and are worried about safety.”

Youth Drama Co-ordinator

# Becoming Leaders in the Digital World

Recognising the potential benefits of connecting members using online platforms, DIY responded to the challenges of making that happen. A closed Facebook Group was quickly established where members already familiar with the platform shared and supported each other.

“Doing my own radio show I enjoyed it because obviously just giving the other DIY members the opportunity to be with me and watch my show every week. I wanted to bring it on camera. It felt like bringing it on camera would help the others, you know what I mean?”

Scott, DIY Young Leader

But many members faced major barriers to accessing digital technology. Not only did this include their lack of skills / experience but also the affordability of equipment and access to support to enable them to use it. How do you show someone how to use Zoom when they have never accessed the internet or used email before and when you aren't even in the same room?

“Just being able to have an iPad and go on Zoom – because I was using my dad's phone all the time and the battery was draining. Just having an iPad to click on when you wanted is amazing.”

DIY Young Leader

DIY secured funding, from the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, to provide members with computer tablets and routers where needed. An additional amount was granted by NHS Salford CCG and Salford CVS via their CV-19 Disability Response Fund for a digital inclusion project which began in January 2021.

## Digital Inclusion

“some of us might not have access to WiFi. Some of us might have no access to any technology”

Young Leader

Working cross generationally gave Young Leaders the chance to Pass the Baton to more mature members of the company. They generally had more experience with digital technology and were able to lead and support more mature members. All participants were introduced to new devices and digital skills, including:

- ★ how to record their voices
- ★ using an ipad to communicate with others – email and Zoom
- ★ accessing and contributing to social media platforms
- ★ collaborating through using an online whiteboard

“I remember when I first started I didn't know what to do - it was so frustrating. It was so frustrating and it was horrible – learning how to use this tablet. I wanted to give up. You guys helped me to use it to connect.”

Young Leader

The process of getting members to access digital technology was captured and used to make a series of short videos and a film – ‘It Does Make a Big Difference!’ These were shared widely through DIY's networks to demonstrate the benefits and encourage others to make the effort to get online.

“This has to be one of the best COVID connect clips I have seen, thank you for sharing. A big well done to all those involved in the amazing work they have achieved the past 12 months. Definitely shared.”

Kat.Walsh, thebiglifegroup on 'Give Digital a Go'



“ Getting to see where everyone’s at and to see how well everyone’s doing in this crazy, crazy time, and it’s about us sticking together.”

Youth Drama Club member

## Digital Leaders with Disability Labels, Leaders with Lived Experience



“ We give help and advice on how to use Zoom to people who have never used it before. So they can understand”

Young Leader

The experience of supporting others to ‘Give Digital a Go’ inspired the Young Leaders Group to look at Lived Experience Leadership. Young Leaders recognised that their increase in confidence and skills had enabled them to demonstrate a whole new area of leadership, offering positive role models to those who were just starting to develop their digital skills. They created ‘Digital Monsters’ which represented the feelings of frustration and nerves they faced when they first started going online, and ‘Digital Superheroes’. These digital personas support and encourage others to access the online world with confidence.

## **Young Leaders work forms part of DIY’s film ‘Enjoy Your Time Online’**

➡ <https://vimeo.com/566007645>

“ The Covid Crisis has created such an opportunity. Our members are now so present in the online world.

“ They’ve always been present theatrically but now they are part of the digital world. Before Covid, our members never needed to communicate online since they shared the same physical space. However, the lockdowns started a process of online engagement for them; a skill they may never have learned without the crisis. This has created self improvement and empowerment in this digital age. Their growth technically will provide contact and exclude isolation from their futures.”

Hilary Easter-Jones, Film-maker and DIY Associate Artist

# Changes in staffing and partners

“ I’ve learnt most about myself in a year working at DIY, really grown and believing in myself a lot more.”

Youth Drama Co-ordinator, Nov 2021

Staff changes have meant resources have been required to attract and train a replacement Co-ordinator and restructure the staffing of the programme to accommodate a change in skill sets. A positive impact has been the opportunity to influence a wider staff team through the programme. DIY are rightly recognised as pro-actively supporting the professional development of those who work for them and have succeeded in doing so with those who have worked on the Passing the Baton programme. The local cultural sector has benefited from CPD provided to practitioners and the Passing the Baton beneficiaries will continue to benefit from a strong and cohesive staffing team.

## **The Passing the Baton Programme was envisioned as being delivered in partnership with You Can Community Centre.**

You Can’s contribution was anticipated to be free use of the space with staffing support at all sessions, publicity and recruitment and transport for participants where needed. Unfortunately this offer was withdrawn early into the programme due to staffing and continuity issues at You Can. DIY have continued to work in You Can spaces and the organisation has helped to publicise the programme, but the potential for partnership envisaged at the outset has unfortunately not been realised.

# Conclusions

The foundation for DIY Theatre's Passing the Baton Programme was its own challenge – to break down barriers and prejudice, and fully equip and prepare young adults with a learning disability with a range of transferable life skills that could lead to creative opportunities and employment.

This report evidences that DIY successfully devised a programme that harnessed the existing knowledge and experience held within the company and enabled its transference to young adults with learning disabilities. The concept did not stop there; by setting up a youth drama club and building on existing partnerships, the young adults were able to practice their new skills and thereby gain confidence and experience. Young leaders with learning disabilities were able to Pass on the Baton to children and young people at DIY and in partner schools and colleges.

DIY Theatre drew on its sector development and influencing work and used its partnerships and contacts, to create a whole package of opportunities and experiences for participants. Young Leaders were supported to become 'seen and heard' on a wider stage. In this way they gained influence and recognised the contribution they could make to the cultural and education sectors. Young adult participants were supported to become part of DIY's decision-making groups and make a valuable contribution to different aspects of running the company. Young leaders have become integral and influential members of DIY.

**“ Before starting Passing the Baton I used to do one sentence words and now I do loads of sentences in sessions and presentations.”**

Young Leader

DIY's Passing the Baton was a complex and ambitious programme which mainly took place during the extraordinary time of the Covid Pandemic. The following points highlight some of the key areas of learning emerging from the initiative, which DIY can use to inform its future developments.

## **Flexibility and speed in responding to crisis**

DIY responded with speed and flexibility to the challenges and uncertainties posed by the Covid Crisis. The company quickly put in place a range of solutions that responded to the needs of different members and soon adapted and developed its work to be effective and ambitious in a digital world. This agility and ability to think creatively was, and continues to be, a real strength of DIY.

The trust and support of funders was crucial in enabling this fruitful response to happen, rather than being tied to outputs set prior to the pandemic.

## **Arts Award**

This was the first time DIY delivered all five levels of Arts Award within the same programme. Each level was introduced in a way that was appropriate for the learners, from using Discover level during initial engagement at outreach sessions in schools to the impressive achievement at Gold Level of one of DIY's Young Leaders. This demonstrated the scope and potential for Arts Award to be offered in this way in future programmes.

## Capitalising on the Passing the Baton process

The outreach projects developed with school and cultural partners had mutual benefits. Projects led by workshop facilitators with learning disabilities provided participants with access to positive role models and inspirational leaders in addition to the fun and educational sessions. The way the programme used the delivery of these training sessions to increase the experience and skills of Young Leaders was exemplary.

## Intergenerational approaches

An important aspect of Passing the Baton was its inter-generational approach. This was established from the outset, with the idea of mature leaders supporting young people on their leadership journeys. During the Covid Crisis, as DIY adopted an increasingly inter-generational approach, new creative and leadership opportunities emerged. This included the key role Young Leaders played in supporting other DIY members to develop digital skills and confidence. The value of this approach has been evidenced and highlights the potential for it to become more embedded in the company's practice.

In addition, there is a higher representation of Younger Adults throughout the organization. It is clear there is mutual respect and that the younger members are bringing new energy and ideas.

## Extending the creative repertoire

Specialist skills from music to animation, from circus to songwriting have been introduced during the programme. Links have been made with skilled practitioners who have themselves gained by the development of their inclusive skills. A number have continued their engagement with the company providing ongoing mutual development. Music practice has, for example, become much more embedded within the organisation. The use of digital skills and the production of digitally accessible work are new areas of learning that have significantly influenced the creative processes and products of DIY as an organisation.



## **LEx Leadership**

Passing the Baton has led DIY to engage with LEx Leadership as a term and as an ethos and to start to explore in more depth what it means to members and the organisation as a whole. This offers a rich and important area for further exploration and development, one which supports DIY's vision 'for a world where performers and arts leaders with learning disabilities are valued as part of the rich diversity of our cultural sector and our society'. It will also provide opportunities to link with other LEx Leadership organisations in the future.

## **Partnerships with schools**

Partnerships with Chatsworth High and Springwood Primary schools were strengthened significantly during this programme. This enabled DIY to continue to creatively engage children and young people with learning disabilities, even during the Covid Crisis, and has led to other partnership opportunities including a recent Healthy Schools Transitions project with Springwood and Chatsworth Schools.

However, this engagement has not been translated into recruitment to DIY projects. The interest and potential are there, but additional time and resource would be required to support this kind of recruitment in the future.

## **Partnerships with Cultural organisations**

A number of strong partnerships with cultural organisations including National Youth Theatre, The Lowry and Manchester International Festival, have offered exciting opportunities for Young Leaders to further their leadership skills and build links within the cultural sector. However, the scale of opportunities for paid and unpaid work envisaged in the initial proposal has not been realized. The Covid Crisis certainly played a big part, but more needs to be done to ensure that leaders with learning disabilities can access meaningful opportunities within the creative sector.

## Further Training and Support

Lots of enthusiasm has been expressed by participants for further leadership training. Because of the significant barriers to young adults with learning disabilities entering the cultural sector, bespoke training is needed, based on personal goals and aspirations, to support every individual to reach their full potential. Training programmes would need to include stronger engagement with the sector from the outset as well as benefits advice that addressed each person's specific circumstances and aspirations alongside development of personal portfolios and digital CVs.

## Barriers to paid employment

The barriers to employment for people with a learning disability within the cultural sector are high. It is not just about changing attitudes. In particular the complexities of the benefits system are very challenging for people and their families to navigate and one-to-one support is needed to ensure people are not negatively affected by taking on paid roles.

Before DIY can create long-lasting progression routes into the cultural sector the company itself will need to change. In order to create more artist development / career pathways for emerging artists with learning disabilities and to thereby influence the external cultural sector, new skills and new ways of working will need to be encompassed.

The potential for DIY to start paying artists with a learning disability on a more regular basis and integrate this approach into its structure has been highlighted. The challenge of establishing an Engagement Team of people with learning disabilities paid for their work is being explored.

“ I've never had a paid job before. I wouldn't know what one was like. I've been down the volunteering route but I've never had a paid side of it before. I've done a lot of volunteering.... I've done a bit of everything. I think I would definitely be good at workshops and helping with the students.”

Young Leader



[www.diytheatre.org.uk](http://www.diytheatre.org.uk)

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Strategic Framework