

Our Theory of Change – DIY Theatre Company

This spans three years starting April 2022. *Adopted Feb 2022. Version 1*

Activities

ARTISTIC PROGRAMME

Core Company

- ≥ 30 full-day sessions p/a

DIY Buds

- ≥ 30 half-day sessions p/a

Youth Drama Group

- ≥ 30 half-day sessions p/a

Community Education

- 4-6 x 10-week courses p/a

LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME

Mature Leaders' Programme

- ≥ 30 full-day sessions p/a

Young Leaders' Programme

- ≥ 30 full-day sessions p/a

▪ Structured Leadership Courses

ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Board – 6 meetings p/a
- Advisory Group – 3 meetings p/a
- Communications Team – 6 meetings p/a
- Policies Working Group – 6 meetings p/a
- Staff Health/Wellbeing – 3 sessions p/a
- Supervisions – 6 per staff member p/a
- Fundraising & financial management
- Advocacy & networking
- Evaluation & research
- Workforce development

Outputs

ARTISTIC OUTPUTS

- 2 research & development programmes → 2 theatre production every 2 years
- 1 creative practice/aesthetics video p/a
- 1 digital production p/a
- 2 sets of educational resources p/a
- 1 training resource on aesthetics/ techniques for creative work p/a
- 14 touring performances over 2 years
- 3 'At Home'/'Sharing' events p/a
- Performances at 2 festivals / events p/a
- 2 collaborative creative projects with other arts companies

LEADERSHIP OUTPUTS

- 3 films about lived experience leadership over 3yrs
- 10 cultural education projects in schools & colleges p/a
- 20 creative practice training sessions for universities p/a
- Input to 3 conferences p/a
- 3 partnership projects p/a with other cultural organisations
- 3 leadership-related research projects over 3yrs
- 1 regional event on lived experience leadership p/a – aimed at cultural and education sectors
- 36 placement opportunities with cultural / VCSE organisations established for pwld.

ORGANISATION OUTPUTS

- New posts - 2 created in 2022
- Social media – 16 posts p/w
- Newsletters – 3 p/a
- Latest news – monthly website updates
- Accessible policies – all documents
- Theory of Change
- Ethical framework
- 3 year plan – every 3 yrs
- Impact report – 1 p/a
- Funding applications – 8 submitted p/a
- Project evaluations – 8 p/a
- Strategic networks – 20 meetings attended p/a
- 'Emerging Artists' training – 1 course p/a
- Social impacts research projects – 2 p/a

Outcomes

PARTICIPANTS

- Creative, personal/inter-personal & leadership skills developed
- Self-confidence & voice enhanced and CVs strengthened.
- New opportunities for progression opened up – including paid employment and volunteering
- Success & constructive feedback experienced
- Sense of community strengthened
- Equipped to engage with current societal challenges
- Health & wellbeing improved

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

- Access to high quality arts & culture increased
- Personal & inter-personal skills developed
- Engagement with current societal challenges strengthened
- Curriculum enhanced
- Accreditation opportunities offered
- Aspirations raised

CULTURAL & EDUCATION SECTORS

- Understanding of issues relating to inclusion/access/equity/justice increased
- Stigma and discrimination challenged through leadership and educational programmes
- New models/understandings of culture & aesthetics more widely used – particularly within FE & HE and cultural sectors
- New relational models of leadership practice, based on lived experience & ethical practice, promoted & adopted
- Perceptions of people with learning disabilities & what they can achieve changed
- Diversity of workforce strengthened through offering placements to disabled leaders
- CPD & models of good practice developed

DIY AS AN ORGANISATION

- Visibility & profile increased locally, regionally & nationally
- Sustainability & future security enhanced
- Staffing structure & governance strengthened
- New creative and lived experience leadership practice models embedded
- Increased range of artistic skills/specialisms developed
- Critical awareness of & action on inclusion, social justice, equity & ecological sustainability increased
- Learning organisation strengthened – based on rigorous research & evaluation
- 12 strong partnerships developed & consolidated over 3 years within cultural, education & VCSE sectors

Impacts

INDIVIDUALS

People with learning disabilities have significantly improved life chances & are able to fulfill their aspirations & their potential – including access to high quality cultural & leadership training and employment.

COMMUNITIES

People with learning disabilities are visible, active creative citizens – with a strong sense of community identity & as much opportunity as any other citizen to become performers, leaders & change-makers free from stigma & discrimination.

CULTURAL SECTOR

DIY is a stronger organisation as part of a more dynamic, agile, relevant & sustainable cultural sector. Learning Disability Arts is an integral element of a much more inclusive & diverse cultural landscape.

Appendix – Setting the Scene for DIY’s Theory of Change

DIY’s Theory of Change is rooted in our understanding of the experiences of people with learning disabilities in our society. This comes from over 20 years’ experience of developing performance and leadership programmes led by people with learning disabilities. It is echoed in national research carried out and collated by MENCAP (<https://www.mencap.org.uk>, 2021). Impacts are considered at individual, community and cultural sector levels:

INDIVIDUALS

People with learning disabilities are denied the same life chances as the general population. They generally have poorer physical and mental health and often additionally experience relative financial poverty. Low expectations result in assumptions that people don’t want to, or can’t, work. Employment programmes and the current benefits system are not designed to support people with a learning disability who want to train and work.

- The average life expectancy of women with a learning disability is 18 years shorter than for the general population. The average life expectancy of men with a learning disability is 14 years shorter than for the general population (NHS Digital, 2017).
- The rate of mental health problems in people with a learning disability is double that of the general population (Cooper, 2007; Emerson & Hatton, 2007; NICE, 2016). Accumulation of negative life events results in higher levels of stress that can result in mental health problems (Bond et al, 2019). Lack of social support and reduced coping skills are associated with depression and anxiety in people with learning disabilities (Austin et al, 2018; Bond et al, 2019).
- The Confidential Inquiry into premature deaths of people with learning disabilities found that 38% of people with a learning disability died from an avoidable cause, compared to 9% in a comparison population of people without learning disabilities (Heslop et al, 2013).
- In 2017/18 only 6% of adults with learning disabilities known to their local authority were in paid employment in England (NHS Digital, 2018), compared to 76% of people aged 16 – 64 in the general population (ONS, 2019).

COMMUNITY

Stigma and discrimination towards people with learning disabilities remains pervasive throughout society and many experience prejudice, discrimination and harassment. Although most people with learning disabilities have moved from the legacy of isolation in institutions, they have fewer chances to take part in leisure activities or socialise and many remain invisible within communities. They lack opportunities to meet others with learning disabilities to work together to address stigmatized identities, engage with ideas about rights, empowerment and equality with a collective voice.

- Children and teenagers with learning disabilities take part in fewer activities and participate less frequently than their peers without learning disabilities. They tend to have fewer friends (Solish et al, 2010; Taheri et al, 2016)
- 1 in 3 young people with a learning disability spends less than 1 hour outside their home on a typical Saturday (MENCAP, 2019).
- Over half of disabled people report feeling lonely, rising to 77% for those aged 18-34 (Sense, 2017). Loneliness is associated with physical and mental health problems and poorer quality of life (Gilmore & Cuskelly, 2014)
- Scope identifies a “Discrimination gap” between the attitudes of non-disabled people and the reality of disabled peoples’ experiences (Dixon et al, 2018). Misconceptions about the

capabilities of people with learning disabilities are widespread (Scior & Werner, 2015). Misconceptions can be a barrier to people with learning disabilities leading the lives they want to lead (Dixon et al, 2018).

- 32% of respondents in a 2017 British Attitudes Survey thought that disabled people were not as productive as non-disabled people.
- Stigma and discrimination can become internalized, leading to psychological distress (Ali et al, 2015; Pelleboer-Gunnink et al, 2019).

CULTURAL SECTOR

Although we have been developing for over 20 years as a member-led cultural organisation and despite our strong reputation and track-record DIY Theatre Company continues as a cultural organisation without core funding - dependent on raising funding project-by-project for its survival. As members of the national Creative Minds network, we are aware that far too many Learning Disability organisations have consistently struggled to be heard and taken seriously by larger-scale, more established cultural institutions. Just as people with learning disabilities are stigmatized and marginalized by wider society, learning disabled performers and artists are being marginalized within the cultural sector. This truth must be acknowledged and challenged if the cultural picture is truly going to become more inclusive and diverse.

This Theory of Change is based on a number of assumptions about the ways in which creativity and leadership can contribute to real and lasting change for individuals, communities and the cultural sector:

Involvement in positive leadership opportunities can enable people with learning disabilities to address issues of stigma and discrimination

- Research has shown that involvement in member-led groups like self advocacy groups can enable members to address stigmatized identities and provide opportunities to engage with ideas about rights, empowerment and and greater equality (Clark et al, 2015; Anderson and Bigby, 2017; Fenn and Scior, 2019).

Leadership and creative activities by people with learning disabilities can challenge negative attitudes and promote positive ones

- Education interventions designed to challenge negative attitudes to people with learning disabilities have shown positive outcomes (Li et al, 2014; Seewooruttun & Scior, 2014).
- Increasing contact with people with learning disabilities can have positive effects on attitudes (MacMillan et al, 2014; Seewooruttun & Scior, 2014; Scior & Werner, 2015). Contact can include training by people with learning disabilities, tutoring programmes, films and online images that contradict stereotypes (Seewooruttun & Scior, 2014).
- Studies including direct contact and education about learning disability have shown positive outcomes – especially with those with no prior contact with people with learning disabilities (Lawson et al, 2017).

Despite the many challenges, we believe that DIY Theatre Company, with its history, its strong member-led ethos and committed team of skilled members, practitioners and supporters can contribute to a world where performers, theatre-makers and arts leaders with learning disabilities are valued as part of the rich diversity of our cultural sector and our society.