

Community Arts Worker Training Course

End of Project Report, Feb 2011



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1 Project Summary

The Community Arts Worker Training Course was developed through conversations between Wirral MBC and Collective Encounters throughout 2009/10. Its aim was to:

Increase the capacity of Wirral based artists to deliver high-quality community arts projects

The budget allowed for five full-day sessions, which were delivered in The Williamson Art Gallery on Sundays between September and November 2010.

It was agreed that, given the timeframe and following research conducted by Wirral into needs and interests, Collective Encounters would offer an introduction to all the key areas necessary to work professionally and effectively in a community context. The days were framed as follows:

- The Right Project with the Right Community
- Funders and Fundraising
- Project Management
- Marketing
- Evaluation, Documentation and Measuring Impact

Wirral was responsible for recruiting the trainees and provided Collective Encounters with contact details for 16 artists, across disciplines and with diverse interests. The course was delivered to 10 trainees, with one additional participant signing up for just one session (fundraising). Of the ten, seven participants attended all five sessions; two attended 4 sessions; and one attended just two sessions. Nine participants completed final evaluations of the training.

The training was very well received, with 100% of respondents giving the training an overall rating of 4 or 5 out of 5.

“I have learned through attending these sessions that with the right support and guidance I have what it takes to make my ideas work. With the skills and knowledge highlighted on the course – I already have a solid foundation to build on and develop.”

2 Outline of the Programme

2.1 Set Up and shape

Collective Encounters made contact with all potential participants via email one month prior to the start of the course; requesting CVs from participants and asking them to complete a skills survey form (see Appendix 3). These provided useful information for the training providers in terms of the arts backgrounds, interests, current skills sets and identified needs of participants. They invited the learners to be proactive in their training by asking them to identify their own learning objectives.

All training sessions ran from 10 – 4 with a 40-minute break for lunch and a short comfort break in the morning. In the first session it proved difficult to get lunch nearby and participants said in the end-of-session feedback it would be helpful to have lunch provided. Subsequently lunch was provided. Each session included power-point presentations, full and small group discussions and practical exercises. The first and last sessions were delivered by Sarah Thornton, and the middle three sessions by Annette Burghes.

2.2 The Right Project with the Right Community

This first session began with introductions (to the training providers and each other); and an overview of the course. It set out what participants could/should expect of the training programme, what would be expected of them, and where it was hoped that the course would take them. The session covered the following topics:

- A potted history of community arts and an ethical approach
- The role(s) of the artist in the community
- How, where and why projects originate
- Understanding need and demand
- Creative consultation with communities and the challenges of community engagement
- Ethical Research in practice
- Turning research and consultation into a project idea
- Aims, Objectives, Outcomes and Outputs
- Timing and structure: the planning, delivery, evaluation cycle
- Making it SMART

Handouts were provided including:

- Copies of PowerPoint slides
- Webliography/bibliography of useful community arts background information
- Sample Ethical Research Policy
- Aims, Objectives, Outcomes and Outputs handout

Through the practical exercises the group identified a project that many members would like to pursue, and the work they did around understanding Aims, Objectives etc. focussed on using this potential project for their learning. Some participants decided that they would stay with this project throughout the training and where possible apply other exercises (i.e. fundraising etc.) to this project. This was to explore the possibility of establishing an artists network, possibly with a physical space at its heart, in Wirral. Other participants choose to learn through individual and/or hypothetical projects.

“I have been able to identify how skills I have can be further used to develop my career within community arts.”

2.3 Funders and Fundraising

The session covered the following topics:

- Arts Funding: a mixed economy approach
- Understanding Government Subsidy
- Some key funds (ACE GFA; Lottery; Local Government; Nesta; outline of trusts and foundations)
- Application forms: What are you?; Your USP; Your Project Brief; Project Activity Plan; Making a difference; Showing Need; Financial Acumen; Income; Expenditure; Documentation; Dos and Don'ts)
- Developing a Fundraising Strategy
- Programme vs Projects
- A Year in the funding life of Collective Encounters: wins and losses

Handouts were provided including:

- Charitable and company status; group status; constitution hand outs
- Arts Council England Funding Sources Information Booklet
- Awards for All and Wellcome Trust guidelines

Throughout the session participants had the opportunity to apply the learning to their own project ideas; and were invited to take this further before the next session.

2.4 Project Management

The session began with a re-cap of fundraising, in particular looking at the connections between: sustainability, consultation, need, activity, outcomes and reach. This led into the sessions focus on project management. The session covered the following topics:

- The project cycle
- Project Management Plans: financial, personnel and promotional
- Using Gantt charts to help plan and monitor
- Managing money: planning, cash-flow, accounting, decision making, monitoring and reporting
- Preparing an income/expenditure budget
- Managing people and relationships, general points and the law
- Managing workers (employees, volunteers, freelancers)
- Partners (venue, funders, participants, community groups, suppliers)

Handouts were provided including:

- Sample project brief
- Project Planning work book
- Sample project budget
- ITC rates of pay
- Glossary of financial terms
- Employment Law: The Basics, hand out
- Sample self-employment contract

“It’s paving my development for a better future. Arming me with an insight as to what is expected of me and enabling me to go forward and make those moves”

2.5 Marketing

This session set out to develop an understanding of the role marketing, press and digital media can play in community arts. It covered the following topics:

- What is marketing?
- Developing a marketing strategy
- Communication mechanisms: printed material, electronic material, press, word of mouth
- Drawing up a marketing budget
- Planning and scheduling a marketing campaign
- Identifying your target audience
- Gathering data
- Design brief considerations
- Writing copy

- Press hooks
- Engaging audiences using digital media: why use social media; available platforms; free potential

Handouts were provided including:

- Marketing work book
- Sample target audience grid
- Sample marketing materials (flyers, press releases, promotional videos)

2.6 An Introduction to Facilitation and Evaluation

This session covered the following topics:

- What does a high quality creative process look like?
- The roles of the facilitator
- An introduction to group dynamics
- A brief history of arts evaluation: from anecdote to measurement to judgement
- Understanding the language of evaluation: Feedback, monitoring, evaluation and advocacy
- Understanding the language of evaluation: qualitative and quantitative data
- Excellence, quality and defining terms

Handouts were provided including:

- Copies of PowerPoint slides
- Webliography/bibliography of evaluation literature and support guides; and facilitation literature and support guides
- Sample Quality Indicators
- Sample Evaluation Policy
- Sample data collection forms (event report; questionnaires; feedback form; statistical data collection sheet)
- Arts Council England Evaluation advice booklet

The final hour of the session was spent evaluating the course. This involved completing questionnaires which enabled us to gather data to make quantitative and qualitative analysis; as well as undertaking more practical exercises. This evaluation process was used both to gather feedback from participants; and to underline the teaching about evaluation that had happened throughout the session.

Becoming aware of issues relating to community arts has been most important – it gives me focus for moving forward.

3 Analysis of the programme

3.1 Experience of the training

Over-all the training programme was extremely successful. Participants were enthusiastic, committed and hungry to learn. While there was a mixed age range and varying levels of experience, many of them spoke about having graduated from arts degrees with a solid foundation in their discipline, but very little if any idea as to how to make the arts into a career. They felt that the training had been well judged and much needed. 100% of respondents felt that they had learned new things which would be useful to them in the future; 77% felt that their capacity as a professional had improved; and 100% would recommend the training to other emerging artists. Many spoke of feeling empowered by the training and of feeling in a much more confident and stronger position to realise a career in the arts.

Many participants felt that the training represented a real investment in them by Wirral MBC and very much valued this – several spoke of having felt unsupported in the past and felt that this represented a very positive sea-change. Many spoke of this as the beginning of a new approach and a new beginning.

Many also commented on the value of being with other artists and breaking down isolation: 77% of them felt that this had been an important part of the training course.

3.2 Content and delivery

Participants welcomed the extensive and in-depth material covered by the course. 100% of respondents considered the quality of resources; quality of presentations; support of tutors; and knowledge/expertise of tutors to be either good or excellent. Feedback showed that participants particularly welcomed the friendly approach of the tutors; the supportive environment that was created; and the wealth of resources and useful tools provided. Many commented that they were surprised by the range and breadth of information necessary to make a successful career in the arts and responded positively to how this had been structured into a training package.

Some participants, however, were a little overwhelmed by the amount of material covered. There were suggestions that perhaps an extra day would have helped or to deliver the training over half-days to provide more time/space to absorb the information. Because of having so much material to cover, in some instances more practical and creative exercises suffered: 88% of respondents felt that the practical exercises were good or excellent.

Participants gave very positive feedback to practical exercises such as developing a project brief; completing Gantt charts; reviewing examples of publicity materials. Tutors would have

liked more space/time to expand on the information and consolidate learning through a wider range of practical applications.

While all aspects of the training were considered by at least 89% of respondents to be useful; the most popular aspects of the training included Project Planning (89% of respondents considered this very useful), Understanding Aims, Objectives, Outcomes and Outputs (78% very useful); Producing Budgets (78% very useful); Evaluation (78% very useful); and Digital Media (71% very useful). The most popular requests for follow up training are around Funding/Fundraising and Digital Media.

For a full breakdown of participants' responses to the training and its different components please see Appendix 1 - 3.

3.3 Context

While 67% of respondents felt that Sunday was a good day for training, several participants disagreed and some had problems with childcare. And while 89% of respondents said in the final evaluation that the choice of venue had been good; there had been a great deal of negative feedback regarding the venue during the training: in particular that staff were unhelpful and unfriendly and that The Williamson Gallery was unsuitable as a training suite. From the trainers perspective there were a few technical problems but these were overcome; and it was a positive experience to work in an arts space.

“The opportunity to do this training shows to me, that art is being taken seriously by local government, it has spurred me on in the pursuit of art as a career.”



Recommendations for the future

These recommendations came out of the experience of delivering the course and from the evaluation and feedback of participants and tutors.

The training package:

- Add an extra day to the training or split the training into 10 x half days
- Ensure all participants complete skills survey forms prior to course commencing in order to ensure all learners' needs are met from the beginning
- Provide all materials electronically through a Virtual Learning Centre to reduce paper
- Ensure follow-on support for those who are interested

Follow on support:

- Collective Encounters to support those interested in producing a GFA bid for their artists network
- Wirral MBC offer follow-on support to individuals to produce business plans
- Wirral MBC explore the possibility of funding a mentoring package for participants who have completed the training
- Wirral MBC to explore the possibility of offering ½ day follow on training packages

Supporting artists' development in Wirral in the longer term:

- Wirral MBC to liaise with local colleges/universities to discuss the training of emerging artists and recommend/help develop a career-focussed module
- Wirral MBC to produce an annual calendar of CPD events for artists
- Wirral MBC to share information on current activity more regularly, through creative newsletters, networking events, bulletins, directory of local artists, website for local artists etc.
- Wirral MBC to discuss with artists their vision of an arts hub

Gives a good overview to what is involved in running community projects – it is delivered by enthusiastic tutors who know their subject matter