



Transitions

Evaluation Report

January 2015



Using the arts to support people with experience of homelessness
to make the transition from street to hostel, from hostel to home

Liverpool, Wirral and Sefton

2011 - 2014

"I should have already contacted you to say a big thank you for offering Abi's wonderful energies to **Spider Project**. She has been amazing and I cannot speak highly enough of her zest, warmth and passion for bringing theatre to places like **Spider Project**".

Manager, The Spider Project

"I was a bit of a mess when we started, it's helped me know where I stand, in week one I was sofa surfing, now I have stayed off the drink for three and a half weeks, bonded with my family more and moved into a flat. The course helped me focus and got me on the right track"

Participant

"these were sophisticated and intelligently structured workshops that, with sensitivity, placed the lives of some of the most exposed and vulnerable citizens of Liverpool at the centre of a socially engaged and creatively meaningful theatre process".

Arts Council England Assessor

"I cannot believe that S**** has engaged with you, he has never engaged with any service, the fact that he is coming time and time again is amazing".

Director of Homeless Services, Liverpool City Council

"This drama was a better release than cutting"

Participant

"Since Collective Encounters started working with us the number of the group tripled... people started arriving early and staying after the session had finished...within eight weeks service users were up on stage in front of about 500 people at the recovery convention... people who couldn't hold eye contact before, lots of people with very low confidence, there performing in front of all those people. I put all that down to the work of Collective Encounters."

Service Manager

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Collective Encounters

Collective Encounters is a professional arts organisation specialising in Theatre For Social Change. We work with professional artists and local people using theatre to engage those on the margins of society, telling untold stories facilitating personal and social change.

Based in Liverpool and working across the North West region the common theme tying together all the company's projects are the effects of poverty and inequality on individuals and communities. Through theatre we raise awareness of this important issue, challenge the status quo and working towards change. We provide three strands of output and activity -

Participatory workshops and performances These are designed to explore issues and problems faced by participants, to build confidence and develop skills. Programmes are accredited by national awarding bodies and all of the workshops are underpinned by our commitment to quality. We actively seek opportunities for participants to engage directly with decision makers and service providers, raising awareness of their experiences and facilitating change.

Professional productions Collective Encounters mounts professional theatre productions that explore social and political issues in non-traditional performance spaces. Through theatre we explore national and international concerns of our time.

Research Through academic and practical research we strive to continually improve our own work and contribute to the wider national and international field of theatre for social change; spearheading best practice in the UK.

Collective Encounters is an **Arts Council National Portfolio Organisation**. The company also receives project funding from **Big Lottery; Children in Need** and **Liverpool City Council** as well as private trusts and foundations such as **The Baring Foundation**. The company is led by a board of trustees with expertise in national policy on poverty, community engagement, participatory arts practice, local planning and adult health and social care. Participants are also represented at board level.

Much of the success of our work to date is due to our approach to working in partnership with voluntary and statutory services and agencies. Our major partnerships include **Looked After Children's Services (Liverpool & Sefton); St. Helens Public Health; Crisis Skylight; National Museums; Imperial War Museum; The Whitechapel; Adult Health & Social Care (Liverpool, Wirral, St.Helens); Unitas and Local Solutions**. These partnerships allow us to ensure our activities and opportunities engage the most marginalised and difficult to reach.

Collective Encounters maintains a deep commitment to equality and diversity and our definition of diversity includes those who experience socio-economic disadvantage. All our work is free. We never charge for professional shows or workshops. We facilitate participants to engage by offering a reimbursement of bus fares to the most in need. There are no auditions or entry requirements and all our activities take place in accessible venues. For performances we offer touch tours, audio description and sign language interpretation.

In terms of programme since 2007 we have offered regular activity for young people, older people including working with people with dementia and adults with experience of homelessness, mental health problems and ex-service personnel.

Our services for **young people** include a weekly youth theatre for 13 - 25 year olds and accredited outreach courses that take place in support settings for young people. This year we are working with young people with experience of the criminal justice system and/or homelessness; those with learning difficulties and young carers. We also work in partnership with **Looked After Children's Services** to deliver a three week accredited Summer Arts College for ten looked after children from the region.

We offer a range of services that aim to improve the experiences of **older people**. These include a weekly third age theatre group, outreach workshops in care homes and training in arts and reminiscence techniques for carers of people with dementia. Our capacity building work with carers is seen as a model of good practice nationally and much of this work extends beyond the boundaries of the North West region.

Our work with vulnerable **adults** in the North West started in 2007 when we conducted an extensive research project that engaged eighteen homeless support organisations and over ninety participants. The aim of this research was to ascertain whether Theatre for Social Change might be an effective tool for this particular community. Our findings were:

- Service providers saw the potential of drama to build confidence, develop skills and increase the capacities of their client group; and perceived this as a significant enhancement of their Meaningful Occupations programmes.
- Homeless and ex-homeless people welcomed participation in drama as a distraction from problems; respite from challenging circumstances; a way of making new friends and being creative.
- Both groups saw the opportunity for participants to create and perform work that would enable them to have their voices heard by a wider community.
- People with experience of homelessness felt that high-impact, professional work could be a means of challenging stereotypes and prejudices held by the wider public.

Since then, we have

1. Delivered outreach and taster workshops in homeless support centres across Merseyside.
2. Run a regular core group for people with experience of homelessness to develop and extend their skills and capacities.
3. Created 16 new plays performed by participants in settings ranging from the Royal Opera House to Liverpool City Council's Homelessness Stakeholders Conference, from mainstream theatres to homeless shelters.
4. Run mentoring and work experience placements for the homeless community.
5. Created a live professional opera and a digital opera tackling issues of homelessness for a diverse public audience.
6. Facilitated cross-community events and performances which integrate homeless and non-homeless participants.

In addition to working with the homeless community we have also undertaken a significant amount of work with adults accessing **Adult Health and Social Care** services and those with mental health problems across the region. The model of practice used with these groups is similar to the way we work with homeless people in terms of working in partnership with service providers, offering activities within these centres and then building up the confidence of participants to undertake activities within different settings. This work has been delivered in partnership with **The Hope Centre, St.Helens Public Health** and the **Imperial War Museum North**.

The success of our approach to participatory work lays in the facts we don't go in with an agenda of what we want to say, we have techniques and processes to uncover and unearth what people really feel are the issues that they want to explore and communicate to a wider public. Stakeholders value the fact we consistently evaluate our approach and always respond to and tailor our workshops to fit the individual needs of the groups we work with and their ever changing make-up. Participants have said we are flexible, understanding that in this context one size can't fit all, so we've delivered weekly sessions, intensive two day programmes, accredited six-week one-day-a-week programmes, taster sessions etc. We have also maintained a core provision for those who want long term engagement and have embedded accreditation into many of the programmes and participants are very proud of their achievements: many have put their certificates on their walls; for many it is the first accreditation they have ever achieved.

Our facilitators ensure each session is complete in itself, so it is of value to a one-off participant; but at the same time offers progression and development for those that attend more than once. Our staff are highly experienced, able to support the most vulnerable and challenging participants; and provide a kindness, empathy and understanding in the workshop setting. Our sessions are fun and safe; they offer a positive, creative outlet for people who have no other opportunity for creative activity; and provide meaningful opportunities for real skills development and personal growth.

We consistently work in partnership with homeless agencies, mental health support services and stakeholders to ensure that we continue to respond to changing needs and circumstances of this vulnerable community, and have continued to undertake research with members of that community, making sure that our programme responds directly to their interests and needs. Our work with adults has been funded by **Arts Council England, Liverpool City Council**, and **Big Lottery Reaching Communities** programme.

Transitions Overview

In 2011 we began a three-year Big Lottery: Reaching Communities funded project which consolidated and deepened the work with Merseyside's homeless community. Transitions aimed to: empower homeless people to engage more effectively with statutory and service provision, and to support them to make a smooth transition from street to hostel and hostel to home. We planned to adopt a creative model and develop new ways of engaging participants that responded dynamically to the highly complex and individual needs of people with experience of homelessness.

On an individual level, Transitions set out to encourage, motivate, build confidence, improve self-esteem and increase the self-reliance of people with direct experience of homelessness. We did this by offering a range of opportunities to facilitate homeless people in making more meaningful use of their time. Activities included regular accredited training, a peer-to-peer mentoring scheme, work placement opportunities and an annual cycle of outreach activities both in temporary accommodation and within homeless support settings. Transitions also set out to create opportunities for homeless and ex-homeless people to challenge negative perceptions held about them by the wider community and engage in community-cohesion initiatives.

Transitions began in February 2012 and finished in January 2015. We are currently seeking continuation funding to enable us to maintain, develop and enhance our provision for this very vulnerable and underserved community. Transitions has achieved its intended outcomes and associated indicators through sustained and regular provision of creative activities for homeless people in support settings and arts and cultural activities. In terms of activities and services Transitions has offered

- Accredited and non-accredited workshops in hostels, temporary accommodations and support settings for homeless people.
- Weekly sessions for homeless people held either within **Collective Encounters'** workshop space or **The Whitechapel**.
- A two year mentoring programme.
- A Work placement and volunteering scheme matching arts and cultural organisations with homeless participants.
- Governance training for one participant.
- Mounting of performances and events exploring issues around homelessness and challenging perceptions and stereotypes.

Activities have been delivered in the local authority areas of Wirral, Liverpool and Sefton. The project has seen activity take place and partnerships formed with **The Whitechapel, Crisis Skylight, The Brink, Liverpool Community College, Liverpool Homeless Games, Liverpool Activities Forum, Ann Fowler House, Green Lane Hostel, Geneva Road Hostel, Darbyshire House, Local Solutions/Homeground Hostel, Bosco House, Spider Project, The Ark, Great Place Housing, Streetwise Opera, Homeless Link, Manchester Royal Exchange, Alternatives to Violence North West, Open College Network, Boscombe Socially Engaged Arts Festival, The Hope Centre, Foundation for Arts and Creative Technology, Bluecoat Chambers, IWM North, DADA, Liverpool Everyman and Playhouse.**

Transitions came to an end in 2015 and

- By the end of the project **80 people** with direct experience of homelessness reported an **increased degree of self-reliance and motivation**.
- By the end of the project **300 people** with direct experience of homelessness reported an **increase in confidence** by engaging in positive activities and exploring issues unrelated to homelessness.
- By the end of the project **150 people** reported an **improved experience of living and working in temporary accommodation**.
- By the end of the project **300 non-homeless people** reported an **increased understanding of the issues facing homeless people**.

The project was led by 1 x part-time member of staff (Transitions Outreach Manager) recruited in January 2011 and the same individual remained with the project throughout. It has been the responsibility of the Transitions Outreach Manager to organise and lead all creative activities and accreditation of outreach programmes. She was also responsible for liaising with project partners, setting up steering committee meetings and capturing evidence of outcomes achieved. Other company members who have supported the work included our Marketing Coordinator, Creative Producer, Executive Director, and Artistic Director.

Evaluation Methodology

Collective Encounters is committed to evaluating its work in a rigorous, ethical and useful way and produces evaluation reports for all its projects. We are guided by our Quality and Evaluation Framework which includes quality and social change indicators against which we can measure our success. We combine our own unique approach with the needs of partners and funders when designing bespoke evaluation processes for each individual project, and look to the evaluation models in current use in the sector within which we're working.

In the case of Transitions preliminary research indicated that both the Richter Scale and the Outcomes Star had greatest currency within the homeless sector, so we discussed which model to explore with our Project Steering Group. We decided to adopt the Richter Scale with a core group of regular attenders, as it best enabled goal setting and fitted most comfortably with our partner organisations.

In keeping with the ethics of our Quality and Evaluation Framework, we gathered monitoring data sensitively without being intrusive in the lives of this very vulnerable participant group.

The evaluation methodology we adopted was multi-layered including:

- Periodic use of the Richter Scale with the core group of participants
- Check-in and check-outs with verbal feedback in all outreach and core sessions
- Creative evaluation workshops at six-monthly intervals centred around the intended project outcomes
- Completion of evaluation forms by audience and participants
- In-depth interviews with those participants and stakeholders who were happy to engage in this process
- Monthly action planning meetings between the lead facilitator and her line manager to identify, discuss and resolve any arising problems or concerns
- Quarterly reports to the board of trustees
- On-going reflection and evaluation by the lead artist, Creative Producer and Senior Management Team

These processes ensured that the project was flexible and responsive to the changing needs of participants and circumstances, and that the lead facilitator was able to shape the content of workshops sensitively and effectively in response to interest, ability and opportunity.

We engage all participants and stakeholders as well as our own staff team in evaluation processes; and have been gathering feedback throughout the project. In the last months of the project we gathered summative evaluative materials and final details on impact. This report demonstrates the impact our work has made on the lives of the homeless community in Merseyside.

Summary of Activity

Community based accredited workshops for people with experience of homelessness

Goal: 60 workshops / Achieved: 60 workshops

Following consultation with our participant groups we decided to run the **Open College Network** accredited *Alternative to Violence* programme in partnership with **AVP North West**. These workshops used creative approaches to explore peoples response to violence and conflict, and to help participants rehearse change and imagine different ways to act in tense and potentially explosive situations. We ran the course twice.

We also ran two Open Awards Level One, Three Credit *Improvisation and Performance Skills* courses: once in partnership with the **Spider Project** (Wirral), and once with **Bosco House** (Sefton). These courses centred around goal setting and confidence building, enabling people to create drama pieces about issues important to them.

We delivered a Level Two, Three Unit Open Award *Mentoring* course. This aimed to develop and hone communication skills, explore prejudice and enhance supervision and mentoring skills. We delivered thirteen workshops for this programme.

Finally, we facilitated an accredited programme with a homeless hostel for young people in Autumn 2014.

By the end of the three years, we delivered 60 community based accredited workshops.

Practical / creative workshops at temporary accommodations or homeless support settings in Liverpool, Sefton and the Wirral

Goal: 90 workshops / Achieved: 143 workshops

Since the beginning of the project we ran weekly drop-in drama sessions at the **Whitechapel Centre**, to engage the most hard to reach homeless people. This group is made up of new rough sleepers as well as the existing entrenched rough sleepers and street drinkers we have worked with in the past. Many of the people who attended the sessions do not engage with other services. Each workshop was designed to engage all who attended and the aim was to build confidence and set goals. These workshops took place every week over three years and ended in December 2014.

We also delivered six-week goal setting and confidence building drama programmes in **Anne Fowler, Geneva Road, Green Lane, Derbyshire house, Local Solutions, Homeground Hostel, The Ark** and **Bosco House** in Sefton. These sessions explored hopes and dreams through drama, they looked at Utopia and Dystopia as well as enabling people to realise they have the capacity and potential to change - often by using drama to mirror their lives and rehearse change. Material from these sessions fed into the core group's work and we encouraged people to move on to our core provision after attending these sessions.

Our core provision has included our homeless acting company *Professional Human Beings* in year one, and in years two and three our *Mentoring Group*, made up of active mentors and 2 active mentees and our *Street Theatre Project*.

A person with direct experience of homelessness will be trained in governance and nominated onto Collective Encounters' board

Goal: 1 person / Achieved: 1 person

John Dermody has participated with us since the beginning of the Transitions project, undertaking AVP training, performing his own poetry, creating and performing in drama pieces in Liverpool and London and participating in cross-community events. John's confidence has grown considerably since beginning to participate in the project, and he has set a goal of achieving paid work. John undertook governance training and now sits as a member of Collective Encounters Board of Directors, representing participants from across the programme.

People with experience of homelessness take part in either a 9 month mentoring scheme or short-term work placement

Goal: 12 people

Achieved: 21 people

Our mentoring programme involved theatre and art gallery trips to major cultural venues and events in Liverpool, as well as personal research projects and weekly creative goal setting. An example of a personal project involved a mentor developing three walking tours of Liverpool exploring official and unofficial public art and conducting these tours with a **Crisis Skylight** arts group.

We worked with five major arts organisations in the city (**Bluecoat Arts Centre, Unity Theatre, Dada Fest, FACT and Imperial War Museum North**) to provide 10-hour placements for a core group of mentors and through these placements we aimed to break down barriers of entering the mainstream and combating prejudice that may exist in the mainstream towards the homeless community.

Cross Community Events

Goal: 3 events

Achieved: 5 events

Transitions participants have twice devised work for and performed as part of Collective Encounters' cross programme *In Our Times* events, interactive evenings of performance tackling poverty and inequality, played to a diverse public.

The *Professional Human Beings*, our homeless theatre company, participated in Liverpool Community Colleges' Theatre festival, performing *Our Street Life* a piece about the lack of accessibility to mental health provision, and delivering an accompanying workshop. The group were the only homeless artists in the large festival programme. Audience feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with many people stating their perceptions of homelessness had been challenged and in some cases changed by the performance and workshop.

Five Transitions participants joined an adult theatre company run in partnership between Collective Encounters and **Lookout Theatre** to devise a piece of street theatre exploring the issue of how businesses should be more accountable to communities and the environment. This street theatre piece was performed to coincide with Liverpool's Festival of Business.

Finally, a core group of Transitions participants worked with ex-service personnel on our **Poets of Loss** project, exploring the transition from the military back to civilian life. This was performed at **Imperial War Museum North** in November, 2014.

Additional Activity

- We coordinated and led 12 steering committee meetings designed to guide the project strategically. The steering committee is made up of stakeholders from homeless support agencies, arts bodies and participants.
- We offered a number of volunteering and observational opportunities for **Applied Theatre** students and emerging artists looking for experience in socially engaged arts practice.
- **With One Voice:** Transitions participants performed at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden as part of a ground-breaking Cultural Olympiad event, staging work by homeless participants.
- **Backstage Me?:** Transitions participants performed and led a workshop at this international conference based at **Manchester's Royal Exchange Theatre** looking at the benefits of using the arts with the homeless community.
- **Light Nights:** In 2011, 2012 and 2013 Transitions participants performed at Liverpool's **The Brink** and **The Black-E** as part of this city-wide evening of cultural entertainment.
- **Crisis Skylight:** Transitions participants performed as part of Crisis's celebration of homeless arts in Liverpool.

Engagement & Reach

- We launched Transitions in partnership with the **Whitechapel Centre**, a long-established and much respected Liverpool based homeless support organisation, and delivered weekly drop-in workshops with them throughout the three years. This enabled us to sustain relationships with some of the harder to reach entrenched rough sleepers in the city as well as introducing us to new rough sleepers as they appear. The partnership with the **Whitechapel Centre**, and their valuing of our work, has also given us credibility within the homeless support community and opened doors into other partnerships and collaborations.
- In year one, we made contact with all the hostels in Liverpool and invited them to get involved with the project. We set up six-week workshops programmes in five hostels, which we publicised through out the cities homeless network, in addition to publicising at the Whitechapel drop-in. We visited the hostels prior to running the workshops to build a relationship with staff and residents; and produced a flyer to advertise the six-week programmes.
- We developed a steering group made up of professionals we had worked with. They helped to focus and support our work, and promote the workshops within their own groups and organisations, so ensuring a wider reach. We developed close links with **Crisis Skylight**, which we fostered through monthly meetings over the duration of the project.
- Also in year one, we participated in *With One Voice* at the **Royal Opera House** in London as part of the **Cultural Olympiad**, which led to publicity on Radio Merseyside: where several of our participants were interviewed and had the chance to promote the regular provision more widely.
- In year two **Homeless Link**, a national charity that represents and supports organisations working with homeless people in the UK, set up a regional Arts forum, which we became an active member of, enabling us to share on a regional level the work we were doing.
- In years two and three we continued our **Whitechapel Centre** provision in Liverpool, extending our hostel outreach to Sefton and the Wirral. These workshops were publicised in their local area networks as well as through **Crisis Skylight**.
- Throughout the project we maintained an online presence, advertising workshops, events and opportunities via our website. We produced posters and flyers which we distributed in homeless support centres across the city and region. One of our participants had an article published in the **Big Issue** (August 2013) discussing her experience of the work and talking about the impact our drama sessions had had on her life. We attended **Homeless Football Tournaments** and the **Homeless Games** to spread word of opportunities to engage with us and encouraged our core participants to share their experiences with their peers. We consistently delivered taster workshops in centres across the city, led by our lead facilitator and often supported by our core participants. We also showed our professional film, *Poets of Loss*, in homeless settings to stimulate discussion and raise the profile of the issues faced by those with experience of homelessness.

Measuring Change

Outcome 1: By the end of the project 80 people with direct experience of homelessness will report an increased degree of self-reliance and motivation.

Change Indicator i) 30 people with direct experience of homelessness will achieve an accreditation by the end of the three year project.

Achieved: 46

Consultation with participants about goals and needs made it clear that exploring conflict and anger management in a creative way was a priority. We approached **Alternatives to Violence Project UK** and in partnership with them co-facilitated two **Open College Network** accredited level one courses in April 2013 and April 2014. 13 people completed the course but as one chose not to be accredited, 12 people achieved an accreditation in Developing Interpersonal Skills Level One, three credits.

In October 2013 in partnership with **The Spider Project** we delivered an Open Awards Introduction to Drama Level One Three Credit course. 19 people participated in the training, and 7 people chose to work for accreditation, all were successful.

In February/March 2014 we delivered the same Open Awards course this time with **Bosco House**. 15 people participated, with 7 people choosing to work towards accreditation. Again, all 7 were successful.

In May we registered 5 people on an Open Awards Introduction to Mentoring Level Two, three credits module. 4 participants achieved their accreditation.

In September we worked in a young people's hostel on the Wirral and will be offered a **Discover Arts Award** as part of that work. A further 5 participants achieved accreditation through this programme.

By the project end we exceeded this goal. Success has been measured through attendance records and successful achievement of qualifications.

Case Study: John

John has worked with Collective Encounters for the past four years. When he first became involved he was homeless and was experiencing long-term problems with alcohol and drugs. He had always had a creative impulse but he lacked confidence and felt shy and reluctant. He had very low self-esteem and found it hard to move forward.

John says that the first step was to get up in the mornings to attend the sessions. He felt a sense of responsibility to the group to show up, and didn't want to let people down. He attended weekly and found that drama was helping to grow his confidence, it helped him to stay away from drugs and alcohol, and find an inner confidence and strength that he was able to grow through working with the group.

As his confidence grew, and he enjoyed being part of a creative community, where others were sharing their ideas and expressing themselves, he began to attend other groups. New doors opened and he found he was able to push himself further with his writing and performing. He found he loved the feeling of performance and the high that came after a show.

Looking back he sees a series of small steps, a slow and difficult progression, which took him through accredited courses, achieving qualifications, mentoring others, and recently setting up his own reading groups with other organisations. He's keen to help others to find their own ability to progress in the same way.

John is now on Collective Encounters' Board of Directors, and makes a valuable contribution representing participants from across Collective Encounters' programme at senior management level. *"I was a mess, I really was", he says, "and now I'm sat on the Board. It's unbelievable! I have to pinch myself sometimes."*

Change Indicator ii) 20 people with direct experience of homelessness will attend more than eight accredited training workshops in year one.

Achieved: 44 across years two and three.

We looked for accreditation and used our outreach work to explore what courses would generate most interest and be of most value for participants. We identified the nationally recognised accreditation providers that were the best fit for our work, and planned our delivery around their programmes. We were able to measure this success via workshop registers.

Change indicator iii) 40 people with direct experience of homelessness will undertake independent research tasks within a creative training framework by the end of year 2

Achieved: 95

Collective Encounters' independent research projects have been varied and are targeted to the specific needs and interests of the individuals we work with. Tasks and projects have included: independent and collaborative out-of-session character development and research for an alcohol awareness piece, independent development of public art walking tours including work sheets and audience notes, location research for a photography project, independent and collaborative out-of-session script development.

We have incorporated an independent research element into all our our six-week projects and accredited courses and we always approach this in a creative and person-centred way.

We measured this indicator in quantitate terms through monitoring notes from the lead facilitator, and measured the qualitative value of the research by how effectively it fed into the development of the creative project which it was a part of.

Here are some comments participants have made after workshops

"I learned I don't need a drink to have the confidence I have looked for in years"

"How I felt about doing this was it was a fantastic experience for me. Reason being is I suffer with an addiction called alcoholism. Being involved with the group means I have found a new drug in my life. I love every minute of it. The icing on the cake was the performance on Monday. When I saw a crowd.....I have never acted in my life and I got such a buzz out of it. And I know if we all stick together, keep coming to rehearsals, keep doing what is asked of us it will be brilliant. I have found new lease of life and without I don't know where I would be".

"I feel I can trust people now"

"My experience of the performance was brilliant, awesome. I am running out of words to say what it was. I enjoy working with the group and I just want to take it as far as it can go. I want people out there to listen to what we have to say. It has given us a chance to stand up and say what we want. It has given us a voice."

"In drama I didn't have to wear a mask"

"I am really glad and happy I did it. I felt part of something. It was nice to have all the compliments. To do something positive to get our message across. I am grateful to the people that turned up. People gave good feedback. They listened they watched...it was good I am glad we did it".

"It gave me confidence"

"The subject matter made me stronger...made me more determined. I am glad I stuck with it"

"I feel proud of what we have achieved"

"I have been able to talk more openly"

Outcome 2: By the end of the project 300 people with direct experience of homelessness will report an increase in confidence by engaging in positive activities and exploring issues unrelated to homelessness.

Change indicator i) 100 people with direct experience of homelessness will have contributed to discussions within a creative workshop context by the end of year one.

Achieved: 159 by end of year one; 377 over three years

Our Theatre for Social Change model presents participants with a variety of ways to engage throughout each session, and all participants are supported to contribute to discussion about the key themes we are exploring, the creative processes we are using and to offer constructive feedback to each other about their work. This discussion is built into our delivery process, and compounded by direct check-in/check-out at the top and tail of each session. We ensure that all participants feel safe to contribute by building their confidence through pair/small group work at first, then building to wider group discussion. We also structure the complexity of discussion throughout sessions and across several weeks of activity.

The success of this indicator has been measured via participant feedback and lead facilitator monitoring. While many participants came into their first session stating that they were just going to watch and not engage we did not have one instance of a participant not engaging by the end of the session.

Change indicator ii) 180 people with direct experience of homelessness will have set themselves a personal goal at the end of a creative intervention by the end of the project.

Achieved: 250

Goal setting is embedded into all the outreach work we do: we use drama as a way for people to rehearse and realise change. We discuss with participants their progress towards achieving their desired changes at regular points throughout courses. Over time participants develop confidence, understand that they can make changes within their lives, and where necessary how to seek the support they might need to make some of the changes. Some of the goals set during or at the end of interventions have been to "go to university", "become self-sufficient and a temple of health", "get over my lack of self confidence", "be able to do a presentation", "perform a history of my life in the 'Pool'".

The success was measured by the number of participants who contributed in workshops where goal setting took place and through the monitoring diary of the lead facilitator.

Extract from Transitions Outreach Manager's Diary

Today in the session the group looked at goals and things they would like to change about their lives. In small groups everyone talked personally about a change they would like to make and then the group focused on one persons goal and created a short piece of theatre about it.

The changes people wanted to make ranged from 'winning the lottery'; 'getting a flat and a job' to 'finding a way to deal with my anger'. These were acted out to the whole group.

S, who wanted to find a way to deal with his anger, did an amazing improvisation about bumping into someone in the street and really 'kicking off': - "Watch where you're going to f***ing Tw**...I'll have you, you cu**...you're f***ing dead" etc. It was so anger filled the room was silent and shocked at the venom and irrationality of the strength of feeling for something so small as an accidental bump in the street. One woman in the group confessed to being terrified in the moment.

S then said he had finished and I asked him to get up and bump into the same person again a few weeks later, this time having learned to deal with his anger. What happened next was a real revelation to him. This time instead of shouting and abusing, it was "Sorry mate, listen last time when I kicked off on you, I'm sorry, I have real problems with my anger and I am so sorry if I offended you, I hope there are no hard feelings" he then hugged Peter, who was playing the man in the street.

The whole room erupted into applause! People were really pleased with the outcome and change. S, said in the evaluation that he had an alternative now and he's had the chance to practice it too.

Change indicator iii) 300 people with direct experience of homelessness will have engaged in a creative workshop, training or intervention within temporary accommodation or wider community setting by the end of the project.

Achieved: 351

The take up of the provision has exceeded expectations. We engaged people in hostels, drop in centres, recovery venues, conferences and by running workshops to accompany performances. Several of the centres in which we have run short courses have said that our drama provision is their best attended course.

Numbers for this indicator have been collected through our registers.

Transcript from an evaluation film

I think it definitely gives you confidence drama. I mean I've been doing drama for nearly three years now but coming to these groups has been really challenging for me because in our other drama group I'm used to being with the same people. In Abi's group, it's a lot different and I've found it really challenging to get up there and do stuff but I've really enjoyed it and it's given me a lot more confidence to get up there and do it again.

For me, the confidence building that the drama has given me is hard to explain, because it gives me confidence that I take with me everywhere in normal life, day to day living. It gives me confidence as well you know, it's not only the ability to stand up on stage and act and perform and anything like that, it's the ability to carry on in life in general and take that confidence that I've built up with the drama process into my life and into my work life and all parts of my life.

I think drama is fun, I think you're like a child actually and you play these different roles and I think the key to it for confidence building is to forget yourself and immerse yourself in a role and be somebody else. And therefore, that other person is passing the book on, it's them, it's not you.

I think it's about people and it's about interpersonal relationships to a degree. I mean I walked in here and I was very nervous I suppose on the first Monday session, but I found the group was really good for me. It was very welcoming, stuff like that. I walked in, my boots were full of my self esteem, my boots were full of my confidence and I can feel it slowly creeping up my legs now and you know it does, when you do something that other people may consider odd and the people your with your peers just say that was great, wonderful, thanks for that and there are discussions. It does build your confidence and it's excellent. I've found that improvisation was just a great experience really and you know, it's definitely in my toolbox and I think another person said, it does transfer into your life, you know when I walk out of here I don't walk out and leave everything what I'm saying behind, I can take it with me, it's part of me, part of the new me which is growing all the time I suppose. So yeah, love it.

This is my first time in a drama group of any kind and I was really nervous on parts of it but as it went on I got a bit more confident with it and I feel more chilled out now. I don't know how much of an effect the class has had on me today but I'm going to come back.

Outcome 3: By the end of the project 150 people will report an improved experience of living and working in temporary accommodation.

Change indicator i) 15 temporary accommodations and hostels reporting an improvement in the working and living environment for staff and residents.

Achieved: 10

In the first year we ran projects in **Homeground Hostel, Geneva Road, Anne Fowler, Darbyshire House** and **Green Lane**. Staff in all of the organisations commented that there had been noticeably improved communication between residents. In hostels where staff participated in sessions alongside service users, there was a more marked improvement in the atmosphere across the hostel: a resident of **Anne Fowler** commented *“there is less of an us and them”*. One staff member commented that: *“I never realised the different reasons people end up in here. It has really opened my eyes to how it could happen to anyone”*.

The Whitechapel has seen our work as inclusive and as the one activity that engages their most entrenched rough sleepers: the girlfriend of one participant said: *“He is really enjoying this you know, it is keeping him off the drink, I have never known him to take part like this”*, and staff members said of the same participant: *“He usually disrupts the classes, it's good he is taking part”*.

Based on this work in year one, we made a conscious decision that all our outreach workshops should include staff and participants/residents alike to maximise the capacity for communication and change.

In Year two we moved away from Liverpool and into Sefton and the Wirral, while maintaining provision in Liverpool's **The Whitechapel** and setting up a core Liverpool city centre based group that any participant from the outreach programme could join, to enable them to continue working with us.

After researching hostels in Sefton and looking at the ways other organisations work, it became apparent that, due to space and facilities, work in the area was based at **Bosco House** and that people from all the other hostels were best to be invited to participate there. We contacted **Bosco House** and set up an initial workshop programme with them in Year two and a second accredited programme in year three. Both these programmes were extremely successful, with **Bosco House's** activity co-ordinator saying: *“The drama has generated a buzz around the hostel – people are genuinely more interested in the activities and the guys are getting on loads better”*.

On the Wirral we worked at **The Ark**, a creative hub for the homeless community with attached hostel. In April 2014 we ran a six week programme there, to which other hostels in the area were invited to participate. A staff member at **The Ark**, said: *“It has helped people who use the drop-in to share views and ideas, I have been surprised to see certain people working together, when can you come back?”*

We also worked at **The Spider Project** on the Wirral where the manager commented: *“The project has re-energised drama in the centre, it has brought people together. I was amazed to see some of our quietest members getting up and giving it some in the workshops.”* In a subsequent interview the manager talked about how the sessions had changed the atmosphere in the centre and significantly enhanced staff/participant communication.

The focus on working in three specific centres in Sefton and the Wirral, following consultation with stakeholders, did not reduce the number of people we reached (we had participants from many other feeder centres) but it did reduce the number of temporary accommodations and hostels we were able to impact consequently we did not achieve our planned target number by the end of the project. Numbers were recorded through our data collection and monitoring systems, and evidence of impact through verbal testimony from service users and staff members.

Change indicator ii) 150 people will take part in a creative workshop or intervention within a temporary accommodation setting by the end of the project.

Achieved: 244

The network of hostels, drop-ins for entrenched rough sleepers that we have worked with have enabled us to exceed our target numbers. Success against this indicator was measured by collection of registers and monitoring data.

Outcome 4: By the end of the project 300 non-homeless people will report an increased understanding of the issues facing homeless people.

Change indicator i): 300 people who will engage in integrated community workshops and events by the end of the project

Achieved: 995

Collective Encounters has created events where participants with experience of homelessness performed alongside people from a wide range of other communities to the general public exploring issues that included homelessness but were broader and deeper. Other events have involved our homeless participants playing to non-homeless audiences in order specifically to challenge attitudes and platform the issues that affect the lives of the homeless community. Many of our performances involve audience engagement, with members of the public becoming directly involved with performers, exploring ideas and having discussions. At other events we run post-show workshops and Q&A sessions in which audience members stay to explore the ideas further.

The success of this indicator was measured by compiling audience statistics across the events and performances.

Change indicator ii) 210 people who will report a positive change in attitudes towards homeless people and about homelessness by the end of the project

Achieved: 461

Our events are performed in a wide range of settings and through the company's online channel. Feedback from audiences has on the whole been very positive with people saying "*It was amazing*", "*I was very moved*", "*Seeing it made me want to help*", "*You just performed my life*", "*It was so professional and so were your group*", "*Hard hitting and real*", "*Loved the poem*", "*You told it like it is*", "*Opened my eyes*", "*Blew me away*", "*I didn't know life was so hard on the streets*", "*I was taking the piss at first but it was like a slap in the face*", "*I laughed 'cause it was so intense*".

The success of this indicator was measured by audiences completing feedback questionnaires asking them if the performance had changed the way they thought about homelessness and homeless people.

Below is a poem performed live at the Royal Opera House by a project participant.

I Want to go Home

"I want to go home"
Will these showers not disappear?
Soaked now, cold now, hungry now.
"I want to go home"
Warm faces have decreased
I look at them in unison and they retreat,
Their shell so safe, so warm
"I want to go home"
The shops I pass look so warm inside,
But their wanted hands nowhere for me to hide
"I want to go home"
There goes a man without problems be,
Close yet so far, warm and safe
A belonging has he.
"I want to go home"
Just here, now my hands so cold and blue
Off with these shackles
A long day it's true.
Into the cardboard with all my might.
Insular, isolated, I need to belong.
"I want to go home" Please

Analysis

Key project achievements as of October 2014

- Transitions has exceeded seven out of ten quantitative targets identified at the beginning of the project through the outcomes and change indicators quantitative outcome and indicator targets will have been exceeded by at least 10%.
- Transitions is a complex and multi-faceted programme. We have delivered all aspects of it successfully, on time and to budget.
- We have had huge success with participants who have found it difficult to participate or commit to engage in any other activity offered to them by statutory services.
- The steering committee offered an opportunity to build up strong networks, and also ensure the work was relevant to local services and sector.
- The regularity of the steering committee meetings ensure there was no duplication of services or provision, and the project was able to respond to gaps and need.
- A creative approach allowed the project to respond to the needs of the participants and engage some of the most hard to reach.
- We have been able to adopt a flexible approach to accreditation and offered a range of personal and professional development courses. This has allowed to better respond to the needs of the participants.
- The performances were entirely devised, created and performed by participants speaking in their own voice, of their own experiences, hopes and dreams.
- These have reached a wide-ranging public audience in Liverpool and beyond and have tackled issues and subject matter such as the provision of mental health, addiction and homelessness services.
- The work undertaken was of a very high quality which can be evidenced by the partnerships formed during the delivery of the programme.
- In addition to the outcomes stated for participants at the beginning of the programme more stories, and anecdotes have been captured about the personal change that has taken place.
- Many of these participants have continued to return to sessions, despite the most challenging circumstances. One participant, for instance, attended every week for a year, despite the fact that he was living in a skip throughout that period. Other participants have been sectioned and released from hospital to attend.

Lesson learnt

- Attendance can be erratic and unpredictable, due to the life circumstances of participants it is almost impossible to anticipate who will attend sessions.
- Many participants arrive late, leave early, are taken from sessions to have meetings with key workers; some need to leave sessions occasionally to have a 'top-up drink'; some stay for long enough to develop a character, rehearse a part, but then don't show for performance. Some participants can be aggressive and occasionally violent.
- The subject matter brought up by working with the client group can be disturbing and highly emotional. This means that the facilitator needs to be extremely flexible, responsive, able to think on her feet, not be phased by challenging behaviour; be able to balance the needs of those who are highly committed to the work with those who are less so; and must be well supported to manage the emotional output from some of our most vulnerable citizens.
- We had not fully anticipated the support participants would need outside of session times to help them reach the goals we were supporting them to set. Our lead facilitator has been required to attend meetings with participants' community liaison officers; negotiate with psychiatrists to enable people who have been sectioned to continue participating; help participants prepare/rehearse for child custody hearings; and just meet participants individually to maintain support. This additional work was absolutely necessary to enable us to successfully achieve our goals for the project, but sufficient time wasn't allocated to it in the planning, and so capacity was stretched.

Looking Forward

Based on the success of the Transitions project there is real and concrete evidence from participants and stakeholders, a creative approach is a highly effective way of engaging people with experience of homelessness, mental health issues and those with addiction issues. This approach has proven time and time again as one of the more successful tools service workers have for engaging the most marginalised and hard-to-reach. The potential of this approach is significant, there is a real demand to extend this work further across the North West Region. The evaluation has shown to us a number of factors and essential ingredients that need to be in place or at least considered when planning future delivery:

- There is a clear demand for further accredited and non-accredited workshops that use a creative approach in support settings for people with experience of homelessness, those facing mental health issues and people with addiction issues. The capacity of any future delivery will need to increase if some of this demand is to be met.
- The work placement and mentoring scheme has been extremely successful, and the structure and nature of the placements has appealed to a significant number of participants. The creative nature and environment in which the placements have taken place has had a significant impact on individuals. It has also broken down barriers and challenged prejudices within the major cultural and heritage institutions across the city.
- In response to the challenges faced during project delivery there is a case for recommending more than one project worker is engaged for workshops in settings where participants are on the more acute end of the complex needs spectrum. There is also evidence pastoral care for workers, or counselling provision may be required for project workers.
- Our participants have also told us there is a need for facilitation services and sign posting to information on debt management, welfare rights and housing issues. For our participants these are real barriers to engagement and there are fewer places to go for help.
- One size does not fit all. There needs to be a mix of opportunities and different level of engagement from accredited courses, performance opportunities, training, mentoring, work placements and taster workshops.

The Changing Landscape

Homelessness in the North West is increasing: **Central Government** figures show a 17% rise in homelessness in the last two years. Despite this rise there has been a pulling back of funding in real terms from the Supporting People programme, and other services are struggling to cope with demand. Local Authorities recognise the benefits of joint working as a support measure for homeless people, and also as a preventative tool. This is cited in the Homeless Strategy documents for Liverpool, Sefton and Knowsley. There has been a real commitment to improving the well being of those effected by homelessness, mental health and addiction by **Public Health** in St. Helens.

National Data shows that although homelessness is on the increase services are in decline, and there is an increasing demand for support for people with complex needs such as mental health, drug and alcohol addiction. **Homeless Watch's Survey of Needs and Provision 2013** finds an 11% decline in services against 5% increase in the take up of services. This survey also finds that although one in three homeless people have multiple and complex needs there is a rise within the sector for services to only supply generic support, with mental health service dropping from 22% to just 4%.

Consultation with key housing associations has shown there is significant investment from Big Lottery to reach people with three out of four complex needs (homelessness, addiction, mental health and offending) within the Liverpool City Region from 2014 for a period of 5 years. These services are available to people with at least three out of the four needs, and people who fall short of this will not be able to access the services. These services are also not available to individuals outside of the Liverpool City Region in areas such as Wirral, Sefton, Knowsley and St. Helens.

Our local and national empirical research has shown there is a genuine need for a holistic approach to the provision of services for homeless people with complex needs. This failure of services makes people more isolated, vulnerable and without hope. There is a need to challenge discrimination and improve the effectiveness of services for homeless people and those with complex needs. The most effective way of improving services is to listen to those the service is designed to help, developing the capacity of the workforce to use different approaches. Confidence, self-esteem and the ability to learn new skills are all linked to our mental wellbeing. People are less likely to be able learn if they have low self-esteem. 70% of homeless people accessing services state they have a mental health issue of some kind [**Homeless Link**].

We have undertaken research and consultation about potential future partnership working with 14 organisations who work with homeless people and people accessing mental health services within the regions in which we work. Specifically we consulted with **The Whitechapel, Riverside Housing, Bosco House, Spider Project, Hope Centre, Addaction, Homegroup Hostel, Plus Dane Group, YMCA, The Hope Centre, Crisis Skylight, Ark Wirral**. This consultation has told us

- Services are in decline with a significant reduction in early prevention work.
- There is a demand for further and longer term accredited outreach courses.
- There is certainly a benefit to using an early prevention model and extending the work into centres working with people with addiction and mental health needs
- Currently mental health, homelessness and addiction services operate separately. The separation means that problems faced by people with complex needs are dealt with in isolation. Early prevention work can often reduce the risk of people with addiction and mental health issues spiralling into homelessness.
- There is a demand for developing the capacity of the workforce within the sector to use a range of alternative approaches.
- The work undertaken over the last three years has been highly valued and the outcomes can only be achieved by offering sustained provision which allows for different levels of engagement by individuals.
- There is a need for higher levels of intervention in Knowsley, Sefton, Wirral and St. Helens.
- There is a lack of capacity within the homeless sector to support those with complex needs.

The Next Three Years

The next three years would see Transitions making a significant contribution to these gaps in service in the North West, offering an extremely valuable opportunity for homeless people and those with complex needs to engage in a holistic, empowering and life-changing creative process. Creative activity is an important tool in the recovery of people who have experienced homelessness and as a preventative measure for people with complex needs. Creativity provides a positive channel for self expression. Self expression is particularly important to people who find it difficult to express and articulate their experiences, their views and their stories and it is only through articulating our experiences that we find the means to address them and overcome them. In addition to this provision, we intend to extend our service to provide professional development in creative practice to homeless, mental health and addiction support workers.

Transitions project has successfully achieved its aim to encourage, motivate, build confidence, improve self-esteem and increase the self-reliance of people with direct experience of homelessness. It has enabled many vulnerable people to engage more effectively with services and make significant changes in their lives. We have successfully achieved our intended outcomes, exceeded our intended delivery plans and consolidated our reputation for providing unique and exemplary creative opportunities for people with experience of homelessness. We have built lasting partnerships with many key homeless sector organisations, and are firmly embedded in the homelessness networks in the city and the region. But there is a clear and evidenced need for us to continue, develop and extend our work.

Transitions will operate in the North West: with Liverpool as the main hub, but outreach work extending out to the boroughs of Knowsley, St.Helens, Sefton and Wirral. The experience of delivering Transitions, and the learning that has arisen from it will enable us to hit the ground running with this work, to plan effectively and to deliver successfully.

Case Study: Emma

Emma has participated with Collective Encounters since 2007, engaging in drama workshops, devising plays, performing locally and nationally, joining in a workshop facilitation programme and consequently supporting our lead facilitator to deliver outreach and taster workshops in homelessness settings in Liverpool. Emma says:

"Drama's brought me out of myself a lot. Its enabled me to know that I've got a voice, I can speak. I can stand up for others as well as standing up for myself. I was a very shy person, but since the drama I've been doing lots of different things. It's fun, you meet new people. You're able to play - to let the little child come out and know when to put the child away. It's enabled me to put more structure to my life...it's put my life in order. I'd encourage a lot more people to come and join in and have fun and play and learn. This is a fabulous thing. Without Collective Encounters God knows where I'd be."

Since developing her confidence, Emma has found she is able to commit to other regular activities. She now volunteers in a breakfast bar twice a week, has joined a weekly choir and has improved family relations.

Some quotes from our participants evaluations:

"It does transfer into your life. I don't walk out of here and leave everything behind. I take it with me and it's part of me. Part of the new me, which is growing all the time."

"I've enjoyed it cos it was something to look forward to through the week. Something to plan my day around. I'm more confident now taking on a role. More confident voicing my opinion".

"I've discovered a joy for life over the past six weeks which I can't explain".

"I feel more confident speaking in front of strangers".

"Doing the mentoring scheme through Collective Encounters has given me much more confidence in myself to know that art's not just for a certain stereotype but its for everybody. It's also made me see things in a different way. Interact with my kids a lot more, take them to galleries that are free. Do new things together".

"This has been life changing and I am buzzing".

"This has been great for me and it's helped me stay sober, I really love the group".

"Doing the mentoring training has really helped my confidence and my goal setting. Although I'm still on the dole my CV has been updated and amended three times since I've been here and my job search has become much more proactive. I'm more involved in voluntary work and community work than I've ever been in my life".

"In week one I was shy and terrified and now I speak my mind".

"I keep coming back because it is an open debate".

An article Emma wrote for The Big Issue, which was published September 2013:

I've been selling the magazine for ten weeks now.

I think some people believe that all street vendors suffer from alcohol and drug addiction but that's not true. Anybody can fall on hard times. The Big Issue in the North helps the vulnerable too.

I became involved with The Big Issue in the North through my friend Morley, also a street vendor. When I first met him and he told me he sold the magazine, I stereotyped him, but I was wrong. Selling the magazines has turned my life around.

I don't have a very good family background. I have Sotos Syndrome. I couldn't cope in mainstream schools because of my learning difficulties so I attended a special needs school. Those were the best days of my life. I cried the day I had to leave because I wanted to stay.

I worked as a care assistant after I left school, which I really enjoyed. I got married but my husband was violent. My mental health deteriorated to the point where I had to give up work. I walked out of an abusive marriage and had nothing.

I've never slept rough but I've done the hostels. Some of them were really bad.

After 16 years of suffering from depression, I've finally been referred to a psychiatrist. It's appalling how long I've had to wait.

I'm passionate about raising awareness of mental health issues and altering people's attitudes. I became involved with Collective Encounters, an organisation that uses drama to campaign for social change, a couple of years ago. So far I've been in five plays.

Last year we took one of our plays to the Royal Opera House as part of the With One Voice Festival. It was awesome. Recently I performed at the Bluecoat in the centre of Liverpool, playing the part of a young woman who grew up in the care system.

Acting has brought me out of my shell and given me the confidence to be myself. I've learnt that I'm the same as everyone else, in spite of my learning difficulties.

I'm from Wavertree but I live in Tuebrook now, in supported accommodation, which means I have my own flat but there are staff on hand 24/7 if I need them.

I was nervous about living alone but the team at the Liverpool office, who helped set up the accommodation, encouraged me to go for it.

My dog Pippa keeps me company. I've had her since she was a few weeks old.

I do a creative writing course with Crisis Skylight Merseyside. I've just been awarded my developing creative writing skills certificate. I get distracted easily but writing helps me to focus. My stories are usually about fairies and animals. They're always happy.

I also take a couple of drawing courses.

Selling The Big Issue in the North helps with my mental health issues. It gives me a reason to get out of bed. If I didn't have this to motivate me I'd just be sitting at home feeling sorry for myself. It really is a lifeline for me.

I'm not a pushy vendor. I think it's important to be really polite and wish people a nice day. I've already got some regular customers who ask if I'm OK if they haven't seen me for a few days. We have a laugh and a joke.

I think it's a really nice way for people to support others.

My message to homeless people is that if I can get my life on track, in spite of all the things I've had to cope with, anybody can.

Photo credits

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