

## **9. DCDP Case Study: Dundee Rep**

Dundee Rep Theatre has been funded to deliver a three-year participatory theatre programme, targeting older people at risk of isolation; adults engaged in the criminal justice system; young people and adults living with health inequality.

Over the past year, we have embarked upon a range of research, development and performance projects at the Rep, in the local community and in Castle Huntly Open Prison. The purpose of the programme is to promote well-being and community engagement through high-quality theatre practice. By identifying and exploring creative identity, individuals are encouraged to re-define themselves and build self-esteem.

Our first established company was the Rep 60+ group, a Rep-based company of older people. Participants were reached through existing local partnerships, introductory workshops and local media, with the focus of work being to create and perform a piece for the Luminare Festival 2015. Luminare is Scotland's Creative Ageing Festival and profiles the work of local companies alongside professional artists on a national level. In October 2015, eighteen actors performed 'The Beautiful People', a show created to challenge the association of youth and the aesthetic in the concept of beauty. The show played to over 200 people in the Rep's Bonar Hall. The Food Train, a project from the Dundee Community Development Programme (DCDP), supported a group of service users to see the show. This group have since then participated in an introductory drama workshop in their local community space.

Following on from the 'Beautiful People' performance, the company (now branded *The Beautiful People*) began an enquiry into sharing and disseminating their own experience of participatory theatre practice. A community-based research and development project, 'Beautiful People Finmill' began in May 2016. The project was facilitated by members of the Rep based company, and took place weekly over six months at Finmill Community Centre. From that project, four participants are now engaged with the Rep-based company. One Finmill participant commented: "*By having people from the Rep group leading the Finmill group, it gave us confidence. They created such a safe and supportive environment*".

Our programme with adults engaged in the criminal justice system was piloted as a 12-week dramatherapy programme with residents of SPS Castle Huntly Open Prison. Dramatherapy is a clinical arts therapy that enables clients to work through issues using metaphor, to develop coping strategies and build resilience. There is a wealth of research into the benefits of Dramatherapy within prisons and feedback was very positive in the initial sessions in terms of self-expression and reflection. Client comments included: "*I didn't realise drama could help you understand yourself*" and "*It really made me think about what I want when I get out.*" However, the nature of the open prison system soon led to significant disruption to the programme. We have learned that any future project in this setting should take the form of an intensive targeted intervention, and have now taken the criminal justice strand of our work into the Rep-based Well-being Programme.

In developing our dedicated well-being programme for young people and adults at risk of health inequality, we have delivered workshops with people in recovery from stroke and acquired brain injury, adults recovering from mental health issues, adults living with chronic pain and young people with learning disabilities and autistic spectrum condition. One participant from an NHS programme commented: "Thoroughly enjoyed my first visit to a drama workshop! Loved the engagement with others". Another wrote: "Joyous. Both mentally and physically stimulating".

This success of this work provided the foundations for two dedicated weekly programmes that began in September this year. 'Feel Good Friday' is a weekly drama for well-being group for adults living with health inequality. The group takes place at the Rep and is free, with a drop-in policy, to create a flexible approach to engagement. The group averages 20 attendances a week with 30 people registered as participants.

Young Illuminate is our new youth theatre for children and young people with learning disabilities. Running on a Saturday afternoon, it provides a safe, creative space for participants who may

struggle to access activities independently. It also means that parents can have some time for themselves and to connect with other parents for support. We hope to build numbers in future through facilitating at an upcoming event for professionals working with young people with additional support needs, and by profiling our work to agencies supporting looked after children and young people.

We have developed a highly-successful relationship with Amina Muslim Women's Resource Centre. Having met through the DCDP network, we are now delivering our second 'drama for confidence programme', with a family fun day in December and a trip to our Christmas Show. The women who have participated have been brave, generous and incredibly creative.

**Suzi Morrice, Dundee Rep**

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