

# QUALITY PRINCIPLES

## CASE STUDY

ACE ARTS (ACTION IN CAERAU & ELY)

## PROJECT

'ME & MY SPACE'

Nic Parsons and Becky Matyus tell us about their experience of using the Quality Principles on projects at the Dusty Forge in Cardiff.

## ABOUT THE PROJECT

'Me & My Space' is an inclusive, participatory visual arts project run by our small ACE Arts team at ACE (Action in Caerau & Ely) at the Dusty Forge, Cardiff.

With a focus on person-centred and person-led participation, we support people to uncover, explore and own their creative talents.

## HOW DID YOU USE THE QUALITY PRINCIPLES?

We fully began using the Quality Principles for this project at the interim evaluation stage, as we were not aware of them previously.

They were most beneficial to us when assessing the best way to progress and adapt effectively during the Covid pandemic. We were able to hone in on key aspects of the Quality Principles and create a detailed analysis so that the project continued to be fit for purpose and its aims continued to be fulfilled during Covid restrictions.

We also used the Principles when reflecting on the project as a whole and particularly during autumn 2020 when we held smaller workshops with social distancing restrictions. As our project is ongoing, we aim to use them to support us on our return to working with participants in person, to plan and later evaluate the final 10 weeks of our current project.

## WHO WAS INVOLVED?

Our core art team of four used the Quality Principles to evaluate progress, quality and effectiveness mid-way through the project, which was very helpful. We used the table provided in the Quality Principles booklet to break down each section and reflect on our methods of delivery to date which helped us to recognise where improvements might be valuable.

We then used them again between our two project co-ordinators, specifically focusing on the 'People' section to evaluate the move to smaller groups to enable us to ensure social distancing and good hygiene in Sept-Dec 2020.

For future projects, we plan to use the Quality Principles with participants, too. We will use a shorter, adapted version with individuals or small groups of participants in our end of project evaluation. In future, for larger scale projects we intend to incorporate monthly online meetings with all partners to raise any concerns, share ideas, etc. and the Quality Principles will support our framework for these conversations.

## WHAT DID YOU LEARN?

Using the Quality Principles to reflect on our working practice has helped us to focus our intentions. We developed a strong focus on participant-led work, which in smaller groups meant we could plan easily session by session and tailor to each individual. This has increased the sense of ownership for participants and has brought a more authentic experience, where personal progress is tracked and celebrated.

When we used the Quality Principles for a mid-term evaluation and tried to do the whole thing in one go, we found it overwhelming and onerous. Although the evaluation was successful, we felt dissatisfied with the process. We have found it more helpful to focus on one element of the Principles (People) and one part of the project, and this made it much more manageable and satisfying. We are likely to repeat this process with the other elements (Intention and Activity) with other project evaluations in the future.

We found it useful, after time away from the project due to Covid, to familiarise ourselves with the Quality Principles again and use them to reflect on the project as a whole as we prepared to return to face-to-face workshops. We found the prompt questions were not all relevant to our situation, so we use what's useful and leave the rest. After returning to the Principles over time, we are more familiar with them and find them more useful.

## TOP TIPS

1. Factor in time to use the Quality Principles at various points throughout the project, so that this is in the schedule from the start
2. Tackle one of the three sections of the toolkit (i.e. People, Intention or Activity) at a time, rather than trying to cover everything in one session
3. Try using them for a variety of purposes and work out where and how they fit most comfortably into your project and contribute most effectively
4. Use them creatively and be creative in your responses. Participants don't necessarily need to know the full detailed version of the framework, but bullet-pointing headings and simplifying content could be very helpful

## MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.aceplace.org>

