



ArtWorks
Cymru

QUALITY PRINCIPLES CASE STUDY

Sparc and Wales Millennium Centre: Powerful Interventions

Miranda Ballin, Artistic Director of Sparc, and Alan Humphreys, Creative Learning Producer at Wales Millennium Centre, tell us about using the Quality Principles on a youth-led partnership project in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

About the project

Powerful Interventions is the first youth-led commission from the Wales Millennium Centre (WMC), born out of the Together Stronger partnership and the work created between Sparc, WMC and Bethan Marlow since summer 2018.

How did you use the Quality Principles?

We used the Quality Principles to ensure focus, clarity and agreement of focus between staff members across WMC and Sparc, as well as lead artist Bethan Marlow, during the length of the project. This was alongside continuous evaluation and information gathering through the partnership.

This was particularly helpful for this project, as it is rooted in partnership working, and we wanted to address the following questions that could impact on future work:

- How does a major institution (WMC) work effectively with a community project like Sparc and learn from it in order to create change?
- How does a lead artist work effectively with an experienced group of youth arts workers/creatives to co-create work with participants?

Who was involved?

Due to the nature of the partnership, we are working across a team of:

- 5 staff members from Sparc
- 2 staff members from WMC Creative Learning
- 1 lead artist – Bethan Marlow
- Freelance artists and support staff
- Additional input from other staff members, particularly WMC, at various times

On top of this, Bethan Marlow is based in Miami for the majority of the time. So, between summer 2018 and Spring 2020, we decided to identify periods of time when Bethan would work with us in person on the project.

Following the global pandemic, the work shifted online, meaning Bethan could be much more involved in the week-to-week sessions. However, during the scheduled periods of work, we ensured we would hold debrief meetings with the teams, and used the Quality Principles to guide the conversation, using the A3 posters to reference different headings and topics. We recorded some of these conversations for posterity, and also made notes.

What did you learn?

The Principles allowed us to consistently ensure we were going in the right direction on the project, ensure the participants were at the heart of the work, and crucially keep everyone on the same page. Working across different teams and artists in this way threw up difficulties in terms of communication, and these moments to bring everyone together (both literally and metaphorically) were important moments at the end of each significant period of work.

Top tips for using the Quality Principles

- Use the headings for each Principle as a guide and make them work for your project. Don't be overwhelmed by the possibilities of what to cover, tailor it to your project and make sure you address the most important aspects.
- Think of the Quality Principles as an extremely useful checklist to use when planning and monitoring the project, to ensure you cover everything. They are more than a way of guaranteeing 'quality'.

Find out more

www.sparc.wales

www.valleyskids.org

www.wmc.org.uk