

PARTICIPATORY ARTS - CAPTURING THE LEARNING

VOLUNTARY ARTS WALES

Monday 8th June 2020

Host: Gareth Coles (Voluntary Arts Wales)

Chat

- People talking about how they have adapted their projects
- Self care important
- Great to see how the community is adapting to look after the vulnerable
- We need to change the way we work for the future - should we give up office space?

Jane Latham - UCAN Productions

- About 15 years old. All about increasing the physical confidence of young people with sight loss. More about confidence building than the art but we have produced some artists and some spectacular pieces of art
- Based in Cardiff University school of Optometry
- Bought Zoom in March and had never heard of it
- Created a google doc and opened up to participants to ask what they could do
- 700 young people on their database
- They put forward lots of ideas and decided to create three offerings
- UCAN TV - Filmed all the exercises for confidence that they usually do
- UCAN Buddy - We connect people
- Interactive Zoom workshops - 8 per week running for all kinds of age groups - popular Maggies Club and Alex Rees is working with them to record voices
- Sassy - older group that runs twice a week and now members are meeting independently of the meetings
- Jane was convinced that the young people wouldn't be able to use the technology but the young people found all the solutions themselves. They are used to isolation - they find it hard to get out into the community.
- There were one or two young people who never go out - we made them heads of isolation
- They started working geographically when they brought groups together but this has become pointless
- Jane was concerned that they would lose all the hard work that had put in over 15 years - but the community is tight
- Jane advocates handing over responsibility to the participants - if they want it they will make it happen

Steve Davis - Spectacle Theatre Ltd

- Covid has forced a major step change
- Spectacle wanted to find a way to connect with their participants in easy ways that young people were comfortable with and would not cause additional stress or anxiety
- The online sessions that they started did help to alleviate stress in isolation
- They are doing work in 5 areas
- Youth Groups - Monday night on zoom - young people can discuss anything they want

- Open Mic Night once a month that is run by young people. This has attracted people from a much wider area
- Writing workshops - still taking place and the young writer has nearly created a new play
- We've just started to devise a new play with a writer. It was a question of addressing the technology and saying 'this is what I want to do - how do we use the tech to do this'
- Chair Dancing and Circuit training - now happens 'live' online
- They also make other videos - cookery and keep fit
- Welfare Packs - delivered out to care homes and older people
- Everything we do is low tech
- Online Participatory Theatre - Out of Control - we rehearsed this online - we had to discover how to use tech to do this. We discovered that we can do it - it just takes time to put it together. Works differently but as effective as live performance.
- Creative team was from across Wales and our audience also came from across Wales. Continues to be developed and shared .
- Story about a grandfather who is not coping , has to look after his young granddaughter. Content relevant to Lockdown but not about it. It explores the grooming process and mental health. We create a discussion or education program around it.
- We had to discuss safeguarding procedures for online live performance and keeping the audience safe, and how discussion would come from the play.
- We had a protocol that everyone signed up to at the beginning.
- The main character constantly discussed with the audience about what he should do about his situation. We used 'chat' , break out rooms and held a workshop afterwards.
- Beware of intensity - working with a small group of young people online can be a very intense experience especially in live participatory experience. Our solution is about sticking to the protocol and having a third person in the 'room' who 'reads' the audience.

Eleanor Shaw - People Speak Up

- Small Organisation Started four years ago
- About giving people a voice and space to express themselves
- Within week one of lockdown we moved our young peoples session to google hangout - this didn't go very well - young people were really struggling with online media life - all their education was online
- We asked young people if they would prefer Whats App - this worked as they had more ownership and worked in smaller groups
- But now they also meet on zoom on thursday
- Story care and share - weekly well being sessions - invited local people to take part in this. Now have two evenings going. An hour and a half. Oldest is 75 and younger is 17.
- We've grown and changed things depending on what people want - they get to feed into.

- Spoken word Saturday - monthly event - open mic night - tea and cake on Saturday afternoons. We asked the community to send us offerings - audio and visuals. Participants were totally happy with this. So we offer this out.
- We asked young people to create letters of kindness and sent letters to a local care home.
- Stories to the door - we used to have a storyteller taking stories into people's home. We collaborated with Beyond the Border on this and we worked together to get this online. We work on a range of ways - phone, skype, zoom
- Intergenerational projects have been the hardest to adapt. Just starting one with a local care home and a school. They have been lots of issues with the Llandeilo version of this - as Eleanor couldn't go out and meet with them.
- So they have a busy week happening.
- Birth Cafe project will be up and running soon. And they will be doing more with schools soon.
- Zoom sessions - they put a lot of staff in and we spend a lot of time reading the room. They use chat and polls. They disable the chat for participants to speak to each other.
- Debriefing after each session is important.
- They had safeguarding training sessions with all staff and the board.
- Reaching 50 / 70 people each week - 500 watches on you tube of the storytelling.
- Emotional time - they spend their time listening to people's stories. The digital way is good but Eleanor also wants to get back to face to face.

DISCUSSION

- Jane will share information on how to run accessible workshops and their security issues. Education side - all online face to face digital work is not allowed.
- People Speak Up are working with zoom and schools - they have a safeguarding policy in place
- Strong theme of collaboration coming through. Beyond The Border and People Speak Up - were already talking about working together. It was useful for both organisations - they were both experimenting with how storytelling can work online and make connections in the local area.
- Funding should be put towards this practice - its clear that trust and community links are so important
- UCAN has a number of over 18 year olds who are really great at access and making it work - Jane suggested that they could lead a session on how to make work accessible.
- When UCAN started they knew nothing about visual impairment - we've always put our young people at the centre of everything - they are the experts on how they
- Citrus Arts - have been looking at outdoor arts and are really happy to share their experience on making work outdoors.