

Newcastle Wild Card: What is the Creative Case for connecting work with inner diversity of health conditions (with particular reference to Mental Health issues).

Creative Case NORTH Seeing Event – NEWCASTLE Session 2

Present:

This session was called by Claire Webster Saaremets from Skimstone Arts and was attended by:

Ali McCaw from Prism Arts,
Jackie Malcolm from Writing Yorkshire,
Vici Wreford-Sinnott from Little Cog,
Aidan Moesby a Freelance Text Artist,
Ann Fletcher-Williams from Arts Council England.

What followed was a passionate and very focused exploration, interrogation and discussion of what diversity means both conceptually and practically for artists, participants, audiences, organisations and funders, with a particular questioning of labels, categories and access.

The discussion is recorded below under the four headings and where common themes have evolved they are highlighted in **bold**. The wonderful vibrance and vigour of the discussion is only hinted at in these notes and there is a hope to flesh them out in continued discussions by those present.

Situations

(listed in order of discussion)

- The culture of **labelling** and **categorization** – where do people fit if they fit at all?
- The movement in the **funding** landscape to **personal budgets** means that access is even more complex both morally and practically.
- Barriers to **access** in active participation and as an audience.
- How do we create **inclusive** audience development?
- How do we move from the Arts/Health agenda?
- 4. Funding streams limited and changing – move to **personal budgets**.
- Missing framework to connect practitioners, artists, participants, audiences, organisations and funders.
- The need for more diverse diversity!
- The potential lack of **understanding** of particular geographies with regards to targets.
- Politics.
- Need for **communication** on what diversity means.
- No box for Mental Health in ACE funding applications – what does this mean?
- Single Equalities – what is the impact of this?
- Boxes and **labels** – does the question shift from “who am I?” to “What am I?”
- Complexities of labels may become magnified before they are no longer needed.
- Self-definition
- Potential dilution of information.
- The difficulty of opening up about Mental Health issues.
- **Definitions in language** – Equality =access rights? Diversity = practitioner-led? Do we need to understand in these terms?

Possible Solutions

- Examples of “soft marketing” – moving away from advertising groups and work for specific groups/needs/issues. E.g. “Would writing help you to express how you are feeling inside?”
- Co-commissioning – creating partnerships that really understand each other.
- Promotion that **ART IS FEEDING THE SOUL** – we need to lead on this.
- Challenge the **labels** which exist ensuring that arts really is for everyone.
- Learning to negotiate within the **labels** which exist in order to challenge them.
- Make **definitions** of diversity clearer and make them common.
- Make the Creative Case for **Equality**.
- Embed respect for life journeys and abilities within the process and the product.
- Create strategies that will be persuasive to ACE, funders, programmers, the government and society as a whole.
- **Share** best practice.
- Utilise conversations and emerging networks within the Northern context.
- Create the missing **framework to connect** practitioners, artists, participants, audiences, organisations and funders.
- Follow-up event in May.
- Continue conversation after today’s discussion (Ruth to email notes to those present)
- Follow up discussion with ACE.
- Clear and open **communication** of what diversity means.
- **Share** examples
- Utilise political/artistic conversations.
- Agree to **clear language and definition** for ALL.
- **Open** up discussions about what managing equality and diversity means to organisations – dissect the **language** and the reality.
- Seize opportunities to **share**.
- **Open** up our offer – sharing of skills and techniques

	<p>and experience.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LEAD FROM THE FRONT – BE PIONEERS! • Culture a two-way dialogue between ACE and the artists. • Ensure a clarity of communication with all partners. 				
<p>Concerns</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labels – are they constraints practically, artistically? • Ensuring artistic quality and equality. <table border="1" data-bbox="410 474 768 533"> <tr> <td>• E</td> <td>• QUALITY</td> </tr> </table> • Concern over potential hijacking of the arts for other agendas. • How does the equality get out there? • Until we reach utopia- do we still need signifiers – how best to use them? • How is this happening? <table border="1" data-bbox="410 894 768 953"> <tr> <td>• E</td> <td>• QUALITY</td> </tr> </table> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to ensure equal opportunities. 	• E	• QUALITY	• E	• QUALITY	<p>Data/Facts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding streams have changed/limited. Personal budgets. • Shift to Single Equalities. • No box for Mental Health in ACE funding applications.
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<p><u>Closing points of discussion</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Change must be sector-led – lead from the front! 2. Important discussions for ACE – keep them going. 3. Continue the discussion from today and report back to ACE. <p>In the final moments of the discussion, we reviewed our journey and focused on the thoughts/actions/questions we would be taking away with us:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep interrogating what is underneath the words. • Look for equality of opportunity and diversity in the wider community and indeed our own. <p>Looking at Mental Health issues and where this fits on the agenda as a starting point we began to look at the diversity of our own practice. Throughout the discussion we kept revisiting terminology (some loaded and some unlocked) and seemed to discover the need and value of having flexibility with this. Language was key to the dialogue throughout but most of all we kept returning to the realisation that art is, and needs to be, the driver for</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="699 1648 937 1707"> <tr> <td>E</td> <td>QUALITY</td> </tr> </table>		E	QUALITY		
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