



Evaluation for Investing in Children membership

North West Disability Arts Forum

North West Disability Arts Forum was set up in 1990. I have met with Alison, the Arts Manager on two occasions and she explained the aims of NWDAF. She told me that they try to facilitate the active involvement of all disabled people in every aspect of the arts and cultural sector. They actively promote and celebrate Disability Arts, Deaf Arts and guide other organisations to include disabled people in all areas of their service. NWDAF work with disabled/deaf children and young people and have set up various arts projects over the past four years. On my recent visit to NWDAF I had the pleasure of meeting with Gary, Amanda, Craig and Jack..

Evidence of Dialogue and Change

Sixteen projects have been run with children and young people and NWDAF. These have included lots of art forms including digital photography, visual arts, music, film making, animation, DJ ing and story writing.

Gary told me “I’ve been coming here for about a year. It’s a drama group, we do acting”. Craig added “We have done one production. We did it once when the audience came and paid and once at the DADA Fest”. The group explained that this is a Disability and Deaf Arts festival hosted by NWDAF every year and run with other children and young people’s art groups. Gary went on to explain all about the production he said, “We all work together. We decide if we are happy with the script and if we are not, we change it. We get to talk about lots of choices and they give us a good say”. Amanda added “And we did a production called Our Street. I played different parts. I really enjoyed doing it”. I asked how children and young people get involved and Gary told me “NWDAF contact us at school and whatever it is they have running, they come in and talk to the young people. Everyone just volunteers and we keep coming back”.

Alison had told me that the children and young people’s worker had recently left NWDAF, and it was felt that there was not enough staff to hold a children and young people’s DADA Fest this year. However after the children and young people strongly expressed their disappointment, NWDAF agreed to carry on with the event. Jack said “At the DADA Fest, the young people are in charge. I helped organise things. I went to a NWDAF meeting. It was like a steering group meeting. Craig added “I went as well. It was a mixture of adults and young people there. We sat around a big table and talked. In fact the adults didn’t talk much; it was all the children and young people”. Craig continued “The DADA Fest is ours. We get all the say. All NWDAF do is book the venue and food. We decide everything, we decide on the acts and everything. At the steering group meetings we sit around and talk about what we want. Jack added “Then we go back to our schools and we talk to the young people there about what they can do”. Gary said “well like we were doing acting, other people from our school were making cups of tea and doing the stage”. Craig again told me “but it’s the young people who decide”. Everyone gets to have their say. We either talk fill in a form or you can post a form on the website”.

Our conversation then turned to the awards at the DADA Fest. Craig explained “We decided that it was best to have different ways of voting. One way is through the website. So like for voting for best newcomer, the website says it’s a newcomer award and there is a picture of the person and a little bit about the person. Then you just click on that to vote”.

Jack told me about the second way people can vote “On the night there is voting. We vote for people, everyone who’s there gets to vote. They do it on sound. It’s whoever gets the loudest claps”. It was very easy to see the young people were very proud of their DADA Fest.

Craig then went on to tell me why he likes coming and working with NWDAF. He said “I have been working with NWDAF for five or six years. They have really helped me and boosted my confidence. I would never have found my second talent if it wasn’t for them. My second talent is being a compere. I now host a number of shows at Picketts. But I got the confidence from NWDAF” Craig continued, “They don’t just listen to what young people say, they take it in. And if there is something they can’t do, say for safety reasons, they don’t just put it to one side, they explain and talk to the young people. Then, if we can’t get over the safety reasons, they talk to us and we would arrange something else. They are always willing to talk to young people and we all try something else”. Gary added “Most of the things NWDAF do are what young people want and ask for”.

I asked the group if they thought NWDAF should be awarded Investing in Children membership and there was an absolute “YES”. Craig put his thoughts on the matter very well. He said “The staff are friendly. None of them have a bad thing to say about children and we have nothing bad to say about them”.

I would like to thank Gary, Amanda, Craig and Jack for talking to me and making me feel very welcome. The work between NWDAF and the young people is built on a continued dialogue and a mutual respect which is a pleasure to witness. The young people agreed with this report. Because of this and all the changes and decisions the young people have told me about, I have no hesitation in recommending North West Disability Arts Forum receives Investing in Children membership.

Very well done!

Glenys Newby
Investing in Children
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