

Theatre NEMO Project HMP Barlinnie

8th September to 28th November 2008

PROJECT OUTLINE:

To engage clients in a wide range of art forms, allowing each to sample the various techniques and methodologies involved.

Through such engagement it is hoped to develop each persons self esteem, confidence, communication and interpersonal skills.

CLIENT DESCRIPTION:

The project sought to engage individuals from the prison population.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

The project was delivered over a twelve-week period:

Initial stage: Circus skills: Utilised as an ice breaker and a means of allowing facilitators and participants to get to know each other.
Drama: Trust and confidence based exercises were utilised to initiate the group building process.
Creative Writing: As part of the drama process creative writing was introduced to explore issues, themes and ideas which would inform the forthcoming workshops which would introduce the group to the processes involved in creating a short film.
Film & Sound Production: Participants were introduced to film & sound production digital technologies. Over a three week period the group worked towards the creation of a short film and an animated film sequence.

Final stage: Completion of short film and animation and visual art work.

Closing stage: Show of work and empowerment workshops.



Conclusion:

From the outset, this was a particularly difficult and challenging project for facilitators to deliver, primarily due to the specific needs of the participants engaged. Individuals, who had chosen to participate, struggled to overcome their own strongly defined methods of engaging with others, methods that were negative, manipulative, and destructive in relation to the team building process and to the experience of the person. Participants struggled to negotiate constructively; assertion of personal thoughts or ideas was generally at the expense of others. In the story boarding process prior to making a short film, constructive ideas were continually thwarted as each sought to promote their idea as the only viable one. Issues relating to prison life out with the workshops was continually pushed and formed a continual sub text and dialogue between individuals, at times facilitators were under pressure to engage in this, this resulted in a constant heightened and stressful negative energy permeating the workshop process and delivery of workshop content throughout.

The above may lead the reader into concluding that this project was unsuccessful this is not the case.

The workshops afforded the opportunity to challenge these negative methods of social interaction that individuals had grown into through their own personal life journey. Facilitators throughout remained focused on the primary objective of providing each person with an opportunity for self recognition and identity within a group setting, and utilising this recognition of self as a means to initiate change in their life's, change which would bring about a development and growth in confidence, self esteem and interpersonal skills. Through the continual challenge presented by the workshop process individuals continually met with the reality that their chosen methods of social interaction produced negative outcomes for themselves and for others, facilitators worked continually to assist individuals in recognising positive means of engagement which when utilised produced outstanding results. An example of this was greatly demonstrated by the completion of the 3D contemporary sculptures and accompanying soundscapes; for weeks the group failed to reach agreement on their design, when at last the group recognised the need to work together and to share and compromise over each others input, the work suddenly became an art installation of very high aesthetic quality which, when coupled with the sound sculptures created, took on a strong articulate energy of complex social significance and meaning. The particular morning this occurred the group sat in quite contemplation of their work, conversation and engagement was profound, intelligent, poignant, and above all extremely positive.

One very difficult challenge continually faced by arts facilitators were eventually met head on and to great effect by the introduction of a self-empowerment and life skills coach at the end of the workshop run. Throughout the art workshops i.e. all art forms throughout, facilitators could not fully challenge certain issues for fear of the whole process collapsing, their approach had to remain circumspect, the life skills and empowerment session were delivered to fully broach these issues and invited each individual to examine their contributions and social roles throughout. These final sessions brought clarity and closure to the project leaving each individual with very positive and clearly identifiable personal aims and goals for personal change and growth.