

Appendix 3: People Express Overview Report 2021- 22

Impact of COVID from 2020/21

At the start of 2021 Derbyshire County Council staff supporting communities, families and children fed back to People Express that ALL the smaller groups they used to support pre-pandemic have stopped operating and had no plans to restart. The group's main concerns were around how to deliver face to face activity safely and effectively within the new restrictions/social distancing guidelines and potential risk to their own health. People Express was also aware that many services continued to be delivered by phone or online (e.g., Youth Offending, Education).

Artists with underlying health problems stopped delivering face to face work, and many other artists and creative practitioners who focused on creating their own artwork during the lockdowns chose not to return to participatory work. In addition to the issues above, in April 2021 the UK was in a full lockdown, with the gradual lifting of restrictions in May 2021.

1) Continued Online Delivery - Being *There* Project

Over 2019/20 People Express developed our own style of online workshops, particularly aimed at isolated and vulnerable adults, young people and children. This included the Programmes Manager visiting houses with creative materials, supporting people to use ZOOM (on occasion for the first time), a professional artist leading the session in 'real time' and no more than 8 people in any one workshop.



All the groups' People Express supported over the pandemic/lockdowns made it clear that online activity would not offer them an equivalent creative, confidence building, social and/or personal development experience and they were keen we understood that they would like us to return to face to face delivery as soon as we were able to.

2) COVID Protocols

In order to restart our face-to-face delivery as soon as a lockdown came to an end and following guidance from schools on our timings we introduced the following measures:

- smaller numbers of participants in sessions & pre-booking and new online booking system
- adjusting budgets for hiring larger spaces for delivery & investing in clear screens & sanitising stations
- no attendance by participants/artist with symptoms & regular staff testing and reporting to Board
- new COVID trustee sub-group to monitor and support staff health & well-being

3) Programme of Community Re-Engagement

Before the pandemic a number of the community groups People Express helped to set up and had been supporting (for up to 6 years) expressed an interest in becoming fully self-sustaining. Unfortunately, the pandemic affected the confidence of volunteers but all groups wanted to restart face to face activity to combat the increased isolation and social anxiety felt by their members. In response to this, People Express set up a *Re-engagement Programme*, this included supporting them to run their first in person creative activity post-lockdown and to raise additional funding for new projects:

- Tuesday Night Club ran creative arts session for children at Midway Community Centre
- Crafty Chatters secured funding for older people/people with dementia meeting at Oaklands
- Newhall Creative Collective secured funding for adults in supported housing & vulnerable adults
- Overseal Gala were unable to hold their 60th anniversary event but secured funding for 2022.

- Swadlincote Aspergers Society (SAS) secured funding for 'Welcome Back' creative cafe for neurodiverse, physically and learning-disabled adults and adults using mental health services.
- Youth of Hatton (village) ran drumming session activities for children and families.

4) New Project - COVID Responsive

During the pandemic families with SEN children fed back to us that of all the community groups they were one of the most affected by the lockdowns as their children, many of whom were on the autism spectrum, found social norms difficult and the new social distancing, mask wearing and inability to see friends and family were heightening challenging behaviour.

People Express secured one-off Government funding for The Magic Lantern Puppet Show designed specifically for SEN children. There were 25 socially distanced performances with small audience numbers over a week at Rosliston Forestry Centre. Thingamajig puppet company set up a small theatre space and transformed the education space into a dark enchanted forest. The content of the new show explored COVID related themes. The show was in May 2021 as the lockdown was lifted, all tickets went 2 weeks early, with 1000 people trying to book on over 1 weekend. The Magic Lantern show was



Skipton Puppet Festival 2021

recommissioned for

"This was amazing for us, the first time we've been out as a family for a year!" Mum of 3 including SEN children

5) Main Programme of Work

The following projects were delivered and/or developed within our COVID protocols:

Passport to Music Year 2 - fortnightly sessions with up to 25 young people at risk of exclusion exploring creating their own music inspired by working with leading professional Jazz, Hip Hop, Classical Indian and Folk musicians. This project was shortlisted for a prestigious national Music & Drama Education Award and showcased at the English Folk Dance & Song Society national event around inclusivity.

Our Place - livestream event showcasing work by groups across the East Midlands. In South Derbyshire young people wrote and recorded a song and video called Grandma's House about their love of the area.

Voices in the Kiln - young people helped create an AR app for visitors to Sharpe's Museum

Hatton Hope & Peace Garden - consultation workshops for a new local memorial garden/nature reserve

Life is For Living - secured funding and developed film screening tour across Derbyshire of compassionate, funny, informative and moving film of how lives are affected by dementia made by the couples, older people and adults who are experiencing it.

Midway Xpress - developing a Caribbean inspired carnival arts residency and event for children and families in Newhall and Midway for summer 2022

Creative Schools Network - workshops for local schools to encourage more creative activity within education and to promote the Artsmark Award run by Arts Council England

Arts Award - opportunities for young people to gain accredited arts qualifications



GOBSCURE - performance, as part of a national tour, around homelessness and mental health

People Express remains an active member of 2 participatory and community arts networks - EMPAF (covering the East Midlands) and Arts Derbyshire. Through these

6) Projects In Development

The following projects were developed in this year but as yet have not secured funding:

I Switch Off - environmental project with Pennine Way and Stenson Fields (the worst affected schools in the district) to raise awareness of idling in cars as children are dropped off and the impact of Co2.

Pennine Way School - a project to increase awareness of cultural diversity

Heath Field School - a project to set up a local Children's Eco/Sculpture Trail

7) Facts & Figures

Number of Workshops: 156

Number of Venues: 10

Number of Participations: 1407

These figures are lower than pre-pandemic figures as the festivals/galas (e.g. Festival of Leisure) we normally attend were cancelled.

8) Arts Council NPO

People Express was successful in their application for extension year funding (April 2022 to March 2023) as part of the National Portfolio.