

Youth Arts Open Fund Case Studies



Cutting Edge Theatre



YouthLink
Scotland



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Cutting Edge Theatre

About us:

Cutting Edge Theatre is one of Scotland's leading small theatre companies based in Edinburgh. With over 25 years of history we aim to make a difference in the lives of the people and communities we work with:

- We enable disabled young people and adults who attend our weekly INSPIRE Disability Arts sessions. These are led by experienced drama professionals
- We develop the creative potential of male and female offenders who devise theatre work with us in the criminal justice setting
- We engage with diverse communities in our open-air promenade plays and our touring theatre productions around Scotland



Our main objective is to strive for an equitable society and recognise that access to drama experience provides a springboard to positive change and improved wellbeing. We use one of the major strengths of Cutting Edge Theatre - our ability to harness the transformative power of theatre to promote awareness, provoke dialogue, and inspire action.

Our Project:

We ran two groups are part of our "ladder" strategy which is to ensure that learning/disabled people have equal access to the performing arts as audience members, participants and professionals. The strategy means that learning/disabled children aged 8+ can start with us, move to the Youth Theatre when aged 13, move to the Young Company if they want aged 18 and then possibly the Intermediate group which is a new one we are setting up in 2024. It gives them a pathway which is missing for disabled people in Scotland

Childrens' Group

We set this up with a new tutor and assistant. Initially we had six disabled children in the group which was great. However, it became obvious pretty

quickly that we needed to change the grouping. Some of the children have ADHD as well as being home schooled, so they need to run around. The children who have sensory needs found this too noisy for them. We decided to split the group but, sadly the ones with more sensory needs haven't been able to return to the group. We are currently rethinking how we run this group and may bring in a new tutor also. This is the only such group in Edinburgh and so we are learning on the job.

Youth Theatre

This has been a great success. Again, it is the only such group in Edinburgh and we think is the only Youth Theatre for learning disabled young people aged 13 -17 in Scotland.

It was a new group and we also had two young people from the children's group move up which is exactly what we hoped would happen. They have blossomed in the Youth Theatre, becoming more confident and expressive. The Youth Theatre has a number of non-verbal participants, so we find different methods to work with them. For the first time, we worked with the Youth Theatre this past term especially on presenting monologues and duologues from scripts and for those who don't read/are non-verbal - created scenes with them for presentation to their parents who were stunned with their progress.

Impact:

The project supported 20 young people facing additional barriers to access artistic and creative activities. They all reported the following outcomes:

- Feeling better able to express themselves through involvement in arts activities
- Improved mental health and wellbeing through their participation in artistic and creative activities.

Quotes from parents:

"She has got so much out of coming along to the class. She can give up on things very easily when they're not exactly what she is looking for, but this drama she has always wanted to come along, and it's the one thing it is never a struggle to get her out of the house for!"

“Despite being 12 years old and being mainstream educated for most of his life, XXXX has ends up excluded and mostly stared at. To see him interacting with peers who see him as an equal has been a joy.”

“He has loved his drama so much that he kept asking for it during the summer. His confidence has meant he is much more likely to start a conversation unprompted and try to use full sentences to be understood”

