

Project Ability 2014/15 Programme Report

Project Ability is an arts charity which fights to end the stigma of mental ill health and advocates for the wider inclusion of people with learning disabilities in public life. Project Ability believes that art transforms lives and has a positive impact and enduring effect on communities.

Project Ability nurtures the artistic talent of people with learning disabilities, mental ill health and children and young people with disabilities and uses the arts as a tool to improve health and well-being, build confidence and better connections by working alongside like-minded people, sharing skills and developing friendships.



2014 – 2015 was a year of celebration; it marked our 30th anniversary and 5th year in our wonderful premises in Trongate 103 in the centre of Glasgow and the city of Glasgow itself was centre stage as it hosted the 2014 Commonwealth Games. There were many high points in the year and we would like to give thanks to the artists, staff and tutors, friends and supporters who gave their unswerving and unconditional support throughout the year.



The **Aspire Programme** for people with learning disabilities takes place in our studio in Trongate 103, and through outreach activity in NHS learning disability units in Glasgow. From April 2014 to March 2015 we delivered 288 workshops in our premises, providing 540 workshop spaces.

This year we extended the programme delivery to people out with Glasgow and Project Ability **On the Road**, delivered a series of one-off workshops in Aberdeen, Perth, Dunfermline, Cumbernauld, Wishaw, Kilmarnock, Milngavie as well as venues in Glasgow. This programme continues into 2015/16.

In April 2014, we learnt that artist Cameron Morgan had been awarded a Creative Scotland funded commission to make a new work for the festival

Generation: 25 years of Contemporary Art in Scotland. Morgan worked in the studio April through June preparing work for the exhibition. In June, he moved into the gallery to create a mural working directly onto the fabric of the gallery, resulting in the exhibition '**Cameron's Way: Coast to Coast**' which opened on the 27th June 2014.

To mark our 30th anniversary we produced a publication which showcased the talents and achievements of the Aspire artists. In a two week residency in July 2014 we commissioned photographer Alicia Bruce to document and record the Aspire workshops, capturing the vitality and personality of the artists. The images produced during these workshops were used in the publication **Aspire, Project Ability's arts programme for people with learning disabilities**, which was published in March 2015.



We ended the year in spectacular style. In March 2015, in our premises in Trongate 103, we hosted the first ever International Summit for Learning Disabled Artists and their Support Studios. This was accompanied by the exhibition “**It is now**” which was distributed throughout Trongate 103 in our gallery, the foyer and corridor spaces.

Over three days artists created art works, talked about their work, shared their practice and networked. Over 70 artists from Australia, Canada, Finland, Ireland, Sweden, Wales, London, Manchester and Glasgow attended this inclusive event. Described as “a blue print for all future conferences” (Declan Kennedy, KCAT, Ireland).

The event was a resounding success and the online conference report can be found at:

http://issuu.com/project-abilityglasgow/docs/summit_report_2015?utm_source=conversion_success&utm_campaign=Transactional&utm_medium=email

Award winning visual artist Tanya Raabe was appointed the Summit's recorder and work produced during and inspired by the Summit will be exhibited in our gallery in January 2016.



The **Create Programme** for children and young people with disabilities also takes place in our studio in Trongate 103, and this year we also delivered outreach workshops in schools across Scotland.

The core of the Create programme is our Saturday Classes. From April 2014 to March 2015 the popular Saturday Art Class delivered 192 workshops for young people aged from 5 to 25 years at Trongate 103 and Art Matters, an art project for young people aged 21 plus which takes place on Saturday evenings delivered a further 32 workshops from April 2014 to March 2015.

In July we invited young people and their families to a consultation event to help us develop the young people's strategy for the years ahead. The young people told us they want more opportunities to learn work related skills, more volunteer opportunities and guidance to establish themselves as artists and makers. To this end we are taking forward a learning programme which gives children and young people with disabilities access to an Arts Award. Arts Award inspires young people to grow their arts and leadership talents: it's creative, valuable and accessible. Arts Awards are credited by Trinity College London.

Other projects included introducing film making workshops into Yorkhill Sick Children's Hospital, family weekend arts workshops, a creative partnership with Ashcraig Former Pupils Club and a regular programme of film making classes. In July, two young artists were shortlisted as finalists in the national Create! Art for Autism 2014 exhibition, with one attending the Prize giving event in Cardiff, receiving the runner up prize for his category.

The **ReConnect** programme is for people with lived experience of mental ill health. The programme supports an open studio at our premises in Trongate 103, targeted programmes for young people with mental ill health and workshops taking place in partnership with NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde resource centres and hospitals.



From April 2014 to March 2015 we delivered 112 workshop days in our studio at Trongate 103, reaching an average of 22 people each day and we delivered 76 workshops for young people aged 16 – 25 years old experiencing poor mental health, of which 28 people participated.

We continued our partnership with the Waterside Resource Centre, Govan and the Stewart Centre, Castlemilk, and began a new partnership with a consortium of North

West Sector Mental Health Resource Centres. These workshops took place in our premises in Trongate 103.



In April 2014, we supported ReConnect artist Lea Cummings to take up a month long artist residency with the Welsh arts organisation Celf O Gwmpas. Lea went on to win a prestigious Unlimited Research & Development grant. He spent 12 months in a purpose built studio in our premises in Trongate 103, working towards an exhibition which was shown "in progress" at the

Southbank, London in September 2014, Summerhall, Edinburgh in November in an Unlimited showcase event and in our gallery in Trongate 103 in January 2015.

In May 2014, ReConnect artist Simon McAuley was invited to speak at the European Outsider Art Association in Paris. That same month he was invited to show work in a solo exhibition in Wales with partner organisation Celf O Gwmpas.

In October we published "ReConnect" a book containing a selection of artwork and writing produced in the ReConnect studio. The book was launched during the Scottish Mental Health Arts and Film Festival (SMHAFF).

The "Walking Group", started in 2013, continued growing in popularity and in 2014 was awarded funding from Paths For All for a 12 month extension. The group meets every fortnight and has been extended to include people from all three areas of our programme: ReConnect, Aspire and Create. Walks are to local culture and heritage venues; museums and galleries with regular visits further afield including Kilmarnock and Edinburgh which involve a bus trip and a walk. Along the way the group have collaborated with Glasgow Sculpture Studios, Glasgow Life Museums and Galleries, The Mitchell Library and The National Portrait Gallery.

Exhibitions: We put on a total of 20 exhibitions. Highlights included **Cloud** a solo exhibition by Swedish artist Henrik Patzke, which was presented for Glasgow International Festival 2014's 'Across the City' programme. **Cameron's Way: Coast to Coast** a solo exhibition by Aspire artist Cameron Morgan commissioned for Generation: 25 years of contemporary visual art in Scotland and **Cosmic Fields of Endless Possibilities**, a



presentation of new work by ReConnect artist Lea Cummings for Unlimited Festival 2014. Unlimited celebrates the artistic vision and originality of artists with disabilities. The work was shown at the Southbank Centre, London, Summerhall, Edinburgh and our gallery in Trongate 103.

Exhibitions took place in our gallery in Trongate 103, Gallery II, a new extension to the Gallery, the Trongate 103 foyer, the Art in the Gait Gallery at Gartnavel Royal Hospital and various galleries and exhibitions in Glasgow, Edinburgh, London, Wales, Japan and Brighton.

The December end of year exhibition is always a fundraiser and an attempt to encourage people to buy original artwork as gifts to themselves and others. This year we held a silent auction of original contemporary artwork produced by friends of Project Ability, and artwork created by Project Ability artists. We were ably supported by the local arts community and through their generosity and support we raised over £5000 on the night, attracting online bids from London and Sweden as well as an active crowd of local bidders.

The years' final exhibition "**It is now**" was a group exhibition by artists from ten international supported art studios from Australia, Canada, England, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Sweden, Scotland and Wales coinciding with our event ***International Summit for Learning Disability Artists and their Support Studios.***

The **volunteer programme**, now in its 5th year, invites graduate artists to contribute to our programme. Volunteers working alongside our tutors contribute their skill and expertise for around 2 hours per week for 8 weeks. The volunteers often extend their commitment for a further 8 weeks. 15 Volunteers recruited in January 2014 remained on site through to June/July 2014. 15 Volunteers recruited in August 2014 stayed in post through to December. A further 15 volunteers were recruited in January 2015 and will remain through to June/July 2015.



There have also been ongoing opportunities for our participants and others, to volunteer in our shop and gallery. Throughout this period 5 people consistently filled invigilation roles, at designated timetabled slots.

We are always looking to extend our resources to the wider arts community and in addition to volunteering to support programme activity, professional artists are invited to submit proposals for ReSearch projects and residency programmes. **The Research Room** is an initiative where artists with different lived experiences can work together to learn from each other and make work. In 2014 – 15 five distinct projects took place. The outcome of the collaborations were shown in Gallery II in Trongate 103.



Residency: In September we invited 5 artists from Celf O Gwmpas to take part in a three week residency at Trongate 103 and in February 2015, visual artist Tanya Raabe began a 5 week residency at our studios in Trongate 103, funded by the Arts Council of England. In part she recorded and documented the events, happenings, workshops and talks during the International

Summit, and with the rest of the time she developed a series of portraits of our workshop participants which captured the energy of the studio. The work will be exhibited in our gallery in January 2016.



Evaluation: In January 2014 we invited artist Janetka Platun to evaluate the volunteer programme. The volunteer programme is aimed at graduate artists, providing opportunities to develop their skills, collaborate with artists with different lived experiences, and contribute their skill and expertise to our fast paced multi-faceted arts programmes. They bring creative energy, enthusiasm, new skills and fresh conversation to the programme and we wanted an artist to evaluate

the worth of the programme, articulating the symbiotic relationship between the volunteers, the teaching staff and the participants.

Platun visited the programme three times between January and December 2014. The outcome of her research was presented at the International Summit for Learning Disabilities and their Support Studios and will be published in July 2015.

Training and professional development: Our reach extended to Australia when in October 2014 we were invited to present a paper on our practice at the conference **Contemporary Outsider Art: The Global Context in Melbourne, Australia**. Project Ability's Director and Associate Artist Tanya Raabe were the only UK representation present. The conference was organised as a partnership between Arts Project Australia and the University of Melbourne.

Artists and staff members from Arts Project Australia travelled to the **International Summit for Artists with Learning Disabilities and their Support Studios** in March 2015 and two Australian arts professionals who had attended the Melbourne conference also travelled to Glasgow in March to attend the International Summit.

Marketing, Website and social media: From April 2014 to March 2015, we have had 24,871 website visits, including 15,732 unique visitors. This represents an increase of over 2000 unique visitors from the previous year, and an increase of over 3000 visits.



Our Facebook profile and page have both grown, with a regular increase of Friends and Likes. We launched our Twitter account in early 2014, and Instagram in March 2015.

Finance: 2014-15 was a challenging year financially with our incoming resources of £486,084 being slightly down on the previous year by 1.9%.

Our core grant from Creative Scotland remained at £141,400, representing stand still against the previous six years. Funding from Glasgow City Council remained at £77,000, the second year of a two year agreement.

These core grants were augmented by major grants received during the year. These included: Funding from The Scottish Government under section 16B of the NHS (Scotland Act) 1978 for £6,800 for an outreach programme for adults with learning disabilities, the second year of new funding from The Paul Hamlyn Foundation for £20,333 for our volunteers and research programme, the third year of funding from Esmee Fairbairn for £18,900 for the Exhibitions programme, the second year of funding from The Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland for £9,650 for tuition for 18-25 year olds with mental ill health, Paths for All for £2,225 to fund the Walking Group project, Creative Scotland for £10,000 towards the costs of our International Summit event, £4,574 for Professional Development enabling our Executive Director to attend the Contemporary Outsider Art conference at Melbourne University and £950 to fund the captioning of a film of Cameron Morgan's Generations Project.

We continued to actively source funding for the Children and Young People's Programme receiving grants from a wide range of Trusts and Grant providers including: Shared Care Scotland (£3,081), the second year of The Big Lottery Fund-Young Start (£8,599), The Robertson Trust (£12,500) and The People's Postcode Trust (£2,318).

Expenditure for the year was £516,040; a 3.2% increase on the prior year. Direct Programme Costs were £25,069 up; a 13.5% increase on the previous year.

A deficit of income against expenditure of £29,956 was returned. While this was a disappointing result the value of the special events and activity that took place to mark our 30th anniversary is emphasised and recognition of specific positive trends is made; donations and fundraising income was up 126% at £17,540 and gallery shop

sales were up by 79% at £3,293. We thank our many friends, volunteers and supporters for their loyalty, time and generosity.

The board hope to return to a break even position in 2016, with continued focus on our financial control, strong budgeting procedures and additional attention on fundraising activities and sourcing alternative sources of finance.