



Practical Pointers: Youth Voice Practical Pointers leaflets aim to pass on useful information to practitioners working with young people

Expressions Drama Group: East Midlands Northamptonshire Arts by Jenny Dunbar

We must never underestimate young people

Jenny Dunbar supported YVPP throughout the programme and worked with staff at Northampton Arts Centre and with two YVPP students to develop the 'Expressions' drama group.

The group worked over 13 weeks and presented a drama to local dignitaries, youth workers and friends on the topic of coping strategies. Jenny participated in the Trafford and Grendon residential weekends as did her husband Tony Dunbar. Together they ran a very successful drama workshop which engaged a wide group of young people and bridged many cultural gaps.

Jenny writes: On reflection the Drama Project with 'Expressions Group' had the potential to reach other young people locally and on a wider basis with the other regions.

I am convinced that the group would have enjoyed and been able to cope with the experience of meeting and sharing with other young people at the residential at Grendon Hall.

The young people were 'Looked After' children and there were constraints which were impossible for YVPP to successfully overcome despite making efforts to overcome them.

I was particularly impressed by the contributions the Northamptonshire group were secure enough to make during the initial session of their Drama project and a positive starting point was created with them.

The 'Expressions' group met over 13 weeks and worked on dramatic interpretations of coping strategies. This work would have benefited from a more solid skills basis and more confidence in the young people's ability to take the work further and to link with others successfully.

Drama workshop at Grendon residential weekend

We must never underestimate young people.

The Grendon experience illustrated this. The Drama workshop which was run in the evening after a long and hard day was successful and enjoyable and the young people from the various regions responded brilliantly.

I am sure that everyone took something important away with them after that weekend, which was about all the activities, an accumulative experience that will continue to resonate in surprising ways and at unexpected times.

The East Midlands 'Expressions' group who could not attend that weekend were willing and enthusiastic and created a short piece of drama around coping strategies which they eventually showed to an invited audience in a studio setting in Northampton. A video was made of the work.

I feel that the full potential of this group had yet to be explored and more cooperation between the agencies concerned with these looked after young people would have born fruit. Maybe more confidence and trust in young people would have resulted in a more expansive and successful enterprise.

We were disappointed that the managers of this agency were unable to accept the opportunity for the group to visit and perform at a local School and involve the school audience in a discussion forum around coping strategies.

It was obvious, however, that many who were involved really gained from the experience and will continue to affect others positively.

In a climate where young people really need to communicate with each other on a real basis before they feel secure to communicate with the 'adults' in the world at large this would have been a necessary and useful building block.



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