

Culture and Arts participation works with young people

This article was published in Participation Works an online gateway for youth participation information, resources, news and networking for organisations working with young people.

Describe your role

I am the artistic director of Culture and Arts a leading organisation wholly committed to enabling the young and disadvantaged across Britain to use active arts participation to enable them discover new talents, improve their self-esteem and assist them with their social integration. My role is to find and implement creative ways of making Culture and Arts vision a reality.

Culture and Arts work is not "art for arts sake". This is about learning and education, empowerment and social advancement. It's about changing lives and changing minds.

What makes a good participation worker?

Nourishing your inner flame of passion through doing what you love doing every day to change young peoples' lives. Focusing on your commitments with clear objectives as well as being flexible on approach to see issues through young people's perspective. Willingness and ability to be open minded understand individual needs as well as the ability to understand the big picture. The ability to make decisions and act on them and above all love for people and their humanity.

What are the barriers to involving children and young people?

Lack of a joint approach, a long-term visions and communication between different organisations create fragmentation on participation work and becomes a barrier in engaging young people more effectively. A lot of quality work, time and money are spent on individuals or groups of children but for lack of communication between different organisations makes the benefits short lived. Some young people find themselves forever in the starting point and sometimes lose interest on what is offered altogether.

What are the benefits?

Children are the citizens of the future, being involved on decision making cultivates on them the sense of ownership and responsibility. By involving them on decision making processes about their needs and wants alongside social and moral responsibilities creates premises for a more open, active, proactive and happy citizen.

What is effective participation?

Communication, mutual respect and involvement of young people on decision making processes. Willingness to understand the children's needs as well as the readiness to walk on their shoes by taking off our own shoes first. The ability of adults in stopping being adult just of a moment, relax more and to put more fun in the process.

What tips do you have for effective participation of children and young people?

Consider and involve young people as your partners to set up clear rules and responsibilities. Spend as much time as is needed to plan effectively for a successful and trusting relationship. Create a safe and inclusive environment where the freedom of expression is respected. Do not promise something you are not sure off. Always do the things you have said you are going to do. Have a clear long term objective beyond the current project and involve young people in planning and implementing these objectives beyond the current project. Include fun in your every day spiritual menu and this will spread to all around you.