

A PLACE OF CONSTANT SURPRISES

The making of a
Community Play
– Evaluation



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



Mischa Eligoloff @cultureuk

“ To research, write, workshop and stage a rehearsed reading of a large scale community play inspired by people with a wide range of disabilities whose lives have been changed through their encounter with Hannahs at Seale Hayne, a charity in South Devon. Working with guests (service users) practitioners, visitors and local residents this ground-breaking piece of new theatre will tell the stories of these people. Working in partnership with Hannahs I will employ a range of creative practices and techniques to gather the stories. Inclusivity will be at the heart of the project.

These stories will be set against the backdrop of Seale Hayne which over the last century has been a hospital for shell-shocked soldiers, a home for Britain’s Land Army and an agricultural college: a place of healing and growth.’

Nick Stimson – Playwright



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Thanks to Dawlish and Teignmouth Camera Club for the images



“ The strength of this project so far has, for Hannahs, been the opportunity for a range of our guests and visitors to talk to Nick about what Hannahs really means to them. The range of methods through which this has taken place has allowed people to take part in ways that they are most comfortable – for example, 1-1’s, sessions in the art room or even a dance and movement class. There have been some beautiful stories that we would not had had the chance to hear were it not for this project, and it has done wonders for the confidence of many who have taken part. We have enjoyed Nick being such a part of Hannahs over the recent months and there is a real enthusiasm for the production of the play in 2015. ”

Anna Gilroy - Creative & Cultural Development Officer for Hannahs at Seale-Hayne

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INTRODUCTION

A simple and one dimensional evaluation of this project would capture and celebrate the number workshops run, with how many participants, how many 121 interviews were held etc.

In this evaluation we will try to do more than capture the nuts and bolts. We will try to get inside the process and reveal the intangible and tangible benefits generated, for all participants. The intangible outcomes have been captured and we have calculated their equivalent monetary value. This process of attributing a monetary value to a cultural experience is becoming more and more common in the arts, it is however a subject of much debate, it certainly helps show value, attract future funding and tells a projects story on the other hand many in the arts world view the process and in some way taking away from the intrinsic value of the art.

Cultural and Arts projects generate wellbeing; instinctively we all feel good experiencing cultural activity as a participant or audience member. Within this report as we tell the story of this project we try to get 'inside' this feeling and explore the results and potential implications for this and future projects. Whilst following this evaluation path we have stumbled upon a bigger picture, a story revealed by the draft work produced by the playwright.

THE NUTS AND BOLTS

The project engaged with Guests, Visitors and Staff at Hannahs at Seale Hayne.

These engagements took place at either creative workshops run by the project team (Nick Stimson, Tony Gee, and Claire Beckett) or one to one interviews. These interactions drove the creation of the final draft of the play with the working title: 'A Place of Constant Surprises'.

To capture feedback from participants a feedback form was devised with the help of Hannahs staff. A traditional feedback form may have been inaccessible for some of Hannahs Guest's, to overcome this we devised a form where the language was simplified and Picture Communication symbols (Mayer-Johnson.com) were used on the form. (See appendices)

- Tony Gee conducted three story-gathering workshops and they resulted in the gathering of approximately 20 stories. (50 people)
- Clair Beckett ran six dance workshops. Clair worked with approximately (72 people)
- Nick did about 50 interviews with guests, people who work at Seale-Hayne and with visitors.
- Casual interactions. A total of approximately 30
- Filmmaker Danny Cooke has documented the project and in the course of making his film he has interacted with 30 Guests, Residents and Visitors
- Play reading with 12 actors and an audience of 15
- Two planned workshops for guest – Theatre and Performance run by Nick est. 20 people

Total = 267 interactions

In addition Nick held conversations with two performance companies (Firebird Theatre and with Amici Dance Theatre Company) with a view to working with them during the next stage of the





projects, both specialise in working on performances with groups with mixed disabilities. He also was interviewed twice on Radio Devon about the project.

Nick had envisaged (at the outset of the project) that the project would challenge him artistically, getting out of a theatre setting and working in a new environment would see him using new techniques both in terms of creation and presentation of the work. This individual learning for him as the lead artist should be noted. In his words:

‘This journey - the researching and writing of ‘A Place Of Constant Surprises’ - has been a far deeper and more influential journey than I had foreseen. As a human being I have learnt that disability is part of who we are - part of all of us in one way or another and that is one thing the play tries to show. As a writer I have learnt that in order to tell the complex and powerful stories of people with disabilities that I needed to fully enter into their world, see the world from their point of view and never to patronise. It has been an inspiring journey.’

‘The process has been one of continual learning. Learning about the huge background story of Seale-Hayne and then the personal stories of the guests, their disabilities, the stories of the people who work with the guests, and the relatives of the guests. The challenge was then to write a play where these many stories were woven into one narrative - a narrative of hope. The structure that evolved - a multi-stranded piece of musical theatre told on several different stages as a site-specific play - was a major challenge. It led me to discover new structures which married episodic story-telling with deeply personal story-telling’

‘The rehearsed reading took place in a room in Seale-Hayne before an audience comprising Seale-Hayne guests and people who work at Seale-Hayne. Of particular interest to me was the clarity of the narrative and I made several notes about moments in the play where the narrative could be clearer. Because the reading was not in the usual theatrical setting it made the positive and negatives much more apparent. Particularly important was the positive feedback from the Seale-Hayne guests.’

SURVEY RESULTS AND CASE STUDY

On the project feedback form we asked participants who returned the feedback form (x45) for their feedback on the experience and their wider view about Hannahs. Feedback was 100% positive, the word cloud below uses the words used on feedback forms, the bigger and bolder the word appears shows the frequency it was used by participants.



The word cloud accurately reflects the positivity expressed by the participants who came into contact with the project. The results can indicate that the quality of the interventions was very high, no respondents used the available text box to share what they felt the organisers could have done better. (The total numbers may differ reflecting where a respondent has not indicated an answer)



We received feedback from participants:

	Guest	Hannahs Volunteer/Staff	Visitor	Project worker/Resident Artist
Are you ...	14	12	11	10
		Arts/Dance Workshops	Interview	Other
How did you interact with the project?		11	18	15
		Yes	Don't know	No
Do you agree with the following statements?				
I am enjoying myself at this workshop/interview	43		2	
The workshops interview is well organised	47			
This workshop/interview has made me more likely to attend similar events in the future	42		1	

CASE STUDY – DANCE WORKSHOP

Week One

A lady with no speech, only communication through gestures enters the room, she is shy and older than most of the other participants. She walked around the room, kept herself to herself and stood by the stereo listening to the music, she would sometimes bend her knees and lift her arms in the air, and mainly signalled to her carer that she wanted to go for a cup of tea!

Week Two

She is more familiar with the exercises from last week, and is more active in the session, interacting with others and sometimes offering movement ideas for choreography, by clapping her hands and bouncing up and down with joy!

Week Three

She now really recognises the space and people in the room, she

moves more freely all around the hall, turning and lifting her arms in the air, she takes my hands and dances with me. She joins a group to make a dance together about each of the individuals every day life routines and she contributes her Tea Drinking Gesture! She then shows us how she can make it into a bigger movement. She takes part in the dance and copies what everyone does. She is now fully integrated into the group and engaged in the activity.

Week Four

She is now pretty much leading the exercises! We play a game where one person enters the circle to make a shape and you build it into a jigsaw puzzle one at a time, more and more people enter and add a shape to the picture. She began to run! She ran in and out of the circle and made shapes and decided when she wanted to go in and out. When asked she now makes movements to share with the group and the rest of the group copy her. She has developed a series of

movements that she likes to repeat that she can do if you remind her or when the music is on. She likes to lie down at the end and relax with the music and some fabric, she smiles and tries to grab the material, she seems really relaxed!

By allowing this lady who has 1-1 care throughout her whole day to have time and freedom to express herself, in one hour a week she has achieved so much. Her support workers have allowed her to move and be free in the space, rather than telling her what to do or how to move. She really has come out of herself, and as each week goes by, she has more and more confidence to participate. She has really become an important member to the group. Now with lots of smiles and energy she gives the other participants joy and confidence to join in also.

One of her support workers said that in other groups she is seen as the naughty one, or loud one, but here she is really calm and enjoys herself... it is hard to believe!





WHAT IS ‘SOCIAL CAPITAL’ (SC)

THERE IS NO ‘AGREED’ DEFINITION OF SOCIAL CAPITAL.

The earliest use of the term “social capital” is attributed to Hanifan (1916:130) who referred to “tangible assets” such as goodwill and fellowship or social intercourse shared amongst those who constitute a social unit. By the 1980s academic across the world had developed the concept. The work of Pierre Bourdieu (around Cultural Capital) (1984), James Coleman (1990) and Robert Putnam (2000) are notable in terms of development of the term and associated links with wellbeing. An accepted definition of SC is still a subject of debate, common themes lend themselves to us working on the basis of accepting that social networks have value and SC ‘is the expected collective or economic benefits derived from the preferential treatment and cooperation between individuals and groups.’ What is clear is that SC derives not necessarily from the product of the collectivism but the process of creation. In the context of this project the workshops, interviews and read through (experience by audience and actors) rather than the final work is the generator of SC.

MEASURING SOCIAL CAPITAL

Feedback to the project was overwhelmingly positive. We wanted to translate these ‘feelings and responses’ into something tangible. As with the definition of SC there is no universally adopted mechanism to measure. We have used the (Arts Councils’ preferred model) West Midlands Observatory Economic Impact and Social Return on Investment calculator. (Online –see links)

‘Social Return on Investment’ (SROI) is a technique that helps to demonstrate the economic value of the social effect of projects on participants.

For example, if a project helps to boost the self-confidence of a participant it is possible to compare this with the average cost of seeing a Life Coach (£50). While the SROI technique is being used more

and more in research, it is important to note that the technique remains experimental and research into this area is ongoing around the globe.

THE RESULTS OF MEASURING THE SOCIAL RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Evidence suggests that Hannahs has generated £14,564.24 total 'social return'.

Social return = £54.55 per participant. (235 participants)

How far this social return figure can be seen as 'value for money' depends on various factors including the amount of money that it cost participants to take part in the project (Which for this project was £0) and the cost of the of the project and any grants received to fund it.

Outcome Number of participants that benefitted equivalent monetary value (£)

Improved self-confidence £11,444.69

- Improved social life £0.00
- Improved physical fitness £73.08
- Improved opinion of the local area £3,046.47

Total £14,564.24

(Notes pertaining to these figures can be viewed in the reports final chapter)



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IMPLICATIONS FOR HEALTH AND WELLBEING

'A growing body of research has found that the presence of social capital through social networks and communities has a protective quality on health. Social capital affects health risk behaviour in the sense that individuals who are embedded in a network or community rich in support, social trust, information, and norms, have resources that help achieve health goals'

Lin, N. Building a network theory of social capital. In N. Lin, K. Cook, & R.S. Burt, (Eds.), *Social capital: Theory and research*, (pp.3-29). New York: Aldine de Gruyter.

Five Ways to Wellbeing is a set of evidence-based public messages aimed at improving the mental health and wellbeing of the whole population. (NHS Confederation and New Economics Foundation (NEF)). These are:

- **Connect** - with people around you
- **Be active** – walk, run, cycle, dance
- **Take notice** – catch sight of the beautiful, savour the moment
- **Keep learning** – makes you more confident as well as being fun
- **Give** – do something nice for a friend or a stranger.

The debate around arts and health is very much alive at present and well represented in the recently published report AHRC Cultural Value Project *Cultural Value and Social Capital*.

In the context of this project there seems to be an opportunity to use the further development of 'Place of Constant Surprises' to test the ideas touched on in this report.

THE BIGGER PICTURE

The key outcome of the project was the production of a first draft of a community play telling the Hannahs and Seale Hayne story.

The play tells a very powerful story using the research collected throughout the project. Clear voices come through in the play and as we hear each a common theme emerges. Throughout its history Hannahs at Seale Hayne in all its different manifestations has run, promoted and created activities, projects and magical experiences.

A Place of Constant Surprises a (relatively) small arts project has generated Social Capital, which has positive implications for health and well being. (As well as creating a legacy for Hannahs – The Play)

This is uncannily mirrored by the content and stories within the play, revealing to us that this has always been the business of Hannahs, the creation of social capital is what it has done and continues to do.

“ *A lot of people say Hannahs grabs you and wraps its arms around you. Seale-Hayne is a magical place that is creating something special* ”

Bronwen Hewit – Hannahs Chief Executive

The Caveats are that there is not a perfect fit and/or agreement over the definition of social capital and/or the social return on investment. The definition of wellbeing/wellness and the indicators are not perfectly aligned with the indicators of social capital.

However, within the current climate, where Health and Wellbeing are increasingly defined by where and how we live, when health and social care are being redesigned to react to new challenges (Ageing Society) it is deemed to be the perfect time to establish frameworks whereby the process of creating and experiencing arts and culture can be quantitatively measured in terms of the creation of well being and the prescription of health.

Another issue to highlight is that there needs to be a balance established in terms of why we create arts and culture, many in the arts and cultural community would not place the creation of social capital and wellbeing as the prime goal rather the intrinsic value of creating art.

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RECOMMENDATION

The further development of the project 'A Place of Constant Surprises' would be of benefit to participants, the audience, playwright and Hannahs.

The research and development phase of the project has been of a high quality in terms of both the artistic interactions with guests and visitors at Hannahs and the final (scratch/draft) product (the play) feedback from everyone who has interacted with the project has been unanimously positive.

Only one element of the project as proposed at its outset was not delivered; the outreach/interviews at the Ivybridge site. This was out of the project managements control and they sought to mitigate the impact by running more workshops/interviews at Seale Hayne.

The next phase of the project could be accompanied by a research element which would seek to develop the ideas aired in this report around culture/social capital/wellbeing, as well as the methods of measurement and definition of social capital.

This could take the form of a (paid) fellowship offered to the academic community, (Exeter University) potentially the outcome would be a published academic paper. (The fellowship payment could be built into a grant application)

The benefits for Hannahs would be twofold: Firstly a unique piece of theatre which tells its story, providing a legacy and celebration. Secondly the process of creation would reveal the links between Hannahs and the creation of social capital. If this is proven it could be used by Hannahs in many ways, as the thread to any future strategies including: partnerships, audience development & marketing, programme development, regional leadership.

NOTES AND LINKS

Notes/Social Capital calculation

<http://www.eitoolkit.org.uk/>

There is a margin for error of (+/-) 14.61 associated with the participant questionnaire data (used to estimate social impact on participants).

1. Outcomes assumed to be short-term (persistence not factored in). Note 2: Deadweight (i.e. benefits that would have occurred anyway, with or without the project) calculated based on intelligence from the person that entered data into the Social Return on Investment Calculator on behalf of the project. Note 3: Displacement (negative effects) assumed zero.
2. Equivalent monetary value calculated using set metrics e.g. where projects worked with participants (aged 16+) with recognised mental health issues / issues of low self-worth, the value (per hour) of participation in the project has been valued at £51 (the cost per hour for counselling services in primary medical care).
3. Outcome based on the proportion of respondents that said they had made new friends / contacts through the project OR the number of respondents that said the project has led them to 'feel part of something' (question which attracted the highest proportion of respondents=used). note 2: Equivalent monetary value calculated using set metrics e.g. where projects worked with young participants (aged 15 or under) without recognised mental health issues / issues of social isolation, the value (per hour) of participating in the project has been valued at £0.96 (average hourly cost of Scouts membership).
4. Outcome based on proportion of respondents that stated their physical fitness improved. Note 2: Equivalent monetary value calculated using set metrics; e.g. where projects worked with participants (aged 16+), the value per hour of participating in the project has been valued at £1.22 (the average hourly cost of gym membership).
5. Outcome based on the proportion of respondents that said their perception of the local area (where the project took place) had improved in one of the following respects (sense of community / as a place for events and festivals / as a place for arts and culture / as a place for sport) (question which attracted the highest proportion of respondents=used). Note 2: Equivalent monetary value calculated using set metrics, e.g. where projects worked with participants (aged 16+), improved perception was valued based on the average spend per day trip (for local residents) in the area where the project took place - as described by DC Research (Association of Independent Museums) (2010) The Economic Value of the Independent Museum Sector, p41.

