

Action: Disability Arts - NorDAF New Audience Programme - evaluation report
foreword

NorDAF

Following on from this very successful audience development pilot project, NorDAF is very excited about the future of Action: Disability Arts and the impact it can make across the North East. The project has started to address the inaccessibility of arts organisations across the region in terms of both their physical access and attitudes of staff to disabled audiences.

This report highlights the very real benefits derived by four arts organisations from the Ambassador placements. The advice and training they have received has already led to many changes being made and we look forward to seeing more developments which will ultimately be to the benefit of disabled audiences.

Action - Disability Arts has raised the profile of NorDAF with some mainstream arts organisations and helped us forge links with more disabled people, many of whom were previously unknown to us.

Much still needs to be done and NorDAF is keen to repeat the project again and is delighted that the four Ambassadors are fully committed to continue, along with other recruits who will be trained to complete and strengthen the team.

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1. executive summary

1.1 the project

Action: Disability Arts was an audience development pilot project run by NorDAF (Northern Disability Arts Forum) across the North East. It was funded by the New Audience Programme (NAP) initiative from Arts Council England through Arts Council England, North (formerly Northern Arts), Gateway Two, increasing access for disabled people to the arts.

“One member of staff... was very resistant initially, he couldn’t see the relevance of access to his work... I went back a few weeks ago and he now has interpretation panels in clear print which are lit, the flooring had changed, there was information there about everything... I almost cried...”

Susie Rutherford at Tyne and Wear Museums

It has aimed to create an innovative new model of good practice through the placement of four disabled ambassadors (Clarence Adoo, Denise Armstrong, Irene Fisher and Susie Rutherford), with support from Jo Verrent, disability arts consultant for ADA inc (Arts, Disability Access = inclusivity), in four mainstream arts organisations (Theatre Royal Newcastle, Northern Gallery for Contemporary Arts, Northern Print Studio and Tyne and Wear Museums).

“[I met] the woman in charge of marketing and she showed me the new season’s draft brochure. We talked about the clear print guidelines... and I said that text over images and poor colour contrast wasn’t making it easy to read. I couldn’t believe it when she came up to me 4 weeks later and said - ‘what about this?’ - and she’d change it all and it met most of the guidelines. I was amazed!”

Clarence Adoo at the Theatre Royal

Each ambassador had 30 days to work with their host across seven areas: physical access, customer care, marketing, education and outreach, employment, programming and consultation with disabled people

“ there is a whole world out there I didn’t know about, and I didn’t know about how communication occurred within that world. I have learnt so much through just working with Denise...” Northern Gallery for Contemporary Arts

The total project budget was £36,000 and the project ran from October 2001 to September 2002 (including evaluation). A further evaluation element occurred six months after the placements were complete in February 2003.

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*“This experience has helped me learn about the theory side of things.....
I’ve learnt lots, lots! learnt about mental health, learning disability,
signage, visual access in design, how staff can approach people
and change things without being threatened or threatening...”.* Denise Armstrong

1.2 the aims, objectives and measures of success

The project had aims related to developments in three areas - the practice of the mainstream (host) arts organisations, the skills of the ambassadors and the profile of NorDAF. These were all met.

the host organisations

- The placements to cover six agreed subject areas (customer care, physical access, education and outreach, marketing, programming and access to programme and employment) **met**
- The action plans produced by ambassadors to include short term recommendations for improvements and long term plans and projects and for these to be agreed to and time tabled by the host organisations **met**
- The action plans produced by ambassadors to include commitment to further involvement of ambassadors and/or NorDAF, and for these to be agreed to and time tabled by the host organisations **met**

specific targets and outcomes for each host

- **Theatre Royal, Newcastle** - To ensure that other areas, specifically marketing, consultation and employment practices were addressed. **met**
- **Tyne and Wear Museums** - To concentrate on up to 4 sites and to ensure that strategic service level assessment was delivered **both met and exceeded!**
- **Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art** - To find the areas where they could move things along quickly and thereby gain a sense of achievement, and also to set in place best practice theory for the areas which would prove more resistant. **met**
- **Northern Print Studios** - Not to overload the organisation and to ensure that access became a central concept for the new premises. **met**

the ambassadors

- For the ambassadors themselves to feel as though they have learnt new and transferable skills during the course of the programme **met**
- For the ambassadors to finish the programme desiring to have further contact/work with NorDAF and/or in the disability/arts sector of the Northern Region. **met**

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NorDAF's Profile

- Other mainstream arts organisations in the region also gain an increased knowledge and understanding of NorDAF through the project **met**
- The project is mentioned in more Arts Council England, North East information than usual, a range of staff members at Arts Council England, North East are involved in various aspects of the programme and NorDAF is invited to a wider range of Arts Council England, North East meetings/events/groups during and/or after the programme **met**
- There is national coverage of the project within disability/arts media **partly met**

“Access is actually interesting. I started this project thinking that it was something that I should do, but that I couldn't get very excited about but I have found it very creative and really interesting”. Northern Print Studios

1.3 the real achievements

The above shows the achievements of the project 'on paper'. The following examples illustrate its profound impact on all those who were involved:

- **Theatre Royal, Newcastle** has developed a new access brochure, is aiming to appoint an Access Officer from September 2003 and has disability and access issues identified within its plans for development
- **Tyne and Wear Museums** has fire egress plans and training now in place in all 10 museums, a compulsory training programme on DET for all staff, is undertaking a comprehensive review of branding and marketing to ensure all conform to basic clear print guidelines and has formed a new consultation group of disabled people who attend museums
- **Northern Galley of Contemporary Arts** has made signage improvements including colour coding, changes to aspects of physical access, implemented compulsory training for staff around disability and made a significant change to its interpretation policy - there is to be more reliance on human interpretation (through the presence of gallery guides) than on written materials
- **Northern Print Studios** have placed access considerations central to their plans for relocation, now ask participants about access needs so they can tailor specific responses to individuals, have gained funds to employ a deaf artist and they themselves highlight a significant change in attitude
- **further paid employment opportunities** for two of the ambassadors. Denise Armstrong has been employed by Northern Gallery for Contemporary Arts as a freelance artist on four occasions during and since the project and both parties feel this relationship will continue. Susie Rutherford has been contracted by Tyne and Wear Museums to deliver 2 days a week (one day training and one day consultancy) for the service for next 3 years

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For NorDAF too, the impact can be seen. Arts Council England, North East are now very keen to assist NorDAF to restructure and expand as an organisation to enable them to develop Disability Arts more appropriately throughout the whole region and to network effectively with other disability groups and mainstream organisations.

“ It has changed the way I view the world.” Northern Print Studios

The project was a success on many levels. It met and exceeded its own stated aims and objectives, but more importantly had a profound impact on both the ambassadors and the host organisations. For the former, the most exceptional ‘unexpected outcome’ is that one, Susie Rutherford, has given up her previous post to work as a disability and arts consultant full time. For the hosts, the most telling response has been that the project has altered their way of thinking. From access and disability being seen, at best, as dull and worthy (and at worst as a ‘problem’), this project has served to change attitudes and deep rooted ways of thinking. For the hosts, access issues can now be thought about creatively and in a positive way. This represents an enormous shift for both parties within a 15 month time frame.

All involved in the project at all levels hope that it can be repeated, not only in the North East, but across the country as an example of good practice.

2. introduction

Action: Disability Arts has been an opportunity for mainstream arts organisations to join forces with NorDAF (Northern Disability Arts Forum) and obtain an unprecedented degree of training, support and advice through a New Audience Programme (NAP). This initiative has been funded by the Arts Council England through Arts Council England, North East. It is one of a number of New Audience project being piloted across England, all taking a long term view on the development of the involvement of disabled people in the arts.

It has aimed to create an innovative new model of good practice through the placement of four disabled ambassadors: Clarence Adoo, Denise Armstrong, Irene Fisher and Susie Rutherford. They have support from Jo Verrent, disability arts consultant for ADA inc (Arts, Disability Access = inclusivity), and have developed staff skills and practice within four mainstream arts organisations across seven areas:

- physical access
- customer care
- marketing
- education and outreach
- employment
- programming
- consultation with disabled people

The four organisations involved are Theatre Royal, Northern Gallery for Contemporary Arts, Northern Print Studio and Tyne and Wear Museums, who are regularly funded organisations of Arts Council England, North East . The project aims to firmly consolidate mutually beneficial partnerships between these organisations and NorDAF to build upon in the future.

The project relates to developments in three areas - the practice of the mainstream arts organisations, the skills of the ambassadors and the profile of NorDAF.

3. context

3.1 NorDAF

Disability Arts is a young arts movement which first emerged during the 1980s. Disabled people who were influenced by the new ideas and lifestyles promoted by the Disabled People's Movement began to use their artistic skills to express their feelings, life experiences, beliefs and attitudes and produce issue based work.

Disability Arts can be made up of a number of different elements: individual artists, performance groups, community arts projects, publications and Disability Arts Forums.

NorDAF, the Northern Disability Arts Forum, is responsible for nurturing, developing and promoting each of these elements in the Arts Council England, North East Board region. It is a thriving and highly regarded arts development service which is staffed and managed by a majority of disabled people. It exists to empower disabled people in Teesside, Tyne & Wear, Durham and Northumberland through the promotion of Disability Arts and Culture.

Aims and Objectives of NorDAF

- to provide opportunities for disabled people to participate in the arts on their own terms
- to promote awareness of the needs and desires of disabled people as arts consumers and practitioners
- to provide advice and information to arts organisations and artists working in Disability Arts or with disabled people
- to work towards a fully accessible arts environment.

NorDAF promotes work by disabled artists through projects, exhibitions, performances and publications. It currently offers a number of services:

Newsletter

"NorDAF News" is a 16 page newsletter published quarterly. It is circulated to 1,000 disabled artists and arts organisations. It contains news from Disability Arts organisations and projects in the north, reviews, artists' work and funding information.

Disability Arts Directory

This Directory contains information about disabled and deaf artists who live and work in the North, British Sign Language interpreters, access consultants and potential funders. It is circulated to mainstream arts providers in the north as part of NorDAF's commitment to promoting Disability Arts. It is also now available to search on-line or to download.

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Information and advice

NorDAF's Information Worker frequently responds to enquiries from individuals and arts organisations. An important part of this work is putting organisations and individuals in contact with each other. NorDAF is able to draw upon a considerable range of experience and skills amongst our trustees and volunteers.

Staff

It is staffed by 2 workers. Veronica McKale is the full time Manager and David Baker is the Information Worker. They are based in MEA House, Ellison Place, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 8XS and can be contacted via Voice/fax: 0191 222 0708 Minicom: 0191 261 2238 or via the web site (www.NorDAF.org).

3.2 the programme

The New Audiences Programme (NAP) was established by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport in April 1998, as a one off £5 million fund for the Arts Council England. Co-ordinated by the Arts Council in collaboration with the Regional Arts Boards, the programme was designed to bring new audiences to the arts and to take new art to audiences across the country.

The programme was extended and subsequently attracted a further £15 million. The programme continues until the end of 2002 with full programme evaluation due in 2003.

In the two years that the programme has been running, over 300 projects have been developed and funded across a range of art forms. These projects tested various innovative approaches to audience development. The principles of the programme are to:

- build on success
- target communities with fewer opportunities for artistic experiences
- encourage a lifelong arts experience
- promote innovation and enable consolidation
- broaden the range and depth of experience
- develop partnerships to support audience development strategies

This project sits within Gateway 2 of the current NAP programme, increasing access to the arts for disabled people.

3.3 project details

funding

The project was principally funded by NAP (£35,000) with £1000 being added to the total budget due to in-kind support re venue hire, bringing the total project budget to £36,000.

time scale

The original time scale for the project was to begin in September 2001 and complete by September 2002. The start of the project was slightly delayed, starting in October 2001 but the final element of the project itself was still completed in September 2002 (including evaluation). Report writing and analysis of the project occurred in October-November 2002. A further evaluation element occurred six months after the placements were complete in February 2003.

4. description of project

4.1 initial project planning

The initial project was conceived and constructed by Veronica McKale (NorDAF) and Aziz Zeria (Arts Council England, North East). The outcomes for the project were set, but there was flexibility to enable the lead consultant (Jo Verrent) to further shape and develop each element. The following assessment of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats within the initial project planning was completed by Jo Verrent in November 2001, shortly after taking up post as lead consultant for the project:

SWOT for initial project planning

strengths

- concept of project is interesting, innovative and exciting
- concept of project develops mainstream arts organisations in a practical way with them as partners and not just recipients
- project trains up local people - has clear legacy for NorDAF
- project could raise profile of NorDAF especially with mainstream arts organisations, thereby achieving a strategic aim of NorDAF.
- project appears achievable and with a suitably sized budget
- project demonstrates good value for money with 3 organisations to be involved

weaknesses

- very short time scale for delivery
- project outline is random rather than specific (but this also provides opportunity for 'shaping' of project by consultant which is a strength)
- budget is random rather than specific (but this also provides flexibility which is a strength!)
- project originates in concept from NA and NorDAF rather than NorDAF alone - could be an issue re ownership

opportunities

- for seeding projects relating to disability and access in the host organisations
- for rolling out projects to other mainstream arts organisations
- for raising NorDAF's profile
- for Jo Verrent to work as a support and not just as a deliverer

threats

- time scale could prove difficult for delivery
- could have problems recruiting ambassadors with appropriate skills
- could have problem recruiting enough suitable hosts

4.2 the seminar

In order to gain 'hosts' for the programme, a half day seminar was planned to explain the ideas behind the project to mainstream arts organisations, specifically Regularly Funded Organisations (RFOs) of Arts Council England, North East. This also provided an opportunity for would-be ambassadors to find out more about the programme and then be interviewed

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that afternoon. The time scale for publicising the event was tight, with the seminar occurring on 10th December 2002.

Organisations were e-mailed about the event and sent some introductory information and a booking form. The booking form asked for access information relating to attendance at the event itself and for the handout pack. The pack (see appendices for examples) included information on:

- NorDAF
- Arts Council England, North East
- the Action: Disability Arts project
- the Disability Discrimination Act
- the Disability Rights Commission

and

- an application form for hosts
- an evaluation form for the seminar

The event had the following programme:

- 09.30 registration (with tea/coffee available)
- 10.10 welcome by Paula Greenwell, acting chair of NorDAF and Aziz Zeria, Special Projects Officer, Arts Council England, North East
Action: for the future...
Two perspectives on the potential for access to the arts and the promotion of Disability Arts in the future
Tom Shakespeare - Centre for Life
Paul Rubinstein - Head of Arts and Culture, Newcastle City Council
- 11.10 Action: Disability Discrimination Act
A presentation on how the DDA effects arts organisations and what further improvements might be required by 2004
A showing of the awarding winning video 'Talk' produced by the Disability Rights Commission
- 11.30 break
- 11.50 Action: Access
A showing of 'Shoot your mouth off', a video project looking at access introduced by Karen Rafferty from Cleveland Arts
A presentation by Tim Metcalfe, Access Officer for Chester City Council on access at the Grosvenor Museum, Chester, 2001 winners of the ADAPT Award.
- 12.40 Action: Disability Arts
Jo Verrent launches the Action: Disability Arts audience development project - and explains how arts organisations can get involved

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1.00 lunch and networking until 2.00pm
with live music by disabled artist J C Jammer

Attendance was lower than hoped. 41 people attended in total - representing 23 organisations and with 6 people attending as individuals. Formal feedback through the evaluation form was extremely low - within only one return - but positive. Informal feedback - from talking to people at the event, from e-mails received after the event and from talking to people at other meetings/events after the event - was positive indicating that people had found the event informative, interesting and useful. The following SWOT was produced 3 days after the event by Jo Verrent:

SWOT on seminar (Dec 2001)

strengths

- varied programme designed including examples of Disability Art, national case studies, high profile speakers both disabled and non disabled
- half day to maximise attendance
- hook in providing information on the DDA which all delegates should find useful, whether or not they are interested in being hosts
- invitations to the possible ambassadors, ensuring that there were also a high number of disabled people present
- good delegate pack - high quality and with lots of useful information

weaknesses

- time scale was very tight for delegates to respond
- parking not clear (two delegates couldn't park so they didn't stay)
- lower number of delegates than anticipated (high level of people who booked and then did not appear)
- no formal reminder to fill in evaluation forms for the day led to very low level of returns (one!)

opportunities

- to raise NorDAF's profile with mainstream arts organisations

threats

- low levels of attendance led to only a small pool of mainstream arts organisations knowing about the project and therefore the concern that we may not get enough host applications

4.3 the ambassadors

It was always known that the choice of ambassadors for the project would be one of the main keys to its success. They would be the people on 'the front line'. Therefore the recruitment for these posts was an extremely important element of the project as a whole. Begun at the same time as the publicity for the seminar (within two weeks of the project starting), the posts were advertised through NorDAF's own newsletter, NorDAF's web site, through the

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NDAF e-mail bulletin and via direct contact - letting key individuals and organisations connected to disability within the Northern Region know about the opportunity.

Information was advertised as being available in a variety of formats if requested (it was requested in e-mail format by three people and in large print by one person). Information sent out to interested parties included information on (see appendices for copies):

- NorDAF
- the ambassador posts (including a bullet point one page summary)
- application form
- application guidance

There were 14 requests for information which resulted in 9 applications, including 6 from people not previously known . The applications surprised all the project planning team with their quality and with the experience shown by the applicants. Applications were received from 2 Disability Equality Trainers, 3 people with experience of access auditing, an architect and 3 artists. It was decided to interview 6 applicants, all of whom, bar one, could attend the initial interview date. The other applicant was offered an alternative date. The interview panel were Jo Verrent, Veronica McKale, Aziz Zeria and David Burdus (all disabled people). Fully equal opportunities processes were followed with all candidates being asked the same questions and scores being given. The questions were as follows:

- What do you think are the three biggest barriers for disabled people accessing mainstream arts organisations?
- What areas of the DDA might change the way mainstream arts organisations operate?
- How do you feel about going into a mainstream arts organisation and trying to get them to change the way they do things?
- One area that might come up in this work is about programming Disability Arts work. What is your perspective on Disability Arts?
- The Ambassadors need to be very confident and assertive - and persuasive - how would you persuade us to choose you?
- It is only a 3-4 month project, and we need people who are ready and available after Xmas - can you commit the time?
- Before going into the organisations, we have planned a training element - what areas do you think this should cover for you?
- Why do you want to be an ambassador?

Due to the high calibre of applicants it was decided to appoint 4 ambassadors instead of the anticipated 3. It was felt that the additional workload could be managed within the budget given that less 1:1 support would be required, than had been expected. Non successful applicants were phoned and written to, with supportive and constructive feedback on their applications/interviews.

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The following SWOT was completed by Jo Verrent after appointments were made in December 2001.

SWOT for recruitment of ambassadors

strengths

- reasonable level of interest in posts
- good number of applications, including a number from people not previously known showing that the dissemination of information was good
- exceptionally high calibre of applicant
- positive comments from applicants on the application process
- applications sent out and received in a variety of formats
- flexible project team able to stretch project to include 4 ambassadors rather than 3 based on the high calibre of applicants
- interview after the seminar was commented on as positive by all candidates as they gained greater understanding of the project through attendance
- interview team worked well together and enjoyed the process
- good practice shown by also interviewing the candidate who could not attend the seminar at a later date (and appointing her in addition to 3 others)
- supportive letters sent to those not selected for interview and those not appointed

weaknesses

- time scale was very tight for getting the message out
- applicants mainly from Newcastle (4 from Newcastle, 1 from North Tyneside, 1 from Teesside, 1 from Northumberland, 1 from York and 1 from Liverpool)

opportunities

- to ensure that future recruitment processes within NorDAF have equally clear application packs/forms and dissemination processes
- to maintain contact with all those who applied as there were other people who could be very useful for NorDAF in the future

threats

- time needed to develop appropriate materials/dissemination/processes could lead to this not occurring for all new posts (short and long term)
- applicants not getting an ambassadorship may not want to maintain links with NorDAF!
- spreading consultant over 4 ambassadors may be time consuming

The ambassadors selected were:

Clarence Adoo

Clarence was a professional trumpet player for 20 years, and has performed for both theatre and television. He has also performed on the stage of the Theatre Royal! He currently works at Northern Sinfonia in the Education and Outreach Department. He is involved in the advisory panel for the new Gateshead Concert Hall and was previously

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an advisor for the capital redevelopment of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden.
Clarence is also a member of the Arts Council's Disability Advisory Panel.

Irene Fisher

Irene is currently an Access Consultant at Disability North, and has extensive experience of delivering Disability Equality Training and training around the Disability Discrimination Act for organisations and individuals.

Susie Rutherford

Susie is vice chair of the Newcastle Disability Forum and works as a Disability Equality Advisor for Disability North. Previously she has worked for multinational organisations within marketing, and worked within the community arts sector.

Denise Armstrong

Denise lives in Liverpool but retains strong links with Newcastle as her parents still live in the area. Denise is a performer and choreographer (currently the artistic director of Common Ground Sign Dance Company) who works throughout the UK and abroad teaching deaf and hearing groups.

In terms of diversity, the ambassadors included: 3 people who define themselves as white and 1 person who defines themselves as black, 3 women and 1 man, 2 people with hidden impairments, 1 person with physical impairments and 1 person with sensory impairments.

4.4 the hosts

Having four ambassadors meant that the project required four hosts. Seven organisations expressed interest, but only four translated that into applications: The Theatre Royal, Newcastle, The Northern Gallery of Contemporary Art (Sunderland), Northern Print Studio, North Shields and Tyne and Wear Museums.

The reasons for the other three not applying were:

- time scale not fitting into their plans
- staff member on long term sick leave
- not sure organisation could currently commit the time due to other pressing issues/priorities

The applicants were therefore varied in relation to art form (although with a visual arts bias), geographic location, size and scale. They ranged from the Northern Print Studios with 3 full time staff and 8 voluntary board members to Tyne and Wear Museums with 170 full time staff, 30 part time staff and 250 volunteers. The applications were principally from

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personnel holding senior posts: Senior Executive, General Manager, Head of Education, and also from one Education Officer.

The applications also varied in the detail of information supplied and the depth in which they perceived the opportunity. Only one organisation gave a little cause for concern - the Theatre Royal's application appeared to view the opportunity as a way to principally provide training to front line staff. The following SWOT was completed on the recruitment process for hosts in January 2002.

SWOT on recruitment of hosts

strengths

- well thought out applications from three of the four hosts

weaknesses

- NorDAF had to chase for applications and only had four applicants in total
- the application from the Theatre Royal was very focused on the customer care aspect and gave little regard to any other possibilities/potential

opportunities

- to push links with The Baltic (they did not apply but did respond saying that they would be interested in some involvement in the project)

threats

- Theatre Royal may continue to consider only the customer care aspects

4.5 initial training

Following the appointment of the ambassadors, each was contacted (in accordance with their access requirements stated in their application forms) and asked for further information about their access requirements in relation to the training aspect of the project. This highlighted the following:

- one ambassador could not begin work until 11.30 am
- one needed, on some days, to leave at 3.00pm
- 2 could not take notes or write during sessions
- 1 could not take notes whilst watching/lip-reading
- 1 needed BSL interpretation
- rooms needed to be warm, to ensure comfortable, firm seating and have enough space for an electric wheelchair.

Rather than planning 3 full days, the training was therefore spread over 4 days - the 28th, 29th January, 1st February and 20th February (the fourth session was fixed at a time agreed at the end of the third day).

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Day one included

- introduction and sharing of access needs
- run thorough of day's programme
- repeated information on the Action: Disability Arts programme (same as seminar)
- discussion of possible outcomes for various stake holders - NorDAF, Arts Council England, North East, hosts, ambassadors and Jo Verrent (see appendices)
- confirmation of roles and responsibilities (including the 'who is responsible for... game')
- clarification of communication routes
- sharing skills and experience (including the 'how much do you know about...' game)
- looking at the programmes for days 2 and 3
- an evaluation game (roses and thorns)

The roses and thorns exercise showed that people enjoyed finally meeting up and getting started, building the team, seeing the strengths/diversity in the team, and being in a group where someone else was leading. People did not enjoy the time pressure and the fact that people kept 'popping in', pressure from Arts Council England, North East in relation to publicising the project, a sense from one person that they knew less than the others and some external concerns (high winds/sandwich at lunch).

Day two included

- input on evaluation
- input on the culture of mainstream arts organisations and the arts funding system
- traditional responses by mainstream arts organisations to issues of disability and access
- information on the host organisations

At the end of day two, the ambassadors were asked what they were looking forward to most.

The following answers were given:

- making change happen
- being genuinely useful
- seeing real evidence of actual change
- making a real difference

They were also asked what they were looking forward to least:

- coming up against blocks and ignorance
- problems with record keeping and access needs
- trying to be all things to all people
- trying to convince people who just won't listen

Day three included

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- information on action planning and the identification of the seven areas that the project aims to cover (customer care, physical access, marketing, education and outreach, programming, employment and consultation)
- discussion on the individual host organisations in relation to the above and points to watch out for
- allocation of ambassadors to hosts
- information on record keeping
- information on the 'how 2 guide'

In determining which ambassador was allocated which host, access barriers were the first consideration. Clarence had to be based at a nearby venue with a degree of physical access and was allocated to the Theatre Royal. This was also thought to be a good idea given that they wanted to emphasise the training aspect of the placement and if one of the two qualified DET trainers had gone in, they may have just got 'stuck' on that issue. Given that Clarence makes such an 'impression' - being in a large electric wheelchair and with support workers, it felt very comfortable that he was to go to Theatre Royal where a strong impression needed to be created.

Denise wanted to be based in a smaller organisation as with her communication requirements, she knew she would be best placed building a strong relationship with a few staff members rather than spreading herself too thinly. She was also happy to travel and so was allocated the Northern Gallery of Contemporary Art.

Susie wanted the big one - Tyne and Wear Museums! She wanted to look at the issues from a strategic perspective and felt this would give her the opportunity to do so. That left Irene, one of the most experienced ambassadors, with the smallest organisation - Northern Print Studios. Irene was very happy to take on NPS as she also, very generously, felt that she could be of most use supporting the other ambassadors in their placements. At this point it was also hoped that we would be able to involve the Baltic somehow in the project, and Irene was prepared to undertake discussions with them, if the opportunity arose.

It was made clear that the ambassadors wanted to work as a team, supporting each other, and delivering on each others placements where relevant.

At the end of day three, the ambassadors were asked to describe how they felt and the responses included excited, motivated and eager and also frustrated (with people 'popping in') and tired (as breaks had been reduced by people 'popping in'). People stated that they had learned a lot already, found new friends and couldn't wait to get started. One ambassador said:

"I just want to pack my job in right now and do this all the time from now on"

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Following the three days outlined above, the ambassadors were sent a set of notes - all information written during the days themselves and also a set of notes clarifying what kinds of questions might be asked around each of the seven areas. They also listed the contents relating to that area that would appear in the 'How 2 guide'.

Day four was on 20th February from 3 - 6pm as this was the only time in February that all ambassadors were free. This session included representatives from the host organisations and was the first time the two groups had met. The programme was as follows:

- welcome and introductions
- update on the changes to the project (ie four not three hosts and ambassadors)
- mini presentations by each host on what their organisation does and why they wanted an ambassador
- information on recording, documentation and evaluation
- the opportunity for hosts and ambassadors to begin setting times/dates for placements/meetings

As can be seen from some of the comments above, the training days had a number of people 'popping in' to meet the group: Aziz Zeria came over from Arts Council England, North East to introduce himself, the Public Relations Officer from Arts Council England, North East, the De Montfort evaluation team and representatives from Access to Work. Most were not problematic in themselves, but they did reduce a very tight time scale and also reduce breaks. Two were problematic, but these are discussed further in their relevant sections of this report - media coverage and evaluation.

In addition to the above, there were individual sessions with each ambassador where they met with Jo Verrent 1:1. These sessions clarified learning and access needs and enabled each person to explain their perspective on disability and Disability Arts. The ambassadors also 'scored' themselves in relation to their knowledge of a number of key specific areas so that a baseline could be established. The meetings also looked at personal goals for each placement and identified 'warning signals' should people become overwhelmed by the project.

The following SWOT was completed by Jo Verrent at the end of February 2002.

SWOT on initial training sessions

strengths

- level of interest and enthusiasm from the ambassadors
- variety of material to cover
- clear structure
- accessible practices developed (ie use of post-it notes - if anyone who couldn't write needed to be reminded of anything it was written on a post-it note for them and stuck

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directly onto their folder, each consultant took notes on post-it notes to type up later
- colour coded for each ambassador)

weaknesses

- only able to work from 11.30 - 3.00 one day and until 4.00 remaining days due to access and childcare commitments and this made it necessary to add in another day making it more time consuming for the consultant (although shorter days are beneficial to Denise re concentration/working with an interpreter)
- access requirements meant that only the consultant and Denise can take notes in sessions (and Denise can't take notes and watch what is being said simultaneously) - the benefit from this is that consultant has to send typed notes of what is delivered which are good for memory aides and to ensure everyone has all the information, the downside is that there is a lot of information to be sent after each day
- lots of people 'popped in' ... meant that time was even more reduced

opportunities

- to supplement learning with material included in the 'How 2... Guide'

threats

- ambassadors could feel under prepared

4.6 the 'How 2... guide'

The original project proposal identified the need for a publication to support the ambassadors and provide ongoing support for the hosts. Although originally planned to be completed before the placements began, the final publication 'the How 2... guide' was actually completed in March, and was disseminated in April amongst the ambassadors, who chose when to give copies to their host organisations.

The contents were determined by the ambassadors themselves. They stated what they wished to refer to and the standards they wished to promote. For example, in reference to standards for physical access, they were not content to refer organisations to Part M of the Building Regulations but chose instead to refer to the standards created by the Gateshead Access Panel and their publication 'Enabling Access'.

The contents of the guide are as follows:

forewords (by NorDAF and Arts Council England, North East)

introductory section

introduction

why?

different ways of looking at disability

national disability statistics

disability statistics for the Northern Region

disability etiquette and language

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the hidden history of disabled people

famous disabled people in the arts

disabled people as ... audience members and artists

physical access

customer care

marketing

access to programmes

education and outreach

disabled people as ... members of staff

recruitment

employment

Disability Discrimination Act

disabled people as ... consultees

consultation

Arts Council England, North East Disability Policy

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The content of the guides was extremely useful and was relied upon heavily by the ambassadors. The 'quality' of their presentation was an issue. Due to time pressures, the original set had a spelling mistake on the cover and no logo for Arts Council England, North East and the contents were not as well laid out as they might have been if funding had allowed for a graphic designer for this element. The budget for the project as a whole was therefore adjusted to allow for an additional 50 copies to be reproduced and NorDAF agreed to reformat the 'insides'. It was agreed to wait until the hosts and the ambassadors had a chance to comment more fully on the guides before reprinting in case other requirements were noted. At the evaluation day on 17th September 2002, the following were requested:

- more details on guidelines for physical widths for doorways (rather than referring people to the Gateshead Access Panel's publication)
- NorDAF contact for a list of disability artists
- more copies for each host so that individual departments can have their own
- more information on North Tyneside
- one of the Disability Officer's listed for Sunderland is planning related and not available for general advice (and this should be stated)
- more information and sources for funding
- contact details for Access to Work for North East

The ambassadors also felt that if the project were run again, it would be a good idea for new ambassadors to have access to it before the training days so that they could query any information that they did not quite understand.

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The following SWOT was completed by Jo Verrent just after the Guides had been given to the ambassadors (March 2002).

SWOT on 'How 2... Guide'

strengths

- provides easy to access, valuable reference information for ambassadors and hosts
- bite sized chunks - not overfacing (only 66 pages in total)
- contains material that the ambassadors requested
- contains standards set by ambassadors
- good value for money

weaknesses

- spelling mistake on cover ('commissioned' not 'commissioned')
- no Arts Council England, North East logo (logos only for New Audiences, NorDAF and ADA inc)
- Aziz Zeria unhappy with quality of internal layout (total budget for writing and production of 50 copies was £3000 which would not stretch to a graphic designer for internal layout)

opportunities

- to reprint amending weaknesses (above)
- to reprint to include any other suggestions made by ambassadors hosts
- to distribute to all main clients of Arts Council England, North East

threats

- none noted

Within the project budget it was possible to redevelop the 'How 2... Guide' slightly, adding the correct logos, improving the layout and adding a comprehensive listing of web contacts. These were produced to disseminate to other clients of Arts Council England, North East.

4.7 meetings in April and May

A group session was held for all ambassadors on 3rd April and individual sessions were held on both 3rd and 4th April to ensure each ambassador could be met and talk through their concerns and questions with the process. A full day for both hosts and ambassadors was held on the 31st May, and individual meetings with the majority of the hosts occurred on the 30th May (with the exception of the Northern Gallery for Contemporary Arts where the lead contact was not available).

These sessions were less formally structured, with the agendas being developed by those attending. Subjects discussed included:

- setting of individual targets for each venue
- setting individual monitoring points for each venue
- agreement on reporting mechanisms
- discussing access barriers for the ambassadors
- planning time tabled commitments
- sharing of skills and experiences

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(Details of the placements themselves can be found in the individual reports from each placement in the appendices).

The following SWOTs were completed by Jo Verrent at the end of each set of two days.

SWOT on April check (3rd and 4th April)

strengths

- informal approach, more relaxed sessions
- Jo note taking on post-its not flip charts - easier for typing up. Post-its very useful for notes for Clarence and Irene who do not write their own notes

weaknesses

- Susie couldn't make the date in the end, had to be seen the next day
- time limited by Clarence's hours (from 11.30am) and Irene's (need to leave at 4.00pm due to childcare commitments) - but made sessions focused and clear
- lack of sign language interpreter - lack of clarity about whose responsibility it is to book them for joint meetings

opportunities

- to improve content of 'How 2... Guide'
- for Jo to offer personal support to particular ambassadors

threats

- time - Jo's time/costs - need to keep a formal record of time remaining

SWOT on May meetings (30th and 31st May)

strengths

- excellent to see hosts in their own environments
- all hosts very pleased with process to date
- all relished the opportunity to meet up and share experiences to date (hosts and ambassadors)

weaknesses

- hosts confused by emphasis on evaluation and involvement of so many additional people

opportunities

- none noted

threats

- Susie's illness - hospital appointment moved forward and she will miss 3 months and have to finish later than the others

4.8 evaluation

The project had three elements involved in its evaluation:

1. the evaluation process determined by Jo Verrent which impacted particularly on looking at the project from the perspectives of the ambassadors and NorDAF
2. the evaluation of the process as determined by the hosts, who had the additional involvement of Aspirational Arts working with them to ensure that they delivered in relation to evaluation

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3. the evaluation of the New Audience Programme Gateway Two by De Montfort University for the Arts Council England

The first of these elements involved

- maintaining an evaluative record of each part of the project to feed into the construction of this report (the SWOTs)
- benchmarking the knowledge and experience of the ambassadors when they began the project and at the end to see which areas had altered
- questioning the ambassadors at varying points to see what additional skills were being learnt and where additional input was required (using video camera for some elements)
- regular discussion with NorDAF to feedback relevant information, assess their perspective and consider any relevant issues
- formal evaluation session with hosts and ambassadors, and a further one just with ambassadors to record perspectives (using video camera)
- a final element 6 months after the placements were finished - ambassadors spent a day with their hosts, wrote a short written report and spent half a day discussing changes in their hosts with Jo Verrent

The responses from each element of the evaluation process are shown in the latter sections of this report. The format of the formal evaluation day is shown below:

evaluation meeting Tuesday 17th September ambassadors and hosts

11.00 - 11.30

Looking at the project concept and delivery to see what were essential components and what areas could be improved should the project be run again.

- What would you tell future ambassadors about the scheme?
- What would you tell future hosts about the scheme?
- In what ways could we improve each aspect of the project?

11.30 - 12.30

Looking at the individual host organisations and what they gained specifically from the experience.

- Host and ambassador fill in grid sheets separately
- And then compare.
- What are the principal things that have changed?

12.30 - 12.45

Looking at any outcomes or initiatives that have developed as a result of the project. How is the work going to continue?

- Ambassadors and hosts work together in their pairs
- Feedback to group as a whole

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12.45 - 1.00

wrap up

think of the journey of the project

- Where did you learn something new?
- Where were you cross/frustrated/irritated by the process?
- Where did you feel really good about being involved?

Ambassadors only 2- 4

2 - 2.30

- What areas did they cover?
- Which were the easiest areas to work on?
- Where was there real resistance?
- What did they do to overcome it?

2.30 - 3.00

The high points and low points experienced on placement. What lessons can be learnt?

- best person they met (most open, most willing to make change happen)
- worst person they met (most fixed ideas, most negative...)
- suggestion they were most proud of making
- problem they never found a solution to
- best bit of bullshitting!

3.00 - 3.30

What did they learn from each other?

3.30 - 4.00

How will this experience affect them in the future?

The recommendations to improve the scheme mentioned on this day were:

- to have all the ambassadors meet up informally once a month with members of NorDAF
- for NorDAF to hold a 'diary' of who was where when, to enable ambassadors to visit each other more easily
- to get ambassadors to run training days for each other using their specific skills knowledge (ie Denise could do one on deaf awareness/cultural issues for other ambassadors and NorDAF)
- for the hosts to meet all ambassadors - scheduled meetings would have been good
- to have better involvement with the press
- for prompter payments from NorDAF (some ambassadors felt that they were slow to pay initially)
- for NorDAF to pay for some of the interpreters for group meetings and to have helped out with the booking side with interpreters

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The second element of evaluation was determined by the hosts, who had the additional involvement of Aspirational Arts working with them. This process did not start well. There was a degree of confusion about the involvement of Aspirational Arts and their function in the process. Some people found their involvement intrusive and unneeded (some of the hosts had considerable experience in evaluating their own projects and initiatives). Use of e-mail correspondence between Jo Verrent and Aspirational Arts led to further confusion over terms of reference and content of discussions. A face to face meeting between the two parties was held and it was agreed that some of the issues arising had occurred due to the separation of elements one and two. It was then agreed that Richard (from Aspirational Arts) would accompany Jo Verrent on her planned visits to hosts to reassure them that they were not expected to deliver something out of the ordinary. On reflection it is still not clear whether the involvement of Aspirational Arts was 'useful', although the individuals concerned were helpful and approachable. Certainly it retained the focus on evaluation, although that was quite embedded within the project from its conception.

The third element was the involvement of De Montfort University as overall evaluators for all the Gateway Two projects. Again, this did not begin well. An initial visit by Michele Taylor and Diane Walters from the De Montfort Team resulted in the group of ambassadors missing a lunch break whilst they talked with them which caused fatigue. The group actually felt talked 'at' rather than 'to' and commented that the language used had been very academic and difficult for them to follow.

The paper based materials sent by De Montford were completed at the relevant intervals and sent back with additional comments. The mid-point forms were used as a basis for one of the exercises during the evaluation day although the results were not uniform (ambassadors and hosts were asked to 'mark' change in the organisations - each scored various aspects very differently from their different perspectives and having no base line point to work from). It was gratifying to see, from the last set of materials sent, that the team had been open to change and had developed the final form taking into account suggestions made by the group.

4.9 access to work

Despite positive conversations initially, and even after a personal visit to the team from two Access to Work personnel, all the ambassadors felt let down by the resulting support provided.

- Susie Rutherford - was originally offered a portable chair/back rest to move round with her as she wasn't to be based in one place (as she was doing Tyne and Wear Museums). Nothing materialised despite frequent calls.

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- Irene Fisher - her problems related to the breakdown of her lap-top computer (although her problems were between her principal employer, Disability North and Access to Work). Some note taker support was provided.
- Clarence Adoo - was originally promised a raft of additional equipment such as the loan of a lap top and a video camera, but no equipment materialised, although some note taker support was provided.
- Denise Armstrong - had issues re the cost of interpreters (and differences in rates between Liverpool and Newcastle). She also found the cash flow of payments difficult and although a lap-top has been agreed, cannot afford to finance this in advance.

4.10 the budget

The budget breakdown for the project is shown below with the original budget, any amendments made early on in the project, the actual spend and the variance between the amended budget and this spend. Notes on the variances on the following page.

ACTION: DISABILITY ARTS BUDGET

	original budget	amended budget	actual spend	variance (from amended)	note
co-ordination fee	6000	6000	6302.05	-302.05	1
How 2... Guide	3000	4000	4417.85	-417.85	2
Training	4500	3000	2749.46	250.54	3
Ambassador fees /salaries	9000	13000	14407.06	-1407.06	4
seminar	3000	1500	1523.58	-23.58	5
access	600	600	0	600	6
advertising/recruitment	300	50	50	0	7
DET for venues	2750	1000	0	1000	8
publicity	300	300	0	300	9
in kind venue hire	1000	1000	1000	0	

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NorDAF fee	5550	5550	5550	0
TOTALS	36000	36000	36000	

Notes

1 **Consultant**

An additional day was allowed to attend and write up a final session in February 2003, 6 months after the placements had finished, in order for the ambassadors to report back on what had changed.¹

2 **How 2... Guide**

The original budget amended to allow for reprinting of covers/reproduction of contents and to allow for production of 50 as opposed to original 20.

3 **Training**

Original budget reduced due to high level of experience already within ambassador team, and to allow ambassador fees to increase. This also included fees to the ambassadors for attending. Slight under spend from budgeted figures.

4 **Ambassador fees/salaries**

Amended to allow for 4 not 3 ambassadors, and also to allow for NI/Tax costs to NorDAF as some wished to be employees and others wished to be freelance. Slight overspend from budgeted figures which also includes 2 additional days per ambassador - one day with their hosts and one day reporting back (in writing and at a half day meeting) on the progress their hosts had made 6 months on

5 **Seminar**

Original budget amended as event was scaled down event (only 1/2 a day). Slight under spend from budgeted figures.

6. **Access**

Under spend as majority of costs covered by Access to Work

7. **Advertising/recruitment**

¹ as NorDAF is not VAT registered, the fees to the consultant included VAT and therefore meant she agreed to work for a lower rate than usual in order to work on the project. She also funded her own travel to and from Newcastle for the project.

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Original budget amended as routes chosen were less expensive than anticipated

8. DET for venues

Original budget amended to enable additional ambassador to be taken on - training to venues given by members of the ambassador team so anticipated costs greatly reduced. Significant under spend as all training delivered within ambassadors placement time.

9. Publicity

None spent

5. aims, objectives, measures of success

The programme had aims and objectives in three areas, with the first being primary:

- the impact of the programme on the host organisations
- the impact it has on the ambassadors themselves
- the impact on NorDAF's profile in the region

5.1 the host organisations

The programme was designed to increase access to the arts for disabled people in the long term. It aimed to do this through raising the awareness of mainstream arts organisations to the barriers disabled people face in accessing all areas of their operations, and providing suggestions and recommendations for removal of these barriers. The specific aims and objectives of the host organisations were dependent, in part, on the organisations chosen to be hosts, as each was at a different stage in its development of access/disability initiatives. However there are some which were generic.

Aim:

- to increase access to the arts for disabled people within the host mainstream arts organisations

Objectives:

- to ensure all host organisations are aware that access to the arts is not solely an 'audience' issue but impacts on all other areas of their organisation
- for the hosts to put in place sustainable short term improvements for increasing access to the arts
- for the hosts to develop long term plans and projects to tackle less easily solved barriers

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- for the hosts to develop plans to continue to prioritise disability and access related initiatives within their organisations, ideally through continued links with their ambassador and/or NorDAF

Measures of success:

- the placements to cover six agreed subject areas (customer care, physical access, education and outreach, marketing, programming and access to programme and employment)
- action plans produced by ambassadors to include short term recommendations for improvements, and for these to be agreed to and time tabled by the host organisations
- action plans produced by ambassadors to include long term plans and projects, and for these to be agreed to and time tabled by the host organisations
- action plans produced by ambassadors to include commitment to further involvement of ambassadors and/or NorDAF, and for these to be agreed to and time tabled by the host organisations

More detailed objectives specific to each host were drawn up after the placements began:

5.2 specific targets for each host

Theatre Royal, Newcastle

The application from Theatre Royal was very focused on the customer care aspect of the work and so the specific target placed here was to ensure that other areas, specifically physical access, consultation and employment practices were addressed.

Tyne and Wear Museums

The danger with Tyne and Wear Museums was in their size. With ten museums to consider there was a concern that the ambassador would either be overwhelmed or not be able to draw themselves away from the minute detail in order to look strategically at the service as a whole. The specific targets set were therefore

- to concentrate on up to 4 sites
- to ensure that strategic service level assessment was delivered

Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art

Being funded directly by a local authority, the Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art has many areas in which it cannot act independently. It was also in a considerable state of flux during the project with key staff moving and political changes occurring. The target set for this project was to find the areas where they could move things along quickly and thereby gain a sense of achievement, and also to set in place best practice theory for the areas which would prove more resistant.

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Northern Print Studios**

Northern Print Studios is very small and so one target here was to try not to overload the organisation and swamp it with the process. As new premises are being planned, another was to ensure that access became a central concept for the new premises.

5.3 the ambassadors

Aim:

- to increase the pool of committed and trained disabled people active within the Arts Council England, North East arts sector for NorDAF to draw upon for future work

Objectives:

- to ensure that the ambassadors gain skills in various areas during the programme
- to ensure that the ambassadors finish the programme desiring to have further contact/work with NorDAF and/or in the disability/arts sector of the Northern Region

Measures of success:

- for the ambassadors themselves to feel as though they have learnt new and transferable skills during the course of the programme
- for the ambassadors to finish the programme desiring to have further contact/work with NorDAF and/or in the disability/arts sector of the Northern Region

5.4 NorDAF's Profile

Aim:

- to increase profile of NorDAF within the region

Objectives:

- to increase the visibility of NorDAF to mainstream arts organisations and local authorities in the Northern Region
- to increase the profile of NorDAF within Arts Council England, North East
- to gain national coverage of the project within the disability/arts media

Measures of success:

- if the host organisations gain an increased knowledge and understanding of NorDAF through the project
- if other mainstream arts organisations in the region also gain an increased knowledge and understanding of NorDAF through the project

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- if the project is mentioned in more Arts Council England, North East information than usual, if a range of staff members at Arts Council England, North East are involved in various aspects of the programme and if NorDAF is invited to a wider range of Arts Council England, North East meetings/events/groups during and/or after the programme
- if there is national coverage of the project within the disability/arts media

SWOT for setting aims, objectives and measures of success (completed Dec 2001)

strengths

- useful to follow the ACE/RAB guidance - resulted in clear and monitorable targets
- above process also enabled less 'obvious' element (raising of NorDAF's profile) to become more prominent
- the simple set of questions from Aspirational Arts was useful - especially to look ahead to problems which might arise and consider what might be done to mitigate against them

weaknesses

- as targets are now very fixed, there may be a tendency to comment only on them and avoid 'the bigger picture'
- due to nature of the projects, targets for each of the hosts need to be completed at a later point - mid way through - and will be set by each ambassador in association with Jo Verrent

opportunities

- to move forward NorDAF's traditional evaluation processes to something more useful
- to move forward what NorDAF does with evaluation material - and ensure reports have a useful life/function to a) shape other projects and b) promote projects/working methods/NorDAF

threats

- if measures of success are not met, project may be seen as a failure, even if it is not and valuable lessons have been learnt

6. findings/results

This section considers how the preceding measures of success were, or were not, met and how these can be evidenced. It also notes any unexpected or additional outcomes arising from the project.

6.1 the host organisations

Measure of success:

The placements to cover six agreed subject areas (customer care, physical access, education and outreach, marketing, programming and access to programme and employment)

Met or not met? met

Evidence:

The reports from all ambassadors show comments and recommendations in all areas, and a seventh - consultation with disabled people.

Comment:

An exercise on the evaluation day looked at the areas people had found easiest to work on and, as initially expected, all four ambassadors stated customer care, with physical access coming close second. They were asked which areas the hosts were least willing to look at and the responses varied:

- Irene - web site improvement
- Susie - employment (as they were starting from a very low point re practices/monitoring) and access to information in easy English - very hard to convince curators
- Clarence - programming
- Denise - marketing, employment and evacuation procedures

Measure of success:

The action plans produced by ambassadors to include short term recommendations for improvements and long term plans and projects and for these to be agreed to and time tabled by the host organisations

Met or not met? met

Evidence:

Reports from all ambassadors show recommendations. In each instance the hosts took elements and time tabled these for implementation.

Comment:

The reports varied in levels of formality, depending on the experience of the ambassadors in producing formal written materials. The hosts equally varied in their desire and need to produce formal action plans from these reports. In all instances there have been personal reports of action implemented in accordance with recommendations made (see examples from ambassadors own project reports in appendices).

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Measure of success:

The action plans produced by ambassadors to include commitment to further involvement of ambassadors and/or NorDAF, and for these to be agreed to and time tabled by the host organisations

Met or not met? met

Evidence:

Level of continuing involvement with ambassadors varies:

Theatre Royal - Clarence invited to be on access group

Tyne and Wear Museums - Susie contracted to deliver 2 days a week (one day training and one day consultancy) for next 3 years

Northern Gallery for Contemporary Arts - has employed Denise as a freelance artist on 4 occasions during and since the project and states that they wish to continue to do so

Northern Print Studio - are considering asking Irene to join their board of management and are currently using her advice on a voluntary basis (although paid opportunities will be available when and if the project moves to a new location)

Comment:

The outcomes here, particularly that from Tyne and Wear Museums are far in excess of those considered possible at the start of the project.

At the evaluation day it was commented that the connections made appear stronger with the individual ambassadors than with NorDAF.

6.2 specific targets and outcomes for each host

Theatre Royal, Newcastle

Measure of success:

To ensure that other areas, specifically marketing, consultation and employment practices were addressed.

Met or not met? met

Evidence:

Placement and report covered all above areas in addition to customer care.

Comment:

By placing an ambassador who did not himself deliver Disability Equality Training at the Theatre Royal it made it easier to move from this central focus which had been present in the application. Change was faster in some areas than anticipated.

“ One of the people I had a meeting with was the woman in charge of marketing and she showed me the new season’s draft brochure. We talked about the clear print guidelines (I was using the stuff in the How 2... Guide) and I said that text over images and poor colour contrast wasn’t making it easy to read. I couldn’t believe it when she came up to me 4

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weeks later and said - 'what about this?' - and she'd change it all and it met most of the guidelines. I was amazed!"

principal outcomes (taken from video evidence on evaluation day)

- formation of an 'access club' based on idea from London theatre to solve some of the problems re communication and information (and data protection)
- made changes to format of the brochure to make it more accessible (following clear print guidelines)
- possibility to ensure rehearsal room fulfils refuge criteria - if this can be made a refuge point the theatre could have more disabled people in for activities
- updated access information provided by theatre

"we knew lots of information about the building that we took for granted that people knew outside of the building. When Clarence came in with a fresh pair of eyes he was able to say 'I didn't know a wheelchair user could get into Cafe 100, I didn't know there was access via a lift to the bar'. We've been able to update our marketing information and all of that information now is in the access policy and guide"

problem areas

- accessible loo has a sloping floor which has been discovered to have structural issues and so it is still unclear what solutions may be possible
- age of building/English Heritage regulations

Tyne and Wear Museums

Measure of success:

To concentrate on up to 4 sites and to ensure that strategic service level assessment was delivered

Met or not met? both met and exceeded!

Evidence:

Strategic work did occur - in particular the development of emergency evacuation procedures across all the museums and a service wide survey of employees and their knowledge/confidence around issues of access. The target to concentrate only on four sites was not met, as more were independently assessed than was initially considered feasible due to the dedication of the ambassador and the excellent working relationship developed with the host.

Comment:

The ambassador 'overworked', but this has worked to her advantage, as she has now gained paid freelance work with the organisation.

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principal outcomes (taken from video evidence on evaluation day)**

- direct access to information and knowledge has reinforced commitment to access
- access working party reconvened and re-energised with new members who have ownership of ideas and this spreads responsibility throughout the whole organisation
- corporate commitment and money for a service wide rolling programme of DET, deaf awareness training, guiding for the blind training, Minicom training etc. Ambassador to move to trainer/consultant status working 8 days a month for 2-3 years.
- decision made to establish a ‘Disabled Friends of Tyne and Wear Museums’ group made up of people who are ‘passionate about museums’ to act as a consultation group and to provide support for staff
- organisation wide survey of all staff asking about knowledge of disability/access issues had unprecedented response - over half of all staff responded to the written questionnaire.
- it was discovered as part of this project that there are no fire egress policies or procedures for the ten museums so this is being addressed as an emergency
- realisation that there are well motivated staff who are keen but without vital information/knowledge to improve practice; that even reluctant staff can be motivated

“One member of staff, a horticultural manager was very resistant initially, he couldn’t see the relevance of access to his work. He suddenly had a ‘light bulb moment’ of his own. I went back a few weeks ago and he now has interpretation panels in clear print which are lit, the flooring had changed, there was information there about everything... I almost cried... he’s a little beacon of good practice on his own now!”

problem areas

- very structured statutory framework in terms of policies, old buildings, complex links with owners of buildings and trying to work within those confines
- concerned about keeping momentum of work. There is a worry that pressure for other agendas to dominate will lead to access/disability issues being pushed out in future

Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art

Measure of success:

To find the areas where they could move things along quickly and thereby gain a sense of achievement, and also to set in place best practice theory for the areas which would prove more resistant.

Met or not met? met

Evidence:

Action: Disability Arts - NorDAF New Audience Programme - evaluation report

The host used the project in a very practical way, trialling a number of approaches during the residency. This fitted well with the ambassador, Denise, who was able to work in a very practical manner. The report lists activities which occurred as part of the project

Comment:

The 'How 2... Guide' served a valuable function in this and other instances, enabling good practice guidelines to be left with the organisations in a solid form.

principal outcomes

- being able to bring in disabled artists immediately (a deaf writer and a deaf dancer to provide workshops connected to exhibitions for deaf and hearing people)
- making direct links with groups who didn't even know that there was a gallery in Sunderland, and being able to quickly provide routes in for them
- learning about the deaf community

“ there is a whole world out there I didn't know about, and I didn't know about how communication occurred within that world. I have learnt so much through just working with Denise - I have moved on personally a huge amount (as have others who work in the building)”

problem areas

- issues around governance - Gallery is council controlled and councillors appear to have little awareness of disability or desire to prioritise access - need for constant lobbying
- recruitment and employment practice - have to follow council procedures which are not proactive or supportive enough. Change for this needs to come from elected member level.

Northern Print Studios

Measure of success:

Not to overload the organisation and to ensure that access became a central concept for the new premises.

Met or not met? met

Evidence:

The evaluation day records show that the organisation did not feel overloaded, but felt that Irene had 'joined the team'. Although the impact was wide reaching and profound it did not 'swamp' them.

Access has indeed become a central concept for the new premises with Irene becoming involved in the assessment of tenders, the interview process and the development of plans.

Comment:

Action: Disability Arts - NorDAF New Audience Programme - evaluation report

A high degree of sensitivity was shown by the ambassador around the amount of work that the organisation was able to take on board at any one time. The ambassador was also able to use her time to support the other ambassadors in their placements.

principal outcomes (taken from video evidence on evaluation day)

- making information available and changes instantaneous - improvements to signage and publicity all changed within a matter of days
- opportunity to work with people who are open to change and to influence attitudes
“Access is actually interesting. I started this project thinking that it was something that I should do, but that I couldn’t get very excited about but I have found it very creative and really interesting”.
“ It has changed the way I view at the world - I now think ‘Oh Irene wouldn’t like that!’ as I go around other buildings.”

problem areas

- inaccessible building mean things that should be simple will take a long time to change

6.3 the ambassadors

Measure of success:

For the ambassadors themselves to feel as though they have learnt new and transferable skills during the course of the programme

Met or not met? met

Evidence:

As part of the initial induction, the ambassadors were asked to ‘score’ themselves out of ten in particular key areas. This process was repeated in their individual final sessions to see where they felt that they had gained skills and knowledge. The appendices show their responses in detail, but in summary:

Denise Armstrong felt she gained skills in most areas, in particular in relation to physical access and the requirements of people with hidden impairments . She felt she learnt a lot about the DDA (both employment and access to goods & services) and about DET. Her scores initially were high for the arts based questions but she did state that she had learnt more about Disability Arts linked to non disabled environments (especially about how to involve learning disabled people in mainstream work).

“This experience has helped me learn about the theory side of things, especially working with Irene, Talking with her has really taught me lots..... I’ve learnt lots, lots! learnt about mental health, learning disability, signage, visual access in design, how staff can approach people and change things without being

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threatened or threatening... Especially about policies - before that was one of my weak areas”.

Susie Rutherford had very high scores in most areas initially. She felt she had learnt most about working with people with hearing impairments - especially the politics around Deaf Culture. Susie felt she had learnt new skills in communication ('how to sugar-coat the pill' to get people to feel good about what they had done to date and how to get them to want to do more), about easy English and about how to manage a large scale project.

Clarence Adoo felt he had learnt something in relation to all the areas, particularly around hearing impairment and hidden impairments, the DDA and DET.

”I have picked up a greater awareness, I now have a stronger eye for looking at disability issues and have developed a wider range of communication skills.”

Irene Fisher also had high scores in most areas initially. She didn't feel she had learnt many new skills around access (except in relation to hearing impairment through working with Denise). She did feel her knowledge had increased around Disability Arts (although she was still confused by some of the political aspects of this) and inclusive practices. Irene felt she had gained skills in mono printing, communication (explaining reasons for changes that were recommended, the knowledge that to fully assess practically based environments, one has to assess the processes and practices and not just the building.

The ambassadors were also asked what they felt each other had contributed to the process:

Clarence Adoo - practical information on physical access requirements (especially the positioning of wheelchairs on slopes in auditoria), calm, clear input on understanding authentic need, social events (he has good parties!). He was praised for his positive social influence, his patient, calm measured approach and his unfailing patience. He was also said to have improved the taste in music of one other ambassador.

Irene - gave great advice and information, good access guidance and advice and made people aware of some important access issues. She provided 'a fab opposite' for Denise, and helped give the team balance and support. She was a crucial element for organising the social life of the project.

Denise - gave everyone insight into cultural issues with regard to the deaf community, deaf humour and practical communication strategies. She provided very enjoyable training, good support and was our fashion expert. One ambassador is going to learn to sign as a direct result of having met Denise.

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Susie - provided social and communication support for the group and added a sense of fun. For two of the ambassadors she provided the opportunity for them to pick up tips on writing their final report.

Measure of success:

For the ambassadors finish the programme desiring to have further contact/work with NorDAF and/or in the disability/arts sector of the Northern Region.

Met or not met? met

Evidence:

When asked as part of the evaluation process all said yes, they would like to do more work in this field in the Northern Region and yes, they would be happy to work with NorDAF.

6.4 NorDAF's Profile

Measure of success:

If other mainstream arts organisations in the region also gain an increased knowledge and understanding of NorDAF through the project

Met or not met? met

Evidence:

Through the invitations to the seminar, attendance at the seminar, though the four hosts and their connections and through the articles in NorDAF news on the project.

Measure of success:

If the project is mentioned in more Arts Council England, North East information than usual, if a range of staff members at Arts Council England, North East are involved in various aspects of the programme and if NorDAF is invited to a wider range of Arts Council England, North East meetings/events/groups during and/or after the programme

Met or not met? met

Evidence: Arts Council England, North East have been asked for information on the project and NorDAF have been invited to more meetings at Arts Council England North East. Also Arts Council England, North East are now very keen to assist NorDAF to restructure and expand as an organisation to enable us to develop Disability Arts more appropriately throughout the whole region and to network effectively with other disability groups and mainstream organisations.

Measure of success:

If there is national coverage of the project within disability/arts media

Met or not met? partly met

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Evidence: There was an article in Etcetera, the National Disability Arts Forum's e-mail briefing and the project has been quoted as an example of the New Audience Programme, Gateway Two, at a number of conferences and training events. The project is also featuring in the ACE publication on the use of ambassadors within the arts. Following the closure of the scheme, NorDAF are aiming to get an article on the success of the project in DAIL and others e.g. Artists Newsletter or Mailout etc.

Impact on NorDAF

- NorDAF is now better connected to some mainstream organisations. This has led to a better understanding of Disability Arts and NorDAF's role as an enabler.
- NorDAF now has a bigger network of disabled people and consultants
- The project has increased some organisations confidence in the Disability Arts sector
- There is now greater confidence with Arts Council England, North East in terms of NorDAF's ability to deliver.

Following the success of the introductory process, NorDAF is in discussion with the Arts Council England, North East to explore extension of the Action Disability Arts scheme to benefit other venues/arts organisations across the region and disabled audiences.

7. Action: Disability Arts 6 months on...

The ambassadors from the project met with Jo Verrent and Veronica McKale (NorDAF) 6 months after the placements had all finished (11/02/03). All the ambassadors had gone back to their hosts for follow up session/s to see what had changed since the project had ended.

revisits

Clarence Adoo	Theatre Royal	6th Feb and 7th Feb
Denise Armstrong	NGCA	10th Feb
Irene Fisher	NPS	5th Feb
Susie Rutherford	T&W Museums	22nd Jan, 4th Feb and 6th Feb

The ambassadors were asked in which areas their hosts had made most progress. The answers varied, but programming and, to a lesser extent, employment, remained the areas in which concrete differences were hardest to see. One reason for this is the time scale. Six months is a short time in planning for many arts organisations. Some of the ambassadors are sure that a further assessment in a 6 - 12 months will see differences in these areas too.

For Northern Print Studio there has been significant action in all areas, partly because as a small organisation they are free to develop new initiatives quickly. In relation to programming and employment they are currently advertising for a Deaf specific artists commission to generate artistic work and education work with deaf communities.

The Theatre Royal has placed disability within many planning processes and there are initiatives in place for when the theatre goes dark in the summer which should show considerable progress. Over the past six months there has been most progress with physical access and customer care.

The Northern Gallery of Contemporary Arts is still in a transitional phase, with 4 key staff leaving and new staff arriving. Pauline Johnston, the key contact for this project, is still in place but is frustrated by the lack of progress that the transition is causing. Activity again has been concentrated on physical access improvements and customer care initiatives.

Tyne and Wear Museums have developed enormously in relation to consultation - changing from an organisation that appeared scared to ask disabled people about their experiences to one which is activity encouraging such processes and including all staff in these developments. Again, progress in relation to programming and employment is harder to find.

Each ambassador has prepared a short written report on the specific changes in their hosts (see appendices)

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Before specific changes were discussed. the ambassadors were asked what blocks were reported by the organisations. What were the reasons that they felt prevented them from taking action on access/disability issues?

identified blocks to taking swifter action

NPS	1. other priorities 2. lack of time 3. lack of money 4. lack of backing	NGCA	1. lack of authority 2. lack of backing 3. lack of money 4. lack of knowledge 5. rigid hierarchy
Theatre Royal	1. lack of time 2. theatre schedule 3. delay in funding 4. listed building 5. other priorities	T&W Museums	1. size of organisation 2. lack of money 3. lack of ownership 4. lack of time 5. lack of knowledge

It was felt interesting that 'lack of money' was not placed as the number one block by any organisations, although it did appear on most lists.

Each ambassador was asked for their top 'changes' noted within their hosts over the last six months.

Theatre Royal

- parking bays outside the Theatre increased from 2 to 3
- new access brochure has been published and is being sent out
- aiming to appoint an Access Officer from September 2003
- disability and access issues within plans for development
- disabled people contacting the Theatre have noted positive changes from staff and been informed of support available (ie free posting of tickets if they can't get in to pick them up, water supplied for guide dogs etc.)

Tyne and Wear Museums

- fire egress plans and training now in place in all 10 museums
- compulsory training programme on DET and also additional elements such as deaf awareness, visual equality etc. for all staff
- comprehensive review of branding and marketing to take place to ensure all conform to basic clear print guidelines
- formation of consultation group (formed from disabled people who attend museums)

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- Helen resigned from Access Steering group (leading to increased ownership of disability and access issues by other staff)

NGCA

- signage improvements have been made including colour coding (although these have still to include Braille)
- there are changes with doors - the ones which are difficult to open now have a member of security present at all times and the key system for the accessible toilets has been replaced with a more independent system
- compulsory training for staff around disability including minicom training
- a number of physical access improvements
- a change in interpretation policy - there are to be more reliance on human interpretation (through the presence of gallery guides) than on written materials

NPS

- access is now central to their plans for relocation This has included ruling out previously suggested sites as not accessible enough
- they now ask participants about access needs so they can tailor specific responses to individuals
- there is a significant change in attitude - they are prepared and eager to challenge others ie paint manufacturers, around access. They think access is interesting and challenging, not dull and unworthy
- they have gained funds from NorDAF to employ a deaf artist and are including work with Deaf communities

Aspirational Arts and the De Montfort evaluation team

The input from Aspirational Arts and the De Montfort evaluation team was discussed. No host had felt that the input from Aspirational Arts had specifically helped them or developed their understanding of evaluation further; in one case it had served to antagonised staff considerably. The De Montfort approach was also criticised. It was felt that it concentrated exclusively on the changes made within the partner organisations and did not look at the factors for success within the project itself. There was also a concern expressed about the lack of stated criteria initially presented in the De Montfort process. *“It was like they were here to judge us, but wouldn’t say what we were going to be judged on.”*

Recommendations to improve the scheme

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1. NorDAF are ideally placed to run a further 'version' of the ambassadors' project. If this is to happen though, there needs to be a dedicated link person from NorDAF with the capacity to become closely involved, to maximise the impact of the scheme on NorDAF, and to broker the long term development of access/disability within the hosts.
2. It would be most beneficial to keep the existing ambassador team and to expand this further. All the ambassadors are keen to be involved in future developments and complement each other well in relation to skills, experience and direct experience of different impairments. Gaps in the team were identified around visual impairment. The team felt that a few additional ambassadors would be useful - too many would be difficult to manage.
3. The scheme needs a local co-ordinator. Jo Verrent had skills and experience that were essential to the schemes success, but if problems had arisen, she was geographically not well placed (living in Yorkshire). It is suggested that if it were to be rerun, Jo is still involved, but in a development/advisory role, and a local co-ordinator is appointed (drawn from the existing ambassadors).
4. To maximise the impact of the scheme, it is suggested that hosts in the future need to have firm commitment from senior management to really ensure change. It also needs to be recognised that organisations under local authority control may have more rigid processes and need a longer time scale to effect significant change.
5. The matching process between hosts and ambassadors was key - it was felt that Jo Verrent's experience ensured that the matches made this time worked well. This was felt to be one of the areas where the scheme could collapse if inappropriate matches were made and so care and skill is required at this point.
6. A more formalised series of training days or 'master classes' could be constructed around the project to increase the skills base of ambassadors and hosts. This could include impairment specific input (deaf awareness, visual impairment awareness, mental health awareness and working with people with learning disabilities) and cover some of the most complex areas such as programming and fund-raising.
7. These could also serve a training function in their own right if they were opened up to disabled people not yet ready to work at 'ambassador' level but interested in this field of work. These people could be drawn from members of access groups etc. already established as part of the work.

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8. These training days could take place at each host venue in rotation, thereby allowing opportunities for informal discussion about the project amongst hosts. It was suggested that creating opportunities for the hosts to share experiences without the ambassadors present might be useful.
9. If new hosts are identified, and the core team of ambassadors used, they would have the opportunity to 'check in' with their former hosts and maintain the progress of those organisations.
10. The 'How 2... Guide' is available as a publication only at present. For access reasons and to ensure that organisations genuinely use the contents thoroughly, two suggestions arose. One, create a CD Rom or web based version; two, hold a session explaining how to use 'The How 2... guide' at the beginning of the training process. This could also be an ideal way to introduce new ambassadors to the programme.
11. There was much discussion about the time limit on the scheme. Each ambassador had 30 days, but was that enough? Although all ambassadors felt that they could have been with their hosts for longer, it was agreed that this would not have directly impacted upon the amount achieved (although all the ambassadors agreed that they had in effect worked longer than the 30 days anyway!). Additional days were required to ensure follow up visits could occur at 6 months, 12 months and so on until ambassadors were sure that disability and access were fully grounded within the ethos of the organisations.
12. Due to the ineffectiveness of support from Access to Work, it was suggested that NorDAF include a significant access budget within any further scheme² and ensure that the co-ordinator or NorDAF staff member was prepared to push Access to Work into action where necessary.
13. A further recommendation was that some additional funding be identified to project fund specific initiatives arising out of the ambassadors placements so that things could be tested quickly. It was agreed that this might be difficult to manage (as different sized organisations may have different needs), and could avoid organisations making the effort to find funding themselves, however for smaller organisations this could be the only way of ensuring action.
14. A key point was made by Clarence Adoo about the responsibility involved with being an ambassador. *"When we said something, they believed us!"*. All the organisations

² there had been in this scheme but the costs of taking on an additional ambassador significantly reduced the amounts available.

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involved in the process trusted the hosts, NorDAF and the whole team and have implemented many of the recommendations made. Further developments of this scheme, whether in the Northern Region or other regions, need to ensure that this trust is built upon and the quality of the product and process is ensured.

There were some smaller recommendations to improve specific elements:

- improve recruitment practice (ensure candidates are informed if there is a delay in recruitment)
- ensure organisations are aware that they will be asked to present information about themselves and their organisations at the first meeting
- ensure that there is clarity about the audience for the reports the ambassadors write - are they for the project or the hosts?

8. summary of findings and conclusion

The project can be seen to have met the vast majority of its objectives:

the host organisations

- The placements to cover six agreed subject areas (customer care, physical access, education and outreach, marketing, programming and access to programme and employment) **met**
- The action plans produced by ambassadors to include short term recommendations for improvements and long term plans and projects and for these to be agreed to and time tabled by the host organisations **met**
- The action plans produced by ambassadors to include commitment to further involvement of ambassadors and/or NorDAF, and for these to be agreed to and time tabled by the host organisations **met**

specific targets and outcomes for each host

- **Theatre Royal, Newcastle** - To ensure that other areas, specifically marketing, consultation and employment practices were addressed. **met**
- **Tyne and Wear Museums** - To concentrate on up to 4 sites and to ensure that strategic service level assessment was delivered **both met and exceeded!**
- **Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art** - To find the areas where they could move things along quickly and thereby gain a sense of achievement, and also to set in place best practice theory for the areas which would prove more resistant. **met**
- **Northern Print Studios** - Not to overload the organisation and to ensure that access becomes a central concept for the new premises. **met**

the ambassadors

- For the ambassadors themselves to feel as though they have learnt new and transferable skills during the course of the programme **met**
- For the ambassadors to finish the programme desiring to have further contact/work with NorDAF and/or in the disability/arts sector of the Northern Region. **met**

NorDAF's Profile

- If other mainstream arts organisations in the region also gain an increased knowledge and understanding of NorDAF through the project **met**
- If the project is mentioned in more Arts Council England, North East information than usual, if a range of staff members at Arts Council England, North East are involved in various aspects of the programme and if NorDAF is invited to a wider range of Arts Council England, North East meetings/events/groups during and/or after the programme **met**
- If there is national coverage of the project within disability/arts media **partly met**

Action: Disability Arts - NorDAF New Audience Programme - evaluation report conclusion

The project was a success on many levels. It met and exceeded its own stated aims and objectives, but more importantly had a profound impact on both the ambassadors and the host organisations. For the former, the most exceptional 'unexpected outcome' is that one, Susie Rutherford, has given up her previous post to work as a disability and arts consultant full time. For the hosts, the most telling response has been that the project has altered their way of thinking. From access and disability being seen, at best, as dull and worthy (and at worst as a 'problem'), this project has served to change attitudes and deep rooted ways of thinking. For the hosts, access issues can now be thought about creatively and in a positive way. This represents an enormous shift for both parties within a 15 month time frame.

All involved in the project at all levels hope that it can be repeated, not only in the North East, but across the country as an example of good practice.

author's note

In its original format this document contained many appendices. It is not possible to include them with this report in a downloadable format but should anyone require further information then they can contact Jo Verrent, ADA inc at Spring House, Spring Farm Lane, Harden, BD16 1BS, Tel/fax : 01535 274277 or email joverrent@adainc.org