

## Cultural Inclusion 18<sup>th</sup> October 2018

### Notes for Paul Morrow's Speech

#### Introduction and background

- I have worked within arts and culture for 14 years as both a teacher and an artist. Working across the age range; early years through to post 16. I have worked with young people with PMLD delivering an experiential and sensory curriculum all the way through to delivering AS and GCSE Art.
- Brief history of the West London Inclusive Arts Festival (link to where we have talked about this before); a shifting geography emerging networks of both schools and arts and culture organisations. This initiative brought into sharp focus on what can be achieved through strategic partnerships between schools, cultural institutions and funders. Now in its 3<sup>rd</sup> year, and this year 9 SEN schools accessed the festival and I'm happy to announce that we have been invited back increasing to 6, possibly 7 and a further 4 cultural institutions.
- How could this model be adapted and replicated across the country? Different in different places and there are great examples of best practice outside of London - some are here today and I'm sure there are more that this initiative can reach out to.

#### Why the manifesto?

- A tool to bring a wide range of educational and cultural organisations together and establish a shared understanding of what inclusion means for disabled children and young people. An umbrella practice, policy, provision – unique nasen, GEM, cultural organisations, schools, parents, young people policy makers... a truly different organisation
- An opportunity to coalesce around a shared vision for the future – i.e. a world where all children and young people with disabilities have equal access to a broad range of artistic and cultural experiences. Collectively we can support this and make this real. We are all here at the start of this journey
- A chance to establish an agreed set of values – i.e. inclusive, collaborative, supportive, innovative, progressive and entrepreneurial – doing new things differently
- A vehicle to affect real change on the ground by developing a range of functions including identifying and promoting best practice, creating an online repository of resources currently available and developing new tools to support inclusive practice, encouraging and supporting mentoring and the formation of strategic partnerships - relationships are central to inclusive practice. Engaging politicians to ensure that cultural inclusion is central to policy parliamentary launch - **we are being effective** and driving change. Collating and sharing inspirational case studies, highlighting and disseminating new research to inform new ways of working etc.
- I firmly believe that we are stronger together. That we can achieve so much more for the children and young people we support by collaborating. That our voice has the best chance of being heard by those who can make a difference. An example is our recent response to the Mayor's Draft Cultural Strategy. It is harder to ignore our recommendations for change

when they come from an organisation with almost 100 signatories! And an emerging national presence. Together we are at the very beginning of something that can make real change

### Why now?

- SEND and Arts and Culture organisations have been setting a path towards greater inclusion of young people with disabilities in arts and culture for some time. Many networks, initiatives and conferences highlighted this as a common theme, including A New Direction's SEND school's networks. A New Direction were the catalyst for me approaching John Lyons, the How and Why conferences at the Royal Academy of Arts and a partnership between the Museum of London and The National Gallery. Clearly an appetite and potential - and a will to do things and to make change
- In addition, there has been increased focus on cultural inclusion by key politicians nationally, regionally and locally. An example is the review recently conducted by the All Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing of all the available evidence that arts and culture make an enormous contribution to improving health outcomes. They concluded: There's a political agenda

*"It is time to recognise the powerful contribution the arts can make to health and wellbeing. There are now many examples and much evidence of the beneficial impact they can have."*

### A long way to go

- Perhaps most importantly, despite this increased focus on cultural inclusion, there is ample evidence that we have a long way to go before disabled children and young people have equal access to a wide range of artistic and cultural experiences:
  - **42%** of venues in one study reported that visually impaired people could access little of their collections.
  - Almost **a third** of UK museums provide no access information on their websites for disabled people planning a visit, and many theatres fail to reach audiences with disabilities.
  - A BBC survey of 1,200 secondary schools found that **nine out of every 10** had cut back on lesson time, staff or facilities in at least one creative arts subject.

### Conclusion

#### Unique opportunity...a turning point

- While there is a long way to go before we have full cultural inclusion for children and young people with disabilities, the timing is right for making change happen.
- There is increased focus on cultural inclusion, both within the sector and among politicians, and a genuine will to make a difference.
- Our challenge is to bring together these different strands, and harness the increased focus on inclusive engagement with arts and culture, to deliver real and lasting change for disabled children and young people across the UK.
- I believe that by working together we can make it happen!

- This is a conference that is about sharing and celebrating, but it is equally about identifying the gaps and be brave enough to talk about where we are failing to be inclusive
- On that note I want to view each other as a resource and a support and to network and have conversations that can lead to real and lasting change

#### **Final thought**

**Culture is the thing that empowers us, it defines us as individuals, but it is also the glue that binds us. It is our common experience and one that should be common for everyone.**