



## Accessible Arts & Media Theory of Change

### Vision

Our vision is for an inclusive society. We level the playing field so everyone's given the best chance to shine.

Activities

We deliver structured learning in:

- Sensory Arts
- Creative and accessible media and technology
- Participatory and performing arts

We also provide:

- Consultancy and Training
- Learning Resources and toolkits

Enabling Factors

We have:

- Highly skilled staff, artists & trustees
- a strong, positive, and caring work culture
- knowledge, expertise and a track record
- creativity and imagination
- a sense of humour and love of fun
- determined, responsive, resilient

We are:

We ensure that we:

- constantly review and develop our practice
- create opportunities for sharing skills
- create and champion positive role models
- provide platforms for voices to be heard
- encourage and provide support
- use a person-centred approach

Outcomes

This enables participants to:

- gain more choice and control
- have a voice that they know people listen to
- take control of their own learning

And to develop skills and capabilities in:

- expressing, explaining, listening & questioning
- confidence and contribution
- planning and critical thinking
- relationships and leadership
- creativity, innovation and applying learning
- resilience and motivation to keep trying
- managing feelings

Immediate

This leads to participants developing:

- improved mental, emotional and physical wellbeing
- raised aspirations
- greater resilience and more independence
- recognition of their contribution and its value
- strengthened family and social networks

Medium-term

This all leads to:

- transition into further work and/or learning for participants
- positive influence on a range of groups and stakeholders
- positive changes in awareness & perception of participants
- breaking down barriers to participation
- levelling the playing field
- changes in policy

Long-term

Vision

Contributing to our vision of an:

# Inclusive Society

## 1 Introduction

This document is a summary of the key aspects of the Theory of Change developed by Accessible Arts & Media in 2017.

### 1.1 Accessible Arts & Media – an overview

Accessible Arts & Media (AAM) is an inclusive arts charity. We've been running arts and creative media learning projects in and around York since 1982. We believe that everyone can learn, everyone can be creative, and everyone can play a part in their local community. They just need the right support, and that's where we come in.

Our fun projects include singing and signing choirs, community media training programmes, apprentice training programmes, where learning-disabled adults and young people train as workshop leaders, and specialist creative sensory activities.

A lot of different people take part in our projects. From disabled adults and young people, to older people in residential care and people with enduring mental health problems. We also work with schools, community groups and local businesses.

The people who take part in our sessions often face difficulty with everyday activities and can end up feeling isolated and cut off. Taking part in our projects helps them:

- learn new skills that they can transfer to other parts of their lives, including education, training and employment;
- explore and connect with the world around them, in a safe, supportive, fun environment;
- learn to work and communicate with other people, making new friends along the way;
- grow the confidence to have more of a say in the things that matter to them;
- contribute to their local community through workshops, exhibitions, performances and film commissions;
- feel happier and healthier – being creative, socialising and having fun makes you feel better.

All our activities are tailored to the individual, supporting everyone to take part in the way that suits them best. We level the playing field by providing everyone with the support and space they need to have an equal say. And we make sure that everyone has a lot of fun along the way.

We want to see an inclusive society, where everyone gets the chance to shine. We're helping to make that happen in York.

## 2 Challenges (Why are our services required?)

### 2.1 Issues affecting the people who take part in our projects:

Disabled people, people with mental health problems and older people in residential care face the following issues:

- lack of tailored learning and developmental opportunities;

- lack of specialised support to help them communicate and connect with others;
- few regular, tailored social activities to support the development of friendships and social networks;
- limited opportunities for them to have a say in the things that matter to them and maintain and develop their independence; and
- few opportunities for them to share their skills with others and make a valued and valuable contribution to their local community.

All of this leads to vulnerable people being at risk of becoming lonely, cut off and invisible. And loneliness is known to have a negative impact on physical health, mental health and the ability to maintain independence.

## 2.2 Social attitudes towards disability and mental health:

Recent studies have shown that:

- negative attitudes and discrimination are worse towards people with mental health conditions and learning disabilities;
- many disabled people and those with mental health problems experience other people's attitudes or behaviours as a problem in challenging areas of their lives;
- a substantial proportion of the population believe that disabled people are less capable than non-disabled people, in need of care, and dependent on others;
- non-disabled people say that getting to know a disabled person would make them feel more comfortable and confident around disabled people;
- and a high proportion of people believe that the best therapy for people with mental ill health is to be part of a community.

## 3 Assumptions

Our programmes have been developed based on assumptions and outcomes from our work to date:

- Creative learning activities support vulnerable people to develop new skills, grow in confidence, make vital social connections and play a more active role in their local community.
- Attitudes towards disability and disabled people are much more likely to improve through more frequent interactions between disabled people and non-disabled people in everyday situations.
- Similarly, attitudes towards mental health are more likely to improve through more people with mental health problems becoming empowered to engage or re-engage with their community and with work and learning.
- Creative learning and social activities have a positive impact on wellbeing.

This theory of change is based on a number of assumptions, chiefly that:

- there is need and demand for our activities and services;
- those in need are able to access our activities and services;
- funding is available;

- staff, freelance artists and volunteers are positively engaged and committed to our vision;
- our staff and freelance artists are seen as credible experts; and
- we are able to influence local policy and practice.

## **4 Internal Enablers**

The following internal factors enable us to make a positive change.

### **4.1 Our organisation:**

At AAM we have:

- highly skilled staff, artists and trustees with a diverse range of experience;
- knowledge, expertise and track record;
- longevity – we’ve been delivering programmes since 1982;
- a strong, positive, caring organisational culture;
- a sense of humour and love of fun;
- creativity and imagination;
- determination;
- commitment to our values and vision amongst staff, artists and volunteers and a strong sense of loyalty that extends to participants and their families;
- responsiveness – the ability to identify and follow up opportunities;
- resilience – we’re constantly evolving and responding to change; and
- a range of learning and creative resources.

### **4.2 Our approach and our practice:**

We’re experts in creating a supportive, non-judgemental and fun environment.

In all our activities, we make sure that we:

- use a person-centred approach;
- provide tailored learning opportunities;
- provide constant support and encouragement;
- create platforms for participants to use their voices;
- create and champion positive role models;
- create opportunities for sharing skills;
- communicate regularly and clearly with participants and their families and support networks;
- are consistent in our approach; and
- review and develop our practice through reflective practice, monitoring and evaluation.

## **5 External Enablers**

The following external factors need to be in place in order for us to make a positive change:

- Funding – without external funding we’d be unable to deliver and develop our activities and services.
- Networks – our staff and trustees are well-connected in local, regional and national networks of third sector, cultural and disability organisations and local authority contacts.
- Partnerships and collaboration – we extend our impact through effective partnership working and collaboration.
- Policy – we keep abreast of local, regional and national policy in disability, health and social care, third sector development and cultural development.
- Technology – we keep abreast of new technological developments.
- Community Links - we have strong links within the local community.
- Trust – we’re a trusted provider of inclusive creative activities.
- Good will – we’ve built up a lot of good will from partners, participants and other stakeholders.

## 6 Activities

We provide structured learning opportunities in:

- participatory and performing arts;
- creative media;
- sensory arts; and
- activities using accessible creative technology.

We also provide creative learning resources and toolkits, encouragement and advice and consultancy and training.

## 7 Outputs

Our activities enable participants to:

- gain more choice and control;
- recognise their own voice and the fact that people are willing to listen to them; and
- develop their own learning.

Our inclusive, person-centred approach empowers participants to develop skills and capabilities in:

- communication (expressing, explaining, listening, questioning);
- confidence and contribution (self-reliance, self-confidence, self-efficacy);
- planning and critical thinking (organising, setting and achieving goals, decision making, analysing);
- relationships and leadership (establishing positive relationships, motivating others, negotiating, contributing to team-work, interpreting others, empathising);
- creativity (innovation, applying learning in new contexts, imagining alternative ways of doing things, being open to new ideas);
- resilience and determination (self-disciplined, self-motivated, concentrating, having a sense of purpose, persistent, self-controlled); and

- managing feelings (reviewing, self-awareness, reflective, self-regulating, self-accepting).

## 8 Intermediate Outcomes

The above outputs lead to the following medium-term outcomes for the people who take part in our projects:

- improved mental, emotional and physical wellbeing;
- raised aspirations;
- greater resilience and independence;
- heightened recognition of their own contribution and its value; and
- strengthened family and social networks.

In the wider community, our outputs lead to changed attitudes towards the people who take part in our projects and the contribution they can make, when given the right support.

## 9 Longer-term outcomes

In working towards our end goal of a more inclusive society, we expect the medium-term outcomes listed above to lead to the following, longer-term outcomes:

- transition into further work and/or learning for participants;
- positive influence on a range of groups and stakeholders, including participants, partners, commissioners and funders;
- positive changes in awareness and perception of disabled people, young people, people with mental health problems and older people;
- breaking down barriers to participation in activities, in communities and in the design and delivery of services;
- levelling the playing field by giving everyone the support and space they need to participate in society and have an equal say; and
- changes in policy.

## 10 Evidence – how will we know we’re making a positive change?

To assess whether we’re making the positive change we want to make, we’ll use a range of monitoring and evaluation methods and indicators that reflect the following key questions:

1. Is our approach effective and our work valued?
2. Are we creating social value for the people we support?
3. In the longer term, is our work leading to a wider community impact?
4. How do we ensure that we can keep supporting our participants by continuously improving our work through learning and reflection?