

P3: A DOCUMENT TO ILLUSTRATE OUR ETHICS & PURPOSE
TASK 3: An introduction (1 A4 page) for questionnaire and responses

Below is the group's summary after participants shared views on the second meeting (July 2007). The sharing session was supported by a hard copy digest of all responses made through the e-forum and email questionnaire on 'Purpose, values and ethics of our work'.

A second document, 'P3: digest of ethics & purpose', is also enclosed. This is the full digest of all your responses and it may help you not to repeat ideas if you want to give suggestions. Please highlight your ideas (in colour or bold) as it will help Stella to identify changes.
 Thanks!

WORKSHOP ON PURPOSE, VALUES AND ETHICS OF OUR WORK
DIGEST OF MESSAGES (E-FORUM + EMAIL)

1. What motivates you personally to work with refugees and asylum seekers?

> I am motivated to work with refugees and asylum seekers specifically because I come into contact with them through working with homeless, destitute, and at risk people every day. As a group they have extra issues to deal with, on top of the multiple needs that homeless people have, and are often in less of a position to access support services. This might be because of asylum status or language barriers that mean that they are not aware of what is out there. As well as signposting, the arts workshops we provide are a chance to 'play', to forget about the problems they face for a few hours, re-engage, and come into contact with others in the same boat.

> I personally believe that everyone has a right to be able to take part in the arts, express their culture and be creative. For refugees and asylum seekers I think there are fundamental inequalities that violate human rights in the way they are viewed and treated whatever country they are in. They are not allowed to work or support themselves, in England, their access to English classes is limited and the whole system seems to be about social exclusion. Many media representations de-humanise and demonise refugees and asylum seekers. They should have the right to be seen as individuals not a mass stereotype, and the arts can provide a powerful medium for individuals to have a voice, and for people from many different backgrounds to work collectively together and learn from each other

> I have always worked with people who are marginalised in some way. I sort of fell into this particular project via the photography rather than because the group were refugees. However once I started working with young refugees I became very involved and have been working with young unaccompanied refugees for 5 years now. I think my commitment comes from a number of factors:

- I have support from a brilliant community centre, Trinity in East Ham, where the project takes place.
- The kids I work with are complicated and lovely. They are generally quite mature for their age as they have had to grow up incredibly quickly. I find being with them challenging and rewarding (sorry all feels very clichéd).
- I enjoy seeing how the young people thrive from being involved in photography, finding a way of communicating, getting pride and satisfaction from seeing their work on display.
- I believe that photography is one of the best arts' tools for young refugees – the camera gives them a very practical tool to negotiate new places, relationships, feelings etc
- I feel that the young people value my input into the project. Evaluations repeatedly show that the young people enjoy building up relationships with facilitators most of whom have lifelong experience and knowledge of living in London.

> Coming from a refugee background of artists and musicians, I am aware of the challenges faced by refugees struggling to find outlets in an unfamiliar and sometimes hostile environment.

> I guess my personal motivations have come more from getting to work in the industry and finding out about this work. My interest in this area of work has come from working in the cultural sector, and facilitating and advocating the transformative power of the arts for personal and community benefit.

When I began work at Sound It Out in 2005 I had never worked in the refugee sector and had a lot to learn. Having just completed a really intensive and long (six month) project developing an ensemble of refugee and asylum seeker participants, as well as other related projects, I have a much deeper appreciation of the sector and the work that's going on.

The benefits our participants have felt, and the journey they have been on since beginning working with us is what motivates me to continue to advocate and develop activity in this sector.

> Wanting to offer opportunity to fully access this culture/society

- Having come from a refugee family had bad experiences in youth arts being made to feel like an outsider, different. Want young people to cope with it better than I did.
- Politically wanting to make a difference
- Learning about myself in relation to others. Working with others. Working with young people who have a certain openness that many 'mainstream' young people in this culture don't have.
- I want to offer my own knowledge of being a refugee to the young people to help them to facilitate their appreciation to this new society
- Belief in equality for all and support of the right of people to move around the world
- The government legislation that keeps young people at the margins of society. The inequalities in the education system and the tabloid press that encourages xenophobia
- To make it easier and quicker for them to settle in here
- Meeting amazing young people from all over the world – having the opportunity to engage with them creatively and learning about different ways of working with them.
- To give people an entitlement to creativity
- To support better access

> As I musician I am keen to discover the music of people's cultural and musical traditions around the world. Having studied and practised western classical music for 40 years and having an interest in contemporary music, new music of all kinds has been a lifelong passion. I have also had opportunities to learn more about North Indian Classical music and music from Indonesia and China. I also perform with musicians from Iran, Armenia, Ghana, India and China. This broadens and develops my knowledge and understanding of music and people. This is my principal motivation for working with refugees and asylum seekers. Other reasons for working in the sector is to engage in cultural exchanges and offer performance opportunities for people regardless of their status or abilities.

Music is a language of mutual trust and is the ideal medium to communicate with people particularly when we do not share a common tongue - it's a way of extending the hand of friendship and sharing significant emotional expressive needs. Music performance is a powerful means of creating a strong bonding experience both for the performers and the audience members.

> I am motivated to work with R/AS because here in Scotland there is a rapidly changing population profile due to the settlement of R/AS, particularly in Glasgow where I am based. I grew up in Glasgow as a child of first generation Afro Caribbeans and have first hand experience of some of the issues that affect non-indigenous Scots and on a personal note, I have a strong interest in how we as a society successfully develop good relations between the existing and the 'new' Scots.

On a professional level, I have a strong belief that engagement in arts practise can bring many benefits for individuals, groups and for communities as a whole. Those benefits are varied and will be different for all who participate but there is no social unit that is unable to participate in arts activity.

> My personal motivation for working with refugees and asylum seekers is principally around issues of justice. I feel that there are huge injustices in the asylum system and increasingly people are subjected to abuses of their human rights. I find it incredible that our so-called tolerant society is tolerating the creation of an underclass of people.

My secondary concern is one of artistic rights. I believe that creativity is a human right and the arts are a powerful way that we can engage with people of diverse backgrounds. Working with exiled artists in particular to ensure that they have a voice within the arts world is a motivating factor for me.

Thirdly, I am constantly inspired by the diversity of culture and within that, the artistic diversity that newcomers bring to this country. I believe we are very fortunate for the cultural capital that they bring to the UK.

> Everyone, in my opinion, has the human right to safety, security and the best possible opportunity to live. Refugees in our country, I feel, do not have this human right. The ideal is always compromised by discrimination, mostly in the form of racism, which is inherent through society on personal and strategic levels. I am motivated to work with refugees and asylum seekers because I don't think this is right and because I think the arts offer an extraordinary 'way in' to understand the value of humanity (both in oneself and others) I have seen it work time and time again so I continued to be motivated. It sounds glib and a tired argument, but for me it still rings true.

> Cardboard Citizens is a theatre production company that works with homeless and ex-homeless people, refugees & asylum seekers and excluded youth. Personally, I want to improve how we interact with refugees & asylum seekers to ensure that we meet their needs and remove any barriers to participation.

2. How does this fit with your organisation's mission or purpose?

> Part of my organisation's mission is to widen participation to lifelong learning. The particular project I manage uses the arts to engage people in learning, with particular targeting to groups that are currently underrepresented and deprived communities.

> PhotoVoice's mission is to bring about positive social change for marginalised communities through providing them with photographic training with which they can advocate, express themselves and generate income.

> Believe this gives me insight into challenges faced by target group.

> I think working in the arts there is an inherent understanding of the work you do, and regardless of whether you feel art for art sake is the better purpose, or art for social change, there is a general understanding amongst us that art is, in some way, shape or form, beneficial. I guess I sit

somewhere in between the polars with a leaning towards the social change agenda, but that's mainly because i feel passionately that those who don't value the arts need to be told!

Sound It Out has long been established in the west midlands as an agency of support, intervention and regeneration while having a fine balance that ensures quality of delivery, quality of training, quality of staff, so I have by happy coincidence managed to find myself in an organisation with the same set of values as my own personal ones!

> This fits very well with our organisation's purpose which is to use forum theatre and performing arts to give homeless people and refugees/asylum seekers a voice - enabling them to reach and recognise their potential. Our work helps to build skills and confidence, and supports individuals to raise and face the issues necessary for them to make positive changes in their lives.

> Sound it Out's projects and vision are very much geared towards inclusion through musical creativity. The organisation actively works to identify and engage with excluded communities. Sound it Out's work with refugees and asylum seekers is very strong – it is carefully planned, responds to clear needs, is well supported, flexible to participant need, artistically strong and well evaluated. There is a focus on skill building initiatives for exiled artists, intercultural project work and building bridges between communities. There is a commitment at the heart of the organisation to long-term development of this area of work which means that the work is never tokenistic. The work is making a real difference to individuals and communities.

> Oval House Aims and Objectives

The constitutional aims of Oval House include “alleviating the effects of poverty” and “increasing young people’s confidence and awareness”. Since the 1960’s Oval House has used drama and other participatory arts to involve local young people in activities which increase their skills and talents, support them to fulfil their potential, help them understand and overcome the economic and social pressures which they face, and to support them into the world beyond school.

The theatre has an effective and successful track record in developing and nurturing the most exciting new talents and artists at the start of their career. Oval House not only present their work, but also enhance their creative and professional experience, and nurture them for progress in the wider performance world.

Oval House actively supports artists and communities who are often ignored in mainstream provision to develop and produce their own work on their own terms both in our own venue and elsewhere.

Although Oval House is renown as a sector leader in ‘cultural diversity’ our policy is built around what we define as **artistic diversity** and this principal is a common thread through all Oval House work.

> Paragon is a professional music organisation and production company based in Glasgow. It has a wide knowledge and experience of commissioning, performing and recording new music of all kinds. We have a deep understanding of the role that new music can play in regeneration and cultural development and extensive experience of working in partnership with a wide range of agencies. We are performing artists and music creators who perform together and also provide a whole range of music creating opportunities and performance events for communities and individuals of all ages and abilities.

Working with refugees and asylum seekers is a natural part of our activities to offer music making opportunities to groups who are disadvantaged socially, financially or through disability. Their status in this country puts them in a precarious position and music can help to alleviate the experiences they face.

> Paragon's main goal is to provide opportunities for the creation of new music for all in society and we draw on the skills of composers, highly skilled musicians and music creation facilitators in order to achieve this goal. We recognize that music is a medium of cultural expression that can produce self-generated narratives that are interpretable by others regardless of their specific cultural narratives. Our music work has a strong cohesive power because it offers individuals and groups the opportunity to communicate with others in a safe and non-confrontational manner. It provides the glue that binds disparate narratives together.

> GLYPT's mission is to provide access to the arts experiences for young people, especially those whom would not normally have access. VOICES' (the programme for young exiles) mission is to enable young exiles to have access to the arts, and specifically, through this access, find a voice, to challenge and overcome barriers of discrimination, language, and poverty. My own personal feelings that drama is a great tool (or sometimes even -dare I say it - weapon) against the external forces that make life extra hard for young refugees, fits in with what we're trying to do at GLYPT.

> At Cardboard Citizens the majority of our activities are open access. But we want to make sure that by accessing activities, refugees & asylum seekers can access the benefits too. I think in order to do this we need more knowledge and understanding of the needs of refugees & asylum seekers.

3. What are the ethics underpinning your work and how do they translate into practice?

>

- Marries the creation of high quality, innovative and interactive theatre with social objectives.
 - Acts as an ambassador for the arts in the social sector.
 - Provides an exemplar of best practice for arts organisations wishing to work with socially excluded groups.
 - Brings together audiences both with and without experience of homelessness to challenge perceptions and effect changes.
 - Develops homeless people as professional artists and professional artists as people through the range of experiences it offers.
-

> Everyone should be able to take part in the arts and learning throughout their lives. The AFL Team recognises the many different barriers to participation that people face and we support our Provider organizations in finding ways to overcome them, exchange knowledge and contacts and help them develop networks.

> The main ethical issues that concern me in my work are:

- How we as an organisation represent the communities we work with when we are promoting our projects to the public. Notably, how we make sure that we remain accountable to the participants when we are designing public communications aspects of our projects (because of funding this can happen before the project has even started).
- How we communicate the project to the participants in a way that makes sure they are fully informed of the bigger picture but do not feel 'over defined' as refugees
- How we ensure that as arts facilitators we get the right balance between playing an educational role and ensuring that participants have freedom of expression
- How we balance planning and participation. Sometimes I worry that our projects are not as participative as we'd like them to be. Too much decision-making happens at a project level because participants have limited English and also lack confidence to make decisions.

- How we make sure participants never feel they have to 'sing for their supper'. I don't have direct evidence of this but it worries me that young refugees experience the feeling that they should produce work about being a refugee because the project expects them to rather than because they really want to.
- How I make sure that my relationship to the participants remains professional and that a dependency relationship doesn't arise. This is sometimes difficult as 'hanging out' is the best way of building relationships and building trust with young refugees but its important not try and be their friend.

My personal ethics are:

- Always give participants as much project information as possible (practical)
 - Ensure there is no pressure on participants to make photographs which meet someone else's agenda
 - Allow creative freedom and decision-making to participants
 - Be clear about personal boundaries
 - Acknowledge that my role of facilitator comes close to being an educator.
-

> Exiled Writers Ink! provides a platform for refugee writers to publicise their work.

>

- participants choice,
- ownership of the process and the product when their is one,
- empowerment - building confidence and self esteem and resilience,
- respect - within the group and between us and the young people
- equality - building an understanding of this framework
- safety - emotional and physical, confidentiality
- and artist/facilitator competence - making sure we are skilled and aware

We plan and evaluate all our work with young refugees in terms of these principals and support our facilitators to learn to do their work in an ethical way.

>

- A commitment to working with isolated/marginalised individuals and communities – identifying key geographical areas, client groups etc and building projects around the needs of these groups
 - A commitment to building intercultural understanding, respect and tolerance between diverse groups – investing in the artistic development of particular groups of people, offering musical opportunities for people to engage across cultural and social differences, working with trainers who have good experience and a commitment to this area of work.
 - A long term commitment – Building on projects over a number of years, learning from previous projects and constantly refining and improving the work, building relationships with specific groups, individuals and geographical areas over a period of time.
-

> The basic ethics underpinning Paragon's work is to make new music making opportunities available to all. Making music is an inclusive activity regardless of age, ability, gender, sexual orientation, religion or belief. It has the ability to cross cultural divides and create bridges between communities. The chief aim is to create appropriate environments to allow the free exchange of musical ideas where those participating feel free and open to do so. The environment is supportive, positive and constructive and Paragon's music practitioners are trained to engage with every individual participant in order to find a form of expression, which allows them to contribute on equal terms with the rest of the group.

> We believe that every human being forms his or her identity in a social context and the emerging identity will be a combination of that individual's view of self and the views of others. Cultural expression (particularly group expressions through faith, traditions, lifestyles and tastes) is often the zone of conflict in 'multicultural' societies because of this disparity of experiences between people. Through the arts, we can express and interpret cultures without the feeling the threat of cultural miscegenation.

> We aim to give young people a safe space to find their creative voice. We are very clear that we are not therapists and it is not our role to 'mine' for stories. We have a clear set of guidelines and practices that ensure we do not breach these ethical boundaries.

4. Can you give an example of your values/ethics in action with brief reference to one of your projects?

> We have designed a part of the project, which works with new arrivals, aiming to help them prepare for education and settle in the UK. We have built in a 'de-brief and review' system, which involves meeting after every workshop in order to make the workshop content completely responsive to the needs of participants. We have adapted and changed workshop content regularly in order to ensure that we are really fulfilling our objectives.

> Monthly events organised by Exiled Writers Ink! enable writers from various asylum seeker or refugee backgrounds to discuss and read from their work in public.

> In order to create a safe space we concentrate on having 'human' time with participants - sharing food together in an informal way before we make art together. This enables young people to build relationships with each-other and us, so they feel safer. We do not have any expectation that young refugees will share their experiences of exile as part of the artistic process. We encourage decision making, choices and youth leadership in a gradual way that is empowering for participants.

> A project that I have worked for the last year has been with a group of people in the Kennishead housing estate in Glasgow. Many of the residents of these tower blocks are Refugees and Asylum Seekers and live side by side with some of Glasgow's poorest in a place where crime, violence and unemployment have been constant problems for decades. We produced a musical play, which was written by the group (a mixture of local Glaswegians and new settlers), which told of their experiences up to the present day. We also created a choir, which drew on the musical traditions of all involved, and we have performed as a group several times and also toured the play around theatres in Glasgow. Participants developed strong friendships out of this and a new sense of community has grown with people being able to understand different values and being able to share in each others' lives.

5. What are your top 5 priorities for 'safe' or 'ethical' practice what might help us define standards?

- >
- Arts project work in partnership with a community level organisations, which either represent the participants or fully understand their needs.
 - Ensure that there is adequate support for dealing with the emotional well-being issues that can arise on an arts project with young refugees
 - Ensure project participants are fully informed about project objectives
 - Ensure project participants do not experience any pressure to 'sing for their supper' i.e. participate in projects freely, because they want to, rather than feel that they have to.
 - Ask refugees how they want to be represented and how they want to represent themselves (if at all) rather than make their representation 'fit' project objectives

- Avoid reproducing and reinforcing current refugee stereotypes
-

> Respect for others cultures (both between the 'host' community and participants from other countries, and between the various cultures represented between one another),

Awareness understanding of parameters across the board in terms of activity - e.g. - short or long term support?, financial remuneration or not?, status of individuals - can they be paid, can they go on to further training, can they go on to employment etc,

Realistic communication to participants about what is being achieved, and what their expectations should be,

Understanding of what the funders and policy makers are doing - where things are going, and how we can best respond and be proactive in shaping future decisions.

>

- Equal opportunities training for all staff
 - Invest time into building relationships with groups, Talk to people to find out what they want
 - If you have specifics to offer be clear about what you can offer
 - Listen to participants and agree group and individual aims and goals as appropriate
 - Discuss and agree group rules i.e. confidentiality, timekeeping etc
 - Work with individuals and help them to assess their progress towards aims and goals
 - Provide dedicated trained support staff to provide one to one time talk/listen/reassurance if an individual needs it.
-

>

- Take your lead from the individuals that you are working with.
- Be neutral in your assessment of any musical/ cultural output. Do not make assumptions
- Establish the best communication possible and always be aware of the need to maintain this.
- Avoid using people as tools.

6. What is the most significant message that you would like to share with policymakers and donors at the workshop?

>

- That arts project play an enormous part in the process of integration and are especially valuable for enabling new arrivals to engage in communities and civil society.
 - Less pressure from donors on projects, which deliver hard social and economic objectives.
-

> My personal wish is that artistic standards from the client group should be high. To promote anything less is patronising.

> For me the most important message is that we are service deliverers with immense skill, networks and experience. We are here to help them do their job, and we need them to be fully engaged with us, to work alongside us in developing policy and allocating funding, to ensure we can both have realistic goals and the appropriate services to achieve realistic outcomes that match

> That young refugees have an entitlement to access opportunities and have a great deal to offer if given opportunities and support. The support for artistic or creative entitlement is not there in most contexts.

> The range and quality of the work that is taking place around the country and how this can be developed with a more coherent National strategy and dedicated funding

> I think that we must always be aware that many of the elements that make cohesion difficult do not reside with the settlers themselves so it is not enough just to represent or profile the experiences of refugees and asylum seekers.

7. How do you think this Peer Leadership Network could raise awareness of the significance of our work with refugees and asylum seekers?

> I think the first question has to be: raise awareness to which audiences? And then what is the significance of our work? I'm finding it hard to answer this question. We need to know more about what we are trying to achieve first. Two points that come to mind:

- Personally I feel that the situation of the separated young refugees that we work with is so awful that the real priority is to fight the slow undermining of their rights. Policies towards unaccompanied minors are increasingly towards deportation rather than integration.
 - Arts crucial part of integration –when it happens - as a slow and complicated process
-

> I think this network can be a really valuable conduit between the 'sector' and the 'policy makers/funders' to enable us to have that flow of communication we need. It can be a catalyst for bringing both 'sides' together so we can start to work in partnership as a way forward. I also think it's a great opportunity to start consolidating the strength of those organisations working in the field and to look at some really exciting strategic and practical ways to work jointly and nationally (and internationally) through consortia

> It's about a collective voice, but we need more voices as well. Some good dissemination tools that we devise and create together

> The Network provides an opportunity for a collective National voice and a chance to meet with policymakers and have some input into national strategy,

>

- Through having a national collective voice instead of working separately in our individual regions
- Through having the space and time to dedicate to 'awareness raising', as we are often too caught up in the needs of our individual organisations and the communities we are engaging with
- Through having access to decision makers and policy makers
- Hopefully through Creative Exchange collating and evidencing this collective voice.