

Institution: Staffordshire University
Unit of Assessment: 34, Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory
Title of case study: Working Together to Create Change
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>The research project had an enduring impact on the way the health authorities in Walsall and Dudley view using the arts to develop better sexual health services for young people and children. In Walsall an officer specifically dedicated to arts in health was installed, a position still in place in 2013. The research led to an awareness, still evident today, of the value of involving the arts in health. Our research is now used in training health professionals in Walsall and community arts work remains at the centre of many strategies to improve the quality of life in Walsall.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>The Working together to Create Change research incorporated the Safety Soap Box exhibition of participatory art works at the New Art Gallery Walsall. The research project was carried out in Walsall in 2001. The Staffordshire University staff member leading the research was Maggie O'Neill, then a Reader working in the Faculty of Arts Media and Design at Staffordshire University. O'Neill's research was assisted by Rosie Campbell (then with Liverpool Hope University College). Mark Webster (now Head of School, Art and Design, Staffordshire University) managed the overall project. At the time of the project Webster worked for the Local Authority as an arts development worker and was part of the commissioning team that took on O'Neill and Campbell.</p> <p>The project stemmed from a tender for research into the causes of and solutions to problems caused by street-based prostitution in Caldmore (a district of Walsall) commissioned in 2001 by the South Walsall Area Health Action Zone. From 1999 until 2003 Walsall had the benefit of a new stream of health funding called "Health Action Zones" (HAZ). This prioritised spending in geographical areas with specific health issues and health inequalities. Walsall South HAZ set up a community based steering group who commissioned projects to meet the needs of communities living in south Walsall. The Caldmore area of south Walsall had long suffered problems related to the issue of street based prostitution and in 1999 commissioned Staffordshire University to undertake a participatory action research project looking into the issues related to prostitution. As part of the project Walsall Community Arts Team set up a participatory arts project called the 'Safety Soapbox' and commissioned Walsall Youth Arts to undertake a photography project working with local residents, sex workers and young people at risk of being drawn into prostitution. The research project which followed used a pioneering methodology based around Participatory Action Research (PAR) and Visual Methodology (VM) and resulted in a report, "Working Together to Create Change: Walsall Prostitution Consultation Report (O'Neill, M and Campbell, R: 2004: http://www.staffs.ac.uk/schools/art_and_design/safetysoapbox/images/full_report.pdf). Mark Webster, then an arts development officer linked to the South Walsall Area Health Action Zone, worked with O'Neill and Campbell to set up a community steering group for the project and involve community groups, stakeholders and a range of agencies working on the ground in Walsall. The project led to follow up research based on a series of interviews around abuse and self harm which resulted in another exhibition in Walsall New Art Gallery in 2004. "Sex Lies Love" commissioned by Walsall Youth Arts in partnership with Walsall New Art Gallery and Walsall Health Authority. The exhibition consisted of a number of image and text panels. Evidence of the exhibition of sex workers' artworks is available from www.safetysoapbox.co.uk The Safety Soapbox exhibition also published a short run edition an artists' book of high quality prints of each of the images (Kate Green 2003; Walsall New Art Gallery). Images from the exhibition were used on the cover of <i>Sex Work Now</i>, 2006, edited by M. O'Neill and R. Campbell, Cullompton, UK; Portland, Oregon: Willan Publishing (now Routledge).</p>
<p>3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)</p> <p>Maggie O'Neil, Rosie Campbell, Anne James, Mark Webster, Kate Green, Jay Patel, Nasreen Akhtar and Waheed Saleem (2004) 'Red lights and safety zones', chapter 13 in <i>City of quarters: urban villages in the contemporary city</i>, edited by D. Bell and M. Jayne, Aldershot: Ashgate.</p> <p>R Campbell, M O'Neill (2006) 'Street sex work and local communities: creating discursive spaces for genuine consultation and inclusion' in <i>Sex Work Now</i> edited by M. O'Neill and R. Campbell, Cullompton, UK; Portland, Oregon: Willan Publishing (now Routledge).</p> <p>M, O'Neil, (2007) "Feminist knowledge and socio-cultural research: ethnomimesis, feminist praxis and the visual turn", chapter eleven in <i>Cultural theory: classical and contemporary positions</i> edited by Tim Edwards. London: Sage Publications.</p>

Impact case study (REF3b)

M O'Neil, R Campbell, Phil Hubbard, J Pitcher and J Scoular (2008) *Living with the Other: Street sex work, contingent communities and degrees of tolerance*, London: Sage Publications.

<http://cmc.sagepub.com/content/4/1/73.abstract>

M O'Neill (2008) 'Sex, violence and work: Transgressing binaries and the vital role of services to sex workers in public policy reform'. Chapter 4 in *Sex as Crime*, edited by Gayle Letherby, Kate Williams, Philip Birch and Maureen Cain, Cullompton, UK; Portland, Oregon: Willan Publishing (now Routledge).

Citation in *Policing and Society: An International Journal of Research and Policy* Volume 14, Issue 4, 2004. Article 'Tacking client violence in female street prostitution: Inter-agency working between outreach agencies and the police'. Clarissa Penfold, Gillian Hunter, Rosie Campbell & Leela Barham pages 365-379.

4. Details of the impact

Our research had enduring impact on the way Walsall Council and Health Authorities in Walsall use the arts to develop better sexual health services for young people as is evident in the ongoing funding for Walsall Arts into Health (<http://www.walsallartsintohealth.co.uk/>). Mark Webster who was integrally involved in the research project set up Walsall Arts into Health and reports that this organisation is part of the legacy of the Working Together to Create Change project. The Walsall Health Authority funded a dedicated Arts and Health leader in Walsall Arts into Health and this funding remains in place in 2013 (Source 2, section 5; also <http://www.walsallartsintohealth.co.uk>). The impact has also reached other areas. Bal Kaur who was involved in our project now works in Dudley encouraging an extensive use of the arts by the public health team around issues connected to sexual health.

Many of the groups we worked with during our research project remain engaged in 2013. Some community leaders who emerged at the time of our research project went on to develop further work inspired by our project. Motivated by involvement in our research, a community member went on to serve on the board of Walsall Youth Arts (1997–2010). The exhibition 'Safety Soapbox: Sharing our true colours' 2001 was the first time the Walsall Community Arts Team (now the Creative Development Team http://cms.walsall.gov.uk/creative_development_team) worked with the New Art Gallery Walsall on a Project and it led to on-going collaborations between the Gallery, the Community Arts Team and Walsall Youth Arts. The project was also part of a range of Arts and Health projects commissioned by the Walsall Health Authority. The outcome of our research project led to many more commissions from the health authorities, (e.g. Walsall Primary Care Trust) particularly focusing on the needs of young people linked to issues related to sexual exploitation and sexual health.

The use of participatory arts methodology in our research demonstrated that community arts is both a valid and effective research tool and has ensured that community arts work remains at the centre of many strategies to improve the quality of life for people living in the Borough of Walsall. This is evident in the continued existence of Walsall Arts into Health (<http://www.walsallartsintohealth.co.uk/>).

The outcomes of our research project are now used in training health professionals in Walsall with regard to youth health issues (see Source 4, section 5 below).

Much of the Arts and Health work undertaken today with young people in Walsall, Dudley and the rest of the West Midlands as well as the arts based research work can be traced back to the pioneering work that took place as a result of our innovative approach to the working with sexual health and sexual exploitation issues in Walsall (see Source 4, section 5 below).

As a result of our research the organisation SAFE (Stopping Aggression in the Family Environment) had their contract extended to offer sexual health services to women working on the street (see Source 3, section 5 below). SAFE continues to be funded in 2013 and the 'SAFE Project' (see: <http://www.safe.wmids.nhs.uk/how.asp>) is primarily focused on promoting the health and well-being of female sex workers in Birmingham, Sandwell and Walsall, aged 18 or over.

The work stream developed as a result of our research project continued to be a key element of the work of Walsall Youth Arts right up to 2010 (see Source 1, section 5 below).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact Source 1: Former manager of Walsall Youth Arts 1997-2010 (an arts-based charity working with disenfranchised young people); currently working at Walsall Art Gallery (Walsall Youth Arts was commissioned by the Community Arts Team of Walsall Council to undertake the art work for our research project)

Walsall Youth Arts were commissioned to develop the Safety Soap Box Art Project which formed

an integral part of the “Working Together to Create Change” research into prostitution in Walsall. “I do think it was an important project, I do think it had a broad effect. It got us [Walsall Youth Arts] involved in a whole range of projects. Introduced us to people and agencies, moving us into a way of working in ways that we hadn’t before.”

Safety Soap box was a “Very emotive project—the whole of our organisation from arts workers to board members, felt that we were in it to make a real difference and felt totally committed to the project and the research. It changed the way the organisation [Walsall Youth Arts] thought about itself. We felt we could make a change and it was a real step up for the organisation to work on a project that could influence non-arts organisations working with difficult social issues ... that’s the important thing for us. We had artists and researchers working out on the street doing arts work with women alongside outreach workers on the street doing needle exchange and offering sexual health services. It had a massive impact on all the arts workers. ... It changed their perception of how they viewed what the arts could do. And what it could achieve.”

Source 1 explains that project gave Walsall Youth Arts both experience in this area of work and the confidence to take on future projects: “As a result of the prostitution research and particularly the arts element, a whole range of organisations started coming to us with ideas for us to undertake projects with vulnerable young people at risk of being drawn into sex work. Moreover the project gave us both the confidence to take on challenging work”.

Regarding the impacts on Walsall Youth Arts of Safety Soapbox itself and the wider participatory research project that surrounded it: “It had a big impact on participants and workers and professionals. I think it was a really important project, it sort of brokered significant partnerships that got us working around issues connected with educational and preventative work with young women and established some relationships with residents groups and local people. It did have a big impact on us and it did impact on real people ... working with young women, well children really, abused through prostitution. It was an extremely important project and very successful.”

Source 1 notes that the work stream developed as a result of the project continued to be a key element of their work right up until the closure of the organisation in 2010.

Source 2: Principal Arts Officer, Walsall Creative Development Team. 2001- 2013. The Creative Development team was known as the Walsall Community Arts Team prior to 2006.

Source 2 was Senior Community Arts Officer at Walsall Community Arts Team (a local authority team) between 1994 and 2001 before becoming Principal Officer.

“Although the project was relatively small it had a huge significance for the team. Many of the groups we worked with during the project are still engaged in the work of the team [Creative Development Team] today. Some community leaders emerged at the time of the project who went on to develop further projects. One community member from the research went on to serve on the board of Walsall Youth Arts, this would not have happened if the project had not taken place. The project caused quite a ripple locally and resulted in many articles in the local paper and some national coverage including an article in the *Big Issue*. The exhibition itself was the first time we worked with the then new, New Art Gallery [Walsall] on a Project and it led to continuing and on-going collaborations both with the Community Arts Team and Walsall Youth Arts. The project was also part of a range of Arts and Health projects commissioned by the Health Authority and the HAZ [Health Action Zone] and the outcome of this project led to many more commissions from the health Authorities, (PCT [Walsall Primary Care Trust], CHT etc) particularly focussing on the needs of young people linked to issues related to sexual exploitation and sexual health”.

Source 2 notes that as a result of the work during the Health Action Zones period the Health Authority went on to fund a dedicated Arts and Health lead in the Creative Development Team and this funding remains in place until the present day. This Officer is responsible for a whole range of Arts and health work [see <http://www.walsallartsintohealth.co.uk>]

“The significance of the project for the team was that it brought the community arts to the cutting edge of working towards solutions to social problems. This was particularly uncomfortable for some, including elected representatives, who struggled to see the value of the work. However the research project valued participatory arts as a serious ... academic research methodology and proved that community arts is both a valid and effective research tool. This project and much of the work in the HAZ [Health Action Zones] helped set the basis for an approach to social problems involving the arts which has informed the work of Walsall Council and the PCT and health Authorities and has ensured that community arts work is at the centre of many strategies to improve the quality of life for people living in the Borough.”

Source 3: Consultant in Public Health. Dudley Public Health Team Community Public Health Worker 1998–2003, NHS Community Health Trust. Source 3 provided input and support to the Working Together to Create Change research project.

“What was significant about it [the research project] is that it brought agencies around the table to talk through their approaches to the issues surrounding prostitution and to look for a new way forward” One of the most important enduring local impacts cited by source 3 is that “It broke down the standard professional boundaries and made people think about new approaches”. Source 3 notes that some of the recommendations from the research report were adopted immediately on completion of the project, so for instance the police established a cross-disciplinary panel of professionals working with women involved in the sex trade, along with other agencies and community members, and the organisation. The organisation SAFE (Stopping Aggression in the Family Environment) had their contract extended to offer sexual health services to women working on the street.

Source 3 points to the impacts that that the project had, particularly at a community level. “Lots of people had their eyes opened by the project ... to the experiences of the women and it made them look differently at women working on the streets”. Source 3 talked about the legacy at a community level in terms of the continued involvement of community members in other projects. She gives the example of a group of people who came together as a result of the project who became critical of the way that a stream of funding was being spent to deliver hostel services to young people in the area at risk of being drawn into prostitution and how, with her help, they went on to form an action group which influenced the way hostel services were commissioned in the Borough of Walsall. Source 3 notes that our research project had enormous impact on the way the Health Authorities in Walsall and the Local Authority viewed using the arts to develop better sexual health services for children and young people. “After that project there were a range of agencies that became committed to using the arts as a way of delivering more effective health services”.

Source 3 now works in Dudley where the arts are used extensively by the public health team around issues connected to sexual health and cites the Safety Soap Box aspect of our research project as a key influence: “It made people sit up and notice just how good the arts are at both engaging the public in a non-threatening way, but also getting them to express themselves differently about issues that affect them. But she cites its major impact as “getting service providers to think differently about the way they perceive services and deliver them”.

Source 4: National Lead for the Improving Patient Experience, NHS Development Authority.

Source 4 worked as a Community Public Health Worker in Walsall 1998–2003. She believes the project had a considerable impact both at the time and since. Particularly important for her was the way the project impacted on the work with vulnerable young people in Walsall and beyond. “What the project showed was that health professionals do not focus on aspects of young people’s lives that do not immediately present themselves outside of working hours”. Source 4 says that our research project, and most particularly its arts aspect, influenced a way of working with young people that had a significant effect on the way professionals approached their work: “This project pioneered working with young people around issues related to sexual health particularly with groups of vulnerable young people”.

She went on to say that the legacy of the project was that further funding was secured through the Health Action Zone and through the Health Authority and then the PCT for future arts based work around sexual health and sex work as it affects young people, particularly in relation to grooming and sexual exploitation.

The projects that followed Safety Soap Box using art to consult with young people and present their ideas were also often used to train and educate health professionals in Walsall about their approach to the issues: “Staff involved in arts work often found themselves becoming emotionally effected by the work which had a profound effect on how they later looked at the issues.”

Source 4 reports that apart from the direct impact on the staff involved from being involved in projects the outcomes of projects were often used to train staff as a part of training materials and content in seminars and conferences. She believes that much of the Arts and Health work undertaken today with young people in Walsall, Dudley and the rest of the West Midlands as well as the arts based research work can be traced back to the pioneering work that took place as a result of the innovative approach to the working with sexual health and sexual exploitation issues in Walsall in 1998- 2003