



Introduction to Working with Young People

Madcap Arts : academic perspective

Madcap is a community arts project that's based in Milton Keynes and the aspect that we feature here is the making music, and the clients of Madcap, the young people who we see in the clips, are people who have been excluded from other forms of education and training, so they're people who are seen as a bit of a problem, and the challenge is to engage their interest in activities through which they learn.

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For a lot of these young people they are interested in making music and various forms of supporting music-making, so it might be to do with studio work, to do with using mixing desks, things like that, so there's the technical support as well as the more creative side of things, so what we see on the clips are Steve, who's primarily a musician, but has clear talents in working with young people in an encouraging and engaging way, and working alongside them so that they see him as a trusted adult, and that's absolutely crucial for anybody who's doing this kind of work with young people. And Gawaine who's assisting him who, again, has technical skills and he's come through the project as originally a participant, and now he's employed there as an assistant to Steve. Neither of them are qualified youth workers which is interesting. There's often a thin boundary between the kind of interactions which are about making the music happen and other kinds of interactions which are about more personal aspects of those young people's lives and this is an aspect of any work with young people that it's through purposeful activities that other kinds of conversations might emerge where an adult might be helpful to young people in talking through other issues in their lives.

One of the things that comes through most strongly is that they gain confidence in doing something that they themselves are motivated to do, and I think that's central to all forms of work with young people that what's happening in here is reinforcing young people's confidence in their ability to do things for themselves. And I think we see that to some extent in the interactions with Jackie that she's bringing a troubled past to the song-writing which she's involved in here, and I think we can see the ways that that might be supportive and cathartic for her in making the music that she is with Steve.

What we were trying to do in showing these examples of practice with young people is to show them from a number of different perspectives, so in this example we have the project worker Steve who's telling us what he's trying to do and how he sees the work that he's engaged in, but we also wanted to show it from the perspective of the young people themselves in terms of what they got out of it, and what they saw was the value of being part of this, and also from the perspective of one of the managers of the project, Sue Quinn, who we see in the last clip, because there's also here an aspect of the kind of concerns that managers have about where the funding's going to come from, how they demonstrate the outcomes of these projects to their funders, and how they ensure the safety of participants, for example, so there are very different concerns and perspectives, and issues that the different participants bring to it, so in order to give that rounded impression of the project, we wanted to show it from different sides.

What we have with Madcap is something that's primarily a community arts project but it is partly funded by the youth service and it's doing the kind of work that youth workers would be comfortable with. The way that it's working with the young people is valuing the experience they bring and an emphasis on informal education and forming positive relationships with young people. So in those ways it's at ease with youth work, what youth workers would be

doing. But it's slightly different in that the emphasis here is very much about the music and the making of music, and developing the skills of young people in doing that. It's a good example, I think, of those kinds of work with young people that are not youth work proper, but have many similarities with how youth workers would operate.