



1. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT

The Drama Performance Level 1 National Open College Network accredited course aims to introduce the participants to drama techniques and help them to develop personal qualities such as self-esteem, confidence and social skills through the devising of their own drama performance piece. Learners are also encouraged to respond directly to the issues revealed in the play and to express their views on the issues in a creative and productive way.

TIME AND LOCATION OF THE PROJECT

The Drama Performance course took place on the following days: 21, 22, 23, 24, 25 and 29, 30, 31 August 2006.

The course took place at HMP Cardiff in a room big enough for drama exercises and rehearsals.

PARTICIPANTS AND WORKSHOP LEADERS

The workshop leader team consisted of Alison O'Connor and Mark Robinson. Anita Lehmann, Education Officer for Escape Artists, introduced the project on Monday 21 August. In total, 8 participants contributed to the course and participated in the final performance.

EVALUATION PLAN

This report was written by Megan Bunting, Education Coordinator on behalf of Escape Artists. It is based on verbal and written statements of participants, workshop leaders, and prison staff.

The participants completed an evaluation form at the end of the course. The workshop leaders have also written down their views on the course and additionally, the prison staff in HMP Cardiff contributed by filling in a staff questionnaire.

2. EVALUATION RESULTS

PARTICIPANTS

7 out of the 8 participants filled in the evaluation sheets and all of them indicated they enjoyed the course. They all agreed that after the final performance they had become more comfortable on stage with one participant mentioning, "*I am comfortable on stage with a guitar but without*

it's a different story! I am now more comfortable without a guitar to hide behind!" Some of the new skills that were learned as a result of the course were: *"acting, stage positioning, to work more confidently as a team and miming"*.

When asked if there were any parts of the course that should be changed, 3 participants indicated they would have liked the course to have been longer, the rest indicated they wouldn't have changed anything. Other comments about the course were: *"Thank you for the time and effort afforded, I feel this has really benefited me!, bring more drama projects to inmates and prisons, this puts the fun back into learning, the project workers helped to unlock my potential and gave me support"*.

WORKSHOP LEADERS

Both workshop leaders felt that the workshop had been *"very successful"*. The strongest and best point according to both workshop leaders was the *whole process* of the course with one workshop leader further clarifying by adding *"working together for 8 days felt just the right amount of time to get a piece together"*.

Asked about what went less well, and how this could be remedied, one workshop leader mentioned the disappointment of not having the right kind of audience in terms of amount and make up. Although it was acknowledged this is a common prison difficulty, the workshop leader suggested that maybe *"in future the importance of this could be stressed to our prison contacts as a part of their preparation, as it really does make a difference"*.

As to the outcomes of the workshop for the participants, the workshop leaders felt that the participants had gained an improvement of communication and teamwork skills. A sense of achievement and people being proud of themselves was highlighted as other strong outcomes. One workshop leader wrote: *"A few of the group spoke of the experience as an 'escape' from the reality of their routines, which was a positive for them"*.

Both of the workshop leaders commented on the attendance/lateness difficulties with the contracted security officers that were to accompany the group throughout the course. However both workshop leaders stressed that the Education staff at the prison were excellent to work with and helped to ease this difficulty as much as possible. A further comment from one workshop leader suggested that a member from Escape Artists might consider attending the final day's performance rather than being present on the first day as this *"would allow [Escape Artists] to see what quality of work is being done in their name and it would be nice for us and the men to see someone represented in the audience."*

PRISON STAFF

The prison staff indicated the performance was great and that the participants seemed to really enjoy it. One member of staff specified by saying "*they all seemed to have thoroughly enjoyed creating and participating in the play giving them confidence and improving communication skills.*" The feedback was generally very positive with one member of staff indicating they thought the course was "*very successful*". Another comment shared was about how professional and knowledgeable the workshop leaders were with regards to the special issues of working within a prison setting. It was acknowledged there were difficulties with the contracted security officers that were to cover the drama course sessions and that the prison did undertake measures to remedy this to the best of their ability. The prison staff indicated they would like to be involved in similar projects with Escape Artists in the future.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE WORKSHOPS AND COMMENTS

- 3 The project management team should consider attending the final performance day rather than the first introduction day in order to get a better sense of what has been achieved throughout the course and to support the work that has been created.
- 4 In order to get a larger audience who will be supportive of the group, it would be helpful if it could be better advertised and that the importance of having the 'right kind' of audience is stressed at the beginning of the project.
- 5 It should be ensured that a member of the security staff is present on a regular basis in the sessions to help provide a consistency to the sessions.

On the whole, this Drama Performance course can be considered as having been very successful and enriching for all parties involved. It is very much hoped that future collaboration with HMP Cardiff will be just as positive and enriching.

MEGAN BUNTING, Cambridge, 20th September 2006