

Case Study #3

Involving Staff in Participation and Engagement

What was the biggest change at your venue during this project?

"I think the biggest change for us has been the cultural shift for the Front of House team working together to be part of a performance. They were part of the community cast for a show called 'The Band' and the process of them rehearsing and joining in the show made a shift in how they talk about our performance programme. Before they talked about it as 'other' - as 'coming in' - now there is more buy in. I'm still seeing the effect. I thought it might be good, but I didn't think it would have such an impact. And it really has just changed how they're engaging."



Photo: Paul Blakemore

"I think that often front of house staff are 'outside' the room and just moving people around the building. I don't know whether they are actually impacted by arts and culture, and the effect it can have. Often their interaction with shows is not present in the moment of that show. So in putting them in the show they experienced the joy of that show in a way that they wouldn't ordinarily. Honestly, just the way they talk about the programme now, they're

getting a lot more involved. They're talking to the artists more when they come in. It's like a cultural shift.

I think sometimes we think about engagement in terms of our communities. Actually, working with the venue community will impact our local communities because they'll have a better experience when they come through our door. It's intangible, isn't it, that kind of positive energy - the 'buy in' internally, so that was really brilliant for us."

The organisation prefers to remain anonymous.

How could you make your venue more accessible?

"I found the experience of working with someone with lived experience going from beginning to end of a project really useful. It was one of those things where we just did it 'on the fly' and it was quite responsive. But it was incredibly useful so in the future I would bring more people with lived experience who we can pay and they see the process of three shows all the way through from the beginning and review it.

The biggest change we could make would be to have more people dedicated to creating that welcoming and inclusive space. I think it's people first. I definitely found this on the consultation I did when we had people with lived experience in the venue. They forgave so much when I was there to greet them when I introduced myself properly. It went such a long way, because that human interaction felt like the most important thing to them. Having people dedicated to that welcome and that feeling of inclusivity. So I guess the learning is you know, make a start. Do a small amount really well and then build from there."

What would you like to tell other venues?

- Start small but back it up with a strategy of where you want to get to.
- Have people involved with lived experience in the room so that you can learn from their experience.
- Have people in your team who are dedicated to the 'welcome' and feeling of inclusivity.
- Enable your FOH team through participation in projects and training.



Photos: Paul Blakemore