

# Background to the Lost Voices Project

## ABOUT

**Lost Voices** - creatively exploring the lost voices of young people who have not traditionally been heard. Young people with experience of the care system. Young people experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness. Supporting them to find their voice, develop, shape and create their own large scale artwork.

Funded through Arts Council of Wales, Connect and Flourish, Lost Voices brings together Mess Up The Mess Theatre Company, Llamau and City and County of Swansea Children's Services in an 18 month+ programme of creative workshops culminating in a large scale public artistic experience in July 2023.

Young people connected to Llamau and Swansea Children's Services will work alongside artists over 18 months to explore in depth their own lives, experiences, thoughts and feelings. They will decide the stor(ies) they want to tell and the forms in which they will be told. They will develop confidence in speaking out. The partners are keen to transform their services in response to what they learn from the young people on the project. The final artistic experience will amplify the participants' voices and ensure they are heard. The audience will engage with the world the participants create on the terms the participants define.

Lost Voices is committed to a process of co-creation in which the participants drive the content and form of the artwork. At the outset, it is not known what form the final public artistic experience will take. It could be a play, a film, an exhibition, an immersive experience or something that nobody has ever seen before.

## THE PARTNERS

**Llamau** has supported young people, women and families facing complex barriers to independence for 35 years. Their work aims to prevent homelessness from

happening in the first place, provides safe accommodation for those experiencing homelessness, and supports people to develop the skills and confidence to leave homelessness behind for good.

**City and County of Swansea Children's Services** works with and supports those families with children under the age of 18 who are in greatest need. This includes disabled children, children and young people who are at risk of being neglected, harmed or sexually exploited and children and young people in trouble with the law. They are also committed to supporting young people transitioning out of being looked after.

**Mess Up The Mess** is a youth theatre based in the Amman Valley, but working in partnership with other organisations across South Wales. Mess Up The Mess specialises in using drama and other creative arts to engage with and empower all young people to explore their lives and identities, find a voice and be heard on the topics that are important to them.

The original project was funded with writer Conner Allen as a partner artist on the project. Following his appointment as Children's Laureate for Wales, Connor reluctantly felt he had to withdraw from the project.

The Partners' Vision for the project is to co-create an inclusive, accessible multi-platform high quality creative workshop programme for young people at risk of homelessness, experiencing homelessness and/or the care system; to fuel young people's inspirations to create a large scale socially engaged transformational artwork which magnifies their voices and acts as a catalyst for organisational change.

The Partners have adopted a set of principles informed by Artworks Cymru Quality Principles (see Appendix below).

## AIMS OF THE PROJECT

In addition to providing a high quality creative journey for participants and a final public product, the Lost Voices project aims:

- To give voice to marginalised young people
- To empower marginalised young people to make a change in their own lives
- For partners to look freshly on their own provision
- To increase engagement
- To ensure young people are heard by society

## PROJECT OVERVIEW

The project begins in November 2021 with a set of tasters and engagement activities, recruiting participants from Llamau and Swansea Children's Services' service users to the project. Participants will join one of two hubs: one based in Swansea and one based in East Wales (Cardiff, Newport or Caerphilly).

From January 2022, the Artistic Director and Co-Lead Facilitator-Writer will work with participants each week exploring their creativity and ideas and developing confidence and trust. By the end of the first year (in July / August 2022), the participants will have come together to decide what they will create in year 2.

Year 2 begins in September 2022. Throughout the year there will be weekly workshops with participants, run by the Artistic Director and the Co-Lead Facilitator-Writer, and joined by an expanded creative team. Over the year they will devise, write and otherwise create the material for the public artistic experience in July 2023. There will be a number of joint sessions where all participants come together and an intensive production week ahead of the public sharing.

Activity	When	How Much	Who
Taster Workshops	Starting before Christmas Year 1	6 tasters x 2 half days / evenings	Artistic Director Guest Artists Llamau and Swansea Staff
1st Year Workshop Programme	Jan - June 2022  Day workshop in half term or Easter	For each of 2 hubs: 10 half day / evening sessions  1 joint day workshop	Artistic Director Co-Lead Facilitator-Writer Guest artists Intern Emerging Artists Llamau and Swansea staff
Pathfinder Workshop	July - Aug 2022	2 day joint pathfinder workshop	Artistic Director Co-Lead Facilitator-Writer Assistant Producer Intern Emerging Artists Guest artists Stage Manager Llamau and Swansea staff
2nd Year Workshop Programme	Sep 22 - Jun 23	For each of 2 hubs: 13 evening sessions (5 before Christmas; 8 after)	Artistic Director Co-Lead Facilitator-Writer Assistant Producer

Activity	When	How Much	Who
			Intern Emerging Artists Creative Artist Team Stage Manager Llamau and Swansea staff
2nd Year Workshop Programme: consolidation	Early 2023	Joint 1 day session	Artistic Director Co-Lead Facilitator-Writer Assistant Producer Intern Creative Artist Team Stage Manager Llamau and Swansea staff
2nd Year Workshop Programme: Rehearsal	May / June 2023	Joint 2 day session	Artistic Director Co-Lead Facilitator-Writer Assistant Producer Intern Creative Artist Team Stage Manager Llamau and Swansea staff
Production Week	July 2023	5-7 days	Artistic Director Co-Lead Facilitator-Writer Assistant Producer Intern Emerging Artists Creative Artist Team Stage Manager Assistant Stage Manager Technician Llamau and Swansea Staff
Evaluation	July 2023	1 day	Artistic Director Co-Lead Facilitator-Writer Assistant Producer Intern Llamau and Swansea staff

## PROJECT TEAM

**Artistic Director, Sarah Jones** (she/her). Sarah is the Artistic Director of Mess Up The Mess Theatre Company. Sarah will lead the project alongside the Co-Lead Facilitator-Writer, co-facilitate the workshops and direct the final public artistic experience.

**Co-Lead Facilitator-Writer** (to be recruited). The Co-Lead Facilitator Writer will facilitate the workshops alongside Sarah and support participants to write material and shape the final public artistic experience.

**Assistant Producer**, (currently Chris Lewis (he/him), Executive Director of Mess Up The Mess, the role will be taken up by Jay Smith (she/her) on her return from maternity leave.)

**Tom Jones** (he/him), City and County of Swansea Children's Services Participation Officer. Tom is managing the project on behalf of City and County of Swansea and is responsible for the Swansea hub.

**Sian Jones** (she/her), Llamau Involvement and Engagement Manager. Sian manages the project on behalf of Llamau and is responsible for the Eastern hub.

In the first year, the project will recruit several guest artists to work with the core team on the first year workshop programme.

A dedicated stage manager / production manager will be recruited during year 1, who will join the project fully during year 2.

Based on the artistic forms and content decided by the participants in year 1, a full creative team will be recruited for year 2. They will follow the devising process across year 2 and support the young people to create all aspects of the public artistic experience.

Across the project, there are opportunities for new and emerging artists to be involved.

There will be 6 freelance placements for new and emerging artists to be paid to work with young people during the process and production.

There are 4 x 4 month salaried creative internships, providing new opportunities to begin a career in the creative arts. These will be recruited at key stages throughout the project.

## TRAINING

The partners have agreed to share their expertise across the partnership and training opportunities will be offered to the full project team (including freelance artists and interns).

## FINAL PUBLIC ARTISTIC EXPERIENCE

Whilst we do not yet know what the final public artistic experience will be, we are expecting it to be large scale and high impact. As a guideline, a budget of approximately £30,000 (including artist time) has been set aside for this element of the project.

## APPENDIX PRINCIPLES FOR MANAGING THE PROJECT

The Partners have agreed to follow the following principles in the project, which have been developed with reference to the Artworks Cymru Quality Principles.

### Intention

The Partners agree to:

- Champion young people's voices to be at the heart of the project so that their authenticity will drive the development of a powerful creative experience
- Work together to remove barriers to participation and create solutions to overcome tangible and intangible barriers
- Engage participants in the commissioning process for artists working on the programme
- Look beyond the obvious, creating a diverse creative team whose artistic journeys and lived experiences resonates with the participants and inspires them to reach higher
- Provide opportunities for non-traditional entrants to the arts sector
- Share training with each other and the team working on the project

### People

The Partners commit to:

- Being open and honest with each other and to raise any concerns with the Partnership Group

- Actively supporting participants to attend, engage and benefit from the opportunities the project offers
- Listening to participants and ensuring their ideas and authenticity are at the heart of the project
- Meeting the needs of all participants and ensuring they can take a full part in the project
- Supporting each other to find progression routes for participants at the conclusion of their participation in the project
- Regularly, sending appropriate representatives to Partnership Group meetings, and contributing positively in the best interests of the project and participants
- Working together to advocate for the project and its outcomes within their own organisations and to the wider world
- Providing due credit (to be agreed separately) to each other and Arts Council Wales when referring to the project

## Activity

The Partners commit to:

- Creating a working environment which is respectful and safe and to jointly create a safeguarding plan and work to common risk assessments
- Protecting the privacy of participants
- Respecting the participants right to experience a high quality project through providing trained staff to support the programme and the participants' engagement and progression within the programme
- Providing suitable facilities for meeting and working with participants that are accessible to them and meet their needs
- Engaging in honest reflection and feedback within the partnership and supporting the embedding of learning as the project progresses
- Working together to ensure that the project outputs are reviewed throughout the project and adapted to best serve the needs and interests of the participants

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