

# HEADS TOGETHER PRODUCTIONS

## Development Plan 2012-2015

*(part of preparation for Arts Council application January 2011)*

### Background to Company

Heads Together is a community arts organisation, based in Huddersfield and working across West Yorkshire (and sometimes further afield). The company uses the arts to inspire a creative vision in individuals and communities in order to improve potential and achievement.

Heads Together has been described as “media-agnostic”; using a wide range of art-forms – the Company designs and delivers creative programmes of work, always in partnership, with the aim of achieving lasting change. The key to the work is to bring creativity to the centre – at the heart of the life of the neighbourhood or the core of the school's curriculum – to achieve ‘creativity with purpose’.

Heads Together Productions has a rich history of twenty-five years of delivering quality programmes of work. Our uniqueness is our commitment to communities, developing our work over a number of years to ensure positive results. We believe in the ‘depth’ of the work we do in communities; not the quick-fix, light-touch projects that make people feel good but may have no lasting impact.

Our work always aims to be inter-generational, and accessible to all levels and abilities. As a Company, we have a strong set of principles - embodied in our manifesto document (attached as an appendix) and a commitment to high-quality work.

It is this approach that has led to our portfolio of programmes today. During the twenty-five year journey of the company, the learning from each programme of work has informed the development, scope and impact of subsequent programmes.

Our three current programmes of work are:

- East Leeds FM
- Two Valleys Radio in Kirklees
- The All In The Mind mental health project in Bradford

### Overview Statement for 2012 – 2015

Obviously these are worrying times for the arts in Britain. But we face the coming years with a degree of confidence. We have a rich background and a very strong reputation as a Company (both within the arts and in our partner sectors); we have three strong, established programmes of work with a range of sources of funding for each of them; and a tight, efficient model of working.

Our main aims for the period 2012 – 2015 are as follows (see detail below):

1. To develop and extend the depth and reach of our three current programmes of work
2. To develop our asset base to match our programmes of work; including creating the only dedicated arts-space in East Leeds.
3. To use our model of working to initiate one additional programme of work
4. To develop a programme of dissemination based on the experience and learning of the Company over the past quarter-century

# 1 Programmes of Work

## 1.1 East Leeds FM

Through the use of internet radio broadcasting, ELFM engages volunteers of all ages, who can develop their views, thoughts, poetry and music over the airwaves. This programme of work has grown out of many years of arts practice in East Leeds, delivering a range of creative projects to engage the community at all levels.

### *Purpose*

ELFM successfully engages people in a place where participation is currently very low (both in arts and social terms). ELFM fosters the notion that the arts should be valued and important to the quality of people's lives and can facilitate their active involvement in shaping provision in their community. The work of ELFM is driven by the belief that in a TV and image-obsessed world, radio is an eloquent, under-rated, democratic medium, and that as citizens and human beings we make our world a better place by being curious about it.

### *Impact*

East Leeds FM was created back in 2003 as a pilot project run by Heads Together Productions with students from John Smeaton High School. It has grown and developed since then and over 5000 people have been involved in broadcasting over that time – ranging in age from three to one hundred! It is an excellent vehicle for community engagement and active citizenship. Much of the work that goes on is truly inter-generational (including one occasion when we had four generations of the same family in the studio at the same time)

### *Partners*

ELFM has taken a leadership role within East Leeds but works closely with Education Leeds; Leeds City Council's Area Management Teams and over 90 community-based organisations in the area – from the guides to tenants organisations to Friends & Neighbours partnerships for older people.

*“East Leeds FM is community radio at its best. ELFM is part of the community of East Leeds, reflecting the creativity, stories and lives of the people. Operating from an old shop in the heart of East Leeds and serving some of the most deprived communities in England, ELFM has consistently delivered excellent community programming that has involved local residents, show-cased local talent, supported community action, helped release creative energy, encouraged communication – and made us all smile along the way! This really is a value for money venture that Leeds City Council has been pleased to offer some support over the years. All those involved in Heads Together Productions and ELFM are dedicated and professional and I hope they will be able to continue to flourish and make dreams come true in East Leeds.”*

Rory Barke, East & North East Area Manager, Leeds City Council  
January 2011

### *Funding*

Alongside Arts Council funding, East Leeds FM has had 23 different sources of funding since 2003. ELFM is currently funded by the Tudor Trust, Leeds City Council (Inner and Outer East Leeds Area Committees and arts@leeds), Education Leeds, West Yorkshire Grants and the last gasps of the Find Your Talent fund.

### *Development Plans*

ELFM is such an effective programme of work; we look forward to a strong future. It's creative work focuses around three areas:

- Music – particularly strong links into developing live music in the area and linking local young musicians in with the professional music scene; promoters, venues and festivals
- Words and literature – developing high quality word-based broadcasting including work with authors, poets and radio dramatists. Pioneering and developing a broadcast literature festival for East Leeds
- Community Journalism – working in partnership with Guardian Leeds, we will develop teams of journalists to create features about local, city-wide, regional and national issues that affect people in East Leeds

In addition we aim to develop a new strand: film and video. As the ELFM website is a very effective and well-visited digital gateway, we plan to develop the use of the moving-image as a creative, community-led operation: ELFM TV.

We will also further develop a strong training programme:

- Continue to develop the 'Writing for the Radio' project we have started with 14 local schools; and develop Young Journalist after-school projects at primary level
- Extend our range of studio-based training open to all at our Seacroft base
- Extend our work-placement and apprentice-ship models of training
- Further develop our year-long Next Generation training programme for teenagers (linked to Arts Award accreditation and in partnership with Leeds Metropolitan University)

We have recently completed our Feasibility Study on Seacroft Methodist Chapel, looking at the possibility of converting it into a dedicated space for ELFM. We are now at a stage ready to fundraise for this development, which would provide the area with a beautiful, sustainable arts venue for all local residents, schools and community organisations to access. This will be the first dedicated arts facility in the whole of East Leeds. (see below under asset development)

"That's the kind of thing that changes peoples lives"  
Simon Wainwright: lead singer – Hope and Social  
ELFM Musicathon May 2010

## 1.2 Two Valleys Radio

Two Valleys Radio is an internet-based community radio project for the Holme and Colne Valleys near Huddersfield.

This programme of work was directly inspired by ELFM – with local people who had heard about our work asking us to start a station alongside the fabulous Moonraking Festival in Slaithwaite in February 2009.

### *Purpose*

As with ELFM, this programme of work is aimed at using creative approaches to develop key objectives with the villages and communities of the Two Valleys. And as the Two Valleys are a very different place from East Leeds, the programme of work is developing its own clear objectives and methods.

The two main themes are as follows:

- Connecting the Valleys and the villages and communities within them
- Supporting and enhancing the cultural life of the valleys; particularly the vast range of voluntary and amateur arts that exists in the area

### *Impact*

In its first year of operation, Two Valleys Radio broadcast from 12 different villages and locations in the area (either through setting up studios or outside broadcasts from the infamous Caravan of Love). 60 volunteers have been involved in planning and presenting broadcasts – ranging from 10 to 73 years old; with 820 guests coming in to play music, read, perform or be interviewed in the various broadcast locations. All that with an audience of 10,900 people visiting the website to listen to broadcasts... it's a fantastic start to the programme

*I have been involved with Heads Together and their Two Valleys Radio work for approximately 14 months now. We have had some terrific experiences. Bringing together artists from around our community is something that I have continually encouraged and working with the radio station has certainly been great in that respect.*

*The highlight of the year was definitely the broadcast, which took place from our band room. Combining professionals and amateurs, music and literature, young and old, over a whole weekend was terrific for all involved and I have great respect for the work that Heads Together achieves.*

*Simon Wood*

*MD Hade Edge Brass Band*

*January 2011*

### *Partners*

The first 18 months of operation has been about proving our worth and making links with local organisations. Two Valleys Radio has developed excellent relationships with all the major festivals in the Holme and Colne valleys (Marsden Jazz Festival, Holmfirth Festival of Folk, etc); the Brass and Silver bands, and the community galas and festivals. We are working with all three High Schools in the area and a number of the primary schools. We have good working relationships with the Area Committees in both valleys, the Councillors and MP. We recently developed a partnership with Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival, creating an opportunity for local young

people to work with a renowned new-music composer, expanding their musical horizons.

*Funding*

Two Valleys Radio has secured two years funding from the South Pennines LEADER fund. In addition, we have been given support from Kirklees Council through Area Committees and Arts In Neighbourhood, and from West Yorkshire Grants. Having said that, Two Valleys Radio is unlikely to receive the kind of funding that ELFM has been used to, and we are determined to make the project sustainable over the long term which means keeping costs and overheads low – and not being afraid to rely on the social capital and good-will available in the area.

### *Development Plans*

Heads Together Productions has just secured premises in Meltham, Kirklees for our Admin office plus Two Valleys Radio (an old disused youth club – very cheap and entirely appropriate for our purposes). Meltham lies between the Holme and Colne valleys so is ideally placed for public transport links.

In the coming years period 2012 -15 our main development objectives are as follows:

- Develop the permanent base for Two Valleys Radio: opportunity for regular broadcasting and a space for ongoing training (to include Arts Awards provision for young people.)
- Continue to develop our work with schools in the area, expanding the scope to include more young people.
- Offer more music-based opportunities to volunteers – enabling more performance opportunities for emerging artists as well as developing musical skills of volunteers. Link up with a range of organisations including schools, sixth form colleges, venues like Bar 1:22 and festivals including Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival
- Continue to find ways to support the voluntary and amateur arts – from profiling their work eg Meltham Gilbert and Sullivan Society and the Valley Flutes to commissioning collaborations – as we have done with folk musician Roger Davies collaborating with Hade Edge Brass Band
- Further develop our outside broadcast capabilities and take the station to broadcast live from the smaller villages and hamlets within the Two Valleys

### 1.3 All in the Mind

All in the Mind is a partnership project between Heads Together Productions and Bradford District Care Trust. It's exactly the kind of "creativity with purpose" work that we have pioneered over the years – whether that be in education; communities; or, in this case, the health service.

The starting point, back at the beginning of 2009, was to develop a steering group consisting of artists and mental health professionals and define and refine the overarching aim of the work; indeed the research question.

#### *Purpose*

To find ways to improve communication about mental health issues; particularly at the point of crisis; to better structure the information given to people in distress, their families and friends, particularly those experiencing serious mental health issues for the first time.

#### *Impact*

The initial work is being done as an extended residency at Lynfield Mount Hospital over an 18-month period. We have brought together a team of artists, skilled in a range of art-forms and experienced in working in a range of community settings.

The work to-date has included writing, visual arts, photography, sound recording and other mediums; with staff, patients, and their families. We have worked with 62 staff (from reception staff to senior managers) and 77 service-users in the first phase of the work and have just published our first newsletter (attached).

*"What is the hospital for?*

*To help people find a better place*

*In their minds and in their lives*

*To help people over time*

*To wake up looking forward to a new day.*

*To be a halo of safety"*

Lynfield Mount Service User

November 2010

#### *Partners*

The main axis of partnership is directly with Bradford District Care Trust although we are working closely with a number of voluntary sector mental health organisations as well.

"As a manager working in mental health services I am particularly interested in finding innovative ways to address problems that seem intractable. The negative experiences and outcomes associated with hospital care – particularly for young people and those who are new to our services – have long been a concern for me. By using creative approaches such as art, writing and photography, Heads Together have brought a fresh approach to an area that few have regarded as a priority. Their creativity, imagination and integrity are enabling progress that could not be achieved through traditional approaches. I believe that by involving and engaging mental health service users at their time of crisis and in ways that enable

them to communicate – often despite substantial limitations – makes the All in the Mind project unique and the progress made to-date is a credit to Heads Together.”  
Stephen McGowan  
Bradford & Airedale Lead for Early Intervention in Psychosis  
January 2011

#### *Funding*

All In The Mind has secured two years funding from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation and is also subsidised by BDCT (and is part of our West Yorkshire Grants portfolio).

#### *Development plans*

The All in the Mind programme of work is organised with a series of periods of activity, reflection and research – according to the model of working that Heads Together has developed in recent years (see attached diagram)

As we approach the end of the first phase of activity in the hospital, the three areas of work that we are looking to develop in the next phase are as follows:

- Changes in the physical environment of the hospital
- Using narrative to create audio-visual and written materials to aid communication
- Developing a range of activities in the hospital and an encompassing narrative of recovery that makes sense of those activities

The programme of work is set to create change at Lynfield Mount and then at Airedale Hospitals in Bradford; and then to be used as a model of good practice in the sector through the Paul Hamlyn Foundation network and beyond. The work is being evaluated and we will be organising a conference to disseminate the results and presenting at other initiatives eg Enhancing the Healing Environment network

The partnership is working well, and our other aim will be to extend the work beyond the end of 2011. We are talking with BDCT and PHF, but are also looking to access related funds eg Comic Relief and Lankelly Chase to continue the work.

## 2 To develop our asset base

In terms of equipment and spaces, the important thing is to match our assets to our programmes of work whilst keeping our overheads to a minimum. With this in mind we will:

- Move our Heads Together base from central Huddersfield and link it directly to the new Two Valleys radio base in Meltham (sharing overheads). The base has been given to us with very low rent from Kirklees Council
- Continue to develop our ELFM base in partnership with other community organisations like the LS14 Trust – the ELFM base is a disused rent office that is given to us for no charge by East North East Homes
- Continue to develop our recording, broadcast and music equipment – ensuring that it is all transportable to suit the needs of our community radio projects – and develop an additional outside broadcast unit (as a mobile work of art) if funding allows (this time maybe an old ice cream van rather than a caravan!)
- To develop the first dedicated arts-space in East Leeds by renovating Seacroft Methodist Chapel. We are in a fantastic position with the Chapel. It is a beautiful building that our feasibility study (funded by Leeds City Council) has shown to be well-suited to our plans to turn it into a community arts centre for East Leeds. Our consultation with partners, including running events in the Chapel like the 24 hour musicathon and our planned broadcast literature festival, have had very positive feedback. The Methodists fully back the plan and are prepared to give us a 99-year lease at peppercorn rent. We have been working with the Development Trust Association who are supporting the process of negotiation and development. Our Board has thought long and hard about taking on this development, particularly considering the current economic climate We have agreed to only move ahead if all risks have been thoroughly considered. However, we believe that whilst this is an ambitious project, it is not over-ambitious; it is a realistic development for an already well-established programme of work

## 3 An additional programme of work

Our initial aim to 2015 is to sustain and extend our current programmes of work. At the same time, we would expect to develop an additional programme of work during that period. What that will be, we don't know – but we strongly believe we have the structures, the people and the experience to be able to develop a new partnership and create a brand new programme of work

## 4 A programme of dissemination

After 25 years we have a strong sense of how and why we do the work we do. We plan to take the opportunity of our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary to start to develop a programme of dissemination for our work over the next 3 years:

- By launching a new Heads Together website which documents the experience and learning of the company; as well as the processes and methods of its working. We aim to make the site a digital hub for the various programmes of work of the Company and use social media and regular newsletters for those wanting to develop a deeper understanding of the work of Heads Together
- Linked to the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, to develop a series of events that aims to honestly discuss the impact of the Company's work; "telling the story of

Heads Together in the words of the people from the different communities where the Company has worked”.

- To extend our links with higher education eg Education researchers at Sheffield University; Knowledge Exchange Network at Leeds Metropolitan University – to further develop a co-ordinated approach to research and evaluation of the Company’s work and the reach of its programmes of work within a range of sectors
- Various programmes of work run by Heads Together are regularly referenced in publications and journals eg the Methleys turfing, our work at West Yorkshire Foundries, our work in Brisbane ... We aim to develop an exhibition and a publication, coming from the research work linked to the Company’s 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, that will provide the missing link; making sense of the whole portfolio of the work of Heads Together and looking to how the Company (and the community arts sector) might develop in the future.

## *Linking in with the Arts Council goals*

### **1) Talent and artistic excellence are thriving and celebrated**

Heads Together has shown itself to be a leading company in delivering excellent community arts over the past 25 years. Our ambitious programmes of work not only engage a vast range of people, but also inspire them about the possibilities of creative excellence – whether that be a 24-hour musicathon in a chapel; a new-music collaboration with Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival; or combining poetry and photography as a multi-layered narrative that makes sense of mental distress. We will work with excellent voluntary and amateur arts organisations in the Two Valleys; bring the best musicians and writers to a deprived area like East Leeds and have a structure to enable the best community artists in the region to take creative challenges (and risks) with their work in a secure psychiatric ward. We will continue to develop the structures and programmes of work that encourage that artistic excellence in participatory settings

### **2) More people experience and are inspired by the arts**

Our experience of engaging people from disadvantaged communities is unrivalled (that's disadvantaged in both the social and cultural context). Perhaps the uniqueness of our work however is the deep and lasting experience that participants encounter. We are currently working with two freelance staff in Leeds – both of whom first met as teenagers on a Heads Together project in the class-room. We are able to work within disadvantaged communities, but also adapt our work to any given situation – whether that be a rural setting or a specialist situation such as working with people experiencing a crisis in mental health. At the same time our work is in partnership and we never forget that to effect lasting change we need to affect the health workers, the teachers, the housing staff, the politicians that we work alongside.

### **3) The arts are sustainable, resilient and innovative**

Heads Together has suffered various crises of its own over the years. We believe that we have demonstrated an ability to change and adapt; and have found an innovative structure that allows our associate artists to maintain their independence but still feel part of a learning team. Our programmes of work are ambitious, focused and demonstrate that we do not just work from project to project wherever the funding arises, but look towards long term partnerships in areas of need. This means that we are able to attract substantial funding from outside the arts making us more resilient.

### **4) The arts leadership and workforce are diverse and highly skilled**

There is little in the way of effective training and professional development in the community arts sector in the region. As a Company we believe strongly in our responsibility to develop the workforce. In 2010, we managed 22 work placements; ran a 9-month skills development programme for 44 young people; and currently have 2 young people in our freelance team who originally worked with as school children. At the same time we present at many conferences and training events about our programmes of work, but we recognise that we don't have the materials and the evidence to present about Heads Together – why the Company does what it does, and what it has learnt over the past 25 years. The first step in improving the skills of the workforce is to look at the competences and structures needed for the work to thrive. Our aim by 2015 is to have a range of materials that effectively disseminate not just the outputs and outcomes of the Companies work, but the methods and processes that we have developed.

**5) Every child and young person has the opportunity to experience the richness of the arts**

Our ongoing partnerships with schools at primary and secondary level; pupil referral units, extended services, and higher education has enabled us to offer a broad range of arts experiences to young people in school and to follow this up out-of-school with a range of opportunities – from one-off sessions to a year-long accredited programmes of work. We are determined to nurture the new generation of musicians, writers, artists and broadcasters. We are just as determined to enable people to access creative means to help understand themselves and the world around them; whether that be the spirit of curiosity engendered by conducting a radio interview or using creativity to make sense of a young person's transition to becoming a mental health service-user