

OPENING THE DOOR!



Exploring the outcomes of The Pantry Project

an immersive arts, food and health programme

www.thepantryproject.co.uk

SUMMARY OF EVALUATION REPORT BY CULTURE SHIFT

This document presents the evaluation findings of The Pantry Project: an immersive arts, food and health programme. It highlights the approach, practice and outcomes of four weekends of creative activity for young people with disabilities, focused on food and wellbeing.

The Pantry Project delivery is led by a cross-discipline team of artists and chefs in close partnership with care providers, and with the support of parents and carers. The Pantry Project model is characterised by solid planning and flexible delivery. Its person centred practice immerses the participants and the carers present in open ended arts and food based activities with a view to enhancing the wellbeing of participants, particularly in relation to food.

Delivery is enriched by the involvement of non-disabled youth buddies. Shared meals, social space and celebration also feature within the model.

The evaluation process has been led by Culture Shift, an independent not-for-profit organisation with a track record in capturing, tracking and assessing creativity-led partnership programmes in education, community and health contexts.



The approach employed observation, questionnaires, focus group reviews, telephone interviews and other available data. Following analysis, findings are presented thematically and in case study format to articulate the impact of the programme. The data is supported by extensive photo documentation.

The impacts of these Pantry Project experiences relate to the many and varied ways in which disabled and non-disabled young people and professionals have shifted their perceptions of the capabilities of themselves and each other. This relates to communication, integration, creative and leadership skill, capacity for play and enjoyment as well as preparing, eating, and experimenting with food.

The evaluation has sought differing perspectives that confirm shifts in behaviours for the disabled young people which extend beyond the weekends into their day-to-day lives. Moreover it has revealed fundamental shifts in the understanding, attitudes and practice of carers who so closely influence the experiences of these young people.

THE PANTRY PROJECT HAS FOUR KEY AIMS:

- To be an outstanding example of best practice in arts and health
- To use creativity to increase the wellbeing and sense of self of all the young people involved
- To provide professional and skills development for artists, stakeholders and young buddies
- To illustrate the impact of immersive creative and social practice on attitudes, understanding and behaviour for all involved.



SUMMARISING IMPACTS

For young disabled participants

- observed shifts or changes in behavioural patterns
- increased overall confidence in creative participation, social interaction/ working with others
- reports of increased understanding and altered attitudes, especially in relation to preparing and eating food The transferability of these impacts to day-to-day life is harder to assess. As is often the case with food linked behaviours breaking usual patterns and creating a fun and non-pressured environment is the first step. Translating this environment to the home or care situation is a longer term ambition. Nonetheless, those participants who have attended several weekends appear to have made continuous progress in at least one area of their behaviour, often around eating food (see case studies).

For young buddies

- valued sense of responsibility
- reported improved social skills and confidence
- a different outlook especially in terms of how they view disabled people
- new creative and leadership skills and Arts Award qualification The buddies more than anyone were challenged by the weekends, experiencing steep learning curves – getting to know and care for their disabled buddies, find the best way to communicate and getting them involved in an arts based activity. These are imminently transferable skills and knowledge that some have already indicated an interest in taking further.



For artists and chefs

- continued professional development through mentorship of more experienced artists
- broadened practice through working with different artform artists/chefs and care providers
- acknowledgement of the natural synergy between food (making and sharing) and art (making and sharing)
- specific learning regarding the protocols and necessary ways of working within respite/care settings

For care providers

- new perspectives on the abilities, interests and preferences of young people in their care
- professional development through working alongside artist and chefs, resulting in increased confidence to adopt creative, open-ended, 'messy' activities
- increased fun with food Many of those involved developed new skills and/or ways of working – their horizons were widened and there was a sense of new opportunities, resulting in increased confidence and motivation.

For parents and carers

- A break, as a result of the respite structure
- Increased awareness of the young people's abilities, interests and preferences
- 'Take-home' props and prompts to support parents/carers to continue and extend the work the Pantry has initiated. For example, new recipes to try out, personal name songs on CD and art works such as aprons, tiles and photos. As the Suffolk chef commented "it's more than just a rest" for the parents/carers, it provides them with new stimulus in their lives beyond the weekends.

