



ANNUAL REPORT OF ACTIVITIES 2015 – 16

Summary of the main achievements of the charity during the year

Supporting Asylum seekers and Refugees

We are strongly committed to our work with the refugee community in the Plymouth area, which is especially poignant at this time when their countries are in such devastating turmoil.

The number of refugees who attended the women's group sessions has increased from 15 to 20 with their pre-school age children as well as older daughters. Feedback shows how our sessions have supported them to become more confident and improve their English.

We have developed new ways of working with the women refugees, and some of them have gone into local primary and secondary schools to talk about their experiences and have employed the methods we have taught them.

We performed at Cultural Kitchen evenings nine times this year where we have supported the lives of 150 young people and adults in Plymouth as they integrate into school and life in the UK.

We gave three workshop performances for 30 students who are on placement with START to support refugees and asylum seekers. The sessions built a strong team at a time when the students were new to the organisation. This work strengthened their capacity to support refugees who are experiencing tough life circumstances as they integrate into life in the UK.

Unlocking Democracy funded a short-term project with asylum seekers and refugees to explore democracy and freedom. Members of Mirror Mirror went to the Houses of Parliament with a refugee to present the findings of this project.

Quotes from women attending the women's group

*"I enjoy women's group because it is a nice place to see my friends and a nice place to meet new people and make new friends. I like coming here because I can **practice my English** as at home there is nobody I can practice with. I really enjoy watching the playback theatre, this makes me happy and I laugh a lot."*

*"I like that there is a mixture of people from different cultures and countries, it is a very mixed culture here at Women's Group. I like that **I can begin to understand what is going on for different women in their own culture**. It is a good space where I can have face to face*



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conversations with other women. I like how emphatic and understanding everyone is to everybody's stories about their lives; it opens my eyes."

*"Women's Group helps improve my English. I get to meet new people and make new friends. Women's Group **gives me help for my own life**. It is a beautiful group with the playback theatre."*

"I love the teacher's here at playback theatre they are very good. The teachers listen to us and the playback makes us laugh and cry sometimes."

Supporting Young Carers

We have become increasingly aware of the huge number (2,400) of young carers in the South Hams, Torbay and West Devon and have further strengthened our connections with young carers' organisations. We have been invited by Torbay Young Carers to make joint funding bids to include Playback Theatre workshops and performances at young carer's residential events and local secondary schools.

As a culmination of the Big Lottery funded 'Cool Playback Tour' we created the 'Big Review' event in Torbay to share our findings of young carers' lives with statutory and third sector organisations. This event was attended by 40 people.

We attended South Devon College young carers awareness raising day where we spoke to 50 young people and gathered their stories. Since September 2015 we have developed a programme in collaboration with Torbay Young Carers to work in 6 schools with 90-120 young carers. We have written funding applications for this project.

Quotes from Young Carers and Support Workers

*"It was **quite relieving**, knowing that there are more people like you that share the same experience."*

*"I realised how some people would see it (my story) and actually it's a lot easier to understand than I thought it would be. And now I see I'm not the only one going through things like that. I know their problems are like mine. I think **finally someone can understand me, and things.**"*

"I found the Playback Theatre event to be very moving and powerful."



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Although we know about our young carers and why they are caring you seem to hear it differently when they share their own stories. All young carers should have the opportunity to attend such an event. I think one of the biggest outcomes is how the children and young people are able to learn empathy and offer peer support” **Katherine Mullan Project manager for Young Devon and Lead Practitioner for young carers**

“Let me first congratulate you all for the excellent work you have done these past few months. The positive effect your dramas have created for the Carers that I see has been tremendous. Expressions like " I felt a release" and " a sort of cleansing of the past " were typical of feedback I had with discussions with various Carers that I see.

In particular the way you presented Mental Health problems in such a way, helped reduce the stigma so unfairly attached to this condition, which after all effects around " one in four " of the population in this country, let alone the effect that has on the Carers who look after or are involved in some way with this care.

Going public, like so many did was very emotional for me also, to see as a Carer Support Worker, many of their stories which I knew of, and the emotionally charged journey so many have had to make, well I too was brought to tears on numerous occasions, something which was good for me, for being part of their journey is a privilege, and watching their growth a pleasure, you very much helped that process, thank you.

So I very much hope your good work continues in some way in the future, and if I can ever be of help, please contact me and I will try my best. Thanks again” **John Davidson Care Support Torquay**

Supporting Adults with learning difficulties

The artistic directors delivered a six-week training course at ROC Creative (Robert Owen Community) for 16 adults with learning difficulties and their support workers. Two support workers were funded by ROC to attend our ten-week training programme in Totnes which developed their skills to grow a new Playback Theatre company.

As a result of this training, a new Playback Theatre company formed called ‘Mardi Da!’ who offer Playback Theatre to their wider community to build confidence and support their wellbeing.

Twenty-five members of ROC Creative and their carers came to a Mirror Mirror public performance, which became a strong integration and exchange among audience members.



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Hearing the experiences and stories of the ROC community made an impact on members of the general public

Quotes from adults with learning disabilities

"I loved sharing my stories with everyone. It felt good, and it was quite moving. I like talking about my feelings and sharing helps me to feel better."

"Playback Theatre makes me feel kind."

"I felt happy and relaxed when I was listened to."

Supporting women who have experienced domestic violence

The artistic directors have written a new Pattern Changing Programme for women who have experienced domestic violence and abuse. This has been developed in collaboration with two highly experienced Pattern Changing facilitators working in the field of domestic violence following seven years of Tarte Noire performances with this client group as part of their Pattern Changing programmes.

There is a particularly strong need for this work at a time when 80 cases of domestic violence are being reported daily in Devon and Cornwall.

Quotes from women in the group and the facilitators

To say that we enjoyed the morning with you and the women would be a complete understatement. How would these women be if they could have something like this on a regular basis? How high would they soar? Pattern Changing facilitator

"It's like seeing the world with more clarity. What matters, what's got worth, what's powerful, what's nurturing."

Supporting young women

It is becoming clear that issues surrounding young women about self-harm and pornography are not adequately addressed by statutory agencies. Two years after the death of a fourteen-year-old girl in Brixham we worked with a small group of six young women



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(13-14 years) at risk of self-harming and suicide due to bullying and social media bullying. Most of these girls had been excluded from school.

We worked in partnership with a local mental health charity Cool Recovery. We received Arts Council funding for this work.

Public performances

During this year we developed new audiences in Teignmouth alongside our regular performance venues.

Mirror Mirror gave six public performances attended by 140 people.

Tarte Noire gave twelve local public performances attended by 240 women on the themes of *What Do You Stand Up For? – Stories of Power and Powerlessness*; *What Matters to You – Politics from Our Hearts* and *What binds you what frees you?*

Feedback from audience members

“ Brilliant. Women at the leading edge. Empathy and power shared”

“ Thank you so much for the opportunity to express my story and have it played back before my eyes. You captured the beauty and essence of it.”

“Really insightful improvisation with sound speech and gesture”

“Amazing how you open people up and help them understand themselves and cherish their feelings.”

“So powerful and necessary. Beautifully held. Thank you so much, I felt very welcome.”

“This evening your Playback really put me in touch with my feelings, out of numbness into awareness, inspired, raw but hopeful.”

“ Blessed relief. Thank you for putting the feelings into actions. So good to have it all in plain view and feel the understanding.”



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"Thank you for bringing this conversation. It's so brave and so essential." "Lovely to connect with local women."

Training

The artistic directors ran two training courses to introduce local people to Playback Theatre. This year these courses were officially accredited by the UK School of Playback Theatre, which 30 local people attended.

12 people attended a training course held at Reading University for the UK School of Playback Theatre, which was delivered by PTSW.

Four members of Tarte Noire attended a Leadership programme designed and delivered by the artistic directors to grow the capacity of the charity to deliver workshops and performances.

Short term projects

Plymouth University Department of Clinical Psychology

Mirror Mirror facilitated the last day of the three-year post graduate programme for fifteen students and four staff members.

Torbay Clinical Commissioning Group

Mirror Mirror facilitated a public consultation event for mental health services attended by 120 people. It was a final opportunity for mental services users, professionals and commissioners in Torbay to speak about the current services. We facilitated a conversation in a highly charged arena. The event was considered a model form of consultation and attended by people from other local areas.

Additional Achievements

The performance of the organisation has strengthened – This is the first year as a charity with a group of committed Trustees.