



Feeling Included – A Case Study

Our road to realising authentic and real inclusive practice

Supported using public funding by



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ENGLAND**

Working together in partnership



Our starting point

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- Identified a need to consolidate our research and embed Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) into the organisation
- Successfully applied for IDEA Youth Music Project
- Aim: to integrate all the current information and learning and create one holistic approach to inclusion

Our approach

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Department for Culture, Media and Sport
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Three areas of focus:

1. Getting help – mentor support
2. Engaging and involving our team
3. Sharing responsibility



1. Mentor allocated

- Assigned John Kelly
- Held four sessions with senior leaders
- Safe space for reflection and questioning
- Facilitated and empowered ownership
- Shared lived experience

Objectives

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- To create clarity for Severn Arts about the meaning, purpose and collective understanding of what IDEA means for the organisation as a whole.
- How to support everyone to FEEL included and want to work for us because we are inclusive.
- To develop communications channels that enable everyone to have a voice and that articulate our collective vision and mission.
- To translate process into good practice and apply it to our work.
- To know how to develop and implement co-designed programmes that challenge and reflect our communities – internal and external.



2. Engaging our staff

- Workshop sessions around meaning of inclusion
- “Talk together” informal staff discussion sessions
- All staff meeting with John Kelly as guest speaker
- Training and development programme put in place
- Shared IDEA action plan



Feedback

Following the staff meeting with John Kelly we surveyed the staff.

- 70% said John's session was informative
- 90% said it was thought provoking
- 74% said it was a good use of their time

Feedback included:

- I need to be more proactive in asking teachers how I can support all the children in whole class sessions.
- To be more mindful and engaging with people in general.
- Helped me feel more confident to talk about my own access needs and others.
- Learn sign language perhaps!
- Ask more questions about the best way that we can work together / how people like to be communicated with / how can we get the best out of each other.

Intern blogs and testimonials

<https://www.severnarts.org.uk/maya-biddulph>

<https://www.severnarts.org.uk/georgia-wells>

Severn Arts have been supportive throughout my time working with them, and I have always felt welcomed by the team.

Severn Arts team were super welcoming and kind, and I felt immediately integrated as part of the team.

3. Sharing responsibility

- Recognition of role in supporting inclusion
- Embedding values and principles
- Making inclusion visible
- Listening culture
- It's an on-going process, not a start – finish process

What was our ONE takeaway?

- Inclusion is a feeling!
- People need to FEEL included

Eureka moment!

Inclusion is about a feeling, not a toolkit/access guide/series of tick boxes or a list of actions.

What do we do next?

- Champion inclusion as a Severn Arts' “way of life”
- Deliver against actions
- Embed, remind, challenge, check, review
- Holistic approach



Poem by Harry Childs, Worcestershire Young Poet Laureate 2023 finalist

At the start of the journey
I was a little lonely
My friends left me
It felt like I was the one and only

The hushed whispers surround me,
Glazed stares engulfed me.
But I held tight
Not wanting to give them a fight

Sly shoves in the hallway,
Telling tales in the doorway I just wanted to get away.
Make them stop,
Why me, you have nothing nice to say.

It's time to rebuild my smile,
As I know It will be worthwhile.
It feels like a long mile
Hold my head high,
As time passes me by.

Don't feel like you're in the dark,
Someone will help get back your spark,
There are people there for you
To show you how to smile again too.

Step away from those who don't understand,
It's time to take a fight and a stand.
It's time to live, learn and be free
As happiness is key.

So let's all choose to be kind.
Always keep others on your mind.
Unite together, show we are strong,
The torment won't last long.
I held tight for my Journey
Now nothing can hurt me.

Useful resources

- [Drake Music | Leaders in Music, Disability & Technology](#)
- [Home - Without Walls](#)
- [John Kelly Musician – Welcome](#)
- [Socio-Economic Diversity and Inclusion in the Arts: A Toolkit for Employers - Jerwood Arts](#)
- [best-practice-recruitment-guide-for-creative-leaders.pdf \(discovercreative.careers\)](#)

For more information

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