

## Report back to The Funding Network

### 1. Name of your organisation and date funded by TFN:

Curious Monkey Ltd  
October 2015

### 2. What was the project you sought funding for from TFN?

What are its aims and objectives? Have these changed since receiving TFN funding?

The project we pitched for at The Funding Network is called *Leaving*. Our aims for the project in our application were:

**Aim:** To address the acknowledged crisis of deteriorating support for vulnerable young people leaving care and to improve their outcomes and opportunities by:

- Creating a new theatre production called *Leaving* from real life stories of care leavers.
- Running a participatory programme of creative workshops with looked after young people to raise aspiration and self worth.
- Holding a symposium that raises awareness and brings the challenges of leaving care into public debate.
- Legacy – creating a documentary of the project to raise awareness.

Our aims remain the same, with added emphasis on the opportunity that the symposium offers to engage with policy and decision makers about specific challenges that young people face at the point of moving into independent living.

In addition to the participatory workshops, we have also run a number of theatre visits, taking the group to theatre venues in Newcastle upon Tyne to see professional productions. This has included a set design workshop and a visit to the set of *The Savage* at Live Theatre, a lighting design workshop with the lighting technician at Northern Stage, a visit to the set of *Get Carter* and a workshop with the Artistic Director of Northern Stage, Lorne Campbell. Following a performance of *Day of the Flymo* at Live Theatre, the young people were able to talk to the young actors who had performed in the show. This was great for broadening their experience and raising aspirations, as the play dealt with issues around the looked after system and the actors were the same age as the group.

### 3. Were you able to do this work as you described it in your application and presentation?

Yes

No

What evidence do you have for the success or failure of the funded project?

The timeline of the project has changed slightly so the project is still underway and the aims of our original application are being met and in some cases exceeded.

The ongoing success of the project is evident through the activity and partnerships that have been building since October 2015. We have:

- Engaged a committed group of 8 young people in care or care leavers
- Run 18 workshops with the group supported by Northern Stage, Live Theatre and Space Six artist studios
- Engaged with North Tyneside and Newcastle City Councils to work with their corporate parenting teams on recruiting more participants for the project

- Secured the partnership with Children North East on the development of the Symposium, to ensure that decision makers engage with the event. The symposium will be held on the 27<sup>th</sup> February at Northern Stage.
- The commission of the play is complete. The creative team have worked together on two weeks of research and development of the script with the support of Northern Stage. We have one more weeklong residency in the week of the 26<sup>th</sup> September 2016.
- The play will be produced in Association with Northern Stage who will provide rehearsal space and a two week run to open the national tour early 2017. We hope to tour the show in two phases – the first in early 2017 to raise profile of the work, and again in Spring 2018.
- Applied to Arts Council England for the funds to tour the show in February (decision October 2016)
- We are working with filmmaker Matt Jamie who is documenting the process from the participation through to symposium and opening night.
- We now work regularly with a freelance producer and a freelance project co-ordinator, who have both been integral to the success of the project.

One of our aims for the funding from TFN was to be able to lever other funds. As a project based company, we rely on arts council and trust and foundation funding. It has been hugely beneficial for us to make the connection with TFN as it has helped us to diversify our funding streams and show funders that there is already investment in the project. Please see section 6 about other funds we have raised in support of the project.

The remaining activity in the project includes:

- 6 participatory workshops in Autumn 2016
- 3 theatre trips
- Shadowing – the young people will shadow members of the creative team during the production process
- Symposium
- Rehearsal, production and tour – the young people will be invited as VIPs to opening night of the show
- Finalising the documentary and releasing it online
- Participatory workshops and curtain raisers in each region that we visit with up to 15 young people in each region

#### **4. If you were not able, please explain what happened and why?**

Can you quantify any changes? Eg ...expanding number of employees, number of projects, geographical scope.

Areas where we have deviated from the original aims included:

- Timeline: We had originally planned for the production to be staged in Autumn 2016, it will now be in early 2017. This is due to funding deadlines, availability of the venue, and allowing time to build up our relationship with Northern Stage.
- Group numbers: We are continually recruiting young people through meetings with Children's homes and local authority staff to build the numbers of the regular participatory group to meet our target of 20 members. We are working with Newcastle City Council to recruit more young people and encourage their staff to advocate for the project. When we are on tour, we will be working with venues and local authorities in the areas we visit to arrange workshops with looked after young people in the run up to the show. This may take the form of one off workshops or a set of workshops leading to a performance that can act as a curtain raiser for the show.

## 5. Can you measure, assess or describe the change that happened as a result of this work?

What actual change did the funded project generate? What proportion of the project/work did TFN fund (eg all/x%)?

As the project is ongoing, we are as yet unable to measure the reach and impact of the project as a whole. We aim for the symposium in February to produce clear actions which will allow us to measure changes that are made. In planning the symposium we have decided to concentrate on a couple of areas that are emerging through working with the young people so that the discussion can be focussed and there can be clear potential outcomes. These may include reviewing the age young people move to the leaving care team and the professionals surrounding that young person change, this unsettling time often coincides with a very pressured time when young people are taking GCSEs. It may also focus on the level of real support young people receive once moving into independent living and standardising this across local authorities. Once the symposium has been held and the production is up and running, we will be able to measure:

- numbers attending the symposium
- action points and follow up from the symposium (have people done what they said they will do? And what has changed?)
- Any policy review
- Audience numbers on tour
- Participant numbers in workshops on tour
- Press coverage for the symposium and tour
- Legacy for the young people (see below)

As part of our regular participation programme with the group, our project coordinator has run evaluation sessions to assess changes in the attitudes of the group. We have so far done baseline and mid point evaluations as there is more activity planned through the Autumn and Winter.

Through games and exercises with the group it became evident that they find it hard to recognise their own behaviour. They found it easier to recognise bad behaviour rather than praising themselves for positive actions. We found that asking individuals to identify positive behaviour in others also enabled them to recognise positive aspects of their own behaviour. The group made an agreement on how they thought they should behave in sessions, which they created early on in the project. In the evaluation, they recognised that they had broken all of their own rules during the term. This shows major progress for these individuals, as they are beginning to see that their actions have consequences and the way they behave towards others matters. Allowing the group to positively reinforce one another in this way helps to build their confidence and learn about how to make relationships and how to behave in a group.

We have discussed the progress of individuals in the group with the Head of Virtual School for looked after children and young people, who engages with the project, she has said that there are tangible changes in the behaviour of members of the group. While these may seem like minor victories, building confidence and providing a place where young people feel that they are being heard, really helps them to have the confidence to improve other areas of their lives.

Work with looked after young people is becoming more prevalent in the arts. In Newcastle/Gateshead there is an alliance of 11 major building based organisations called NGCV (Newcastle Gateshead Cultural Venues). This umbrella group is currently looking into improving their offer for young people in care and care leavers. They have contacted Curious Monkey to discuss how the work we have done and continue to do can feed into their work and be an example of best practice. This will mean one of the legacies of our project will be helping to feed into improved services within the arts for all looked after young people in the region.

Legacy is an important aspect of the project, to help make a lasting change to the lives of the young people we work with. We are currently designing a project to engage the group we have been working with following on from *Leaving*. We hope to integrate them with other young people, to broaden their experience and continue to offer a regular activity that they can engage in.

**6. As a result of presenting at TFN, did you experience any of the following;**

**Further funding from individual donors** – We have begun talking to the Pat Newman Memorial Trust who visited us in Newcastle in August. The Pat Newman Memorial Trust was one of the donors to the project through TFN. We are meeting them again in London in September to continue our conversations about future funding.

**Further funding from institutional funders** – As a result of the TFN funding, we were able to apply to Newcastle City Council's Newcastle Culture Fund through the Community Foundation. We were awarded £16,384 towards the project. This has meant that we have been able to build a relationship with the community foundation. We have subsequently received funding through the community foundation for another project. Through the residencies at Northern Stage, we will have received £4000. Children North East are fundraising to contribute £5700 towards the project.

The funding from TFN has allowed us to lever this funding which has then enabled us to go to Arts Council England with a robust application for £43,635 for the production, future participation and tour. The outcome of that will be in October 2017.

**An introduction that benefited your organisation (e.g. to an individual, business or other organisation)** – The introduction to The Pat Newman Memorial Trust is a great opportunity for us and we hope to build a relationship with them to support the future of this and other projects.

**7. Could you give us an estimate of how many people have been reached by the TFN funded project/work and by how much?**

We have engaged:

20 young people and have a regular group of 8 for participatory drama workshops

18 people in the making of the play through verbatim interviews and workshops - We've completed interviews with 8 care leavers and with 10 other people (residential care workers, MP, Ofsted inspector, social workers, corporate parenting managers and education providers for LAC.)

30 audience members at work in progress performances

We have employed 9 artists

We aim to engage at least 30 more young people in workshops on tour

The symposium will host around 100 people

We hope that the audiences on the first phase of the tour will reach 2000

**8. Can you tell us any personal stories to highlight the value of funding from TFN?**

One of the main challenges young people in care face is lack of confidence and self-esteem, creating a barrier when making relationships, looking for work or engaging with services or education. An example of how the project has helped to overcome this is the story of one our participants who is in care who has been with us since the start of the project. When he joined us, this young man was happy to participate but did not want his voice to be recorded, or for his photo to be taken. This was largely down to low self-esteem, he didn't feel he had much to contribute to the conversation and didn't want to look silly in photos. During the process of the project, this young man's confidence has grown and he has taken up a keen interest in photography and filming. He started to volunteer to be included in photographs and has agreed to be recorded for his words to be included in the play. This

young man will now also feature on the poster for the play with the rest of the group through a photo shoot later this month. This shows that not only has this young man found a new area of interest in being behind the camera, his self esteem is growing and he's recognising that he does have important and valued ideas to contribute.

Another young person from the group attended Paddy Campbell's play *Day of the Flymo* at Live Theatre which addresses the issues faced by young people in care. Through this experience and subsequently working with Paddy in our workshops, this young person has started to bring in stories that he has written for the workshop leaders to read. Through seeing similar stories on stage, this young person gained confidence in expressing himself and his own experiences through writing stories. He talks about how partaking in this creative process has helped him to work through and deal with some of the issues he struggles with as a result of past experiences in his childhood.

In both of these stories, the small steps taken by individuals during or outside of the workshops are examples of the valuable and transferrable skills that participating in drama can provide - Helping young people make steps to improve their lives.

**9. Since presenting at TFN, has your organisation undergone any significant change(s) which our donors would be interested to know about (these changes do not need to be related to the experience of presenting at TFN).**

We became registered as a charity in June 2016.

**10. Can you please include any relevant photos or clips that may relate to the project.**

Here is a short video from the first research and development week at Northern Stage  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n9twlUefrBw>

These are some photos of workshops at Northern Stage working on writing and drama skills



We will continue to update our website as we move into the shadowing and production phase  
<http://curiousmonkeytheatre.com/blog/portfolio/leaving/>