

## **Staff resistance and buy-in**

Karen, you must have  
encountered some resistance  
to your recent participatory programming.

How do you manage that?

I think that's very tricky.

The resistance with some people  
was very much about,  
"I haven't got time for this,  
I haven't got time for this",  
and so bringing staff in  
at the earliest possible opportunity  
made a big difference.

Staff that had to come  
into the project slightly later,  
maybe because with anything  
that involves participation,  
you may start in one place  
in space and time but where you're going to end up  
six months down the line, you don't know.

So you can start with what  
you think your project team is but you don't know  
what skills and resources you may need to pull in.

For those people it was about trying  
to bring them up to speed very quickly  
but it was also about allowing them to spend time  
with this project, with the young people.

To realise that not only were  
the young people really keen  
but also that what they had produced  
up to that point in the project was good quality stuff.

This wasn't a shabby piece of work.

They were producing really, really

high-quality interpretation,

selections work, decision-making,

all of it was very high-quality.

I think that, actually, for people who came

slightly later into the process,

who were a little bit more nervous,

it was a learning experience for them as well,

equally a learning experience for them.

And I think that's one of the messages

that have come out the project

is how much more confident staff are.

That helped them understand

and kind of let go a little bit

and then they wanted to get involved

they couldn't wait and then they were sort of

knocking on the door of that youth group,

our 'Recreated' group and saying,

"Would you like to speak to me about something?"

That was fantastic to see, a real transformation.

So, without having the skilled staff

and without having the staff who were prepared

to change the way they've done things maybe 20, 30 years,

I don't think it would have been as successful as it was.

Victoria, Glasgow Museum of Modern Art

ran a participatory social justice

programme for nearly a decade.

That programme was a radical departure

from anything that had come before it.

So how did staff adjust?

There definitely were times when people sort of felt,

"Is this is what we should be doing as

a contemporary art gallery.

Could we just do some straightforward art?

I didn't really think I was coming in

to learn about sectarianism."

You know so there were sort of

debates and questions along the way

that were really robust at times.

And I think that's really important

and healthy to have those.

What you don't want is to have somebody

who is begrudgingly working on something.

We weren't working from an established 'how to'.

It was kind of... we were emerging

in this embedded, integrated practice together.

You can't work to a 'how to' in that instance anyway

because every particular situation presents you with

a different set of contexts,

a different range of participants,  
a different range of issues.  
So there were healthy debates along the way  
but, on the whole, I think  
we supported and merged  
with each other's values in a respectful way  
and when we gave the opportunity to say,  
"Is this is something we should  
just knock on the head?"  
or saying, "We will make the case  
to do something completely different?"  
Nobody wanted to.  
Because at the end of the day  
absolutely everybody said,  
"This is when we work the best.  
This is when the public  
understand our work the best  
because it is so integrated and  
when we can provide most value."  
Janice, I noticed that Victoria didn't talk about resistance  
but about developing a new practice together.  
Do you have any tips for community practitioners  
wanting to bring their colleagues on board?  
One of the points that we got to in Glasgow  
was a real recognition.  
We have very excellent ways of working  
with our external partners

that we weren't applying to ourselves.

In terms of how we thought about

relationships internally,

how we went about involving

and including people internally.

And it was kind of that light bulb

moment when you suddenly say,

"Well, hang on a minute,

we know what all the principles are

in working with external partners

and developing relationships

and working together and sharing skills

and respecting the other people,

and all that sort of stuff."

But you're not necessarily applying that

in your own internal

working relationships and ways of working.

Because in any organisation

there are systems that have always existed

that you simply think,

"Well, hang on a minute, why are we doing that?"

Because we know that that's not effective.