

What DIY did in 2020



DIY Theatre Community Interest Company

Impact Summary

Introduction

2020 has been an extremely challenging and difficult year. We have all had to find new ways of being and doing because of the Covid Pandemic and Lockdowns.

This report is above all evidence of the amazing energy and resilience of group members and the phenomenal creativity and versatility of the DIY freelance team. We continued to regularly work with 28 core members and participants but reached many more through events, education and outreach activities throughout the year.

Although many of us have started to get our heads around meeting online several DIY members have not had access to technology or have experienced other barriers to the digital world. Our aim throughout has been to keep on creating and connecting. We've done this through drama, song, film, animation, visual arts, Zoom workshops, phone conversations and resource packs sent out in the post. If there was ever a time when organisations like ours were needed it is now. If there was ever a time when we needed to demonstrate the relevance and impact of our ethos and our approaches it is now!

Who we are and what we do

DIY is an established Learning Disability Theatre Company based in Salford. We are a Community Interest Company, member-led and our Board comprises mainly disabled people. We have been creating accessible and thought-provoking theatre and creative projects for over 25 years! We aim to:

- ★ Challenge preconceptions and barriers through high quality performance, education projects and research.
- ★ Celebrate diversity and creativity in all areas of our work.
- ★ Promote the achievements of performers and theatre-makers with learning disabilities and share good practice.

Our vision is a world where performers, theatre-makers and arts leaders with learning disabilities are valued as part of the rich diversity of our cultural sector and our society.

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2020 Highlights



3 Festivals in 3 days!

September was Festival Season and DIY contributed to Manchester Histories Digifest, Connect LD+ and Enrich Online. We were interviewed about our experiences of working during Lockdown, shared our Digital Story and other lockdown work and ran workshops.

>> page 7 for more about our Digital Story.

Film Première

Our Film 'I Wish Everything Was Back to Normal!' attracted 330 views when it premiered on YouTube.

>> page 9 to find out more about original new films and songs made by DIY this year.

“The news today was amazing. I passed my Arts Award with flying colours and I was a little bit worried about doing it from home and everything but it seems to have paid off and I'm going to get a lovely certificate at the end of it. I feel a bit emotional at the moment.” DIY Young Leader

Arts Award Achievements

Even Lockdown couldn't stop our talented young members who succeeded in achieving 6 Arts Awards including a Gold!

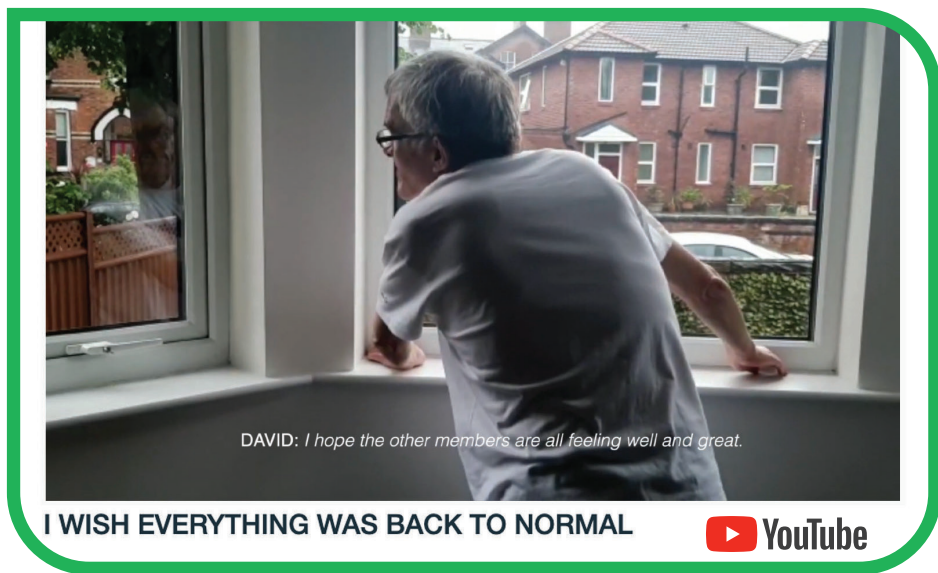
>> page 12.



Circus Tricks!

Adapting a promenade into an animated series, our Passing the Baton team created something wonderful to share and educate.

>> page 10



DAVID: I hope the other members are all feeling well and great.

I WISH EVERYTHING WAS BACK TO NORMAL



Creating & Connecting

We regularly worked with 28 core members and participants but reached many more through events, education and outreach activities throughout the year.

It has been essential that we continued to offer creative opportunities throughout the year to support peoples' health and wellbeing as much as develop creative skills.

We started the year with two visual arts courses 'Making for Theatre' and 'Print and Stitch'.

19 learners completed face to face courses before lockdown.

Between March and July we set up a Create & Connect area on DIY's website bringing together lots of resources based on NEF's '5 ways to wellbeing'. We ran 9 general sessions and 10 Young Leaders sessions to build up members' skills and confidence online.

Every week we sent out creative resource packs and DIY staff regularly rang those DIY members who could not access our online offer.

Everyone was encouraged to share their creative work and a private group was set up on Facebook for members to connect. We celebrated our creativity in a calendar at the end of the year.



681 Creative Resource Packs were sent out

28 people received our Resource Packs

150 creative phone calls made to members

“The packs have been fantastic. I've enjoyed doing the colouring and writing. Best bit for me is the writing because I love writing.”

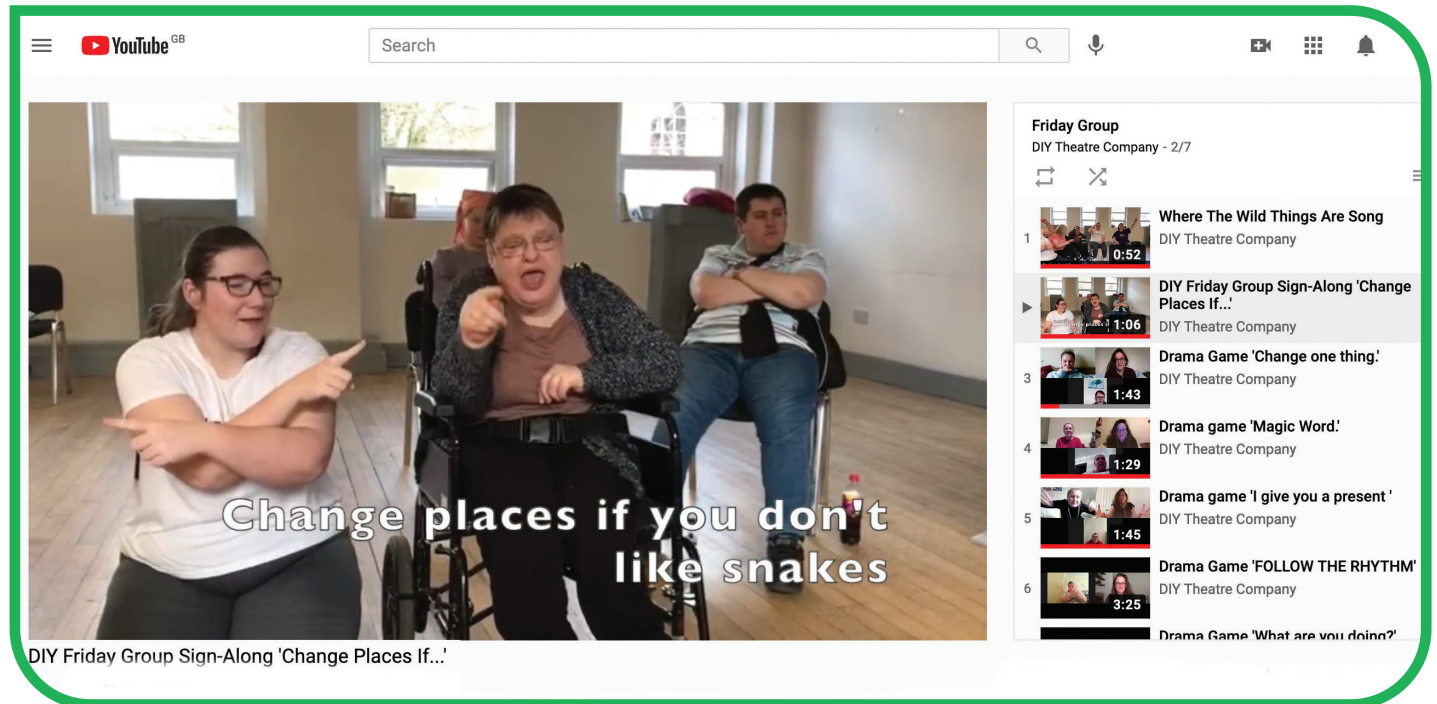
“Phone calls have been a good thing because I can have a talk to someone.”

“Thank you DIY got my 2021 Calendar. Some of my favourite pictures”

20 learners completed one of our 10 week online courses during the Autumn

In the Autumn we resumed our 'course' format and ran two ten-week courses using Zoom. Our 'New Skills New Choices' course helped learners to develop lots of essential and transferable skills and boosted confidence, while our 'Communication through Craft' course explored different art forms and techniques.

*“We're improving our drawing skills and doing different activities every week.
Communication through Craft participant*



7 drama game films made and shared

DIY's Friday Group created films of some of the drama games they play. Each game supports one or more of NEF's 5 ways to wellbeing. These can be accessed via the Friday Group page of our website.

The importance of Creativity During a Pandemic

Many DIY members have expressed struggling with their mental health during 2020 including feelings of isolation and loneliness. The global pandemic has highlighted the importance and centrality of arts and creativity in all our lives. Using NEF's 5 ways to wellbeing, members have identified the ways DIY's activities have supported their health and well-being during this difficult period:

Connect: we have continued to connect during the pandemic both through digital and non-digital means. Feedback from participants shows how important this has been:

“It gets boring when you're isolating to be honest. It really does. But with Zoom more or less every day you don't get bored.”

“It's nice to see everybody on Zoom. We can still do drama and it's nice to see all your friends again”

Be Active: Whilst limited by Zoom, DIY sessions have continued to keep people physical and mentally active.

“When you're stuck at home and you can't really do anything even the simple things can make you laugh. Because literally at the moment all I'm doing is sat on my backside. So DIY has really helped me to get involved and be less bored.”



Take Notice: Working on Zoom has required participants to learn new ways of taking notice and being aware of each-other in the space.

Keep Learning: Participants have learnt new skills – particularly digital skills.

“I'd never even heard of Zoom at all – I didn't know what it was.”

Give: Participants have contributed to the enjoyment and education of others through Festivals, schools work and online.

“Doing my own radio show I enjoyed it because obviously just giving the other DIY members the opportunity to be with me and watch my show every week. I wanted to bring it on camera. It felt like bringing it on camera would help the others, you know what I mean?”

Improvising in a time of crisis



Following Patient 36

A Story about Learning Disability History
told in film, sound, text and images.

[Click to start](#)

Following Patient 36 has succeeded in raising awareness of, and increasing knowledge about, Learning Disability History. It has positively influenced perceptions of, and attitudes towards, people with learning disabilities.

The events of 2020 have challenged DIY artistically as well as emotionally. Long periods of uncertainty have meant we have had to improvise and be adaptable. Luckily improvisation and creativity are things DIY does well.

Originally envisaged as a live performance Following Patient 36 became a digital project, with participants connecting online and creating ways of sharing Disability History on a digital stage.

“I loved how they showed and demonstrated what happened and helped us understand”
Student

“Loved your production, amazing transition to online performance, really one of the best I’ve seen.”
Dr Winter Phong, Oklahoma State University. November 2020

As part of our Following Patient 36 Project we have created:

- ★ **A Digital Story** using film, photographs creative writing and song. This was shown at two online festivals during Summer 2020 – Manchester Histories Digifest and Enrich Festival. Over 3,000 people tuned into Digifest over the 2 day Festival.
- ★ **A set of online Educational resources** to support schools, colleges and other organisations to celebrate / explore issues relating to Learning Disability History. These online resources were trialled by Loreto High and Manchester Hospital School. Loreto introduced the resource to Year 8 pupils during Disability History Month as part of their PSHE / RE Curriculum.
- ★ **A series of ‘digital placards’** inspired by our research into the history of protest, which were launched on Social Media during Disability History Month.

Following Patient 36, the Digital Story, has been viewed online over 200 times.

“Patient 36 went down amazingly and we feel so special that you allowed us to show it!”
Eloise, Enrich Festival Organiser.

50 young people used the Following Patient 36 resources at Loreto High School.

“The visuals and audio were really engaging for the pupils. The reflective questions were really thought provoking for pupils. Asked two weeks later about the lesson, pupils could easily recall information from it”

Jess Harrop, Second in RE,
Loreto High School



Sharing our experience of Lockdown

'We're all in this together' song lyrics:

I'm in a distance of my own,
waiting, watching.

I'm trying to be good and
I'm stopping at home.

Watching the news and
waiting for post.

Everything's shut up,
I'm keeping apart.

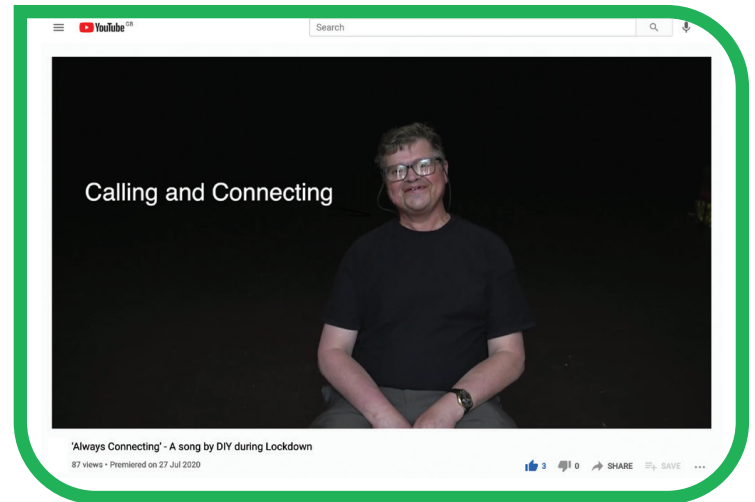
I'm isolated and I feel a bit bored,
looking at the same 4 walls.

It's really quite hard,
and I can't be with friends.

DIY projects played an important role in supporting artists with learning disabilities to share their experiences of lockdown.

We worked with film-maker Hilary Easter-Jones and Musician Sarah Atter to explore and share DIY members' personal experiences of Lockdown.

Our film, 'I Wish Everything Was Back to Normal!' attracted 330 views when it premiered on YouTube.



We created 4 films and 3 songs:

Always Connecting and **We're All in This Together** were both original songs / films about members' experiences of Lockdown.

I Wish Everything Was Back to Normal, Always Connecting and **We're All in this Together** were shared extensively on Social Media and featured in the 'Lockdown Tent' at The Lawnmowers' 'Connect 2020' Festival.

For our festive song in this extraordinary year, DIY actors created our own version of the protest song and anthem **We Shall Overcome**.

You can find all our films and songs on YouTube or Vimeo, search for DIY Theatre Company or <https://vimeo.com/showcase/7375526>.

Circus Tricks!

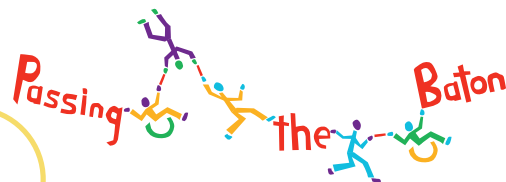
Participants in DIY's Youth Arts Programme have shown great creativity and flexibility in responding to the Covid Crisis.

We worked with 13 young people with Learning Disabilities across our Young Leaders and Youth Drama Groups.

Our main project has been Circus Tricks, which was originally created as a piece of promenade theatre aimed at children and young people with learning disabilities.

Before Lockdown young DIY members worked with 2 circus and 3 music professionals. They learned a range of circus inspired skills, explored Junk Percussion, Samba, Song-writing and Google Chrome Lab.

In response to lockdown restrictions the group decided to adapt 'Circus Tricks' into an animated format that could be shared safely.



"Thinking back to the day when we had the idea and had to do the presentation to Salford CVS for the Circus Tricks! funding, I never ever thought the project would be so amazing!"

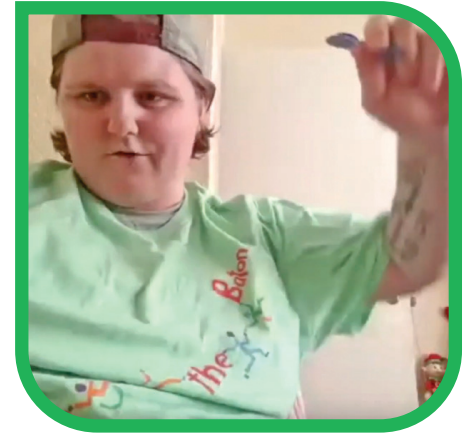
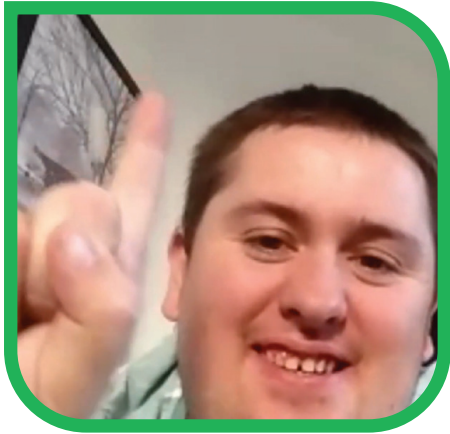
DIY Young Leader



"I am just so overwhelmed! I'm really happy with how it's turned out."

DIY Young Leader





Circus Tricks resources include:

- ★ 6 videos, which introduce the audience to our songs and amazing circus characters.
- ★ A Participatory Resource Pack which can be enjoyed by individuals at home, can be delivered within the classroom or other youth / arts settings.
- ★ Supporting videos and downloadable worksheets.

All the resources are available on our website.

“Due to Lockdown our learners had missed the opportunity to complete their Discover Arts Award as usual. Circus Tricks meant that they were able to catch up on this learning. It also gave me an idea for best practise for monitoring Discover Arts Award that I will implement during the school festival in the summer.

Sadie Smith, Teacher, Chatsworth High School

Our Circus Tricks project has supported 41 learners to achieve either Discover or Explore Arts Award.

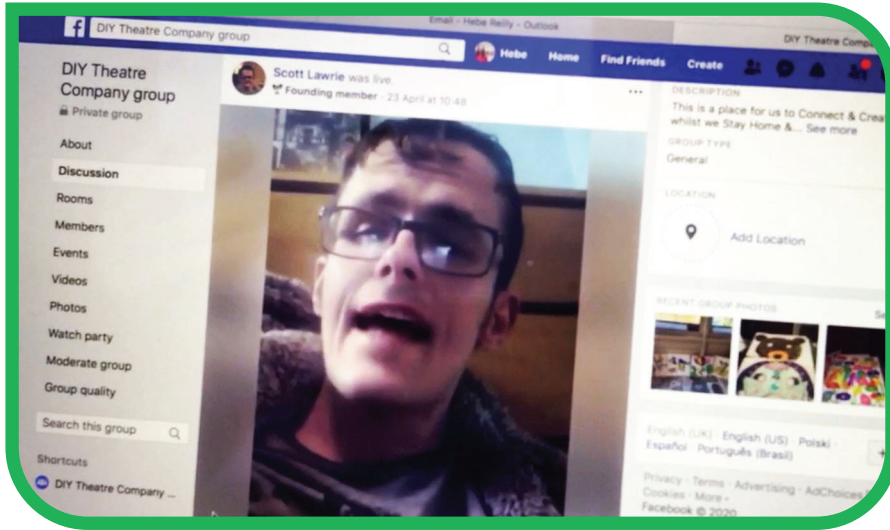
DIY piloted Circus Tricks with two local schools; Chatsworth High and Springwood Primary.

DIY Young Leaders also ran a Circus Tricks workshop at the national Enrich Festival.

“It's been great for some of our more focused learners to see the DIY young people on Zoom and in the Resource Pack. It's really important that young disabled people have role models like this to look up to.”

Victoria Lawley, Teacher, Springwood School

Individual Achievements



During Lockdown DIY found creative ways to support young people on their Arts Award Journeys. DIY members achieved :

- 1 Gold Arts Award
- 2 Silver Arts Awards
- 3 Explore Arts Awards

Amy achieved her Gold Arts Award. She worked closely with the DIY film-maker Hilary Easter Jones. For her Arts Award Amy created 3 videos, organised a launch event on YouTube and led a weekly drama activity for other DIY members.

“ I feel fantastic – I put all my work into it I feel really great. I made Hilary work and she made me work!!!”

Adam & Scott achieved their Silver Arts Award. Scott hosted a weekly radio show via Facebook Live for DIY members and Adam produced and distributed marketing materials for Scott's Radio Show.

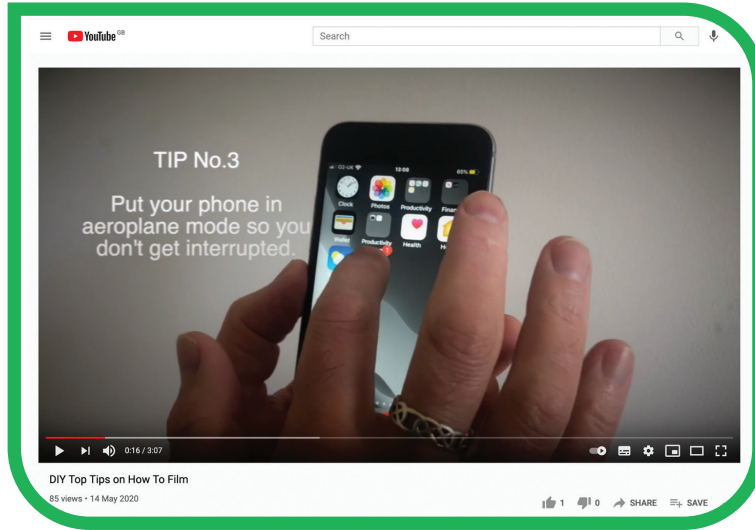
“ It feels good to get my Silver. I put in a lot of hard work. It was difficult doing it during Lockdown. Big thumbs up from me!”

Georgia, Eve & Shayleigh, members of our Youth Drama Club, achieved their Explore Arts Awards. They worked with professional circus artists and musicians before creating their own circus characters and preparing for the Circus Tricks performance.

1 Young Leader completed a directing course at Mind the Gap Theatre, Bradford.

1 Young Leader completed a podcasting course at Reform Radio, Manchester.

Digital Exclusion



When Lockdown was announced many of our members had yet to access digital technology. None had used online conferencing technology like Zoom before.

“*At first I didn't like Zoom because all I could see was a small little box but every time I've come on Zoom I've got more confident and got used to seeing people in little boxes.*”
DIY Young Leader

DIY members who have managed to access Zoom have really enjoyed the social interaction it has brought. However, DIY members continue to experience significant barriers to digital technology. These barriers include:

- ★ Lack of affordability of equipment.
- ★ Lack of skills and confidence.
- ★ Lack of familiarity with digital platforms.
- ★ Poor or unaffordable internet connection.
- ★ Lack of confidence / skills of those working with / supporting DIY members in their homes

Digital inclusion

During the year DIY has raised funding to buy equipment, we have set up a Digital Inclusion project and we have been supporting a number of our members to access Zoom.

“*Just being able to have an iPad and go on Zoom – because I was using my dad's phone all the time and the battery was draining. Just having an iPad to click on when you wanted is amazing.*”

“*Getting to see where everyone's at and to see how well everyone's doing in this crazy, crazy time, and it's about us sticking together.*”
Youth Drama Club member

Sector Support / Development



DIY was shortlisted as a finalist in the Lockdown Inclusion Award category for the North West Cultural Education Awards 2020.

Arts Award Training in 2020:

- ★ Blackpool Academy 7 Advisers at Bronze and Silver levels.
- ★ Liverpool Cultural Education Partnership 6 Advisers at Bronze & Silver levels
- ★ The Lowry: 10 Advisers at Gold level, 9 at Bronze/Silver levels, and 10 at Discover and Explore levels.
- ★ Sunningdale School: 6 Advisers at Discover and Explore levels.

Higher Education:

- ★ DIY Leaders worked with 5 Manchester University Medical Students exploring the social model of health and social prescribing over a series of 5 sessions.

- ★ DIY ran 2 sessions with students from Manchester University around inclusive theatre and sensory approaches.
- ★ DIY Leaders co-led 2 workshops at University of Salford for 26 students on their Applied Theatre Course.

Strategic Networks:

During the year, DIY has continued its active involvement in a range of strategic organisations including Salford Local Education Partnership (Chair), Artschain (Campaign Group for Participatory Arts), Creative Minds (national Learning Disability Network), Curious Minds (Equality and Diversity Advisory Group).

Supporting Artists

Our work is made possible by an amazing team of established and emerging artists. This includes specialists in theatre, music, film, visual arts and design. Some work with us throughout the year, others join us for specific projects or workshops.

During the pandemic many freelancers have experienced loss of work, insecurity and anxiety. DIY has tried to maintain contact with our freelance team and employ as many freelancers as possible.

21 established and emerging artists worked with DIY during 2020.

493 days work given to freelance artists.

“*[Working on the Circus Tricks] project, which has run through the Covid pandemic, the drive to continue to engage these vulnerable young people as well as the flexibility of process and product, and the regularity of work and income, has been key for me personally.*”

Sarah Atter, Musician

“*DIY Theatre Company commissions during this pandemic have provided me with more skills than I had going into it. I am so grateful to be part of a team who continue to make a difference not just to each other's lives, but to the lives of others.*”

Hilary Easter-Jones, Film-maker



Close up of 'Together in our Separateness' by Claire Hignett. The piece was made in response to thinking about DIY and Isolation, it will be finished when DIY members are again able to meet face to face.

“*The art classes I was expecting to run over the summer term were cancelled due to Covid but I was instantly involved in creating textile art packs for the whole company so was intensely busy. As this work slowed down and I began to feel the loss of contact it was lovely to be offered a commission, making me feel really valued.*”

Claire Hignett, Visual Artist



Lyrics from our
'Always Connecting' song:

We're never not connecting
 Creating and connecting
 We never stop connecting
 Calling and connecting
 We're never not connecting
 Caring and connecting
 We think about each other
 But we have to stay at home

I'm in a distance of my own
 Waiting, watching
 I'm in a distance of my own
 Waiting, watching

Many thanks to the funders who supported DIY's work during 2020:



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