

Unscene Suffolk Evaluation report 2014

Background

Unscene Suffolk is a community theatre project for adults with visual impairment, founded in 2013. *Fossils*, produced in 2014, was Unscene Suffolk's second project following *The Cave* in 2013. The project was funded by Arts Council England and Suffolk Community Foundation (via the Transforming Suffolk Fund) with support from the New Wolsey Theatre, Sensing Change and Ipswich Museum. The project consists of three phases: introductory workshops (February- April), rehearsal and performance (April - July) and evaluation and future planning (autumn 2014).

Project content and implementation

Project concept and partnership with Ipswich Museum

Following the success of the pilot project, Unscene Suffolk was keen to build upon its learning and achievements, and this became key to planning for the next project.

Two achievements which stood out were the success of performing in an unconventional setting (in 2013 we created a 'cave' and invited the audience inside it for the show), and the group's achievements regarding independent travel: almost all of those who had attended the pilot project were now able to get to the workshop venue on their own. In order to build on both of these achievements Unscene Suffolk decided to approach Ipswich Museum – immediately next door to our usual rehearsal space – about the possibility of performing there. The museum were keen to help and its collections – particularly the natural history which dominates its main gallery - also provided an obvious subject matter for the project.

Recruitment and retention of participants

The group was fully subscribed with 15 participants taking part in the project, eight of whom had performed in *The Cave*. Five people performed for the first time in *Fossils*, and two who could not be in the performance due to other commitments were involved in the early workshops and rehearsal process.

As in 2013, links to existing support groups for visually impaired people were crucial to the recruitment and retention of participants, with many showing reluctance at first but being encouraged by representatives of these organisations, whom they know and trust. Most new participants were referred to the project by Sensing Change.

Participants ranged in age from early thirties to mid eighties, with over-60s making up just under half the group. Given the connection between sight loss and aging, this was reflective of the makeup of the target group.

One participant who signed up to the project in February was unable to continue attending and this place was offered to another individual who was able to start immediately. With the exception of one participant whose attendance was affected by a number of medical appointments, all group members attended regularly from February to July.



The group backstage with Mayor of Ipswich, Bill Quinton

Staffing and Volunteers

All workshops were led by Jenni Halton, and an Assistant Facilitator, Steven Ockenden. Three volunteers trained in Community Sightguiding were provided by Sensing Change.

Although familiarity meant that participants required less assistance with finding the venue than in 2013, these staffing levels were still essential in order that absences or unforeseen circumstances could be managed safely.

Volunteers' duties included meeting participants at bus stops and train stations, assisting with mobility and refreshments in the space, and other visual tasks such as describing visual elements of the work being shared. Where appropriate during the workshops, volunteers were encouraged to join in with creative exercises. During the performances, volunteers had specific responsibility for assisting participants using the stairs, and helping with costume changes.

Phase 1: Introductory workshops

Eight introductory workshops took place in the New Wolsey Theatre's HEG space and Ipswich Museum's Education Room, on Monday afternoons from February to April 2014. New participants were welcomed and the group were introduced to the museum's Natural History collection by Bob Markham from

Geo-Suffolk. Bob facilitated handling sessions through which participants were able to experience items from the collection first-hand and learn about local geological history directly from an expert. Jenni then facilitated a range of creative exercises encouraging participants to respond to and interpret their learning.



Fossil handling sessions

Workshop themes included:

- Telling the story of the coprolite industry (which led to many geological discoveries in Suffolk); considering key characters and turning points.
- Creating movement sequences based on learning about fossil formation processes.
- Creating scenes from fossil-based folklore / superstitions.
- Imagining what might happen if the taxidermy animals in the museum came to life.
- How do you think historians of the future will interpret what we leave behind? Improvised scenes.
- What would you put in your time capsule? Individual monologues.
- Sharing ideas about how we conceptualise / visualize time (synaesthesia – experienced by many blind people including approximately 1/3 of our group).

These early workshops also allowed participants to explore a range of theatre games and exercises, each week sharing work with the rest of the group. The aims of this phase were to build confidence – especially for new members – and allow the group to get to know one another and to think about the themes that would feed into the performance. The workshops had an emphasis on accessibility for blind actors and audiences, exploring audio description, multi-sensory and immersive approaches to performance.

During Phase 1, some members of the group also attended a group trip to an audio described performance of *The Threepenny Opera* at the New Wolsey Theatre. The performance was produced by Graeae, the UK's leading disabled-led theatre company. Following the performance, one of the leading

actors, who is visually impaired, visited the Monday afternoon workshop to meet the cast and share her experiences of working as a professional performer.

Phase 2: Rehearsal and performance

At the end of Phase 1, participants were asked to commit to a further eight Monday workshops (including an all-day rehearsal), plus an intensive week of rehearsals and performances from 7-12 July 2014. 13 participants chose to be involved, and those who could not be present at the performances were welcomed at rehearsals as supportive friends / 'access consultants'.

Creative team

Jenni Halton led all workshops and directed the final performance, with Steven Ockenden appearing in the performance as a paid assistant. A wider creative team, recruited prior to the commencement of Phase 2, was engaged to work on the performance in the following capacities:

Pat Whymark - Musical Director, Composer and Dramaturg

Julian Smith - Stage Manager

Danuta Tarbard – Costume Supervisor

Devising process

As a devising company, Unscene Suffolk aims to involve participants in the whole creation of the show, not just as performers but as ideas-generators, giving them a sense of ownership over the work. Since the company does not hold auditions, and must cater for people with varying needs, it is essential that each individual has a suitable part which utilises his or her strengths.

Pat Whymark suggested a loose narrative which might tie together some of the different ideas the cast had come up with during Phase 1: a village in which an unusual fossil is found. This structure allowed for the creation of a range of characters (villagers) and sub-plots. It was presented to the group with suggested characters, and they were asked to improvise some of the key scenes which might happen in the play. These improvisations were audio-recorded and Pat and Jenni used the recordings to ensure that cast members' own words and ideas appeared in the final script where possible. Various ideas from the early workshops, including the fossil folklore and the group's learning about fossil formation processes, were also built into the script.

Having worked with many of the cast members on *The Cave*, Pat and Jenni were in a better position to tailor the script to individual needs, but still found it difficult to balance the desire to use the cast's own ideas with the pressure to finish the script in time. This is a key point for our evaluation which will be addressed later in this report.

For more insight into the content and inspiration behind the script, please see the programme notes in the Appendices of this report.

Scripts and line-learning

Learning lines remained one of the most challenging elements of the process, as it had been in 2013 – largely down to there being no change in time scales (a knock-on effect of the late notice with which funding was confirmed). As well as sight-loss, many group members faced additional barriers including poor hearing, learning disability and the impact of aging on memory. However, there was significant improvement in a number of individuals' ability to learn lines compared with the previous year, and many commented on this in the evaluation as something they had achieved.

Various methods were employed from large print scripts to screen-reader friendly email versions and CD recordings. The writers' knowledge of the cast enabled them to structure the script appropriately for individuals; for example making cues direct and obvious for an actor with a learning disability who may find it harder to memorise a cue unrelated to the line which follows it.

"I liked the different ways we all had of learning our lines. The whole thing felt better and I felt more included [than last year]." – M, Participant

Style and aesthetics

The location – inside Ipswich Museum's collection of Victorian taxidermy – very much set the tone for the style of the whole performance. The story was set in 1890, with full period costumes, and little need for props to finish off the effect in such an immersive location.



The Watchseller 'on set' in the museum

*Fossils used, at first glance a conventional theatre setup, with audience seating in a single block with a central aisle, and the 'stage' area in front of this. However, performers also used the balconies opposite and directly above the audience, and the space behind them, to create both 'surround sound' and multi-sensory effects, including covering the audience with a fabric canopy and sprinkling (lightweight!) 'debris' on them from above. As well as being immersed in the performance, the audience were invited to handle small fossils during the show. By 'breaking the fourth wall' in these various ways, it was hoped that the show would be made more interesting for people with a range of different access needs – *and* for those with no specific need.*

The performers' own access needs

were also served well by the 'landmarks' in the space – various museum cabinets and railings acting as markers which could be used for finding the way around the stage area. The taxidermy-filled backdrop was referenced in the script, but did not limit the locations that could be suggested by the addition of various signs showing different village locations. A degree of artistic license was implicit in the performance which required the audience to imagine a bakers' shop, or a market square, when given a simple cue such as a sign or a soundscape. Scene-setting was also achieved through the character of the travelling Watchseller, who served the purpose of narrating and audio-describing the story, as well as having a small but crucial role in the plot. Audio description – for the benefit of visually impaired audiences – was integrated into the narration of the play.

“Having audio description in the show gave me an awareness of what was going on the whole time and helped me to follow the show.”

– C, participant

Performances

Three performances of *Fossils* took place on 11 and 12 July 2014. The show played to a total audience of around 100 people, including an invited audience at the Dress Rehearsal.

The performances went very smoothly and audience members commented on that it was 'even better than last year.' All audience members were asked to fill in feedback forms (for full data see Appendices). Comments included:

“I thoroughly enjoyed the show - beautiful use of language.”

“Brilliant - I really enjoyed it. Gave us something to think about.”

“Excellent. Fascinating story and a very professional production.”

“Fantastic setting! Very clear idea, well performed. Unusual and quite inspirational.”

“Absolutely brilliant - what a great organisation. Thank you.”

“Brilliant beyond my expectations”

“Extremely good with a powerful message”

“Really clever use of the space. Very interesting performance.”

"Fantastic show, very inventive and really clever use of an unusual and interesting setting - wonderful and unique!"

"Members of the cast appeared to support each other well ...a very enjoyable thought provoking hours entertainment - well done."

"I always thought theatre was on a stage in front of an audience. I've never been to anything that's been so inclusive." [Debbie Playford, Sensing Change]

"I was not conscious of the cast as individuals, I was conscious of them as a group of villagers of 125 years ago, it was so real. It was really clear and I felt that I hadn't missed anything." – visually impaired audience member.



The cast 'on stage' in the museum.

The performance also received a review on the InSuffolk website, which can be found in full in the Appendices. The following is extracted from it:

"[Fossils] asks important questions about how we see what we see, or what we think we see, and to what extent we project our prejudices onto the unknown or unexplained..."

The audience was not excluded from these questions. We were invited to don cloth gloves, ostensibly to examine some small fossils from the museum's collection but also to consider the consequences of putting barriers between ourselves and others, and what these barriers may mean to the blind and partially sighted in particular..."

Fossils played to sell-out audiences for three performances at Ipswich Museum and I'm sure this number could have been doubled. For only a second outing from Unscene Suffolk it was an accomplished production, with the inexperienced actors showing few nerves and a lot of good humour. The company is a welcome and necessary addition to the local theatrical landscape and its future projects should be watched with interest."

As well as surprising its audiences, many of whom were not regular theatregoers, the performance was different to anything that had taken place in Ipswich Museum before. While the museum had hosted a youth theatre project in recent years, its relationship with the Wolsey Theatre was still underdeveloped (despite shared use of the HEG space) and the project offered a chance to explore the idea of partnership working further. Both organisations were extremely supportive and helpful, each taking responsibility for their own area of expertise, and working together to manage Front of House arrangements for the performances, including assisting visually impaired audience members. Ipswich Museum was very enthusiastic throughout the project and plans to use *Fossils* as a case-study to encourage the facilitation of more performance work within Colchester and Ipswich Museums Service's buildings.

Fossils played for three performances compared with *The Cave*'s five, but achieved higher audience numbers due to the number of seats available. While some cast commented that they would like to have done more shows, this did feel like a more manageable number for the more elderly members of the group who were nonetheless exhausted at the end of the week!

Phase 3: Evaluation and Future Planning

Following the performances, an evaluation workshops took place in late July, and four further workshops in the autumn. These gatherings were an opportunity to share audience feedback with the cast, reflect on the project and gather ideas for future work. Some participants described experiencing a 'low' after the intensity of the performance week and appreciating the opportunity to meet as a group again. As well as some practical exercises, an open discussion took place and was recorded. The quotations and statistics found below and throughout this report are taken from these sessions.

Confidence

Increased confidence was a key theme of the discussion, with participants emphasising the project's impact on their confidence to do things in everyday life. One participant commented:

"I am more likely to give input in a group situation, and happier to start a conversation in public."

All new group members stated that their confidence in performance skills had improved significantly as a result of participating, and returning members reported consistently high levels of confidence at the end of the project. There was a notable improvement in participants' confidence performing musically or singing, and the work had progressed musically since 2013 with additional

songs including solos, and a cast member playing the guitar. However music remains an area where more attention is needed to harness the group's potential (see below).

One interesting indicator of confidence in the group setting is participants' willingness to lead small group activities and/or warm-up exercises. Participant leadership is a key aim which proved difficult to achieve during the pilot project, with individuals being reluctant to take on this challenge despite having the skills and in some cases experience to do so. It was therefore a real breakthrough that, during Phase 1 of this project, group members began, somewhat 'organically' to suggest different warm-ups, and through encouragement, to lead them. These often involved familiar songs or games, making it easy for the group to join in and encourage / support the person who was leading. Unscene Suffolk hopes to continue building on this positive development in future projects.

Learning and achievements

Participants commented that they had learned or achieved something new in a number of different areas:

- learning about fossil formation processes
- local history: Coprolite Street, the fairy loaves [folklore], Fisons, potassium, the discovery of the mammoth
- philosophical thinking: "We are the fossils of the future!"
- learning about ourselves; e.g. I can think on my feet if I forget a line!
- learning to trust people to help them, e.g. sighted volunteers

"The thing I will take away from this process is that I learnt to trust people to help me." – K, participant

Other benefits for participants

Participants identified a number of other benefits of participating, including:

- enjoyment of the devising process; seeing the play evolve from nothing, contributing ideas and watching it all come together
- being part of a team and feeling included
- the feeling of independence given by the 'landmarks' in the performance space
- enjoying the pressure of having lines to learn and something to work towards
- enjoyment of wearing costumes which bring the performance to life
- the feeling of appreciation and



Performers in the museum space

- achievement when the audience laugh and applaud.
- introduction to a new place of interest: Ipswich Museum
- the friendship: 'it makes a big difference to my life' (participant in her 70s)
- learning a regular route / independent travel: two participants who required assistance to get to the rehearsal space at the start of the process were travelling independently by the end.
- improved memory, focus and concentration.
- one member of the group (in his 80s) was asked by our documentary film makers to act in another film they are making, and has already completed the job, donating his fee to Unscene Suffolk.

"I had never been in the museum before. Now I have visited with my partner, son and grandson" – K, participant

"I have thoroughly enjoyed my time with you all – thank you for making me feel so welcome in the group." – M, participant

Volunteer Evaluation

Volunteers took part in the evaluation workshop alongside participants, but were also able to give feedback via a written feedback form. All volunteers said that they would recommend the project to other volunteers. Further comments included:

"I found the group friendly and was glad to work with Pat [experienced volunteer] for the first couple of weeks to gain some confidence. I have had no experience of a theatre group and have found all aspects of the workshop / rehearsal / performance very interesting. I was pleased that the volunteers do join in where possible."

"Fossils exceeded my expectations... For me personally my confidence has grown as I increase my guiding skills. I have enhanced my ability to be non-judgemental and empathetic and flexible. A valuable lesson I have learnt is knowing when to offer help and when to stand back. Sometimes I am guilty of under-estimating the performers' ability. I am delighted at what can be achieved!"

Full volunteer feedback data can be found in the Appendices.

Areas for improvement

The following areas for improvement have been identified by participants and the creative team for future projects:

- More pre-planning of storylines before workshops begin; leading to more devising time and more time to learn lines and polish performances. In order to achieve this, funding needs to be confirmed with more notice.

- More individual direction / acting tuition. (This will also be made possible by earlier completion of script.)
- More cast involvement in music; catering for those who wish to use their skills, sourcing appropriate instruments (e.g. keyboard) and finding ways to use these in the context of the performance.
- [If using unfamiliar spaces] devote more time to formal orientation and utilize the skills of sighted guides further.
- Continue to grow our audience beyond family and friends, particularly attracting more visually impaired audience members.
- Encouragement of more participant leadership.
- Opportunities for volunteers to reflect on experiences outside workshops.
- More organized 'socials' outside workshops.

Jenni Halton
Workshop Leader, Unscene Suffolk
December 2014

"[At first] I thought it wasn't for me but it's just so overwhelming how it all slotted in and the outcome.... I'm glad I made myself come back because I very nearly ditched out. I didn't expect it to be such teamwork. It never entered my head that acting was such a big team effort ...It's brilliant. Bring on the next one!" – C, Participant

Appendices:

1. Programme notes
2. Press review
3. Audience feedback
4. Volunteer feedback data

Appendix 1 – programme notes

'Fossils' is Unscene Suffolk's second production, and the second time we've chosen an unconventional setup for our stage. Last year we invited our audience into a make-believe cave; this year we are performing surrounded by a collection of Victorian taxidermy. These environments offer vital 'landmarks' for visually impaired performers and audiences, in contrast with an empty stage, which can be difficult to navigate without sight. And this year our venue, the Ipswich Museum, also provided the inspiration for our story.

Although Ipswich Museum houses a wide range of historical artefacts, many of us associate it most strongly with natural history, having visited the giraffe, the rhino and the mammoth as children. Our devising process began with fossil handling, and we were particularly interested in the tactile qualities of these items and the centrality of shape and texture to the processes by which they are formed. Of course, many items cannot be handled, or touched at all, due to their fragility. The wearing of gloves or the need for glass cases raises questions about access to historical items for visually impaired people, which we have tried subtly to acknowledge in our story.

The story is fictional but ultimately human and brings together many of the participants' ideas from our early devising sessions which took not just fossils but history and time itself as a stimulus. Through a combination of research and play, we began to realise that even 'natural' history is subject to interpretation, speculation and personal agendas. We hope that you will recognise some truths in our fiction, and be inspired to question a truth of your own.

Jenni Halton, Director

Written by Jenni Halton, Pat Whymark and the cast / Director & Producer - Jenni Halton / Musical Director, Composer & Dramaturg - Pat Whymark / Assistant Facilitator – Steven Ockendon / Stage Manager – Julian Smith / Costumes – Danuta Tarbard

Cast:

Watchseller/ Servant:

Clare Burman

Doreen Robinson: Fran Ling

Charles Robinson Junior:

Wayne Witney

'Uncle' Bob: Vince Ridgewell

Violet Pimm: Caroline Giddings

Walter Brown: David Appleton

Martha Johnson: Carolyn Allum

Julia Carswell: Julie Bennett

Jack: Mark Conquer

Mrs Briddle: Pam Rivers

Biddy Bunn: Maggie Davy

Beattie Bunn: Kim Clifton

Frederick Evans: Jim Whyte

Henry Pimm/ Parson:

Steven Ockendon

Music performed by:

Jacob Marshall-Tierney

Volunteers:

Juliette Aylett

Anne Altria

Pat Abbot

Thanks to:

East Suffolk Association for the Blind, Gill Cook, Debbie Playford, Common Ground Theatre Company, Mel Hollis, Marcus Neal, Donna Ross, Nicola and Keith Halton.



This project is funded by Arts Council England and Suffolk Community Foundation via the Transforming Suffolk fund, and supported by the New Wolsey Theatre, Ipswich Museum and Sensing Change.

Appendix 2 – Press Review

InSuffolk website, 14th July 2014,

<http://www.insuffolk.com/fossils-unscone-suffolk-insuffolk-review/>

Ipswich Museum is one of these places that people living in the town probably don't visit as much as they should, because when you do there's normally something to surprise and intrigue you lurking among its slightly eccentric collections.

That was certainly the case last week when Unscene Suffolk presented their second production, **Fossils**, in the lower main room and upper balcony of the museum.

The community company was formed last year to offer accessible and participatory theatre opportunities for people who are blind and partially sighted and this play grew out of development sessions involving fossils and other tactile historical objects. The museum also provided an atmospheric and rather eerie performance space while the building's layout and exhibits gave key 'landmarks' to assist the actors in moving within it.

Fossils had an excellent cast of fourteen under the direction of Jenni Halton and I'm pleased to report that none of them were overshadowed by the close proximity of a large woolly mammoth, looming giraffe or pair of fierce looking gorillas. Has Judi Dench ever been able to say the same ?

Written by Halton and Pat Whymark from Common Ground Theatre, Fossils is the story of apparently human remains dug up at low tide on the beach of a small Suffolk village in 1890.

This discovery has repercussions for all of the villagers, not least young Charles Robinson Jr (Wayne Witney) who first unearths them but receives only further scorn from his mother, Doreen (Fran Ling.) She nicknamed him 'Skipper' because he could not skip as a child, which sums up their relationship at the play's beginning.

Each of the villagers portrayed has a different response to the deformed bones, from the mercenary to the cynical, the romantic to the religious. Some embrace scientific investigation of their origins and meaning while others want them re-buried before they bring bad luck upon the village. Clare Burman (right) as an enigmatic travelling watch-seller is the outsider of the group who plays a crucial part in the story's narration and plot.

These village politics ask important questions about how we see what we see, or what we think we see, and to what extent we project our prejudices onto the unknown or unexplained.

The audience was not excluded from these questions. We were invited to don cloth gloves, ostensibly to examine some small fossils from the museum's collection but also to consider the consequences of putting barriers between ourselves and others, and what these barriers may mean to the blind and partially sighted in particular.

The central place of these issues in *Fossils* make it something of a fable, or even a parable, as well as a well told and entertaining story, and although it embraces its late Victorian setting it was more than a period piece.

Fossils played to sell-out audiences for three performances at Ipswich Museum and I'm sure this number could have been doubled. For only a second outing from Unscene Suffolk it was an accomplished production, with the inexperienced actors showing few nerves and a lot of good humour. The company is a welcome and necessary addition to the local theatrical landscape and its future projects should be watched with interest.

Doug Coombes

Appendix 3 – audience feedback – individual comments on each row

Top notch. Very accomplished.
Amazing: intriguing and very funny. Entertaining. Well done everyone.
I thoroughly enjoyed the show - beautiful use of language and it was <u>funny</u> . I also liked the relationships between characters - especially the bakers.
Thought provoking entertainment!
Brilliant - I really enjoyed it. Gave us something to think about.
Fantastic effort by all cast, well done all.
Excellent. Fascinating story and a very professional production.
Excellent. The whole work has been an enrichment!
Brilliant beyond my expectations.
An interesting and honest performance. Good content, complex story, excellent singing and <u>funny</u> .
Brilliant and interesting!
Fantastic setting! Very clear idea, well performed. Unusual and quite inspirational.
Excellent -well put together.
Brilliant thoroughly enjoyed it.
Fantastic, informative and very enjoyable. Thank you!
Some very humorous moments. Charming.
Interesting idea, nice performance. I would like to <u>see</u> more!
Extremely good with a powerful message. It would have been better to pick up the tickets at the museum.
Very good and meaningful.
Very clear, interesting, loved the music. A different story!
A most enjoyable show. Love the humour and story. All should be very proud of what they did and the whole atmosphere was wonderful. Keep up the good work - I look forward to the next one.
Thought it was fantastic! Funny and enjoyable.
More
Very good
Very good
Absolutely brilliant - what a great organisation giving people confidence, outside interest and friends. Thank you.
Excellent and accessible production - more please!
Really clever use of the space. Very interesting performance.
Very subtle.
Wonderful! Well done all!
Very good - love the location.
Fantastic show, very inventive and really clever use of an unusual and interesting setting - wonderful and unique!
I thought it was just wonderful!
Very enjoyable.
Fantastic - well done to all.
Museum was a good and interesting performance space. The two levels worked well - acoustic was good - heard everything well. I enjoyed the comedy and singing/ music especially. Storyline held together well by narrator. Members of the cast appeared to support each other well. Overall, a very enjoyable thought provoking hours entertainment - well done.

Appendix 4 – volunteer feedback – one form per page

Unscene Suffolk

Volunteer feedback form: February – July 2014

Thank you for volunteering with Unscene Suffolk! Your feedback is anonymous and will help us to plan for future projects, and to improve the experience for both volunteers and participants. Please be as honest as possible.

What made you interested in volunteering with Unscene Suffolk and what did you expect from the experience?

.....
I have done various work for volunteers and thought this would be a very rewarding experience helping people who are blind or visually impaired.

In what ways did the project meet or exceed your expectations?

.....
It gave me a better understanding of what and how the people I helped guide manage to travel and get about.

In what ways could we improve the experience for volunteers?

.....
I think it would be nice for the volunteers to have time to have a chat with each other.

Would you be interested in volunteering for Unscene Suffolk again in the future?

Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure X

Would you recommend Unscene Suffolk to other volunteers?

Yes X No ☐ Not sure ☐

Unscene Suffolk

Volunteer feedback form: February – July 2014

Thank you for volunteering with Unscene Suffolk! Your feedback is anonymous and will help us to plan for future projects, and to improve the experience for both volunteers and participants. Please be as honest as possible.

What made you interested in volunteering with Unscene Suffolk and what did you expect from the experience?

I wanted to gain more experience in sight guiding and to increase my understanding on what it is like to live with sight loss or to be partially sighted To be honest I did not possess any pre-conceptions. I like to keep an open mind!

In what ways did the project meet or exceed your expectations?

Similar to last year, Fossils exceeded my expectations. The cast were always happy for me to guide them and I really appreciated their trust and recommendations. The final performances were polished, professional and the cast's improvements were immense. For me personally my confidence has grown as I increase my guiding skills. I have enhanced my ability to be non-judgemental and empathetic and flexible.

In what ways could we improve the experience for volunteers?

I think I would like more time to guide the performers around their space and the stairs. Jenni's fantastic organisational skills assist me greatly in volunteering. I always get a good amount of notice if plans change and that is very helpful.

Would you be interested in volunteering for Unscene Suffolk again in the future?

Yes x No ☐ Not sure ☐

Would you recommend Unscene Suffolk to other volunteers?

Yes ☒x No ☐ Not sure ☐

PS a valuable lesson I have learnt is knowing when to offer help and when to stand back. Sometimes I am guilty of under-estimating the performers' ability. I am delighted at what can be achieved! A positive to finish!

Unscene Suffolk

Volunteer feedback form: February – July 2014

Thank you for volunteering with Unscene Suffolk! Your feedback is anonymous and will help us to plan for future projects, and to improve the experience for both volunteers and participants. Please be as honest as possible.

What made you interested in volunteering with Unscene Suffolk and what did you expect from the experience?

I hadn't heard of the group and was asked by Sensing Change if I would help out. This was my first volunteer role after completing My Guide training so I had no expectations – just nerves. The only thing I had imagined was that I would be on the sidelines.

In what ways did the project meet or exceed your expectations?

I found the group friendly and was glad to work with Pat for the first couple of weeks to gain some confidence. I have had no experience of a theatre group and have found all aspects of the workshop / rehearsal / performance very interesting. I was pleased that the volunteers do join in where possible.

In what ways could we improve the experience for volunteers?

I can't think of any at the moment – I enjoyed the whole process.

Would you be interested in volunteering for Unscene Suffolk again in the future?

Yes ☒ No ☐ Not sure ☐

Would you recommend Unscene Suffolk to other volunteers?

Yes ☒ No ☐ Not sure ☐