EXPLORERS Meeting 4- 28.11.23 Notes and Actions

3.00pm – 3.15pm   Introduction and housekeeping from In Process- PAW
                      introduction to Steering Group hosts:
                      Kyla Craig Art Riot Collective – Introduction from Baltic Gateshead
                      Jazz Moreton Artist- Online Introduction
                      Ellie Page Outside In North West- Chair/Host or 'Boss Cat' APOLOGIES
                      Becky Waite Blue Room at the Bluecoat– 'Pass the Mic'
                      Ashokkumar Mistry Artist – Overseeing online chat

Kyla Craig introductions with Jazz Moreton, Becky Waite

3.15pm- 3.25pm   Brief updates from the previous meeting- Martin Swan
                      Including subgroups and Network Directory update

Martin Swan Trying a hybrid event for the first time. We met the steering group and agreed that we would defer the other subgroup meetings (Supported Studios, Artists, Research), which were due to take place after this meeting, and that we would defer them to a later date in December or January.

3.25pm- 3.40pm   The future of the network and how it will work after EXPLORERS
                      comes to an end in Spring 2024- Ellie Page, Kyla Craig
                      How the network might look to get funding to continue?
                      Should there be lead organisations?
                      How we invite new artists/organisations to join?

Anna Farley - There is lot we still have to figure out - vision, and values etc We shouldn't be seeking new organisations until we understand the offer and what unites us - we still haven't put them down yet.
Hayley Field - why is there a need for funding for the network?
Martin Swan - without funding then people would be expected to do things without being paid for doing so.
Anna Farley - organisations have a fee and security but freelance artists do not but that very important for some people.
Jennifer Gilbert - some organisations are very small with 1 member of staff and doing something such as running the meeting without being paid is very tricky
Kyla Craig - Art Riot perspective - the meetings are really useful, could the funding facilitate face-to-face element of the meetings? This would help people who are not part of the meetings to be more included in the network.
Sonia Boue - How much time would it take over a year to run the Network?

Martin Swan - 1 day per month as it is, with subgroups and steering groups a bit more

Jennifer Gilbert - If there are actions to follow meetings it will also take more time

Sonia Boue - If there are ND people involved it might take longer

Anna Farley - It would be good to have an idea of the work involved in running EXPLORERS - how do we extract what bits are useful and make use of them?

Kyla Craig - Importance of a transition, and the practicalities of a funding bid - needs more work

Ashokkumar Mistry - There are different motives for being in the group for artists and studios. For artists its important because it's a place to feel welcome and accepted compared to most institutions. Artists feel included/invested. Important to prioritise. Just have one steering group, not lots of groups.

3.40pm- 3.55pm	Ambition and Intent, and what these mean to neurodivergent artists (and are often misread or ignored)- Ashok Mistry, Becky Waite, Kyla Craig
	What these words mean for supported studios

Anna Farley - what inspired you to join the network, what initiated the connection, what have you gained, what have you given? What have the exchanges been? Give a small indication of why you want to stay in it. Jam Boards, Video. Give a bit of a story - i don't really know all the individual motives (for being on te network). What is it that is special, and what next?

Ashokkumar Mistry- Until we can match up the information we're not going to know what the role of the network is. its lots of different things for different people. W e will know why we are her and will know a way forward.

Sonia Boue - feels like EXPLORERS is a very diverse range of people and events. The reason why i'm here is because of an absence of this kind of space. There isn't anything currently. It is a place of connection and potential and a space that's welcoming. Sometimes its hard to keep going. Coming here in hope. hearing from more people would be great.

Jennifer Gilbert - is it worth setting up Jam Board and support people so everyone has a voice to be heard about what the network is more. Martin to add the information in

Kyla Craig - if people do this it would help to confirm the ambition and intent. Add the questions onto the EXPLORERS Directory.

3.55pm- 4.05pm	International networking and how we can develop this network outside the UK as well as link up with existing European and international networks- Tobias Roedl ([BDKS Kassel](#))

Tobias Roedl- it would be good to get more members outside the UK

Martin Swan - there are 4 international members of the network and there are some interesting networks in Europe and North America and it would be good to join up with some of these

Tobias Roedl - there is a network in Denmark that is a large

Jennifer Gilbert - my concern is to make sure we get it right in the UK before we try to connect internationally

Hamja Ahsan- is it just Western Europe and North America that we are interested we working with. There are connections in Indonesia we could develop.

Jennifer Gilbert - I have been working with and have connections in Indonesia

Andreia Bickenbach - Have we made connections with Berlinklusion?

Martin Swan - yes, we were scoping a project with them but I will check where we are with that

Anna Farley - we could invite international connections as part of a funding bid - that could be really exciting, creating guest visitors to come into the network, and also create some deeper relationships and respect them for the knowledge of art, social structures, health etc. We would learn and exchange knowledge

Hamja Ahsan - this network is framed mainly around visual arts but there are lots of things happening outside of this all the time, such as at the Edinburgh Fringe - over 100 acts that self identified as ND - could be framed as performative, comedy - may not contribute to PAW main remit but in terms of the discourse [around rights and representation] they have a valuable contribution to make. Also, the Zine network which has a lively vibrant zine culture around ND.

Sonia Boue- we should have an international programme as part of our activities - many ND artists find it difficult to make connections internationally. How exciting would it be if the connections to EXPLORERS could enable a connection to[for example] the Reina Sofia in Madrid.

Ashokkumar Mistry- We want to do some much but we are still trying to get ourselves started. Its worth having conversations with other places but it has to be done in a manageable way. Artists want to be seen and counted. Local galleries want national or international narrative from artists but when that happens they are still not interested. AS a ND artist you are constantly chasing your tail, and being forced to follow neurotypical approaches.

Naoibh Macnamee- we need to have a clear remit and organisations know what we are doing and why we are doing it.

Anna Farley- We need to stop dreaming and think about the now thing. There is no information available about how to travel for artists with additional support needs, what funding is available etc - lacking in every industry. How to have mobile autonomy as a creative practitioner - this does not exist.

Martin Swan- Agreed but in fact there is not even information about supported studios in the UK, there is very little information about ND creative activity or artists at all. Much is held in the heads of a few specialists, which is why the network is so important [so the knowledge can be shared and be made more widely available].

Ashokkumar Mistry - I suggested this as a piece of research for ACE and the British Council and they did not pick up on the idea

4.05pm- 4.20pm	How the network responds/reacts to changing political/governmental/ institutional positions- Jazz Moreton, Ellie Page
	How people with disabilities and/or who are neurodivergent are affected by these changes (such as the news about forthcoming Welfare reform that puts more expectations on people to be economically productive). Should the network have a set of values, should it lobby for those values?

Jazz Moreton- for 13 years the Conservative government has put pressure on disabled and neurodivergent people, changed disability living allowance to personal independence payments and it has been really harsh, forcing people to search or apply for jobs they won't achieve. Often we only have opportunities if an able person has ring fenced something for disabled people. Forcing disabled people to participate in unpaid work programmes is like 1930s Germany. Why can't we work together to elect MPs who will put the needs of people ahead of the economy and have a decent set of values.

Kyla Craig - maybe we need to add a question to the Jam Board to see who do we know who might be able to help us lobby for change.

Anna Farley- Jazz shared an article by Frances Ryan [Guardian journalist]- would they be interested to join the network

Martin Swan- We did invite them to last year's event - they couldn't attend but consider them an ally although we are not in contact with them

Jennifer Gilbert - I'm in conversation with them at the moment.

Anna Farley- there is a book and audio book they wrote round the critical theory around the demonisation of disabled people in the history of politics in recent times which touches on what Jazz is talking about.

Martin Swan- we know that people are marginalised for all kinds of reasons and when institutions such as the government demonise people (who don't work for example) - that is why the network exists and we should fight that and that we stand for people and part of that is a set of values that we feel are ours is very important.

ACTIONS FROM MEETING:

- Questions from Jennifer and pages on a Jam Board, around organisations and people who want to make connections with, plus ideas around lobbying.
- Sharing and expanding the EXPLORES Directory
- Inviting Guest Speakers and sharing of stories especially global minorities
- How to operate internationally
- What our values are
- Lobbying for political change
- Equal access being a core value