

## **Refugee Week Focus Groups**

Centre for Dance Research (C-DaRE): Coventry University  
July 23 2018

There were two focus groups, each lasting approximately 60 minutes. There were 19 participants attending in total, representing many of the stakeholders in Refugee Week. The focus groups were taken through the questions listed below although most of the conversation was free-flowing and covered a lot of ground. Overall there was a fair amount of agreement across both groups about the successes and challenges as experienced in Refugee Week. The first part of this report draws together the main points raised, which includes observations, discussion points for the future and key messages. This is a distillation of the conversations, which are then included in more-or-less verbatim form, edited only to assist reading. No one is individually identified. The Focus Groups were led by Sarah Whatley (Director, Centre for Dance Research) and Vip Artpradid (Post-graduate Researcher, Centre for Dance Research).

### Questions:

1. Tell us about your background and role in Refugee Week.
2. What was your motivation to take part?
3. Do you feel the week was successful – in what way?
4. How did you personally promote the event?
5. How well do you think the events were received? Any specific events to mention?
6. What do you think the key aims of the week were? And do you think they were met?  
Do you think the aims met also mirrored the particular aims of your own organization/personal motivations?
7. What was your favourite/most special moment of the week?
8. What challenges did you meet?
9. What would you change next time? What improvements for next year?
10. Did you feel a connection to the national Refugee Week movement?
11. Has this made you more enthused to be part of this week again in the future?
12. Have you come out of this week with any new ideas for the future?
13. How do you think the partnership approach worked? Strengths? Weaknesses?
14. Who do you feel the week was aimed at?
15. Which audiences do you think missed out?

### General prompts:

1. Experience of Refugee Week 2018 (overall feeling, memories, vibes!)
2. Specific experiences of/with impact (who, what, when, where, why)
3. Suggestions for improvements for next year?

### **Participants**

Susie Murphy, Jen Preece, Jacqui Ibbotson, Laura Nyahuye, Sroosh Kouhyar, Matthew Fife, Ian Bradley, Nicole Twamley, Gamika Lyanapathirana, Christine Mutshipay, Lakshmi Mehra, Mehru Fitter, Helen Lewis, Mark Steele, Janet Malatesta, Katie Davis, Lucy Thompstone, Tayyibah Mota, Nav Mann (observer).

## Summary

### **Observations**

- FarGo was an excellent venue but there were some problems with communication, which impacted on other tenants and organization for some events.
- Some activities and events needed better placing to avoid clashes, or to avoid confusion about who they were for.
- Being clear about what worked and what didn't work is important.
- Volunteers were excellent and helped with promoting the principle of integration and citizenship.
- The location for Party in the Park divides opinion about its suitability.
- Some stalls at Party in the Park were less popular/less successful.
- Coventry is made up of a wide number of different communities but not all were reached, or participated.
- The host community tended not to attend, believing that Refugee Week was not for them.
- Information about events was not always clearly communicated.
- Involving children/school groups could be a good way of attracting more families.
- Promotional activities, including posters, and other forms of information were not always effective.
- The Steering Group and how it is constituted is critical in ensuring the success of the Week.
- Organizers committed a huge amount of voluntary time and energy to ensure a successful week, but this is unlikely to be sustainable in the future.

### **Discussion points for the future/future planning**

- Location of Party in the Park – should it stay where it is or move to a different park/location? What are the pros and cons of staying in Hillfields or moving?
- How should the Steering Group be constituted, what are its terms of reference and how will it ensure full representation?
- Should/could a programme co-ordinator/curator be recruited to manage Refugee Week?
- How can perceptions of 'refugee' change and encouraging more integration across different refugee and non-refugee groups?
- What is the balance between arts, sport, health, information services and other themes during the week in terms of programming and activities?
- How can resources and information services be best integrated within the week (e.g. Law Centre, further/higher education)?
- What should be included and what should be taken out next time?
- What is the most effective way of promoting Refugee Week?
- How can the activities be captured and archived, to ensure a visible legacy for Refugee Week and Party in the Park?
- How can information be effective and accessible, communicating where activities are taking place, who they are for, taking into account language translation and the needs of all stakeholders and audiences?

- Can community and artist groups build in requests for funding to support Refugee Week through their usual fund-raising activities?
- What could be ticketed, charged for, and what should be free to access?

### **Key messages**

- More connection with national Refugee Week would be desirable.
- Planning needs to start early and needs to involve everyone in imagining what to include.
- Retaining 'Refugee' in the title of the week is important but work needs doing to ensure that the week is more inclusive, is relevant for all communities in the city including the host community, and is not only for refugees.
- 'Networking' is a core aim for the week.
- More community leader involvement is needed to ensure all parts of the city community are represented and included.
- Cultural sensitivity is important.
- Integration is not 'one-way' and refugees make the city a better place.
- A funded infrastructure, and paid coordinator/programmer/curator is needed to plan, manage and document Refugee Week.
- Stalls and activities in Party in the Park need to be interactive.
- Food is an excellent way of bringing people together and emphasizing sharing.
- Dance and music are excellent ways of generating excitement and integration.
- City of Culture provides an excellent opportunity to gain more support for, and showcase, the work of Refugee Week.