

Developing an Asset 2

Case Study: arts@trinity

The Challenge:

To open up and develop Holy Trinity Church as a self-sustaining venue for a wide range of cultural and artistic activities and make it an inclusive, accessible place in the heart of the City of Leeds.

Summary points:

- People starting up a venture should be prepared to commit time at the start and expect returns later.
- Change can take place at a very rapid pace and it is important to make sure that all stakeholders are kept fully informed.
- Developing mutually beneficial partnerships can go a long way to making a project successful.

What and Why:

• **Expand on what the challenge is and the activities associated with it.**

With the future of city centre worship being uncertain, the challenge is to diversify the use of the church building into an accessible venue for hosting a range of arts activities, which will become self-sustaining but will not compromise the spiritual basis of the centre. arts@trinity is currently hosting a number of events but the current internal management structure for supporting this programme is unsustainable.

• **How does the activity align with the organisation's mission / values / aims / objectives?**

arts@trinity is committed to being an inclusive, community venue and it sees the development of arts activities as an extension of this work. It is committed to making the venue affordable for all arts practitioners and visitors and to ensuring the delivery of quality artistic work, which does not compromise the spiritual significance of the environment.

• **How will the activity improve the financial sustainability of the organisation in the short, medium and long term?**

The diversity into hosting arts activities began with no dedicated financial resources given to it. The programme was initially managed by the full-time Arts Chaplain and one volunteer. The church now receives small annual grants from the Diocese of Ripon and Leeds and arts@Leeds (Leeds City Council) to support the delivery of the artistic programme. arts@trinity is one of only twelve projects selected by Yorkshire Culture to take part in a social enterprise pilot project to explore sustainability in the cultural sector. This project is focused on producing a business plan, with four strands of activity, which can be developed. The business plan reflects the goal to operate without a reliance on grants, but there is an acceptance that grant funding will be required to undertake the necessary alterations to the building to turn it into a viable arts venue.

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? • How?

- **What were the key steps in establishing the activity?**

The personal commitment of the Arts Chaplain and the one volunteer and the support from the Parochial Church Council. Also developing partnerships with other cultural organisations in Leeds and with the Leisure Services Department of Leeds City Council to host some events at Holy Trinity Church. The social enterprise pilot with Yorkshire Culture is now an opportunity to develop the initiative for the long-term.

- **What additional resources / skills were identified as being needed by the organisation to progress the activity?**

Financial: Start up costs were minimal as no additional premises were required and the arts development work is part of the role of the paid Arts Chaplain.

Personnel (staff, volunteers, board / trustees): The Arts Chaplain has taken the lead on developing the arts activities with significant support from a church volunteer. This was recognised as being unsustainable and the financial support from the Diocese has allowed for the recent recruitment of a part-time Arts Administrator.

IT: The IT resources of the church support the management of the arts activities.

Assets: The church building is the asset and it is recognised that to develop the arts venue potential, a significant amount of conversion work needs to take place.

Other: There are no official reporting / monitoring requirements on the arts activities. Up until the appointment of the Arts Administrator, it has been difficult to do effective publicity of events. A communications company and a theatre company rent space upstairs in the church for a nominal amount and in return they help with productions and printing publicity at a reduced rate.

? • Who's Involved?

- **How were stakeholders identified and brought on board?**

Staff and volunteers: Staff and volunteers are supportive of the development of the arts activities. The approach has given a boost to the life of the church and generated additional business for the café, located on site.

Board: It is the Parochial Church Council (PCC), which oversees the arts activities of the church and it was the initiative of the PCC, which led to the development of the Arts Chaplaincy position.

Funders: Along with the Diocese, other external funders are willing to support some work, which uses the arts to work with people with special needs.

Service Users: Although the regular congregation at the church is small, it was important to take their needs and views into account when developing the arts work. Being a small group, there was a chance they could feel marginalized. The congregation is supportive of the work but does not regularly attend events.

Local Community: The arts activities have helped to raise the profile of the church in the community and they demonstrate how open and accessible the church venue is for

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Why Not?

• What risks were identified in establishing activities?

Personnel:

- Only the Arts Chaplain available to develop the initiative.
- Only significant support from one volunteer.
- Established views of current staff. Would they support this new use of the church building?
- Competition from other established arts venues.

Financial: No financial resources were originally dedicated to the initiative but with the diminishing congregation, it was accepted that to survive the church had to re-invent itself in another form.

Existing provision: The cultural change for the small but significant current congregation, which wants to preserve the values and spirituality of the church.

Other:

- Ensuring the quality and appropriateness of the work.
- Competitive market: lots of cultural activities for people to attend.
- Not getting sufficient audiences or arts practitioners wanting to use the venue.

• How were these risks managed?

The Arts Chaplain role was developed to allow the church to diversify its activities but no significant thought or resources were dedicated to developing it in a sustainable way. Reliance on volunteer support is unsustainable but the success of the initiative has persuaded the Diocese and Team to resource the part-time Arts Administrator role. The church is not aiming to compete with commercial arts venues, whose rates for hire are much higher. The accessibility and inclusive ethos is more important but the church is aware that it will have to compete with other socially motivated organisations. However, its venue is somewhat individual and particularly suited to hosting musical events.

Overcoming the cultural change for the current congregation was helped by the fact that Holy Trinity Church has a tradition of being different and worshippers were not made to feel marginalized during the changes. They do not feel threatened by the arts activities but recognise that church survival depends upon developing this work.

The Arts Chaplain monitors the type of work to ensure quality and appropriateness in line with the mission of the church. The appointment of the Arts Administrator means a stronger focus on publicity and marketing for the performances and the venue.

Key Facts:

- **Organisation's name and trading subsidiaries:** arts@trinity
 - **Organisation's mission:** "To be accessible for everyone. To foster, encourage and co-operate with people of faith or not creatively through the use of the arts."
- FYE 2004 / 05 Turnover:** £80,000 No. of paid staff 1f/t, 6p/t
- % Income grant v trading:** 15 : 85 No of volunteers 3
- Status:** Voluntary organisation (reviewing structure) Date of Inc. 2003

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Moving Forward:

The Diocese is keen to keep the church in operation and there was an original idea that it could become an annex to Leeds City Art Gallery but the church in its current structure is not appropriate.

The social enterprise pilot with Yorkshire Culture is giving arts@trinity an opportunity to focus on sustainable development. The business plan has identified four strands of potential development – the café, hosting events, generating and promoting events, and retail. The focus is now on identifying resources to put the business plan into action. Significant refurbishment and adaptation of the church needs to take place to transform it into a fully equipped venue. The staff resource also needs to increase to focus on the business development.

Funders are supportive of the type of venue and the nature of the work being produced. The aim is for the arts based business to become self sustaining whilst remaining faithful to its mission of being accessible to everyone.



Background:

arts@trinity, aka the Chaplaincy to the Arts and Recreation for Leeds, is a community based project to develop Holy Trinity Church into a venue for a wide range of cultural and artistic activities, such as music, theatre, dance, film and video.

With a decline in the number of worshippers to Holy Trinity Church, it became clear that the church would have to develop in other ways to survive. With a tradition of liberalism and a tendency to try something different, the church decided to use the arts as a means of redefining itself in the community and arts@trinity was born.

The current Arts Chaplain and a volunteer have devoted time to developing mutually beneficial partnerships as well as attracting arts practitioners to the venue. The Arts Chaplain is trained in the performing arts and has undertaken some theatre work with people with special needs, which has been performed in the church.

With significant local support for the initiative, the focus is now on moving to the next level of operation and creating a self-sustaining arts-based business in the church setting.