

Professional Portfolio

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Building a Personal brand

Personal branding is the way in which a person promotes themselves in a professional capacity. It can help differentiate one individual from another by reflecting the values and personality of that person (Geyser, 2022) - ultimately shaping the impression the wider world has about them.

As an Undergraduate student interested in developing a career as a freelance worker in the creative arts industry, it is essential that I establish my brand and find innovative ways of showcasing my skills, achievements, and experience to stand out amongst other freelance creatives.

Given the nature of the industry that I would like to go into, as well as the prevalence of the internet and social media, creating a strong personal brand is highly important for building my client base (Nanda, 2022) and increasing my likelihood of securing work with organisations that share the same creative values and interests as me.

From preparing professional documents to creating an online profile, the Changemakers module has given me an opportunity to consider the ways in which I can develop my unique brand identity and promote myself to prospective employers and clients. This portfolio will summarise the activities undertaken to achieve this.

Creating a CV

The Curriculum Vitae (CV) is a record of personal progress and demonstrates an individual's range of qualities. CVs should be viewed as a form of marketing tool and an opportunity to communicate the personality and brand of the individual to a potential employer (Smith, 2021), whilst taking into consideration that the structure and content should be subject to Sector preferences (Cole, 2021).

There are many articles which offer guidance on how to produce a CV for the creative industries, noting that these often deviate from traditional formats, particularly as some of the skills and competences learnt in creative settings are more difficult to articulate in words alone (Smith, 2021). While writing a CV for arts-based careers can be difficult because professionals in these areas do not always have a linear career structure or consistent pattern of work to showcase their relevant skills and experience (Whitmell, 2012); the skills and knowledge gained in more traditional work settings can still be used to demonstrate to a potential employer how these experiences are valuable to arts-based positions.

My CV (**appendix 1**) includes many of the traditional elements expected in a professional resume, including my employment history in non-arts based roles. I felt that it was important to include my work experiences in office and retail positions to emphasise my skills in team working and effective communication, which I feel are transferrable to creative positions.



Image 1: Extract from my CV

To appeal to prospective employers in the applied drama field, my CV also details previous creative projects I have been involved in, as a means to highlight my experiences in the creative industries. When creating my CV, I deliberately used bright vivid colours and included a photo of myself; although this is not always advisable for applications to traditional roles (indeed.com, 2023), on CVs relating to the arts, the use of visually stimulating content provides an opportunity to express my personality and stand out in a unique way. My CV also includes links to my blog and social media profiles as a further opportunity to market my brand and highlight the work that I have done in the industry to date.

Eventually, I would like to include a link to my online portfolio (see **Appendix 2**), documenting past projects and accomplishments, in my CV. Some online sources have acknowledged, that this can show further evidence of my creative skills and be a useful tool to help me stand out further from my competitors (Abanto, 2021).

Other Professional Documents

As with my CV, any document being presented to an organisation or potential employer should incorporate my personal branding to give a positive impression.

During my placement at People Speak Up, an arts-based charity organisation, I needed to claim back some expenses incurred for a session I facilitated. This was a great opportunity for me to prepare my first invoice (**Appendix 3**). As a freelance creative, I wanted this to reflect my image as a professional, therefore, I kept the design simple and sophisticated. However, on reflection, I would consider changing the style of the invoice to align with my developing brand, e.g. using a similar style to my CV. Specifically, I would like all my professional documents to include consistent fonts and colour schemes as well as a logo to represent my brand, as these are important aspects of marketing myself as a professional and leaving a strong impression (Christie, 2021).

Social Media Profiles

Social Media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and TikTok have become an increasingly integral part of brand building and identity. In the creative arts field, these platforms allow individuals to showcase their personality and skills in a more creative way than a written CV might be able to. They also serve the purpose of drawing in potential customers and other organisations that may be interested in working with you (Parker, 2019).

I have created professional profiles on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram (see **Appendix 4**) to try and build my professional brand. My main objective is to use the social media platforms to showcase any past and current projects I have been involved in. I also hope that by having an online presence for my professional work and experiences, this will help me to develop a solid client base as well as increase my networking opportunities with organisations that I would like to work with in the future.

Prior to creating my professional profiles, in our first module session we discussed the ways in which our personal values can be incorporated into our branding. I identified my top three values as:

1. Optimism
2. Friendship
3. Loyalty

I was able to create a short paragraph encapsulating these three core values to include in my social media bios (see **image 2**) and 'About me' sections. By highlighting my values and aims as a professional, I think this helps to reflect the type of people, projects and organisations I hope to be associated with. I have already had the opportunity to start utilising my online platforms, posting photos and videos from workshops and events that I have led or participated this year.



Image 2: screenshot from my Instagram profile

I have also created a profile on LinkedIn which is another valuable way to raise my online profile. LinkedIn is host to the largest business-oriented network of professionals. The company state that 93% of recruiters use LinkedIn to research and recruit (Rycraft, 2018), therefore having a presence on the platform could improve my chances of being spotted by organisations and charities interested in working with me on creative projects.

I am aware of other platforms such as the Wales Arts Health & Well-being Network (WAHWN), representing members from the arts, health and HE sector, which I was introduced to by my module tutor. Although, I can see the benefits of joining a network of this nature while based in Wales, I hope to find a similar association in my home city of Coventry when I return from my studies.

Professional Contacts

Having access to a network of professionals involved in the same or related industries can help to open up pathways to new experiences and career development opportunities (Knight, 2016).

In a bid to broaden my professional contacts, I have researched several organisations based in my home city of Coventry and surrounding areas to identify potential volunteering and job opportunities that may be of interest to me when I finish University (or during summer break).

The Arts Council England are a national agency who promote a range of cultural and creative experiences and have invested in a number of projects in the West Midlands area (such as Coventry). From their website I was able to obtain a list of organisations running creative projects in my region and have noted these details, along with other contacts I have established during my studies, in a spreadsheet (**Appendix 5**) for future reference. The aim is to reach out to these organisations in the near future to see what opportunities might exist. I will also follow them on social media to see if any networking opportunities come up that I can attend. I am particularly excited about the prospect of building networks in Coventry; as the recent City of Culture (2021) it has had lots of investment into its cultural and artistic spaces, so I am hopeful that there will be plenty of opportunities for voluntary work and networking events there.

In addition to developing a network of potential industry associates, I have also begun to consider my existing professional contacts. During my voluntary work at People Speak Up, I had the opportunity to attend a number of events relating to a variety of creative mediums, including poetry and pint nights; spoken-word events and cancer awareness concerts. Each event was valuable as I was able to build connections with a new person in the arts-based field, all on different professional journeys to mine but sharing common goals. Where possible I will continue to follow these contacts using social media to keep up to date with their projects; and will retain their contact details in case an opportunity presents itself to collaborate with them.

Personal Development Plan and personal SWOT analysis

As well as trying to establish professional contacts, another effective tool that will help me to develop a personal branding strategy is completing a personal Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis (Harr, 2022). A SWOT analysis can be a useful technique to manage and eliminate potential setbacks to achieving my career ambitions (Mindtools.com, 2023). It is also a helpful tool in building my personal brand, by playing to my known strengths; identifying what opportunities are available to improve my personal marketing and seeking to address the threats and personal weaknesses that might negatively impact my brand.

Having completed a SWOT analysis, I consider my biggest strengths to be my sense of calm and personal warmth towards others. I also see my diverse background as a positive aspect of my brand identity, as I feel that I can use it to connect to people from different cultures.

I have also identified the opportunities that are available to me, in so far as the networking events that I have attended as part of my volunteering work and the contacts that I will use and continue to take advantage of.

While I recognise that a major threat to my success is the competitiveness of the area of work that I would like to go into, I feel that in time, my experience and strong brand identity will help me to overcome this.

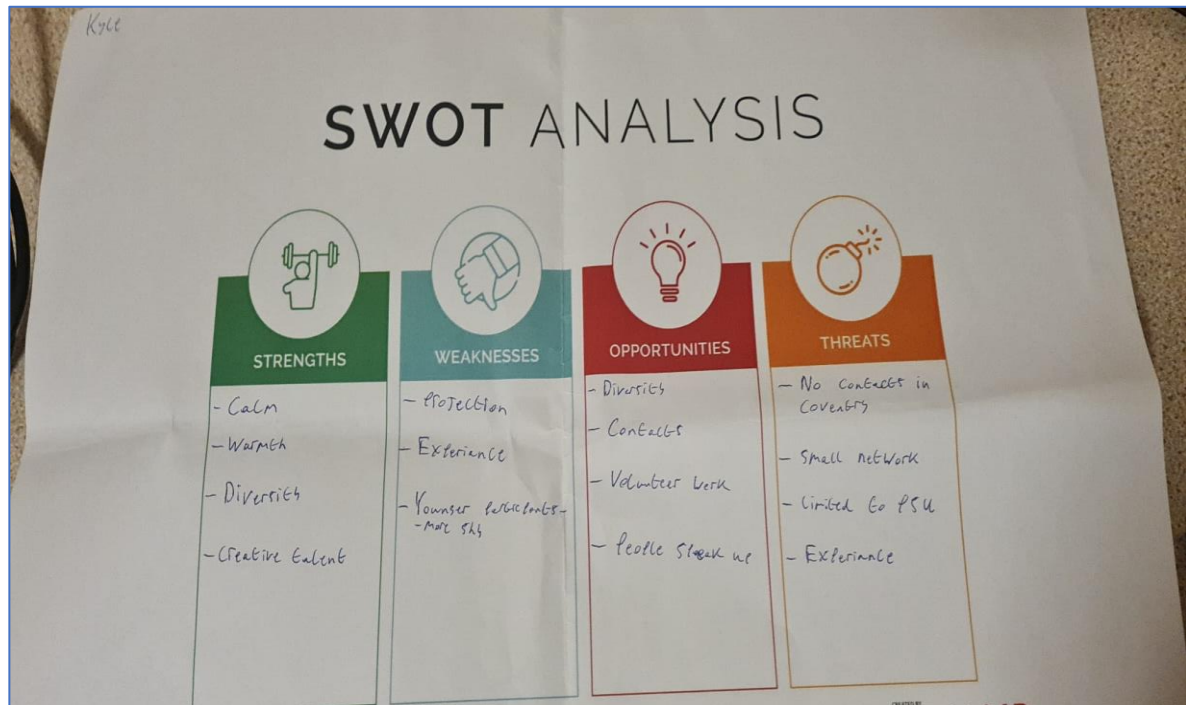


Image 3: Copy of my SWOT Analysis

I have also written a professional development plan to keep track of my short and long term career objectives (indeed, 2022). I think planning for the future is a critical part of developing my personal brand, as it will help me to understand what aspects of my development I need to work on to improve my professional identity. My personal development plan briefly outlines my career goals for the year following my graduation. I have tried to make my plans realistic but ambitious, taking into consideration how I might achieve these self-set targets and what might help to motivate me to achieve them. For example, one of my short term goals is to successfully complete my undergraduate degree course and build on my creative skills and experience.

Personal Development Plan

Objectives: *Freelance Facilitator*

Start date: *2024*

End date: *Present*

Actions:

- Finish undergraduate degree
- Drama Therapy masters
- Extend creative skills
- Contacts
- Reliable contacts
- A constant source of work
- Facilitator Training
- University's reading material
- Google Training program

Obstacles:

- Lack of Experience
- Creative/Professional development
- Protection (Start - End)
- Contacts/Other Freelancers
- Lecturers/Academics
- University's Alumni

Criteria:

How will I know I've achieved this?

Support:

What support will I have?

Review:

How did I do?

Image 4: Copy of my Personal Development Plan

I know that in order to achieve these goals I need to tap into the support offered by my lecturers and also make effective use of the contacts I have made during my studies.

One way of achieving my Personal Development Plan goals is working to improve my employability skills, which will help me with finding a constant source of work. As part of the module, we were given a brief for the role of a community arts practitioner/facilitator (**Appendix 6**) and set the task of preparing for a mock interview for the role. It was helpful to have the opportunity to prepare for a mock interview for this type of role, as it would be something that I would genuinely pursue after my degree. This experience will be invaluable as I seek to execute my career goals in the coming months and years.

Conclusion

The biggest takeaway from this module is that I have now begun to establish my personal brand and can understand how important it is to my professional aspirations. It is now up to me to expand upon what I have learnt and developed by continuing to build on my external facing profile on various social media platforms and websites; and forging new connections through different networks.

Word count: 2147

Appendices

Appendix 1: CV



KYLE JOSEPH COLLINGWOOD

WORK /VOLUNTARY EXPERIENCE

PEOPLE SPEAK UP VOLUNTEER

(January 2023 – March 2023)

Working at People Speak Up involved supporting a variety of workshops within the local community as well as delivering my own workshops.

Activities included:

- Helping to set up the activity space,
- Servicing drink and food to participants,
- Working with a wide age range of groups including the over 50s, youth groups (12-18) and dementia-friendly sessions
- Street-play facilitation
- Supporting activities carried out in local care homes, such as storytelling.

CAMPING AND CARAVANNING CLUB

Customer Service Assistant [summer temp]

(June 5th 2022-Aug 20th 2022)

In my role as customer service assistant, I learnt and demonstrated skills in good customer service, handling difficult and complicated booking requests and enquiries, complaint handling and data entry.

Main duties involved:

- Taking telephone enquiries in the main HQ office,
- Helping customers book campsites for holidays/vacations.
- Updating information on the database
- Taking payments over the phone

WH SMITH (WORK EXPERIENCE)

(January 15th, 2019 -January 23rd 2019)

I worked at WH Smith for one week's work experience as part of a college module. Tasks involved:

- Cleaning the shop floor
- Helping customers
- Putting out stock

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- First Aid trained at people speak up (2023)
- DBS check – up to date

CONTACT

✉ Kylecollingwood03@gmail.com

☎ 07400613020

🌐 <https://collingwoodblogger.wordpress.com/>

📍 28 Greenleaf Close, Coventry, CV5 7BG

SOCIALS

 KYLE COLLINGWOOD
 @KJ_COLLINGWOOD
 @KJ_COLLINGWOOD



Appendix 2: Professional Portfolio

A link to my professional portfolio (PowerPoint document) is available here:

<https://collingwoodblogger.wordpress.com/2023/03/12/professional-portfolio/?preview=true>

Appendix 3: Invoice



KYLE COLLINGWOOD

INVOICE

Invoice number: 0001

INVOICE TO

PEOPLE SPEAK UP,
ELEANOR SHAW
FFWRNES FACH,
FFWRNES THEATRE,
LLANELLI. SA15 3YE

DESCRIPTION	SUBTOTAL
Icing pens for cookie/cupcake decorating session	£10.50
Cookies and cupcakes for decorating session	£4.11
TOTAL:	£14.61

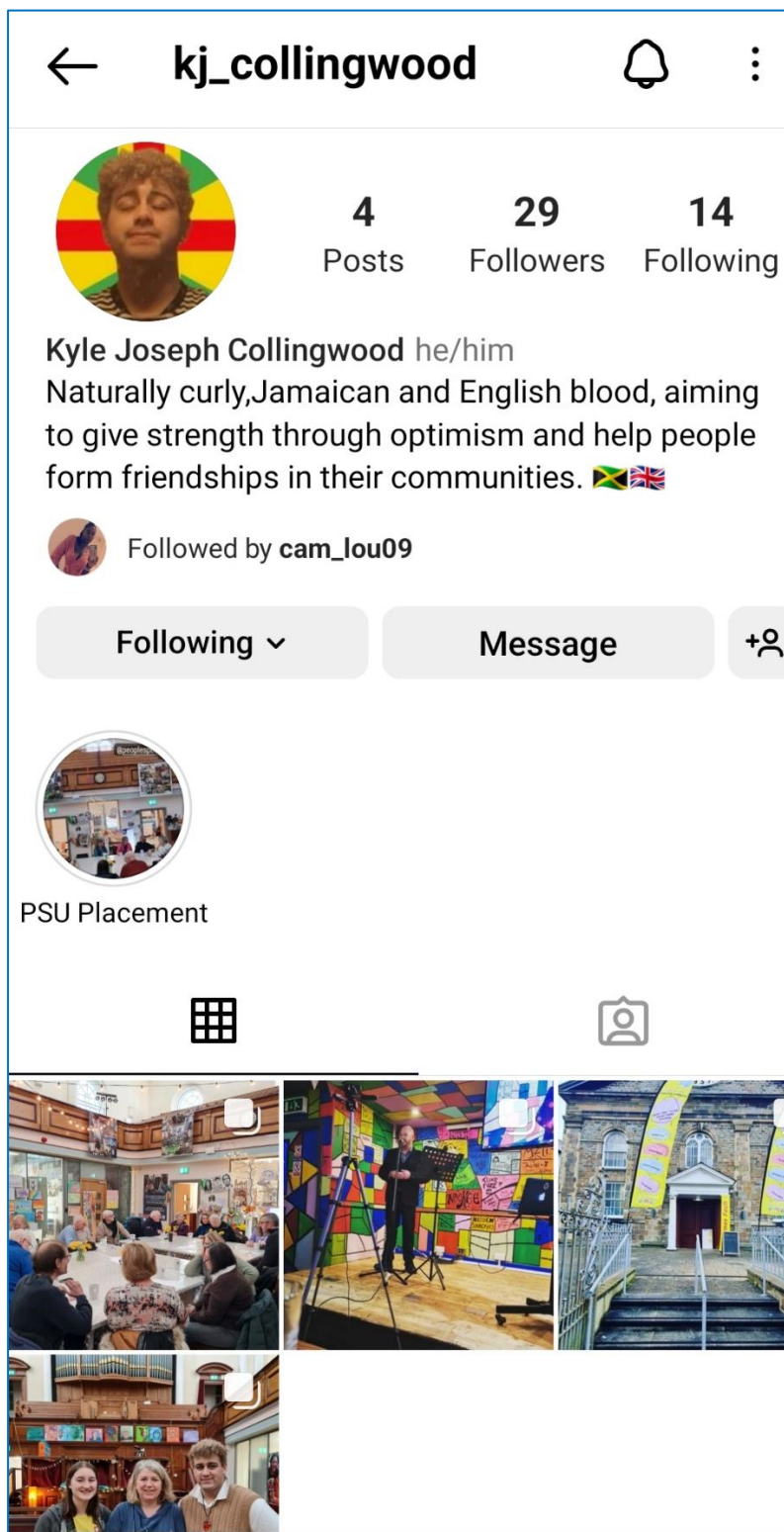
BACS PAYMENT
PAYMENT DETAILS:
90920600
60-24-23

CONTACTS:
07400613020
KYLECOLLINGWOOD03@GMAIL.COM

Appendix 4: Social Media Platforms

Facebook: Screenshot from my profile



Instagram: Screenshot of my profile page

Twitter: Screenshot of my profile page

The screenshot shows the Twitter profile of Kyle Collingwood. At the top is a header image of a desert landscape. Below it is a circular profile picture of a young man with curly hair. To the right of the profile picture is a button that says "Edit profile". The name "Kyle Collingwood" is displayed in large bold text, followed by the handle "@KJ_Collingwood". The bio reads: "Naturally curly, Jamaican and English blood, aiming to give strength through optimism. follow my insta: [instagram.com/kj_collingwood...](https://www.instagram.com/kj_collingwood...)". Below the bio are two icons: a location pin for "Born 23 March 2003" and a calendar for "Joined February 2023". It also shows "2 Following" and "1 Follower". There are four tabs: "Tweets" (selected), "Tweets & replies", "Media", and "Likes". Under the "Tweets" tab, it says "You Retweeted" and shows a tweet from "peoplespeakup @Peoples..." dated "24 Feb". The tweet text is "A big thank you to Kyle & Aimee!" followed by a list of handles: "@AppliedDrama", "#studentplacement", "@UWTSD", "@CarmsCouncil", "@CAVSCarms", and "@Arts_Wales_". There is a small "PSU PEOPLE SPEAK UP" logo to the left of the tweet.

Kyle Collingwood
@KJ_Collingwood

Naturally curly, Jamaican and English blood, aiming to give strength through optimism. follow my insta: [instagram.com/kj_collingwood...](https://www.instagram.com/kj_collingwood...)

📍 Born 23 March 2003
📅 Joined February 2023

2 Following 1 Follower

Tweets Tweets & replies Media Likes

↻ You Retweeted

peoplespeakup @Peoples... · 24 Feb
A big thank you to Kyle & Aimee!
[@AppliedDrama](#)
[#studentplacement](#)
[@UWTSD](#)
[@CarmsCouncil](#)
[@CAVSCarms](#)
[@Arts_Wales_](#)

Appendix 5: Professional Contacts

Name/Organisation	Capacity in which they are known to me	Contact number	Social media/website info	Email address	Field of work	Location
Helen Coope, Northampton College	Former Tutor, Acting Diploma	n/a	Instagram (@nc_actors)	helen.coope@northamptoncollege.ac.uk	College with an interest in community theatre	Northampton, East Midlands
Belgrade Theatre	n/a	02476 553055	admin@belgrade.co.uk	boxoffice@belgrade.co.uk	Theatre company (shows/performances/projects)	Coventry, West Midlands
Creative Kindness	n/a	n/a	Facebook (Creativekindnesscoventry)	creativekindnesscoventry@gmail.com	Crafts workshops/sessions (health and wellbeing)	Coventry, West Midlands
Eleanor Shaw, People speak up	volunteer placement (2023)	07972 651920	https://peoplespeakup.co.uk/index.html	Eshaw@peoplespeakup.co.uk	Arts and health workshops/sessions	Llanelli, Wales
Geese Theatre Company	n/a	01214 496222	https://www.geese.co.uk/	info@geese.co.uk	Theatre company (shows/performances/projects)	Birmingham, West Midlands
Integrate coventry	n/a	07747 213269	Instagram (@integratecoventry)	royak@covrefugee.org	cultural projects and activities (refugees and migrants)	Coventry, West Midlands
Mount nod school	Local primary school	02476 466837	https://www.mountnod.coventry.sch.uk/	officestaff@mountnod.coventry.sch.uk	Primary school	Coventry, West Midlands
Onismo Muhlana	networking event	n/a	Instagram (@saynizzy)	n/a	Professional photography and film	Newport (South Wales)
Phill, People speak up	volunteer placement (2023)	07891 342185	https://peoplespeakup.co.uk/index.html	n/a	Freelance storyteller	Llanelli, Wales
Royal and Derngate	n/a	01604 624811		BoxOffice@royalndderngate.co.uk	Theatre company (shows/performances/projects)	Northampton, East Midlands
Tarah Kandial	networking event	n/a	Instagram (@Tkandial)	n/a	Visual artist and Poet	Cardiff, Wales
Tia-Zakura	networking event	n/a	Instagram (@Tiazakura)	n/a	Spoken word artist	Cardiff, Wales

Appendix 6: Brief for facilitator role (mock interview)**The Art of Wellbeing: A summer programme of participatory arts in Carmarthen for everyone!**

Position: Community Arts Practitioner with a specialism in drama

Fixed Term: 3 months: June – August 2023

As a community arts practitioner, you'll develop, promote, deliver and evaluate arts activities to local groups and individuals to support their wellbeing and improve their quality of life. You will be consulting with the local people in the devising process to ensure that the delivery is co-creative and relevant. You will be a key part of a multi arts team, specialising in applied drama and theatre activities to improve the health and wellbeing of participants.

Alongside your applied drama work you will be engaging in a range of artforms and with a range of artists. These could include:

- crafts
- creative writing
- spoken word
- dance
- film
- music
- theatre
- visual arts.

We will be looking to increase the engagement of with a wide range of people including:

- young people, especially those at risk
- homeless people
- people with disabilities and mental health conditions
- ethnic minorities
- the elderly

The actual work you do can vary considerably depending on the role. You may be directly involved in delivering creative projects or you may be more focused on administrative responsibilities.

Responsibilities

You'll need to:

- work with a range of community groups to identify their needs and adapt projects to meet these needs
- negotiate with community groups to see what art form they would like to use for the project
- design and deliver programmes and workshops to engage different communities
- help groups to develop artwork for their own community
- project manage one-off events, such as festivals and longer-term projects, including the setting up, monitoring and evaluation of the project
- build up a pool of arts professionals to hire in or work with for projects
- complete administrative duties including bid writing, fundraising, and managing budgets
- offer advice and support to community groups on fundraising and forming projects
- liaise with a variety of people and organisations including local authorities, schools, companies for sponsorship, freelance professionals, and specialist workers

- market and publicise projects via outlets such as social media and the press
- manage and support volunteers.

Skills

You'll need to show:

- creativity in applied drama practices and an understanding of the creative process
- the ability to help the creativity of others and work collaboratively with creative professionals
- organisational and administrative skills
- awareness of the context of the work, including issues of social regeneration and inclusion
- knowledge of the specific needs of different community groups
- an enthusiasm for working with groups in the community and a willingness to build relationships with these different groups
- strong interpersonal skills, patience, empathy, a positive approach and respect for others
- project management skills
- flexibility and adaptability
- negotiating skills, especially to secure funding for projects
- basic business knowledge, especially if working freelance.

You'll need to have Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) clearance to work with young people and other vulnerable groups.

Work experience

Experience in the field of community and participatory arts is important and you may need to provide evidence of previous projects when you apply.

Please submit your CV on attendance at the interview and be prepared with an example of a project that you may run within The Art of Wellbeing.

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