UK Tour April 2014
Evaluation of an integrated tour
Building the Constant Flux
Integrated Touring Model for
musicians with a learning disability
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1. INTRODUCING THE PROJECT

October 2013 saw the first UK tour for two bands made up of adults with learning disabilities – Zombie Crash from Brighton, UK and Pertti Kurikan Nimipäivät (PKN) from Finland. The tour was developed, organised and managed by Constant Flux, a new arts organisation that provides opportunities for musicians with learning disabilities. Building on the successes and learning from that tour, Constant Flux began work on a tour for London’s The Fish Police; a four-piece
The Fish Police have two members with learning disabilities, Dean Rodney and Matthew Howe. Despite having performed live for eight years and being well-known on the learning disabled music scene, The Fish Police had never performed for a mainstream audience or played an integrated gig until this tour. The line-up is completed by bassist and music facilitator Charles Stuart and drummer Drew McLean, both of whom are funded to work with the group by disability arts organisation Heart and Soul, based in Deptford, South London.

Constant Flux applied for and was awarded £14,959 of Arts Council England funding for the tour, through Grants for the arts, a 52% increase in funds awarded on the first tour. This increase was calculated based on actual spends on the first tour.

By analysing the dynamics and details of the Fish Police tour and hearing from everyone involved, this evaluation looks at how the Arts Council grant was applied to the touring project and identifies some key learning points towards the Integrated Touring model; a robust, sustainable and practical set of guidelines for learning disabled musicians and their supporters who want to hit the road!
Richard Phoenix started **Constant Flux** as a Community Interest Company in 2013. Building on seven years of working within learning disability arts organisations as well as supporting individual musicians with practical workshops and advocacy, Richard’s vision for Constant Flux is just as clearly informed by his experience as a part of an international not-for-profit DIY (Do-It-Yourself) community.

Years of on-the-ground practical experience of international touring as a musician in a wide range of bands gives Richard and those he works with a strong understanding of how things really work. At the same time, being fully professionally connected to and embedded within established the Disability Arts sector gives Constant Flux
a strong level of professional understanding, reputability and access to the infrastructure and expertise contained within these organisations.

The success of 2013’s PKN and Zombie Crash tour helped to challenge the perception that touring for learning disabled musicians was a logistical impossibility, by providing a robust proof of concept to the sector. It demonstrated not only the financial viability of touring but that there are open and enthusiastic audiences across England for learning disabled bands, through the hugely positive audience engagement that was recorded. You can read the full Evaluation here.

Constant Flux has been working to create an Integrated Touring Model and toolkit for learning disabled musicians. The model will use real world examples as proof of concept for other individuals, bands and organisations who want to promote their work through touring. It will offer a toolkit of practical advice building on the learning and experience of these tours, whilst recognising that every musician, whether they perform solo or within a group, is unique both in terms of their creative output and their support needs.

The Fish Police tour was the second project for Constant Flux and as such, the basics of a practical framework for all the activity had already been developed and tested. While a larger, more realistic budget and pre-existing workflow smoothed the process, other challenges were presented, largely due to the longer tour schedule (seven dates as opposed to four on the first tour.) Richard took full responsibility for the booking of all events, liaison, general tour management and every aspect of both the pre-tour work and each day of the tour itself, subcontracting only a partial amount of press and media outreach work, as well as the independent evaluation.
3. THE BAND AND THE TOUR
**The Fish Police** are Dean Rodney (singer, rapper, songwriter), Matthew Howe (guitar) and Charles Stuart (keys, co-songwriter and background vocals). The three first met in 2003 at a music session at arts organisation Heart n Soul in Deptford. They are unique not only in their integration of LD and non-LD members, with a live line-up featuring players from Grace Jones and Mark Ronson’s bands, but also in the music they make and the wider artistic projects they are involved in, such as the large-scale international project The Dean Rodney Singers, which included an installation at the Royal Festival Hall and performing at the Paralympic 2012 opening ceremony. They released a debut LP ‘The Marzipan Transformations’ to coincide with the tour.

**Heart and Soul** are a creative arts organisation. They have been working with The Fish Police as individuals for over 10 years through their ‘expressive arts’ project, and have a very strong relationship with the band. Heart n Soul has over 27 years experience of working with people with a learning disability, supporting them to make outstanding art and music and is included in the Arts Council England’s National Portfolio for its ‘outstanding’ contribution to inclusive practice. Heart and soul take a music focus around work skills and look at how to support people with a learning disability in their general professional development as artists, as distinct from music making as a recreational, therapeutic or community building activity. This is reflected in the existing achievements of Dean Rodney.

**Booking the tour**

The Fish Police are a unique band with a unique sound. **Constant Flux** took a deliberately bespoke approach to booking each event, seeing the band’s ‘fit’ on a bill and suitability for a promoter as anoth-
er vector of integration. Read more about what we mean by this in the [Building the model] section of this evaluation. Each event also took place in a venue regularly used for mainstream gigs, with flat access and accessible toilets.

**The dates**
The tour took place in April 2014.

4th Nottingham – Nottingham Contemporary
5th Leeds – Wharf Chambers
6th Sheffield – Broomhall Centre
7th Sunderland – Pop Recs Ltd
(8th Day off / Driving)
9th London – The Macbeth
10th Brighton – The Green Door Store
11th Swansea – Mozart’s

**The Team**

The team consisted of 8 people: Driver Ben, Tour Manager Richard, Photographer and filmmaker Felipe, Musicians Matthew (guitar) and Dean (vocals) plus drummer Drew and Charles who plays bass in the Fish Police and was also the band’s primary support whilst on tour. Hannah, a freelancer at Heart and Soul, handled the visuals (projections) for each performance and also undertook extra support during the tour.
4. CHALLENGES

A range of challenges and barriers to accessing exist for people with a learning disability who want to attend live gigs. These include accessibility of the venue itself and the transport options to get to and from the gig. Crucially, there is the issue of support worker availability for events that happen in the evening, where shift patterns can often interfere with activities and social engagements.

In terms of attracting and engaging as many people with a learning disability as possible to each gig, the break from the established ‘learning disability club night’ as a social event remained a factor. This is especially true given that The Fish Police are such a well-known act within the boundaries of that scene, whilst being, at least at the
At the outset of the tour, total unknown quantities on the mainstream gig circuit. It is extremely rare for a gig or club night to be promoted to the learning disabled community without it being a specific learning disability event, as networks for the promotion of integrated events is still being established and also the trust and integrity of the events has to established when that person is being supported to attend.

In Nottingham, 126 people attended, with an estimated 0 people with learning disabilities. In Leeds 106 people, attended with an estimated 10 people with learning disabilities. In Sheffield, 66 people attended with an estimated 30 people with learning disabilities. In Sunderland: 15 attendees, an estimated 2 of which had learning disabilities. In London 164 people attended, with an estimated 15 learning disabled attendees. Brighton there was an audience of 95 with an estimated 15 people with learning disabilities in attendance, and in Swansea, 35 people attended, with an estimated 0 learning disabled attendees.

As with the first tour, providing promoters who may not have existing links to learning disability music organisations with adequate support and ideas about how to get the word out to the right places in their town is an a key area for improvement, however there is limited capacity to do this research and networking work on behalf of a promoter so some of this has to be self-initiated. It is also worth noting the much higher estimated figures for attendees with a learning disability than on the PKN and Zombie Crash tour.

Promoter accountability and reliability had been an issue on the PKN tour. One of the three key recommendations from the first evaluation was to create an informal promoter ‘contract’ covering the basic requirements. This was put into place and agreed via email. This was
an effective development as it allowed for a clear breakdown of what work was required of each promoter. Of course, the level of promotion undertaken in different cities still varied which contributed to variance in attendee figures.

The overall biggest identified issue was around the routing of the tour, with feedback from the Fish Police indicating that overall the tour felt too long. One suggestion for a future tour with this amount of dates could be to break them up into chunks and potentially run it over **two weekends**. For van and gear hire this may present issues. Covering over a thousand miles of UK soil in less than a week is a fairly big undertaking even for seasoned touring artists, and as The Fish Police’s first ever tour it was a significant challenge. Booking dates based on promoter availability also meant some routing choices that resulted in longer drives than strictly necessary e.g. Sunderland to London.

However, keeping in mind that there is no ‘optimum’ length for a tour, the decision around the number of dates on a tour, where they will be and lengths of drive will always have to be made based on consultation with the band and their support workers.
One of the key areas Constant Flux looked to improve upon from the last tour was media engagement. It was concluded that lack of sufficient time before the tour had resulted in a few crucial ‘near misses’ with press hits that may have impacted, if not on turn outs, then on sector and general public awareness.

As such, several months were allocated for press strategy for The Fish Police tour. Two freelance PRs were contracted, with Liv Willars covering web and digital outreach and Orla Bennett looking after print media. As a result of this coordinated effort, the tour was featured in two separate

5. SUCCESSES
pieces in The Guardian (print and online) as well as an array of music publications. The Guardian coverage included a commissioned opinion piece from Richard himself. See further links in Appendix III. Feedback from attendees demonstrated the importance of a coordinated press approach and crucially an understanding of the necessary lead times for event-based media outreach.

This media success also helps to establish new avenues for how learning disability is discussed and positioned in the media. Constant Flux notes that the vast majority of media coverage on people with learning disabilities focuses on either ‘hate crimes or cuts to services’ - i.e. either overtly or implicitly negative.

As Gareth, Creative Director of Carousel project Shut Up and Listen says, this different sort of coverage can have far reaching effects.

“By being celebrated for their art, learning disabled people will become more visible in popular culture.”

Overall, the general audience reaction was the biggest reported success, with the band being unknown to most attendees at the outset of a gig and winning them over, getting everyone dancing night after night. Check out the Twitter feedback.

Paul Harvey @paharvey99 · Apr 10
If I see a more enjoyable gig than The Fish Police this year, it'll have been a very good year.
Over the course of the tour, Constant Flux also saw an increase in performer confidence; with the Fish Police set (comprised of 12 songs played in the same order every night) itself becoming less ‘rehearsed’ and more spontaneous. This shows the value of playing integrated gigs and taking influence from other bands, moving towards a more flexible performance rather than a set piece.

As discussed in the Challenges section of this evaluation, encouraging the attendance of learning disabled people, however the overall general attendance of the majority of the gigs exceeded expectations, with Sunderland as the only exception. Constant Flux had built in full cost recovery to the tour so the viability of the tour itself was not contingent on a certain amount of door entry fee. It must be noted that attendance figures do not necessarily correlate with the enjoyment of
the performers and opportunities to meet people and make contacts. This feedback from Joseph Alderdice, who performed in Big Wow as a support act in Sunderland, the gig with the lowest attendee figures, demonstrates this point perfectly:

“I had a blast playing with Fish Police in Sunderland. As somebody who works for a disabled people’s organisation, I was particularly impressed with how the meticulous planning and support arrangements blended into the background. Indeed, this was only apparent on later reflection, as during the night itself I was immersed entirely in the occasion. To engage as musical peers with people with different life experiences, away from the dynamics of service provision and receipt, was truly enriching for me and my bandmates. We talked about the idea of me remixing one of their tracks, so hopefully we will cross paths again soon. I hope they remember us when they hit the big time!”

Merchandise and ticket costs were also important areas of income generation for the tour and very successful – creating £1,397 income for the tour that would also have allowed any unexpected costs be catered for. The Fish Police released an album through Heart and Soul and sold more copies of the record during the week of the tour than they had in the entire time since releasing it.
6. PARTICIPATION

Once again the Gig Buddies scheme helped to bring Brighton’s learning disabled attendee figures up. The scheme pairs non-learning disabled gig-goers with learning disabled music fans to attend gigs together, which addresses some of the issues around availability of support workers after hours actively inhibiting people’s social lives.

Gig Buddies is the work of Stay Up Late, an organisation that Constant Flux takes much inspiration from due to it’s similarly proactive, practical approach to addressing issues around access to live music for learning disabled people. Stay Up Late was a campaign started by Heavy Load, a
punk rock band from Brighton made up of members with and without a learning disability. They started the campaign because people with a learning disability were having to leave their gigs and go home early because their support workers had come to the end of their shifts. The Fish Police highlighted during feedback the value of meeting other learning disabled musicians, and this is a two-way inspiration for local bands; a tangible buzz and sense of possibility.

“The Fish Police at the Green Door Store was the perfect night for a gig buddies social - The Fish Police play amazing, catchy, easy-to-dance-to music that got everyone busting out some brilliant dance moves. A general vibe that didn’t just half-heartedly have a go at inclusion, but smashed some barriers.”

- Madeline Denny (Gig Buddies Project Manager)

At 5 of the 7 gigs, 10% - 50% of the audience were people with learning disabilities. However at 2 of the gigs, Nottingham and Swansea, no-one was recorded as having a learning disability in the audience. These were the two gigs that no band from the LD music scene performed at, indicating that having musicians from local LD music scenes is important in creating engagement with that audience.

The promoters said recording these figures was difficult without feeling as if they were singling out members of the audience, which would be counter to the ethos of the nights. These figures ended up being sourced from estimates based on the number of carers who were allowed free entry. The promoters also reflected that this methodology had flaws, including carers that were willing to pay.

The Sheffield lineup featured called The Star Band, a project of Under the Stars. Mia Ali (Business Manager, Under the Stars) had this to say
“Thanks again for inviting us to support The Fish Police last night. The Stars Band had an awesome time, and myself, Moony and Chris (The Stars Band facilitators) all came away buzzing, really inspired by both The Fish Police and the gig itself. As Moony said this morning: ‘It reminds you that another world is possible...’”

Also in Sheffield, a group of promoters called A.C.T.S that had come together specifically to put on integrated gigs, as a direct result of their experience of putting on PKN and Zombie Crash on the first tour also handled The Fish Police. This is a brilliant example of the kind of ripple effect Constant Flux’s work is having to raise awareness of accessibility issues and integration across the UK music scene.

In a direct evolution from the previous tour the Leeds gig featured a band called Ultimate Thunder, who had attended the Leeds date of the PKN tour as audience members. They had been inspired by the event, putting on their own integrated gig in Leeds and had stayed in contact with Constant Flux, who then could get them on to the lineup for The Fish Police gig. The universally positive feedback from audience members is perhaps the clearest way to illustrate the impact of the gigs.

“There was a lot of different bands playing. They all did about 3 or 4 songs each. It was loud. After every band there was a little break whilst the other band set up on stage. My favourite band was the phish police (sic). They were amazing and had some humour with their songs. It was great.”

Ellen (gig buddies participant, who came with volunteer Jessica)
Once again, the vast majority of the pre-tour planning activity was undertaken by Richard in his role as director of Constant Flux. Richard acted as both project coordinator and tour producer, taking overall responsibility throughout the planning process and during the tour itself, and leveraging personal contacts to make it happen.
However, in contrast to the first tour, for two punk bands, Richard’s existing networks, primarily covering DIY punk, hardcore and indie promoters, did not quite map perfectly onto the kinds of audiences The Fish Police would attract. Here’s Brighton gig promoter Andrew Auld on the contrast between the this tour and the PKN tour:

“The Fish Police, innovators that they are, do not make music which is particularly easy to ‘market’ towards one particular subculture of music fan. Blending experimental pop, soul, hip-hop, rock and various strains of dance music (to tremendous effect I may add) means the band are a harder proposition to ‘sell’ to people than, for example, Pertti Kurikan Nimipäivät’s unequivocally punk music with its ready-made punk fan-base.”

Despite initial concerns that this would present an issue in terms of lining up enthusiastic promoters, making contact with wider networks and doing general research meant that a seven day tour, this time including Wales, was booked with only one rejection.

PKN and Zombie Crash tour created a prototype model to work with, however no two bands are the same, and of course musicians with support needs are even less easy to stereotype. When this support comes from within the band, as with The Fish Police, whose bassist Charles is also their primary support whilst on tour, this creates a different dynamic, once that Richard’s model had yet to test.

Having experienced the much higher workload than anticipated in the planning of the first tour, the grant application was adjusted accordingly, with an extra 12 days added of work. This additional time was included for the task of tour management whilst on the road and extra time for evaluation.
As a Community Interest Company with a number of projects, there were also other activities and regular pieces of work that needed attending to during the tour planning process, with all other work being suspended while Richard tour managed the seven-day trip. Richard reports experiencing this stretch on the business due to personal capacity, and future capacity building would assist Constant Flux in being able to delegate further aspects of the pre-tour work or tour management.

With Constant Flux’s reputation spreading around the country, Richard has stated a desire to limit the degree to which he is seen as the ‘face’ or public persona of the organisation, with the understandable rationale that, as an organisation set up to advocate and amplify the voices of others, it would be counterproductive to push public messaging that focuses on him instead of the musicians he works with; he does not want to unwittingly engage in self-promotion. This is a tough balance to strike. For as long as promoting the work of the organisation means talking about work done by its director alone, this is likely to remain a challenge. Similarly, the organisation’s ‘founding story’ rests on Richard’s journey through various LD arts orgs and his direct work with musicians and experiences on what does and doesn’t work. Creating a profile for the organisation and developing a pool of trusted media and press contacts is also a solid route to take for then being able to support learning disabled musicians themselves to speak to journalists and self-promote.
Constant Flux presents...

THE FISH POLICE

UK TOUR 2014

APRIL 4th - NOTTINGHAM
APRIL 6th - SHEFFIELD
APRIL 9th - LONDON
APRIL 11th - SWANSEA

APRIL 5th - LEEDS
APRIL 7th - SUNDERLAND
APRIL 10th - BRIGHTON

More ticket & venue info:
www.constantflux.co.uk / info@constantflux.co.uk

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The Fish Police’s album “The Marzipan Transformations” is out now

www.thefishpolice.com
Arts Council England awarded the project £14,959 through Grants for the arts. This included 15% contingency fund as identified in the projected budget. Extra costs had been much better accounted for on this tour and as such Constant Flux applied for 52% more than the first tour.

The £3 entry price at each gig created a buffer for the finances of the tour. As discussed in the evaluation of the first tour, charging an entry
fee, even where all costs have been covered through the budget, acts as a **vector of integration**. Brighton Promoter Andrew Auld again:

> “From my position on the door it was often difficult to discern between attendees with and without learning disabilities and carers as most attendees voluntarily paid the £3 entrance fee & preferred to pay the suggested amount rather than the ‘donation’ option. It felt as though the act of paying for entrance to the event was empowering for individuals with learning disabilities & meant there was no stark differentiation made between them and those without a learning disability.”

All gigs were £3 entry with only the Nottingham gig having to be free due to the location - the Nottingham Contemporary Art Gallery Café, which was an open public space.

A far more realistic budget, less unforeseen circumstances and a simplified financial recording process that Constant Flux had already worked through once on the first tour all contributed to a smoother financial process for the Fish Police tour.

Through the **integrated touring model** that Constant Flux is developing, promoters will work with both learning disabled and mainstream acts to create a live gig like any other. None of the promoters worked with for any date on a Constant Flux tour so far draw a wage from their work putting on events, and usually see it as a ‘labour of love’ or way to be involved in their local music community or bring a band they are a fan of to their city.

In agreeing to manage the process of booking a venue, choosing support bands and promoting the event to their local community, it is
likely that a promoter will expect to shoulder some personal financial risk in the run up to the gig, whether through. This is usually a small amount (e.g. security deposit for a venue) and is almost always recouped from door takings, with the remainder put towards payment for the performing bands. If anything, this small financial risk creates a personal impetus to ensure the event is well promoted to as a wide an audience as possible.

In contrast to all this, the financial delivery of a tour block-funded by Arts Council England looks markedly different, with Constant Flux having accounted for all costs and created a minimal-risk framework for the delivery of the events. The Fish Police tour was budgeted for in such a way that Richard had covered costs for not only the touring band but support bands, venues, PA hire, food, hotels etc, all of which would usually be handled by the promoter at a mainstream gig. A tour manager would usually delegate these roles, and a piece of learning that came out of the tour was that, in practicality, Constant Flux handling all of the financial side of the gig may have left promoters feeling disempowered or as though their role was less important.

**Two suggestions** for reframing the process to ensure that no promoter is left feeling like a spare part:

a) A set amount of money given to each promoter to subsidise the costs of making their event integrated. This might mean: paying more for an accessible venue and arranging transport for learning disabled audiences, or just extra work in promotion e.g. working with an LD organisation to promote the gig. There is obviously more risk in handing over money this way, and this may be a development that would require a more concrete contractual agreement with a promoter. On the flipside, providing budget in this way demonstrates clearly how much
of a key part of the success of the tour an individual promoter is, and covers another desired outcome of Constant Flux being less integral in terms of the detailed planning of each gig.

b) A portion of the budget set aside for making the shows integrated and the promoters individually ‘apply’ (ask) for however much they think they need to subsidise it, with the remainder being covered by door takings. This is has potential as a **scalable model**.

This could work if Constant Flux, perhaps in collaboration with some like-minded organisations, was able to manage a larger, stable pot of funds that promoters nationwide could apply to, in order to cover the costs of putting on learning disabled bands or making their gigs accessible and integrated, with the option for promoters to donate a small percentage of profit back to the fund once all costs have been covered and bands paid, so the fund is to some extent ‘evergreen.’
9. BUILDING THE MODEL

From the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities:

“Article 8 - Awareness-raising

1. States Parties undertake to adopt immediate, effective and appropriate measures:

a. To raise awareness throughout society, including at the family level, regarding persons with disabilities, and to foster respect for the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities;

b. To combat stereotypes, prejudices and harmful practices relating to persons with disabilities, including those based on sex and age, in all areas of life;

c. To promote awareness of the capabilities and contributions of persons with disabilities.”
Integration as an ideology

The goal for all Constant Flux’s tour work is creating an opportunity for a genuinely integrated live music experience to happen. The term ‘integration/integrated’ is regularly used in disability arts but there is not the widest understanding what this means outside of the sector. Through the increased publicity garnered through the TFP tour, the phrase “integrated” in this context appeared in many national print and online publications, which is a key aspect of awareness raising.

With the knowledge garnered from these two tours in addition to seven years developing Rock House and other integrated events, Constant Flux has solidified that the three main aspects of an integrated live music experience must:

I. Put learning disabled participants on stage and in the audience
II. Create a level platform for learning disabled musicians when playing with mainstream acts
III. Take place in suitably accessible venues and spaces

With points I and II specifically, there is now a need for clear practical advice and instructional support on how to achieve this, as a next step for developing the model, to ensure that tacit knowledge within the organisation can be laid out clearly in an accessible format for anyone who might want to book a learning disabled act, whether on a Constant Flux tour or independently.

Vectors of integration

How does integration as an ideology translate to real world best practice when booking and promoting either a single gig or a whole tour
for a learning disabled solo artist, band or multiple bands?

Constant Flux, along with other organisations in the sector, is developing a set of practices that we can define as **vectors of integration.**

These practices work to empower and amplify the voices of learning disabled musicians, providing them with an opportunity to experience music making and performing in a ‘real’ gig environment, rather than as a supported ‘activity’ that can be easily collapsed into any other general recreational activities. This is a **radical approach** in that it looks to totally collapse the boundaries between mainstream and learning disabled musicians on a bill, whilst acknowledging and properly valuing the labour of support workers. Many of these practices have their basis in the ‘DIY’ (do-it-yourself) music community from which Constant Flux draws so much inspiration.

The vectors of integration would also extend to the manner in which a tour is booked. This practice is nuanced and context-dependent. For example, with regards to the best practice for considering support acts; while a booker should have one eye always on ensuring that learning disabled musicians are represented on stage, they should also consider bands that are a **genuinely well-suited** and appropriate support act for a touring band in terms of genre.

This is in order to create an integrated line-up that is more defined the music being played than the learning ability of the musicians playing it. This is **challenging work** that will often requires compromise, and is work that needs to be distributed amongst local promoters (who might reach out LD arts orgs for contacts) and a central booker (in this case, Constant Flux.)
The Fish Police tour has robustly tested this iteration of Constant Flux’s Integrated Touring Model and has proved it to be a solid foundation.

The biggest areas for **reflection and refinement** are around workflow and capacity, particularly in the context of who takes financial responsibility on a fully funded tour such as this. As described in the finances section, it is important that full cost recovery does not stand in the way of giving promoters a sense of purpose and the impression that their role in the process is anything other than crucial.
10. RECOMMENDATIONS

In the PKN and Zombie Crash tour evaluation, the following three key recommendations were made:

- Develop a set of key milestones from planning to delivery
- Develop informal promoter contract to manage expectation
- Develop the process for better communication with musicians and their support network
These three areas were particularly strong for the Fish Police tour which demonstrates a commitment to learning from experience and to putting the needs of participants first. Constant Flux should continue to work on promoter contacts and making responsibilities clear whilst also retaining an adequate amount of control. A next step could also involve translating the tour schedule into more shareable milestones that give an outsider a clear idea of what will needs to happen in minus six months, two months, three months, a week and 24 hours before tour. This is the next natural step to take in fleshing out a touring model that can genuinely be taken up by other organisations and individuals.

Three new recommendations for the development of the model after The Fish Police April 2014 UK Tour:

- Consider delegating block ‘sub-grant’ for accessibility related costs for individual promoters
- Scale back tour lengths in favour of time to socialise and make links with other musicians in cities they visit
- Investigate the idea of an open-access Integration Fund

Looking ahead

Draw upon the groundbreaking work of Stay Up Late’s Q-kit (a quality assessment tool and a model for self-advocacy for learning disabled people) to consider how to further include learning disabled people who would like to be involved in different aspects of booking tours around the country. How can the principles behind it be adapted when thinking about what makes a good gig for a learning disabled person, outside of excellent music?!
Questions to ask:

- What do learning disabled musicians and music fans think of a venue and how accessible is it?
- Who would like a tour to come to their town - how do they reach out?
- How might Constant Flux support a collective of learning disabled promoters to create their own events with visiting bands?

Even on a more general level, there may be future scope for involvement with taking money on the door, designing posters, stamping hands and handing out flyers, all of which are integral tasks in the suite of activities involved in putting on an event.

Viewing the booking of integrated tours as being more than about ‘providing entertainment’ means addressing the concerns of creating sustainable cross-country communities and networks, and fostering mutually supportive relationships between bands, performers, artists and their supporters, advocates and fans. This is clearly an approach that Constant Flux has built into the touring model, and it happens naturally to some extent when musicians meet while on tour, but links to the feedback from the Fish Police about the importance of making time while travelling around the country to make and develop these connections.

With another successful tour under its belt, Constant Flux has significantly contributed towards the expansion of the model, asking questions of it and developing awareness of the mitigating circumstances that will always make every tour unique. In addition to this, the confidence and spontaneity of The Fish Police has increased, not to mention their investment in their own group. Constant Flux’s continued work around initiatives like The Rock House in Brighton that genuinely bring
together learning disabled and mainstream musicians takes these principles and runs with them. Constant Flux plans to continue work on the integrated touring model through more touring projects in the coming year.

The most important outcome of The Fish Police April 2014 tour was a kind of double exposure – two bright flashes.

The first flash demonstrates to mainstream audiences the sheer scale of amazing talent and exciting creativity held within the learning disabled music scene.

The second flash shows the scene itself (musicians and their supporting organisations) that there is not only a place for them on stage at mainstream gigs but a cheering, pumping, dancing crowd, too!

Last words from Ryan O’Donovan, guitarist of Zombie Crash and Beat Express, who played on the Brighton date of the tour:

“This movement with Constant Flux is a major step in putting learning disabled artists out in to the mainstream to be acknowledged and respected as any non-learning disabled artist. […] [The Fish Police] have come a long way as an established band at Heart n Soul, and they were just right to put forward into the spotlight for this kind of adventure. Their time came in due time. The fact that non-learning disabled artists and members of production crews have taken more of a liking to people like us means promising expectations for the future of learning disabled musicians.”
BANDS

“When Ravioli Me Away were asked to play a gig with The Fish Police, we checked them out and were very excited by their music, but then actually seeing them live was inspirational! The atmosphere in the room was buzzing with enthusiasm and good feelings. We’ve been listening to The Fish Police record LOADS ever since. Really pleased we were thought of to be put on the same bill.”

- Alice Theobald (Ravioli Me Away – played London gig)

“Thanks again for inviting us to support The Fish Police last night. The Stars Band had an awesome time, and myself, Moony and Chris all came away buzzing, really inspired by both The Fish Police and the gig itself – as Moony said this morning, ‘it reminds you that another world is possible...’”

- Mia Ali (Business Manager, Under the Stars)

I had a blast playing with Fish Police in Sunderland. As somebody who works for a disabled people’s organisation, I was particularly impressed with how the meticulous planning and support arrangements blended into the background. Indeed, this was only apparent on later reflection, as during the night itself I was immersed entirely in the occasion. To engage as musical peers with people with different life experiences, away from the dynamics of service provision and receipt, was truly enriching for me and my bandmates. We talked about the idea of me remixing one of their tracks, so hopefully we will cross paths again soon. I hope they remember us when they hit the big time!

- Jospeh Alderdice (Big Wow – played at Sunderland gig)

“This movement with Constant Flux is a major step in putting learning disabled artists out in to the mainstream to be acknowledged and respected as any non-learning disabled artist. I’ve had the honour of performing with Zombie Crash as a co-starring act to Pertti Kurikan Nimipäivät on the first tour, as well as performing with Beat Express as a supporting act to The Fish Police on their last stop of their tour. Anything gig I’ve performed at under Constant Flux has been spectacular as we’ve won the crowds over like those who watched us within the learning disabled community.

The last show of The Fish Police’s tour in particular was a great example. I believe it was one of our finest of the year, along with the setting of The Fish Police being the headliners. They’ve come a long way as an established band at Heart n Soul, and they were just right to put forward into the spotlight for this kind of adventure. Their time came in due time. The fact that non-learning disabled artists and members of production crews have taken more of a liking to people like us means promising expectations for the future of learning disabled musicians.”

- Ryan O’Donovan (Member of Beat Express, who played in Brighton)

PROMOTERS / VENUES

It would be easy to say my involvement in the Fish Police’s London show was rewarding or fulfilling but really that doesn’t do justice to how fun the show was and misses the point. The Fish Police are one of the most entertaining and inspiring bands I’ve had the fortune of promoting throughout my ten year career and the integrated show and audience transcended expectations. Hats off to Constant Flux for having the vision to push this idea up the hill to where it belongs!

- Chris Tipton (Upset The Rhythm – London promoter)

“Thanks for the show last night it was totally awesome , something I will always remember! You are more
The Fish Police show at The Green Door Store was an incredible evening & one of the most enjoyable events I’ve been involved with promoting. One of my first reflections on the evening was the enthusiastic and mixed turnout, made all the more remarkable considering that The Fish Police, innovators that they are, do not make music which is particularly easy to ‘market’ towards one particular subculture of music fan. Blending experimental pop, soul, hip-hop, rock and various strains of dance music (to tremendous effect I may add) means the band are a harder proposition to ‘sell’ to people than, for example, Pertti Kurikan Nimipäivät’s unequivocal PUNK music, which has a ready-made punk fan-base. Despite this there was a great turnout and the crowd was a mixture of music fans, musicians & artists (with and without learning disabilities), carers, friends, family and staff from local arts charities and communities. I have no doubt that this success is partly due to the intensive and far-reaching press coverage achieved through incredibly hard work by Richard at Constant Flux and also informed by the great job Constant Flux did with the P.K.N tour in 2013. The Fish Police’s awesome set was incredibly well received and the rest of the line-up (Cold Pumas, Fair Ohs & Beat Express) complimented the headliners with a musically varied supporting bill, comprised of musicians both with & without learning disabilities, that worked wonders. From my position on the door it was often difficult to discern between attendees with and without learning disabilities and carers as most attendees voluntarily paid the £3 entrance fee & preferred to pay the suggested denomination than the ‘donation’ option. I felt as though the act of paying for entrance to the event was empowering for individuals with learning disabilities & meant there was no stark differentiation made between them and those without learning disabilities. Whilst the purpose of these events is certainly not to eradicate difference one of the most positive results I have observed from Constant Flux shows is that they encourage access to experiences and practices for people with learning disabilities which are often not allowed to them; such as watching a band, paying to attend, buying a drink, meeting new friends (often fellow music fans), on the same terms as people without learning disabilities. I felt that the crowd was very integrated and that, as these events continue, I’ve observed increased communication between audience members with and without learning disabilities. In this respect I can see very real and very positive effects from integrated events. The extensive media coverage of The Fish Police tour shows that there is widespread interest in the work of Constant Flux and I feel that the first two tours are the beginning of a very important body of work that is nothing less than revolutionary. I am very grateful that I was able to be involved with the tour and found the experience fun, exciting and stress-free - the watertight organisational skills of those at Constant Flux meant that the common stresses of the local promoter were alleviated at this event. Everything was in place and all plans had been made well in advance. I’m very glad that in these austere times the Arts Council are supporting work as important as this which is notably improving the lives of individuals with learning disabilities; it is essential that this support continues and I hope that I can also continue to be involved!

- Andy Auld (Promoter in Brighton)

“It was a pleasure to be part of the tour, in some small way. The whole night was really positively received by all who attended and played and I was particularly encouraged by how eager people were to interact with each other afterwards, entering into a dialogue about their different experiences of music and touring, as peers. I hope that this can be the start of something exciting for the DIY indie community in the UK. But wouldn’t it be great if we could refer to it as the norm?”

- Dan Shannon (promoter in Sunderland)

“I found the night really rewarding musically and just to be involved with. I’d love to be involved in similar future events. Fish Police were great and it was a pleasure to be involved with. We got so much positive feedback from the audience. Hard to evaluate all the pros but I had a blast and wanted thank everyone involved.”

- Neil Johnson (promoter in Nottingham)
**AUDIENCES**

“I just wanted to say ‘what a great night!’ It was brilliant to see so many people there and I overheard lots of comments about how brilliant folk thought the bands were (and some were saying this with surprise!) I bought the CD and am loving it!”

- Vicky Ackroyd (Company Director, Purple Patch Arts)

“For me, what Constant Flux are doing is more than just offering opportunities for learning disabled artists and audience members to be integrated with the ‘mainstream’ music scene, they are creating a platform where exciting music and artists, and enthusiastic audiences can discover one another. By being celebrated for their art, learning disabled people will become more visible in popular culture.

Having worked with Constant Flux on various projects, I was in no doubt to what the Fish Police show in Brighton would be like - professional, accessible, high quality, inspiring and exciting. It was wonderful that Shut Up and Listen and Beat Express were able to be involved.”

- Gareth Evans (Creative Producer, Shut Up and Listen)

Saw The Fish Police at the wonderful Wharf Chambers on Saturday night - they totally blew me away! Fantastic show - songs still stuck in my head, particularly Fishwater, The Sandrine, Cocoa Butter, etc... Bought a T-shirt, spreading the word. Keep it up fellas!

- “Towncat” (comment on Guardian website)

“Supported by Constant Flux, an organisation set up by Richard Phoenix of Sauna Youth to create opportunities within the DIY music scene for musicians with learning disabilities, The Fish Police kicked-off the first date of their current UK tour in celebratory style in the Cafe Bar at Nottingham Contemporary. Made up of four musicians, the band play twitchy, robotic funk that’s peppered with humour, but more importantly for a Friday night it makes you want to dance until the shoes fall off your feet.

Clearly taking great joy from the sizeable crowd that has turned out for them, the singer mingles down the front for the majority of the band’s set, joking with the audience and urging us to move to the music. The band, all style and skill, create a unique mix where Kraftwerk, Japanese anime and high street fast food outlets all live side-by-side. It’s delicious fun serving to deliver a serious message: To change the perception of musicians with learning disabilities and to promote integration.

In a world where having the right haircut, the correct type of shoes, or the most Facebook likes are all too often deemed more important than having good songs and the ability to connect with people, The Fish Police are a refreshing, bullshit free zone of talent, fun times times, and unpretentious danceable songs. Plus, if you listen to Chicken Nuggets For Me and don’t crack a smile, you have no soul.”

- Left Lion magazine Review

“The Fish Police at the Green Door Store was the perfect night for a gig buddies social - The Fish Police play amazing, catchy, easy-to-dance-to music that got everyone busting out some brilliant dance moves. A general vibe that didn’t just half-heartedly have a go at inclusion, but smashed some barriers.”

- Madeline Denny (Gig Buddies Project Manager)

“There was a lot of different bands playing. They all did about 3 or4 songs each. It was loud. After every band there was a little break whilst the other band set up on stage. My favourite band was the phish police. They were amazing and had some humour with their songs. It was great.”
Ellen (gig buddies participant, who came with her volunteer Jessica):

“I asked George about the Fish Police gig, and although his comments do not really do justice to his great enthusiasm for all things connected with gig buddies, this is what he said - It was good fun going to Fish Police and I can't wait to hear them again. I like going with my gig buddy because she is so nice. Everyone was having a good time at the gig listening and dancing, and there was a bar too!”

- George Jarman (gig buddy participant)

“I like Fish Polices upbeat lyrics which their charismatic lead singer communicates so effectively to the mixed audience of disabled and non-disabled listeners.”

- Joan Jarman (attended the Brighton gig)

“It was a really amazing gig with support from like minded bands aswell which included learning disabled members.
The Fish Police seemed to be enjoying themselves so much with catchy hooks and funny lyrics. I was very much impressed by the lead singer/frontman who's cheeky banter made everyone smile. A great night where disability was not disabling in anyway!”

- Sarah (George Jarman's gig buddy)

“I thought it was amazing, I loved it so much! I think I enjoyed it, but I find it funny it's called the fish police, I'd never heard of them.”

- Sarah G (gig buddies participant)

“As an extension of my role as a project worker in one of Hackney Council’s day service projects, I try and make sure the musical interests harboured by some of the people I support get encouraged through attending events in the local community. While many people who I work with in the day service clearly have a strong interest in music, very few of them are supported to engage with music outside of their homes or their 9.15 to 3 day service sessions. While many young people develop socially by using music as an 'in' to find and engage with like minded peers, this opportunity is often denied to learning disabled and or autistic adults who are embedded in the social care system. There is often a low level amount of pressure placed on day services and residential homes to provide a certain number of activities for the people they support. However, all too often very little consideration goes into aligning these activities with the specifics of those people's interest or passions. Beyond a general laziness when it comes to researching potential activities, a lot of this is down to support staff not taking peoples interest seriously and accepting that if they did they may come into conflict with arbitrary factors such as rotas and set meal times.

With this in mind, I believe supporting people to integrated music events, like the fish police concert, is extremely important. In my experience supporting people to concerts in the evenings that are relevant to their tastes in music has had a huge impact on helping build their self esteem and ability to integrate socially outside of a care environment. In addition to this element, integrated concerts like those promoted by constant flux, go beyond this and show some of the people I work with that learning disabled and/or autistic musicians can not just attend concerts, but actually take centre stage. I don’t assume that everyone I support views other adults who overtly exhibit learning disabilities as their peers. However I believe that some people absorb the significance of seeing an audience react positively and without condescension to a musician who may exhibit idiosyncrasies they recognise in themselves, or people they generally only meet in day services. Attending integrated concerts also helps me show people I support that I take their music making in the day projects seriously, and that building up to a live performance can be a tangible goal if that is what they want.
Between myself and three other support workers, we supported a group of six people to attend the fish police concert. While everybody engaged with the music to different degrees, it appeared to be a really positive experience for everyone. The choice of venue was well suited to the attendees who use wheelchairs, and the entire night ran on time which meant no one had to leave before it was done.

While everything had been done by constant flux to make the concert genuinely accessible, supporting people to attend was still somewhat of an uphill struggle. As ever, problems seemed to stem from the disinterest of support staff in residential homes, or service users’ primary carers, in the content and significance of the activity being offered. In one case, someone I work with who had expressed a lot of enthusiasm about attending wasn’t home when I went to pick them up. I was told that they had gone a ‘computer session’ and no one realised it was on the same night. This is symptomatic of a general attitude in social care of ‘as long as they are doing something’. This attitude is based around the aim of filling a quota of hours with whichever ‘activities’ provide the least change of routine or effort for support staff, regardless of significance to service users. This kind of mentality often stops people from attending one off events, even if they consist of something special that a person may particularly want to attend. People are not given the choice to skip something like a regular evening class, to go and see a concert, even if it may be a unique opportunity to see something they feel more enthusiastic about.

The other main issue was battling staff in residential homes on an age old issue of ‘they can go, but they have to be back by 9.45 so they can be in bed for the 10.30 shift change’. I respect the efforts of constant flux to not support these negative standards in social care, and running events that conform to the mainstream conventions for an evening event. The world of social care is very good at creating programmes of ‘community integration’ that creates a community presence that is ‘conveniently’ the inverse of the majority of mainstream society. Moderate and profoundly learning disabled and/or autistic adults often attend bowling alleys and cinemas between the hours of 11 and 4, and musical experiences are often limited to free lunchtime recitals in churches. Constant flux is doing excellent work in counting these trends and helping build up a strong and hopefully empowering presence for learning disabled adults in the UK’s music scene.”

- Ralph Simmonds (attended the London gig)
Twitter Feedback

Lucy Clare Stephens @LuceStephens · Apr 12
Not much of a sober dancer, but the fish police changed that last night. They nailed it

Big Wow @bigfuckingwow · Apr 7
We stand corrected, the UK does have at least *one* good band: The Fish Police.

Pierre Donahue @PierreDonahueD · Apr 11
The Fish Police blew me away tonight..a slice of urban London transported to Uplands..

Paul Harvey @paharvey99 · Apr 10
If I see a more enjoyable gig than The Fish Police this year, it’ll have been a very good year.

Ravioli Me Away @RavioliMeAway · Apr 10
Best gig ever! Thanks @theconstantflux @thefishpolice @fairohs @danielwakeford!

LearnDisabilityWales @LdWales · Apr 9
The Fish Police are at the cutting edge of the learning disability music scene.

Thomas J. Hughes @thomas_j_hughes · Apr 9
Heading home after another amazing show courtesy of @theconstantflux. Daniel Wakeford was especially great. You should all listen to him.

Jen Calleja @niewview · Apr 10
The Fish Police & Daniel Wakeford @TheMacbeth tonight were so incredible. I needed a dance. Thanks @theconstantflux! DO THE COCOA BUTTER

Irene Taylor Trust @MusicinPrisons · Apr 10
@HeartnSoulArt we (that’s @musicinprisons) were there for #fishpolice this eve and YOU WERE FAB!!!

Katie Chodosh @katiechodosh · Apr 10
If you think you’re cool and you weren’t at The Fish Police tonight then you’re wrong because all the cool kids were at The Fish Police.

HOOKWORMS @HOOKWORMS · Apr 6
The Fish Police were amazing tonight, had the best time. I love @theconstantflux

Nott Contemporary @Nottm_Contemp · Apr 4
The Fish Police are smashing it tonight!

matt harvey @mattckonrad · Apr 4
@HeartnSoulArt It was amazing. Blew me away with it’s goodness. The Fish Police forever!

Sam West @wj_sam · Apr 5
The Fish Police @Nottm_Contemp were fucking great!
Appendix III. Press Coverage Links


The Crack (Nottingham) - http://www.thecrackmagazine.com/view-editorial/1464

Left Lion magazine (Nottingham) - http://www.leftlion.co.uk/articles.cfm/title/the-fish-police-and-constant-flux/id/6564#.UzrKRa209OB

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Owen Richards - owenrichards.co.uk