

Q Julia Bishop (researcher)

A Paula M (After-school drama club leader)

Q OK so we're recording now Paula. So this is linked to Anna and her participation in, I think it's the Drama Club isn't it at Abbeycliff School?

A Yeah.

Q And the questions divide into a number of different sections, so I thought perhaps we could just begin with some general questions about the activity itself, the group itself, what does it do and who funds it please?

A So the group is funded by Abbeycliff Primary School, they employ me to come and run an hour session every week in term time as a Drama Club. It's run for Years 2, 3 and 4 children, and the reason behind that fits in with my intention of the Drama Club. So the Drama Club was started not necessarily to teach drama skills but to teach confidence building skills and self-esteem and all those kind of skills that you are seen to require as an adult but not so much as a child. So I use drama and games and exercises and kind of craft activities and performance skills to try and build on confidence in children. And the reason it's done for Year 2, 3 and 4 is because by the time obviously they've reached Year 5 and 6 they're almost going off to secondary school, so I thought by running the Drama Club for younger children it would try and build their confidence from a younger age.

Q Right. Oh that's really interesting. What's your background if you don't mind me asking?

A No that's fine. I studied Performance of Stage and Screen at Sheffield Hallam University, so it was like an acting course but there was kind of more routes for stage acting and screen acting, and we did a lot of theatre in education work and like drama in education. So one of my placements was actually I worked with Rosemary at her Youth Theatre company, and then I'm still there 3 years later.

Yeah, which is brill. So it all worked out really, really well and I'm glad that I could stay at the Youth Theatre as long as I have done. But yeah.

Q Yes, it seems to have followed on perfectly.

A Yeah, yeah exactly.

Q So how long have you been running the club at Abbeycliff?

A I started running the club in April 2018, so not very long at all, and I think this is the third term that we've just approached, so not long at all.

Q And does it run weekly, Paula?

A It does yeah, it runs weekly in term time, every Tuesday night for an hour.

Q Lovely. And so Anna, how often does she come and visit the club?

A Pretty much every session, I think she's attended every session almost other than one or two. So yes, so she joined right from the very beginning as well.

Q Oh right, OK. And I know the week I visited her mum was there, but that's not the normal thing, she's normally there by herself – well without a parent, is that right?

A Yeah. So I go and pick the children up after school from their classes, and then there's myself and another parent volunteer in the room. So we've just got 8 children in the group at the moment but we have got a waiting list.

Q Wow. So what kind of numbers are best for that group then?

A Obviously to follow policies and procedures with ratios, because they are so young it's 6 children per adult, so I can have 12. But it was upon my decision to have a smaller group just because the space we're in isn't very large.

And because we're in the library, obviously it's a lovely space, it's brilliant, but I feel like 8 to 10 is manageable in the area. And then in the summertime we actually open the doors and we take the drama outside to the quad area that was just next to it. But obviously through the winter we are confined to that space, yeah.

Q Yeah that makes sense. And so when Anna comes to the group what sort of things would she typically do?

A So I try and do the same every week just with what we do. So we always start with like a 5 or 10 minute check-in, which is what I call it but for them it's like a welcome circle. So they'll come in, they'll have a drink and a snack and they'll just sit in a circle or they'll sit in a little space in the room. And the children like to bring Show and Tell, so if it's something they've been working on in class, or if it's something they've done over the holidays, or something that they're proud of that they've achieved, they can come and tell us, they can tell the whole group. So we usually take it in turns. Not every child has always got something to say, so I always try and encourage by just starting by saying 'have you done anything this week that you're proud of', 'have you helped anybody', you know have you helped anybody with their homework, because the school has so many fantastic opportunities for the children to get involved in so we always try and ask them that.

And then we will play a game. So it depends what we are doing in a session as to if it's like a focus game or a running around fun game, we'll always start with a game. And then we will start with there'll be 20 minutes of drama, drama activities, and then just because the children like it so much and it seems to really focus them and bring them down a little bit we do some craft activities. So like this term we've been making puppets, a puppet house and a puppet stage, and then when we go back after October half term we're going to start practicing making some puppet shows, which will be lovely. So we always try and do a little bit of craft as well. And then we always finish with a game. So it's always the same structure if I can help it because I just think it gives them a sense of knowing of what they're going to be coming into. And then it's home time, because the hour goes really quickly.

Q So moving on to questions about technology and media in the activity or in the club, I just wondered if technologies and media sort of ever feature during the sessions, and if so, how?

A Yeah. So the only time that we've ever really used technology in a session, and this is very minor I'm guessing, is when we're doing craft activities, the children will sometimes use my laptop just for ideas. So when we were doing the puppet making a lot of the children had an idea in their head of what they wanted to do but weren't too sure how to go about it, so I let them use the laptop, I sat with them and we did some searching of like images, like stage ideas of what they could make. So they kind of used that as their idea making. And we use music as well, so I'm guessing my phone will count because that's how I play the music. So if we're doing a game that requires music, like a quick game of musical chairs or something, or I tend to put some calming music on when we're doing craft activities, so I will use my phone in the session, but the children never do.

And then I always use it for session planning, I use my computer a lot for session planning but I'll always kind of print that off, so I rely heavily on paper I guess through the session. But that's really the only contact they do come into.

Q Yes that's interesting. And do you find also that they might bring in ideas that come from the media as it were, from the content that they're encountering, into a session?

A Definitely, yeah. When we were doing the puppet making one of the little boys brought in like some Xbox game characters, and a lot of the girls in the group obviously wanted to do either princesses or witches, wizards and things. And a lot of film characters were brought in as well and they modelled their puppets on characters out of films that they liked, or people that they kind of look up to and aspire to be I guess.

Q Yes. Do you find that's quite testing of your own knowledge of some of these things, these films and games and things?

A For me, I think with drama, for me personally it's actually proved to be a positive thing, only because when you are working with....I mean most of my group they are say Year 3 now but my group was averaging last term at these heavily Year 2s, so that's quite young. So when you're introducing them to drama for the first time, if they've got a connection already that you can kind of link drama to, it really helps. So for example we play a game called The Bus Game, and they've got to line up and I set the room out as though it's a bus and we nominate a driver. Now the aim of the game is, whichever customer gets on they've got to bring something to the bus. So it can be a feeling, it can be an action, or it can be a character. So the bus driver and whoever else is on the bus has then got to copy as soon as they get on, so it's a really nice way of doing some character building. Now when we first played that game, me saying 'oh be any character you want', I was using quite stereotypical characters like pantomime characters, so The Joker, or The Princess, and they found it a lot easier to relate to characters in films or on television or on Xbox games, or on laptops, or from storybooks. So they were kind of choosing to be superheroes from the Marvel comics. So for me that brought a really fun sense to the game because it meant that they already had an automatic connection to a character, and it made explaining it and it made them understanding it, a little bit more easier. So I think for me the benefit is from that possibly.

Q Yes. Do you find that they sort of bring, as well as that knowledge of the character, just what that character's like, is it translated into actions and things they might say and do, is it kind of already...because it seems to me it's quite close to acting skills already.

A Yes definitely. I think if I said to them 'I want you to re-enact the film' or I don't know, Trolls or something in a child's movie, they probably could do it start to finish really.

Kind of they do, they take on the characteristics. There's one child in the group that really likes the DC comics, so she's always talking about this one particular character, I think it's Harlequin, and she tells me that her bedroom is painted in Harlequin colours, and everything, like carving pumpkins and stuff would probably be Harlequin, the face and things. And she really likes that character. But when she's been that character before she's really taken on the characteristics and quite like the solemn characteristics that this character would have played. So they kind of absorb it completely. And that is, yeah that's just from watching the film.

Q That's really interesting. So just going back to your uses of technology that you've mentioned, the laptop and your phone, there's a question here. So how far does the way you use these things, how far does that reflect the policy of the organisation and....you know your parent organisation, and how far is it a more sort of personal decision or approach?

A Well I know that in school they do a lot of work on iPads, so as far as I'm aware they don't do a lot of work on computers, because I think it's just kind of teachers that do....they've got computers in school but I know that a lot of....so like Golden Time at the school, one of the things you can choose is time on the iPad.

So it's kind of used as a reward almost. And I know that they use it in class, and I know that they use it in like quiet corners in the classroom as well – I'm guessing, I don't know that for definite, but that's from what I've observed being in a classroom. So yeah they tend to look to use....so the children are really aware of using the technology, and obviously when presented with a laptop, that was I'm guessing quite new for them.

Yeah, because obviously they're used to something without a keyboard as such, and if they've not got one at home they might not have come into contact with one, because obviously they are still quite little. And for me, using it in the session, that was just something I knew I had the resource to do so I thought that it might help them a little bit more, so I used it to kind of push their ideas along a little bit. And the whole group didn't use it, I think there were only 2 or 3 of them that heavily relied on it, and that was more just to get the character's colours right, and which character am I going to draw, if I get them all up I can pick one, type of thing. So yeah I think it's more my choosing to use it more than anything else.

Q Yeah. So you were using a laptop, so can you just sort of talk me through what you remember of how it was used, who was doing the searching, where the ideas came for the searching, what websites, or how you were searching, that kind of thing.

A Yeah of course. So there would be two of us in the room, and because it's an open room I'd just kind of sit to one side so I could still see. But I'd sit with the laptop in front of me and then the children would kind of put their hand up and ask if they could come and use it. So I would sit and do the typing, obviously there's like blocks and things on the laptop so they can't access anything, but I was with them. So we were using Google and they would say to me 'oh I would like to see what a witch's outfit would look like'. So I would search it for them and they would literally just sit and watch the screen. So Google would already be up on the laptop, I would just search for 'a witch' and then they would draw like a 'witches for children' idea type thing, and they would literally just colour and write down their ideas. And then we would do it together. So if they needed help drawing a sketch we would both use the ideas from the laptop, I would draw them an initial outline and then they would go off. So really their actual contact with the laptop wasn't very existent, it was just more them seeing visually what was on the screen.

Q Yeah, yeah. Did they then stay....when they were using it for ideas would they copy with the screen in front of them, or were they kind of absorbing what they saw and then going away and kind of mashing that up in their own heads kind of thing?

A I think with these three that we did it with, I draw the outline of the character and then they would kind of absorb it, yes. And they'd absorb.....like we did a tiger for instance, somebody wanted a cartoon tiger, and then obviously the children could tell you the two main colours of a tiger but this would have a bit more intricate detail, and she actually came back to me and what she'd done was, she'd....you know like those colouring books you can get where the squares are all numbered and it tells you what number to colour, she'd kind of done that. So she'd run off after I'd drawn the outline of the tiger and she'd put a little, like a dash of each colour, on the part of the tiger that it needed to be. And she came back and said 'does this look right', and I said 'yeah brilliant, go for it'. And she'd used her memory and then went and coloured it in. And it was pretty much bang on. She'd done a really good job of it. And that was just from studying the tiger for a couple of minutes on the laptop and then going away and colouring it herself.

Q Yeah. Oh that's a lovely example, thank you Paula, that's really interesting. So going back to Anna, did she use the laptop in....I don't think in the session that I observed, but maybe she has on other occasions?

A She didn't unfortunately, no. The session that we actually used the laptop she wasn't there unfortunately.

Yeah, no. I think she definitely would have done because she's one of the youngest in the room and it was....I mean obviously I might be completely wrong but just from knowing her, I mean I've gotten to know Anna over the year with working with - Marina works on the projects that I work on - so Anna attends the projects' events and things like that, you know I'm guessing that she would have used it just for ideas. Often in the session she'd like to have some ideas explained to her and then she could have her pick and then go off and decide what kind of character she wants to make, or sometimes it's just if I give her a few ideas of what to do in a game she is then fully aware of what she's got to do. So I'm guessing that she would have used it if she was in the session, yeah.

Q So what are your aims in using technologies and media in the group?

A Yeah.

Q So it just sounds like it's to kind of enhance existing activities, or a kind of check in and a bit of research.

A Yeah.

Q Anything else do you think?

A I was probably....

Q I suppose there's the music side as well.

A ....not use it as much. I have no intentions to use it more other than, yeah just kind of enhancing the session and enhance these kind of like creative ideas. And I probably would

only ever use it for that one purpose, I wouldn't ever use it to bring into a game or anything like that, or into an actual drama activity.

Q Is there a particular reason for that? Is it meant to be in a sense in your mind, is it a kind of tech free zone of this, or do you feel it might be a barrier?

A Not intentionally, but I think with the group that I've got personally – and again this may shift according to who is in the room – but I think it would be a potential barrier. It might be nice to have maybe some iPad time to kind of reiterate what the school does. Because obviously when you go into a school and work, and like I've found from running Drama Club, you know it's useful to know of how the school runs so then I can carry on, even down to wording that I use. So you know if the teacher wants a little bit of quiet in the classroom, you know some teachers will use the clapping technique and some teachers will use verbal, and it's just really useful to know what the school does so I can use that practice as well.

So I think I would maybe have an iPad in the room for a child that was feeling a little bit tired or exhausted from the day and just wanted a bit of quiet time, but I think if we were relying on technology more for the whole class it obviously would maybe start taking away the physical element that I'd like in the room. And I think sometimes I don't want it to be too restricting. I don't mind them, if they come to me and say 'oh I want to draw a tiger, can I have a look', that's perfectly fine because they've come to me with the imaginative idea. But I don't think I would ever say 'let's Google some characters' you know. I'd like them to pick one and then we go on the laptop because I don't want their imagination to be, not limited but I think sometimes maybe technology may have that affect, you know. So I'd like to kind of keep a really open mind in the room, but I've nothing against using technology here and there, and it is something I would definitely consider doing for the future terms definitely, just maybe with the odd iPad in the room.

Q Yeah that's really interesting Paula, thank you. Did you want to add anything about, we didn't really talk much about your use of the music from your phone, if there's anything there?

A Yes. So we have....at the end of every term I go round each child and we just say 'what would we like to see in the next term' because I want it to be their session as much as mine. So most of them have said they wanted to do more arts and crafts, which is why we did puppets; and then two of them said that they'd like to play some games with music, or they would just like to have a little bit of music in the background when they were doing the crafts because it's quite calming and soothing. So I just went on....I use Spotify on my phone and I just typed in...I did research at home just to make sure obviously they were all child friendly, but with kind of like calming music, or there's an album that's like a kid's bop type of album and it's like loads of songs that are appropriate for children, out of things like The Greatest Showman, or like musicals and children's film things. So we just play that. We don't use it every session, just because we don't really have time most sessions and before you know it you're leaving. But we use it for....they wanted to play some party games at the end of term so we used it for kind of musical bumps and musical statues but we incorporated drama, so it was 'you have to freeze as a witch' or 'you have to freeze as a wizard' type of thing. And then we used it maybe twice in the background of us doing some colouring and mask making, but it didn't play – I'd say it didn't play a crucial part. You know the children asked and requested it so it was nice that I'd brought it, rather than they could see that if they had a really good session and felt like they can come up to me and say 'oh next session could we do

this' you know that's absolutely fine, of course they can. So yeah it's just kind of background noise more than anything but it's all played from my phone just because it's the easiest thing for me to play music on.

Q Do you ever do any dance-focused activities that might obviously require music?

A No, that's a good question. No we haven't done. The only bit of dance we have ever done, and I don't even know if you'd class it as dance, is if we do physical warm-ups. So it's not necessarily following a routine of movement but it's just doing some silly exercises to get warmed up and then we'll do some vocal warm-ups. So we've done probably five minutes worth of singing over the whole term, the whole term sorry. But vocal warm-ups, we sing some vocal songs, so we've used tongue-twisters. And then the physical warm-up it's more like PE exercises rather than kind of like flowy dance routines and movements. But we've never done them to music as yet, we've always just done it just with voice or just with me saying 'now let's do this action' and then 'let's run around the room' type of thing.

Q Yes OK. No that's really also totally relevant, thank you. If funding and support was no object are there any technologies or media content that you'd like to use in a session?

A I would probably want to know what was out there first. Because in my experience working with children in a drama situation – so I work for a company called ??? and ??? they're a children's theatre school, I obviously work for the the Youth Theatre, and then my own drama club, none of the three heavily uses media in any way. So I'd probably want to know what was out there and what was available first. But....it's difficult to say. I think probably not. I think I would probably....I'm quite happy with....because obviously when you're leading a session you're not the only one that can determine where it goes, you know if the children have really taken to an activity and a game, you know we could stay with that for the whole session, I'm more than happy for that to happen. There's a game we play quite frequently and it takes 5 minutes, but with them it takes half an hour because they enjoy it so much.

Q Which game is that?

A It's The Bus Game. Yeah they keep getting on. Then once we've got a bus full they get off and line up again with different characters, which is lovely because that's what you want to see. But sometimes, if I'm planning there I'll just plan and I'll plan maybe a few more activities so then I'll get them to pick some like slips out of a hat so they don't know what they're going to get and it's a surprise if they get on the bus, which they always like. But yes, so I think I'm quite happy. Like I said, I don't see media in general as a restriction but I think from my intentions of the group and what we do in the room, I think it would restrict us more. So I think, yeah, if funding was an option, we had as much in the world, it would probably go towards costume and more physical things that they could actually use in the drama group. But yeah, if that helps. That was a bit of a backwards answer.

Q Have you, in the small uses that you have made of the tech in the class, and the media, the music and so on, have you encountered any barriers or difficulties in integrating it would you say?

A Erm...no. I think because the school does use technology on a daily basis so I've never kind of encountered that they don't know what it is or what it's used for. And like I

said, I think using a laptop, they know what it is, they probably would come into a barrier with spelling, but I'm guessing that would just be the age of some of the children you know with spelling words anyway. So if it was Year 6 they'd be able to type and things. But I've never really come into any barriers with using it, but that's probably just because I don't use a lot of it. Maybe if I used...you know if we did put on a show and used lighting and music on a wider scale we would probably do a few sessions on actually teaching about lighting you know and introducing them to it. Because at that age, other than like little school shows they've done, you know with the lighting and stuff I'm guessing their knowledge would be pretty restricted. But yeah.

Q . Do you think there'll be any sort of media or technology in the puppet show that you're planning?

A I think there will definitely be music. And because we've not put a show on for an audience as yet because they've not wanted to, they've all made pieces that when it's come to showing them it's kind of scared them off a little bit. So we just didn't do it, you know I didn't want to cause any uncomfortable feelings in the room and put them off coming back.

So maybe when we've put on the show....I'll give them the option, I'll say 'oh do you know that if....' we could start with the lights, like I say, and just make them aware of the options available. But they've all definitely hinted that they would like some kind of music to go with their show, so there will be music present, yes.

Q Right. Is there any detail on what type of music or anything like that, or is that...is it just the old music?

A Music that relates to the characters, so the Xbox game has a song I think that goes with it, I think it's Fortnite. There's characters on there that someone's used inspiration from and there's a song that goes with that. Maybe like a superhero song for the DC ones, and they've asked for some fairytale music because one of the little girls has made a castle and has got witches and wizards and horses and princes with hers. So they've specified maybe what they kind of relate to their characters, as opposed to an actual song in the charts at the moment or things like that, which is quite nice.

Q Yeah. How will you....you perhaps haven't thought about this yet but I mean have you thought how you'll sort of...will they get to help choose that music, or how to integrate it, how will you kind of manage that as you're going forward?

A Yeah definitely. I have thought about it actually because it would be nice to teach them about it. They've obviously been using it on my phone and things, but I've got an app where I can – I can't remember what it's called, I need to re-download it – but you can cut tracks and things like that. And I'd like to get them maybe to work for each other's performance. So if one puppet show was like the lights off and on, you know, allowing the children to do the lighting. And then if the music's play and pause and I would like this song playing at this point, it would be nice if the children could sit with me and do that and help run each other's performance. I thought that would be quite like a nice little backstage experience for them all. It's only minor but it still counts. But yes I have actually thought about it, whether or not it will actually unfold, time will tell. But yeah the thought is there.

Q Oh that's really interesting, you know sort of just how that potential sort of comes into it and how it's feeding into your thoughts.



A Yeah it would be really nice.

Q Yeah it's really interesting. So I think you mentioned earlier that you use tech yourself and media just in your own kind of preparation, that sort of thing. I just wonder about other uses that you make in that professional setting, so admin, training or anything like that, or just other uses of technology that you have?

A Just for the Drama Club or in general that I use it for?

Q Well the actual question is, are there any other uses of technology in your club that you'd like to tell us about? I think there's a question later about your more personal use of tech, so let's keep it to the club.

A That's fine. So I rely on technology for....I do my planning online, so I do my drama planning which is just usually just through the Word documents. I usually have....I don't ever Google for lesson plans or anything, I'd usually have the idea and just need to write it down, but because I prefer it typed up and nice and neat so I can keep them stored for future reference. So all my lesson plans are typed and printed and then I keep them. And then there'll be the odd games. So there are a few games that require me to have...like we play a game for instance called Ladders, and Ladders is that the children sit in pairs with their feet touching and they create a ladder effect on the floor. And I read a story out, and if I read Jack and the Beanstalk I'll give each pair a word to jump up and run up and down the ladders on and sit back down. So it's quite an active game and that can take 15 to 20 minutes sometimes, it depends how long for the story. So I often use the internet for downloading any poems that I want or any stories. I used the internet when we did our first term, which was looking at poems, and I ended up actually buying a book because all the poems I found I was using online were all in one book, so that kind of prompted me into buying a resource for the group, which was good.

And then if we're doing any arts and crafts I use it to get images to print off. So I've not really got the time to sit and draw freehand 10 outlines of masks and things unfortunately, much as I would love to. So like for Halloween, the Halloween activity we did before half term I just printed off some like Day of the Dead masks, and everything else is done by hand with the mask work and things. So I do rely on it I would say pretty much every week, sometimes more than others depending on what is in the session plan. So like for the puppet making, I've not relied on it at all really because I've not even done a plan, because some sessions we've just gone in and gotten straight on. But yeah I do rely on it every week before the club I would say.

Q I'm sorry, when you said about the Ladders game I didn't catch what they had to do.

A So they sit in a pair with their feet touching, and they sit in like a line. So if you imagine you're sat opposite your pair and your feet are touching your partner's pair, and then there's somebody to your left and right and there's somebody to your partner's left and right. They've got to leave enough gaps in between the pairs for people to be able to run in between. So the participants run up and down the pairs like they're jumping through ladders almost. And they have to...it's really hard to explain visually. If I said 'your word's Jack' so you have to jump up and I say 'oh Jack and the Beanstalk', the partner, the pair that had the word Jack would both jump up and then they've got to run, and it's a race to get back to their seat. It's a really fun game, but it usually takes a while to play.

Q Sure, oh that's great, thank you. So now I just want to focus a little bit on Anna. So we've sort of talked about this, so the question is, how does Anna use the technology or media that's on offer? And you've spoken about the fact that she would have used the laptop, I think that's right, for the puppet making ideas, is that right, is that what you said?

A Yes.

Q Yes, she didn't in that particular week.

A No.

Q I mean has she.....can you think of any other examples where she might have done that kind of thing and engaged with any, your laptop or the music side of things, or any other....

A She engages with music, but because I run it from my phone I don't let the children have it. So it was probably as simple as just putting a music request in. She would come up and say 'oh have you got this song, can you play this song' and then she'd go back to her arts and crafts and I'd play it type of thing.

Q Oh OK yeah because she does love music and singing and things I think.

A Yeah. They can ask for songs obviously and I know, I've already kind of checked against them and I've already got ??? on a playlist and I can play it, but I don't really go outside of what I've looked it just obviously because you have to be careful with music and stuff.

But yes that's really the only contact she's had in the session with me with kind of media and technology, and that's more putting a request in.

Q Yeah. And do you find that she might be the sort who would come up with ideas from things she might have seen in a game or on a film or something like that? Or is she more somebody who is more generically out of her head fairy princess?

A I think she....no I think she would come up with her own characters. I think she would probably watch – and again this is just a presumption – but she appears to have watched quite a few films and TV programmes at home. She's always kind of telling me about characters that I've personally never heard of that might be on kind of children's programmes now, and a lot of them introduce new characters to me, and through films and things like that. And she often knows the characters by like their full names and things, which is really nice. So she can tell me a lot about them and about what they do, and if they're quite silly characters she really goes into a bit of depth and description about them, which is good, yeah.

Q Yeah it's interesting. So do you sort of make it a thing to sort of try and draw them out if they come with some knowledge like that?

A Yes definitely. If a child comes to me and says 'oh I'm doing this puppet and this is this character' I sort of say 'oh brilliant, tell me a little bit about them'. And before they know it they've told me what their grandad's called and what they did in a film and what their speech was. And I think that for me is a real benefit like I said, because I feel like it just

really pushes their imagination forward. And if they want to do some drama based on a character that they already know then I'm more than happy for that. You know it does encourage them as well sometimes to make up their own characters and be an individual superhero with no name that's just kind of an idea of the one they've seen on TV as well, which is a really good connection for them to have I think. And I guess they use it as inspiration more than anything.

Q Do you find that it....obviously that creates a connection between you and them, do you find that it helps them to connect with each other at all, or is it more kind of dialogue between you and them about those things?

A Yeah, so....we....I think it does, and I think the only reason I say 'I think' is because we play a few games that kind of ask them to interact with other characters. So we play a couple of drama games that they've got to pick a character and then they've got to....it's like a character walk. So it's called Honey Walk. So I give them situations to...so like you've got to walk around the room as though you're wading through honey, or you've got to walk around the room as though you're walking on the moon as your character. And then we kind of develop it. So I'd say 'do it as you, as yourself, then do it as your character, and then I want you to meet all the other characters in the room'. And I think definitely with the puppet making, we've got some shows that are going to be very weird and wonderful – to put it nicely – just because maybe some of the characters in the puppet shows wouldn't necessarily be together in a film, or you wouldn't necessarily find them together. But just through working together they've kind of brought somebody from a famous film together with like a dragon, you know? And it's quite nice actually to see that influence that it might have had. You know it's like 'well they're not friends on the film but oh they could be friends in my puppet show'. And I think it's kind of given them the power to create their own version, which is really good.

Q Yeah. And are they sort of saying 'oh they could be friends in this' or are you kind of making those sort of, say slightly subversive or different suggestions, does it come from that?

A Yeah, I think a bit of both. So if there's a child in the room that's kind of struggling to understand or struggling to make it work, I'll sort of say 'well why don't you go and make friends with this character'. But then a lot of them will just kind of get on and, you know you'll have a goblin talking to a princess type of thing, or you know. And I think it is a bit of fifty-fifty, a bit of guidance maybe from me, a little bit of a push, but then once they're aware of what they're doing and, you know that there's no limitations in drama, you know that even an enemy and a heroine in a film they could actually be friends in real life. It's their spin on things and it's them using their imagination to see what is actually possible, which is brilliant and ???

Q And do you find in any way, you know it kind of creates....obviously there are some children who are perhaps more familiar with the Marvel comic characters maybe, and some more... obviously the princesses thing one imagines might be quite gendered. Do you find that there's anything around that? Let's make it open-ended.

A Yeah I do. And I also think it reflects....you can tell kind of what children have come into contact with, maybe what kind of technology.

You know I think for the little group, we've only actually got one boy in the room and I think he was there when you were, I can't quite remember, there's only one boy, there's 7 girls and one boy.

He works really well, he gets on with them all really well and he never kind of asks for another boy to be in the group, obviously as much as we are trying. But yeah I think he was the Fortnite boy, he was the Xbox, Fortnite characters. And I think it is quite gender, sort of like the girls were picking the princesses and the witches, but then it was a little girl that actually picked the DC comics with the Harlequin and the Superman and the Batman type of characters. So maybe I think there's a little bit of both. I do think there is a little bit maybe. But yeah and I think it does reflect, like obviously there are some children in there that you can tell have never watched a DC or Marvel film because they ask who the characters are, or who's is that character, and it's the Fortnite character. So I think it really reflects as well what children have had what access to certain types of media and technology. And you can really see that through the ideas that they generate.

Q Yes that's interesting. I mean I wondered if you felt it in any way fostered social interaction. OK they don't all come with the same knowledge, but you know does it foster interaction between them?

A I think it varies, because what one child, not lacks in understand but what one child doesn't necessarily have a lot of knowledge on, another child does, and then what that child doesn't have a lot of knowledge of the other one does. So I think it really benefits the session. I know that a lot of the children in there have kind of been introduced to new films, and you know a child maybe says 'oh this character's really funny and he's in this film'. They say 'no but I'll ask my mum if I can watch it'. You know and it's shared knowledge in the room, which is really nice, and it is nice that they come....I think if they'd all seen the same films or played the same games we would be really restricted to what we did, but I've never found that the case. Which has been good.

Q Yeah, yeah absolutely. So one of the things that we're interested is the way in which children sort of transfer knowledge, maybe knowledge from play and knowledge from media, you know. And I just wondered, obviously you use technology for creativity in your group and so on but I wondered if you felt there were examples of them kind of transferring skills, picking up things in one way and then transferring it to other contexts that you've witnessed within the group?

A Erm....I'm not really too sure. It's a bit of a tricky one. I think in terms of....I'm not really too sure. Yeah I think I've never really looked at it like that. So the skills, do you mean transferable skills from what they've seen through using technology and how they bring it to the session, or....

A One of the children actually came into the session and they asked if we could play a game called Video Game. And I'd played it before with other groups but I wanted them to explain. So they, obviously it was a game pre-existing but there's a video game game that relates to a drama game about playing a video game. So you walk around the space and it's play; you freeze and it's pause; you fast-forward the game and you run around; you re-wind the game and you run backwards; and then you can...so I went to the children and said 'right, what other things shall we add in from playing video games? And they all kind of had that experience of playing them so they all kind of had an impact. So like from Mario video games, he jumps over obstacles, so if I said 'jump' they had to pretend that they were

jumping over something. And then from the video game someone else had seen they had things like throwing at them, so if I said 'duck' they had to duck down. And we worked as a group to create this video game through loads of different video games or computer games, or you know like even films that they'd seen, I don't know like a karate fight in a movie, and they put in these moves and built their own video game, game. So I don't know if that....

Q Oh that's lovely thank you. And obviously you took it up yourself and, you know I just wondered about how you felt about...you know we're interested in the way that adults kind of facilitate and support children's uses of tech, and you're not doing that in a direct way but you're certainly....there's something in what you do that is drawing on that and using that in an example as an opportunity to further your own objectives in the game and in the class and what the session is for.

A I think now, in this kind of modern day and age that we're in, it's really hard to avoid technology. So I think there's no point pretending it doesn't exist. And obviously to the extent that, not that I don't want it in the sessions but I feel like it wouldn't really benefit the session from my point of view. I think, you know with games like that I'd like to kind of use their knowledge and show them that it's good that you can have these experiences and sit and play video games and play them with your friends, but did you know that you could also make them a bit physical and, you know make your own, or we could make our own video game through either the use of physicality or emotion and things like that. And it's maybe they're sharing their knowledge on media and technology with me, and then I'm sharing knowledge on drama and putting the two together. So I'd always encourage it but maybe in a different way of using it. So like, 'let's make our own film' or 'let's make our own children's TV show or radio show' you know and maybe make it a bit more physical and bring it to life for them.

Q Yes. I mean that's in fact where the next question sort of goes, because it's saying we're interested in understanding how this sort of play might develop skills and knowledge for, say Anna, in terms of for example physical skills, social skills, cognitive, creative and emotional skills, and you've mentioned several of those already actually.

A Oh brill. Yeah I think....just thinking about it now, it would be nice to do something like this, but you know getting the children to make their own like radio show or something like that you know. Because I'm guessing that, I mean they'll probably listen to it in the car but they probably won't do what I do and have the radio play in the house. I mean I'm guessing, I could be completely wrong, I wouldn't want to make a presumption but from what I've experienced and heard from them, you know they do sit at home either with the television on, or they sit with an iPad or they are....they probably come into contact with technology every day, you know definitely. Some days it might be a film, or it might be a time on the Xbox, or doing homework on an iPad or something like that. So I think I'd definitely like to use that to the advantage that they would be creative with their learning with it. But then maybe putting it to use and say, you know working on the confidence side, you know 'why don't we make a...you could have your own radio show' and developing other skills other than drama. So like I said about the lighting and the music use in the puppet shows, you know does somebody want to pretend that they're recording it with a camera, maybe we could have a look at getting a camera in and doing that and them actually making something out of it, and then watching it back and seeing it in real life action type of thing would be really good. But definitely for someone like Anna, I think Anna would....she's really confident is Anna but she just sometimes needs a little bit of a kick, like a push, just to

get things rolling you know. She might have loads of ideas bless her, but then helping her to decide on one idea to go with, you know I definitely think she would benefit from doing something like that because it would be seeing herself back in action and seeing that, you know 'wow, I can see all this on TV and I've just done something like that in my drama club'. And I think that's a little bit of a self-esteem push for them as well, you know that they could actually see themselves doing stuff. And this is a long shot but this is how I started out, I did something like that in school and I got into drama and went on to study it, you know, and then telling them a little bit of stuff about my background you know. And like....I told them, because I'm an extra in Manchester, I work for an extras company, so I did a little shoot on Emmerdale once upon a time. And so I told them that and their faces were like 'oh wow, that's brilliant, how can I do that'.

Q Oh lovely.

A And I'd literally just opened a door and closed it, that's all I did. But it's sharing those experiences of actually being in the media, and like the different side of it which was really interesting. But they seem to really like, you know really kind of....they were taken by it. And a lot of them said 'oh...' and I said 'you know you can actually have a job in doing this'. And it's all been kind of new experiences to them as well, that technology isn't bad, and watching films isn't bad, because that's how film artists get started. And you know encouraging them maybe to use it more for certain reasons.

Q I just wondered if any of them mentioned YouTube to you at all, or YouTubers?

A Yes. Not so much YouTube but this new app, I don't know if it's really well-known but it's called Tic Toc.

And it seems to be what all the children are using. And it's like a way of just making funny videos. I've never come across it. And I think that's an app on the mobile phone. They do use YouTube because a lot of children I think now watch videos on YouTube, and I know there's a lot of kind of like tutorials on how to make slime and how to make like make-up things like that, and I think a lot of the children from drama use it. But a lot of them use Tick Tock which is music and recording and like it's doing effects on this app to create really funny videos, and a lot of them use that.

Q Yeah, and they talk about it in the session maybe, or refer to it.

Time 55:00

A Yeah they always pretend. If I ever ask them to do any character work they sometimes pretend that they're doing Tic Toc videos and things like that, which is nice. So yeah that is heavily spoken about.

Q So the next question is about the way in which you engage with the children if they're using technologies and what kinds of roles you take. And the examples would be things like guiding, prompting, directing or co-playing. I mean do you ever you know sort of....

A Yeah, I think just because as I say there's limited use, we do use it in a lot of guided work and the children are never alone with it. Just more because as well it's my work laptop so if anything happened to it I wouldn't be able to work. So a lot of it is guiding them, just to help them round the websites. And obviously with the music, because they don't ever come

into contact with the device it's just more...I guess that's more kind of guiding as well because I'm saying 'oh this one, do you like this film, we could put this soundtrack on'. So yeah a lot of it is, the laptop work is definitely guided and I'm always with them kind of observing what they're doing.

Q Yeah, no that's great. I'm just looking through the questions and just thinking have we covered this. So it says do you ever initiate play or activities using technologies with Anna? Probably you've covered this because it doesn't sound like it's so relevant, you know it's kind of....unless you make that suggestion of, you know 'shall we look at things on the laptop'.

A Yeah, I don't think I do. I don't think I ever have. Whether or not I will in the future I'm not clear on but I haven't up until this point, no.

Q No. And that's because it just isn't sort of relevant to the situation?

A Yeah, it's just because it's not kind of what runs in the session I guess, yeah, it's just never really been relevant.

Q How do you think Anna draws on her everyday experiences and knowledge of technologies and media at the club? And you've spoken a bit about that already.

A Heavily does it, yeah, she's always kind of coming to me with new things that she's seen. Or even if, I know obviously it's not technology, but if her mum's taken her to see a show, or she's been somewhere with her grandparents, she draws on a lot of her experiences anyway, so I think technology just kind of fits right into that in terms of what she uses as influences and things, yeah.

Q Yeah that's great thank you, that's good. So your own perceptions of technology and media, and kind of where they're coming from. So again you've touched on this. So do you think any particular technologies or media are particularly positive, or any particularly negative for children at the club?

A I think obviously one of the things that I....and this is probably the same with a lot of children, but the children that I work with, sometimes they might have watched a film that's over their age limit, or you know they might have...I know for a fact that Fortnite has got an age limit on it and I know that the child in my drama class is very much under that age limit. But I think the barriers there would be just controlling what obviously gets used inside the drama club. So there'll be a lot of games. Like children are kind of open to a lot of things these days I think, and I think they've got a lot of access to stuff maybe that they shouldn't. So if there's anything about, we tend to have any fighting or like use of the word 'killers' in the drama club just because obviously you don't know the ripple effects it's going to have and you want to keep it as appropriate as possible. And I think sometimes with technology it doesn't, it works against doing that, you know if they've seen and watched a film with an older sibling or something that's older than they are. So there's been a very rare sort of occasion that I've just had to kind of censor what's been going on, just maybe....not pulled someone aside but just sort of say 'oh we don't really use that language here', you know 'we're not going to do fighting in drama club or anything like that'. So I think that's really the only barrier I've really come across.

The negative side of it is that maybe children are just kind of watching or they've got access to stuff that they maybe shouldn't, and I guess that's hard to monitor sometimes because of YouTube and because of, you know showing them stuff out there. So then, like I say, I do push it sometimes, because in films there's characters in the stories and there's ideas and imaginary lands, and a lot of the time when I want to create something I often find myself referencing towards a lot of kind of children's TV. You know if I want them to create something a little bit weird and wonderful I often find that I go kind of towards like children's TV programmes or films just to kind of get their imagination going a little bit. I find that I do it sort of unconsciously, you know like I don't really realise I'm doing it.

Q Yeah, well it's embedded in all of our lives, you don't sort of separate it out do you.

A Completely.

Q Yeah. So the violence and the fighting thing, is that particularly because of being at Abbeycliff maybe where there could be stuff resonating. Or would you just do that more generally, is that a concern you have for children more in general?

A Yeah, I'd just do it generally I think. I think, obviously it depends what age you work with. I've worked with....I could only work with 4 and 5 year olds at my other job and I never ever come across anything like that obviously because they are so young. But I guess if you've got an older sibling, I mean I know that I'm guilty from doing it you know, I've got little brothers, and they'll watch even something as simple as like a superhero film, you know like the Marvel comics, there's a lot of kind of fighting and deaths of things in there. You know it's sometimes just moderating what goes on. And the children know what's appropriate. But yeah.

Q So we're interested in well-being in relationship to technology and media, and emotion. So I just wondered if you had any thoughts to share on links between playing with technologies, playing with media content, and children's emotions and wellbeing that we haven't perhaps covered already in other parts of the conversation?

A So in terms of maybe what technology....the impact technologies can have on a child's well-being or....?

Q Yeah that's right, and their emotion state you know. And positive or negative really, either way, or anywhere in the middle.

A Yeah. I think it does have a big impact. I mean from children I've worked with in the past, not necessarily at this drama club, but they've kind of....and we've had conversations before about 'oh well we were doing this so we were practicing this scene from this film and somebody accidentally got hurt because we hit someone too hard', do you know, little conversations like that that happen in the playground. And like little child's play and things like that. And I think, like I said, I've not experienced that in the drama club as such, just because it's just not happened. But I think you know if they do take....sometimes I think they don't see....obviously in films it is all make-believe and it is all pretend, but from a child's imagination, you know if they aspire to be a certain character I think sometimes it can have a big impact because they'll try and be like them sometimes.

And I know from having younger brothers, seeing them, they used to play, like use films and stuff a lot with their playing, you know like anybody would, you know they want to



be like the characters in the films. But I think it can have a massive impact on their well-being because I think technology is so apparent these days as well and it is everywhere, you're either going to see a film in the cinema or, you know you can get access to it like online and things like that, I do think it's hard to avoid it. And I think it's hard for them not to have the connection with it and be heavily influenced by what they see.

Q Yeah. So in the case of your brothers and what you were talking about there, did you feel that because they were kind of inhabiting the character in their imagination, did you feel that then that could....I mean there perhaps could be a positive and a negative side to that? Is that what you're saying?

A Yes definitely. I think the negative obviously would be things going a little bit too far, you know if it's a character that gets into a lot of fights, or has like a....my dad always makes me laugh because he always says that he used to aspire to be like Popeye. You know and obviously his was characters like that, he always reminds me of that because obviously he said 'oh I always used to try and be like Popeye and look like Popeye' and it always makes me laugh because I just think obviously what a character to aspire to be like.

And it is true, you do pick the most kind of odd characters to try and be like. But they can also have such a good impact because, you know I think it really does open a child's imagination, and I think a child needs imagination to be able to play. You know there's not a child that's kind of come into drama club – I was kind of worried at first that I'd maybe have a child that didn't have an imagination or didn't read books or see films in their life, children out there that probably don't have access to those things. So I think if the group was really struggling I would probably use media and technology and little bit more. So if the group was kind of lacking a little bit in creating their own ideas and couldn't be left to their own devices to make a little piece of drama, I probably would rely on it a little bit more. But because they've all come with a good amount of knowledge anyway, I don't feel like I need to supplement what they haven't got.

Q And just in terms of the expression of emotion in the group, can you think about what other kind of emotional things that they're expressing if you dealing with....because I mean when you talked about the bus it seemed like they really got into those characters. Is there joy, is there excitement, is there giddiness, is it...how does it...or is it other emotions?

A Sometimes we do a lot of work on just kind of like feelings and emotions. So like a lot of the times when they get on the bus for example they could be feeling itchy, you know so they're all kind of like itching and then the whole bus turns into like an itching frenzy. And it's getting them to work with their emotions. And I kind of push for, oh if someone's really tired today or if someone's having a really groggy day you know, that's absolutely fine, so we do a lot of kind of like emotion work. And I try and do it from a point of view that if you are feeling a little bit tired or a little bit grumpy or....you know that's absolutely fine because we're allowed to feel those things, it's our body, it's normal and it's natural to feel like this sometimes. Because I think sometimes with children, from my point of view obviously I don't actually have any of my own, but just from my learnings over working with them and witnessing like what they are like, sometimes they are told not to be grumpy or they're told not to frown or....you know they're always told to be happy. And as you get older it's not that easy!

You know, and it is OK to feel tired and bit deflated. And so we practice and we have a go, and we make obviously a bit of a laugh and joke. If they're grumpy I say 'you've got to be really grumpy', you know stamp your feet and growl and all these. So we do have a bit of

fun with it. Or I think they're more aware of stereotypical characters from the media as opposed to actual feelings and emotions that they should naturally feel themselves.

That's from what I've found anyway from the 8 children I work with, that they're really good at being superheroes or animals or things they might have seen on the TV, but actually addressing emotions, they kind of struggle with that a little bit more. And that's obviously what they feel on a day to day basis.

Q So you don't feel that the sort of technology and media content is really helping them there to....

A Definitely, yeah, I think so yeah. I think it helps them but not kind of in a sense of they can look at themselves sometimes. Sometimes they have to, when I say 'be a character' it's very rare that they'll be themselves. And obviously you are a character you know, you are you, you've got your own characteristics. So we did a full session on 'what if you woke up in a morning' and I just gave them like rules, like steps to follow and stuff. So I said 'get up, have your breakfast' and I just said 'look around and see what everyone's doing'. So like even from you know like what they were eating for breakfast, you could tell if someone was eating cereal, you know some children didn't eat, you know it shows that they don't eat breakfast. I think you can tell a lot about somebody from just by looking at them and observing. So we did a whole session on like their own self-character development. So it turned into like 'what do you want to do when you grow up' and stuff. And then that's when it went back to technology and 'I want to be like this person out of this film'. So I think there was a very fine line between themselves and the characters they see maybe in the media.

Q Yeah, oh that's great.