

Can nightclubbing change the world?



**A story of setting up a
nightclub for people with
learning disabilities.**

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What is Red?



- **A nightclub event for people with learning disabilities and their friends**
- **Hull Student Union's nightclub venue**
- **Held every four months**
- **Open 7.30 – 12.00**
- **Aims**
 - 'A GOOD NIGHT OUT'**
 - Making and meeting friends**
 - A sense of belonging**
 - Development of new roles and experiences**
 - Tackle issues of power differences and social marginalisation**

Why did we start red?

- **Clinical experience**
People referred due to ‘challenging behaviour’ so often had;
 - few opportunities to socialise
 - very little going on in their lives
 - few people in their social networks who were not paid to be there
 - a distinct lack of basic opportunities to control/shape their own lives
- Many of those we met told us of their desire to go out, have fun, make new friends and find a partner



People with Learning Disabilities in the Hull and Surrounding Area



- **Population of Hull – 294,000**
- **32.8% of working age population unemployed**
- **56.8% have no or low academic qualifications (national mean = 46.1%)**
- **36.6% of children live in income deprived families**
- **Estimated 7350 people with mild to moderate learning disabilities**
- **Learning disability hospitals closed in 1997**

Societal Discourses about Learning Disability



- **People with learning disabilities are grouped together by societal discourse and by their life experiences**
- **Through societal discourses they share some social disadvantage; based upon**
 - **Medical Perspectives (Personal tragedy perspective, Oliver, 1990)**
 - **The Care Market (McKnight, 1995)**

Learning disability and Power

- **Community psychologists make a direct link between power and wellbeing**
- **Positive power allows us to have mastery and control (Nelson & Prillentsky, 2005)**
- **The connection between knowledge and power (Johnson, 1998)**

**“It is important to people with learning disabilities to make information accessible because information is power. As people with learning disabilities it is important for us to take our power back”
(Richard West and Saul Reuben; CHANGE, Quoted in Porter, 2005)**





- **It is argued that societal perceptions can lead to psychological oppression**
- **Belief of personal tragedy, leads to kindness and pity; also belief that any change is the individuals responsibility**
- **Coupled with the internalisation of social perception, the beliefs of others are internalised by the person. Hence internally driving change becomes increasingly difficult and consequently further decrease the individuals power.**

Learning Disability and Social Marginalisation



- **Marginalised people remain “outside the major arena of capitalist productivity and reproductive activity” (Leonard, 1984)**
- **Exclusion from mainstream schools/ activities/ relationships**
- **Importance of social support is well researched**

Why a nightclub?

Why not a disco afternoon, a coffee morning, bingo, a board game evening, basket weaving...!

- **Where do we go to have fun, socialise, meet people...?**
- **Target audience – 18-35 year olds, young, single, and wanting to party**
- **Most day services run 10-3**
- **Most evening projects only funded for those who live with parents**



Why a 'special' nightclub?



- **Practical Reasons**

- **Wheelchair access**
- **Parking and accessibility**
- **Safety - from drunk abusive people**
- **Number of supporters**
- **Risk**

- **Theroetical Resaons**

- **Building a sense of communitiy; belonging to this group rather than joining another**
- **Not closed group but a targetted one e.g. gay bars**
- **'Conscientisation'**

Limitations and scope for change



Stigmatisation

Marginalisation

**Internalised
negative self-
beliefs**

Scope for change

**Social Innovation -
RED**

**A Just and Inclusive
Society**

**In which people with
learning disabilities
have fulfilling,
and valued lives**

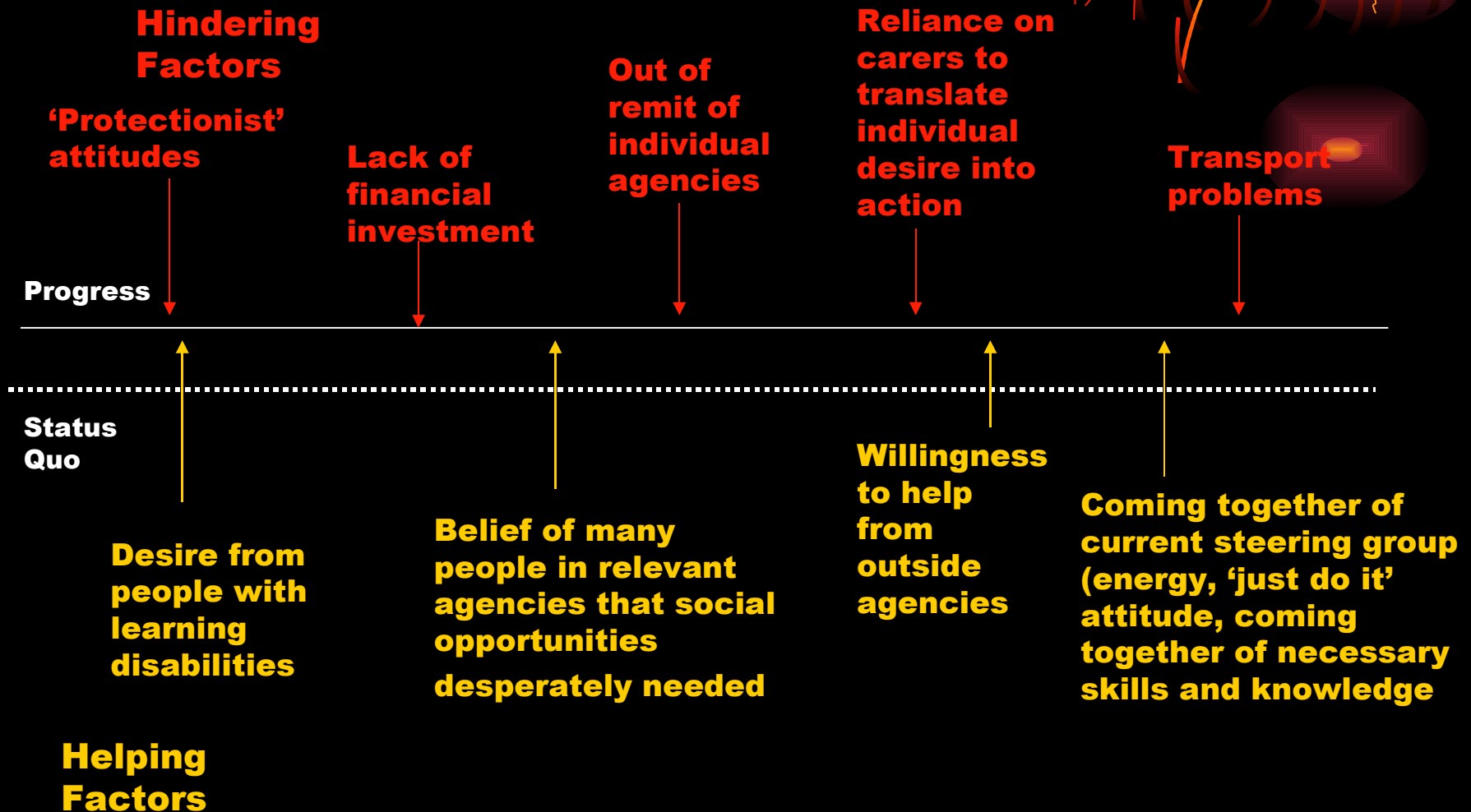
**Welfare trap /
dependency trap**

**Specialist
services**

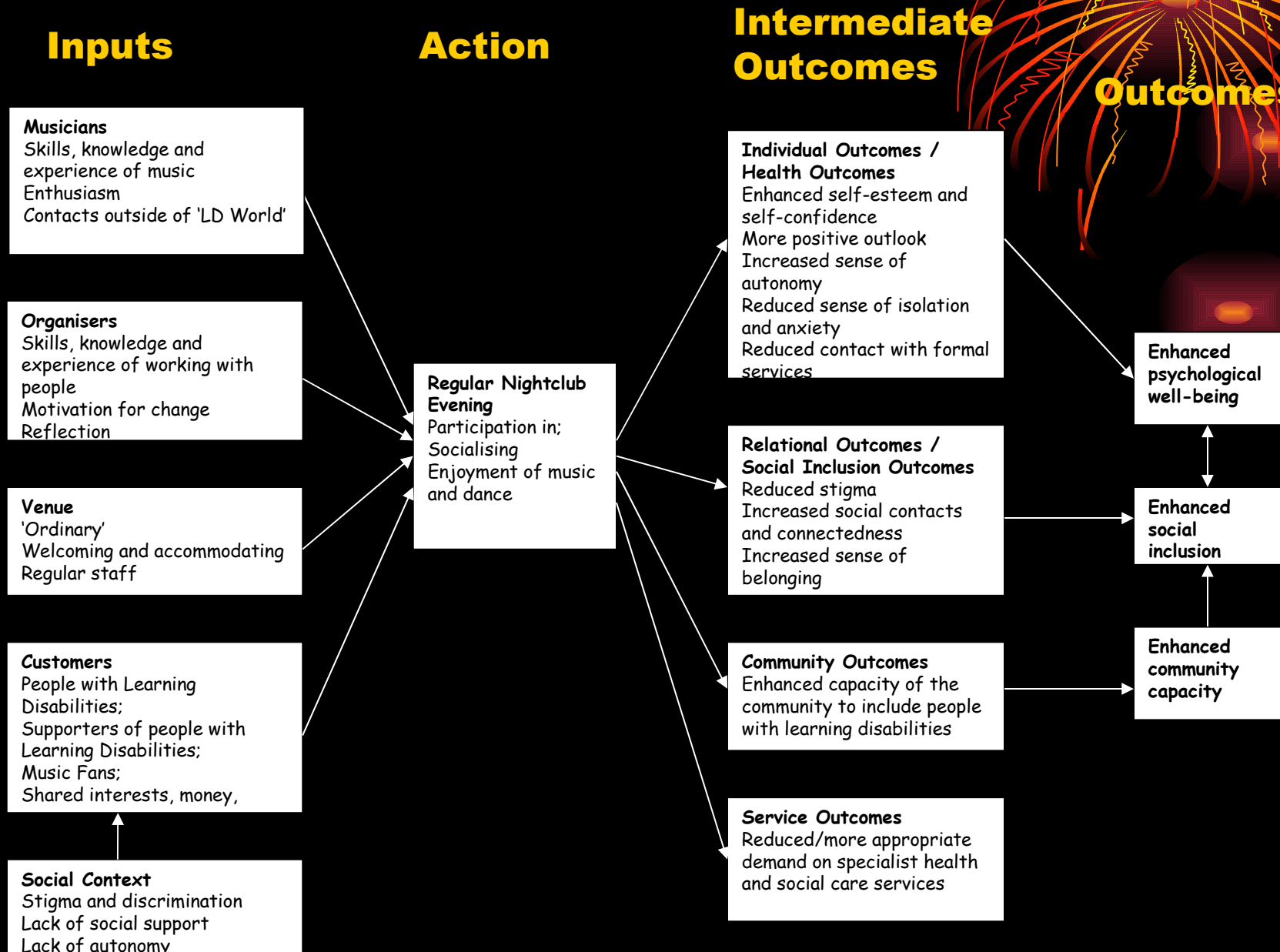
**Dominant cultural narratives (re:
vulnerability, dependency, etc.)**

**Scope and
limitations
expected within the
Red project**

Limitations and scope for change



Proposed Theory of Change



Getting started



- **Becoming nightclub promoters**

How do we get started? What do we know about what's involved in running a nightclub?!

Should we raise money to employ an organiser, persuade a local nightclub owner to take it on, try to bring together possibly interested organisations?? Or go it alone.

- **Steps One**

Book a venue, book DJs/bands, advertise, sell tickets, etc.

But to raise money we must sell tickets, to sell tickets we need money for advertising...

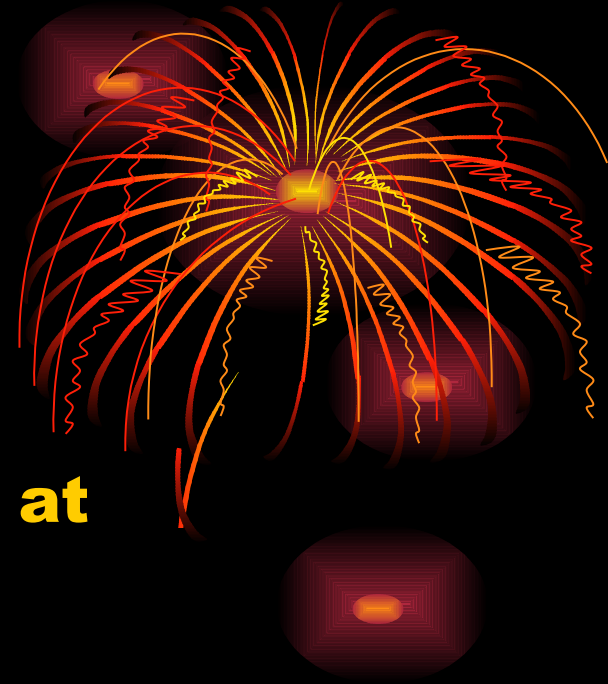
- **Fundraising**

???????? Questions – Concerns – Issues ??????????

- **Carers: will they come? should we charge them? Times?**
- **Are we nightclub promoters or a service?**
- **Are we staff- if so of what?**
- **What if..... Risk vs protection**

The first night!

November 2005



- **Doors opened at 7.30 (though people were waiting from 6.30!)**
- **278 tickets sold**
- **Resident DJ, two guest DJs, and a samba band (each played 50 minute sets)**
- **Fantastic atmosphere!**



Since the first night



- **Two further events (March and July), with the fourth booked for November**
- **Funding from ‘mind-the-gap’**
- **Ticket sales stabilised at around 250**
- **Customers from York, Leeds, Bridlington, Scunthorpe (about a 60 mile radius from Hull)**
- **Things that changed from the first night:**
 - **Shorter sets**
 - **Chill out room**
 - **Merchandise**
 - **Website**
 - **Volunteers**
 - **People have stayed later**

The feedback



- **Comment Slips filled in on first night**
 - **‘I thought it was amazing!’**
 - **‘I liked dancing, nice music, meeting friends’**
 - **‘Enjoyed it a lot’**
 - **‘Very good’**
 - **‘I will come again in March 2006, come again, can’t wait till March 2006, see you again in March, see you soon, see you in March 2006, can’t wait’**

The feedback



- **Comments from DJs, bands, and bar staff**

All enjoyed themselves and want to come back and take part again (and we're not paying the going rate!)

- **Comments from others from outside of the 'disability world'**

'It was a great atmosphere. It was great being with people who were having so much fun. I loved being part of it. I would like to be part of it in the future.'

- **Advocacy story**
- **Rachel's story**

“if we were starting again”

- **Lots of things same!!**
- **Not a charity**
- **Group structure and clarity of roles for steering group**
- **Not to be so scared?**



The future

- **People with learning disabilities need to be more involved - DJ workshop to begin this winter**
- **Involving wider community more**
- **Extra spin off nights**
- **To keep going- more of the same**
 - **More evaluation?**
 - **Community Interest company?**



Discussion Questions

Although we will discuss anything!

- **Can nightclubbing change the world?**
- **Can we discuss it being a 'special' nightclub....what do you think?**
- **Evaluation should we do it and how?**

