

The Wizard of Oz



Interest Link Borders – Roxburgh Branch

A report of the drama project with the Roxburgh
Children's Group, April to June 2025

Contents

Introduction – 3

Who was involved? – 4

Planning – 5

Brainstorming – 7

Rehearsals – 10

The Performance – 14

Quotes and Feedback – 18

Conclusion – 21

Introduction

The Roxburgh Children's Group for 8- to 16-year-olds meets every second Monday at Burnfoot Hub in Hawick. The aim of the group is to work with children and young people with learning disabilities (members) and support them to:

- Improve their social skills
- Improve their self-esteem
- Build friendships
- Feel happier
- Access new opportunities

This is achieved through running a variety of projects and youth group sessions with members and peer mentors (young people of a similar age, who do not have a learning disability). From April to June 2025, the group's project was to rehearse and perform 'The Wizard of Oz' for family and friends.

Becca Duffell, Children's Coordinator, April 2025



Who was involved?

The following group members took part in the project:

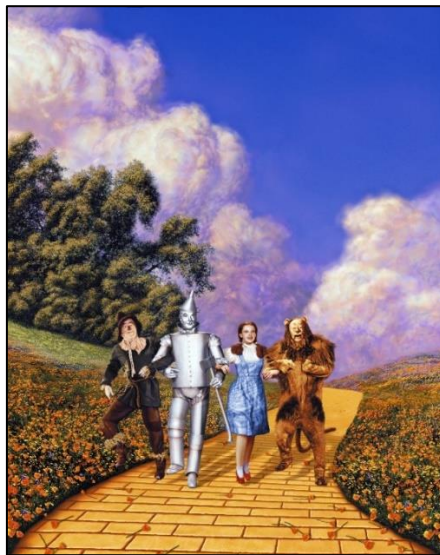
- Haiden, member
- Lacey, member
- Haylee, member
- Emilee, member
- Ivy, member
- Emily H, member
- Shaun, member
- Grace, member
- Amy, peer mentor
- Hanna, peer mentor
- Bethany, peer mentor
- Alicja, peer mentor
- Amelia, peer mentor
- Emily W, volunteer
- Sarah, sessional worker
- Becca, Interest Link staff

We were also joined by four family carers – Taylor, Gordon, Nicola and Jasmine – and drama tutor Charly.



Planning

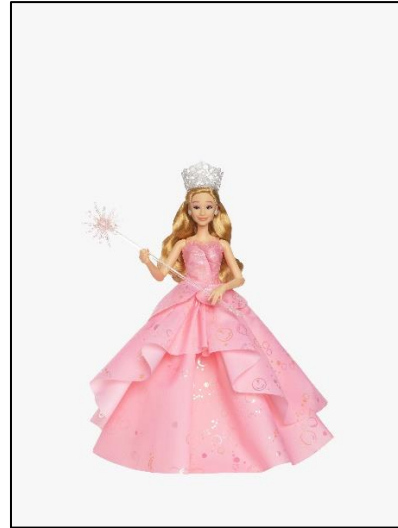
Author L. Frank Baum first published 'The Wonderful Wizard of Oz' in 1900 and it has been a popular children's story ever since. Judy Garland starred in the 1939 film adaptation 'The Wizard of Oz', which added now classic songs such as 'Somewhere Over the Rainbow' to L. Frank Baum's story.



In 1995, author Gregory Maguire wrote the novel 'Wicked: The Life and Times of The Wicked Witch of the West' which retold the events of 'The Wonderful Wizard of Oz' from the point of view of The Wicked Witch. Maguire's book gained popularity and was adapted into the musical 'Wicked' by Stephen Schwartz and Winnie Holzman in 2003. The musical continues to be popular on both Broadway and The West End to this day, and a movie adaptation starring Ariana Grande and Cynthia Erivo was released in UK cinemas in November 2024.

Many of the group members have got caught up in the popularity of the recent Wicked movie, some of them playing with toys and dress up outfits and many of them singing songs

from the show. The story is an enduring one, and was the first thing that came to mind when I began to outline a drama project in March 2025.



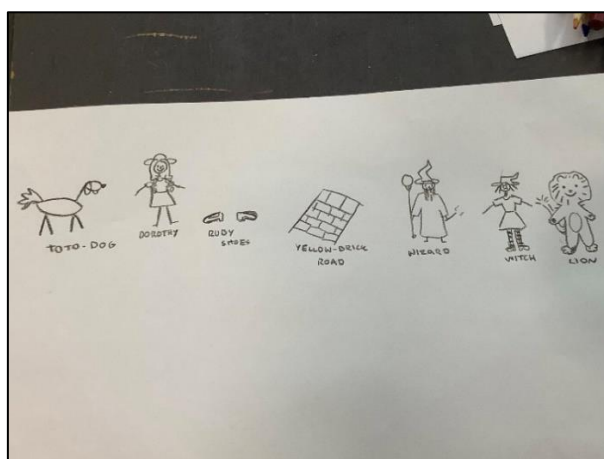
Charly has previously run drama projects with Interest Link, so she seemed like the natural tutor to reach out to when I began planning the project. We met for a coffee to outline everything together, before starting the project in earnest on the 28th April. The project ran for five sessions of 90 minutes each – four sessions to brainstorm and rehearse, and the fifth session as a performance to family and friends.



Brainstorming

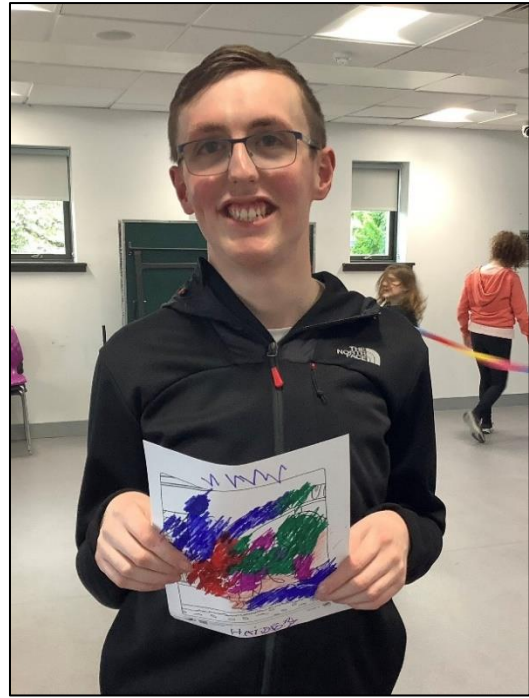


For the first session, Charly asked the group to write and draw what they already knew about 'The Wizard of Oz'. Some group members knew lots about the story, while others were more familiar with 'Wicked'. It took us a bit of discussion to separate what happened in the different versions of the story.



Some group members used colouring pages to get their creative juices flowing, while others played with potential props and costume elements that I had brought along to the session.





We thought about the different characters we knew, and started to chat about who we might like to play in the performance. Charly suggested that the characters could be performed in groups for anyone who didn't feel confident to act a character all by themselves.



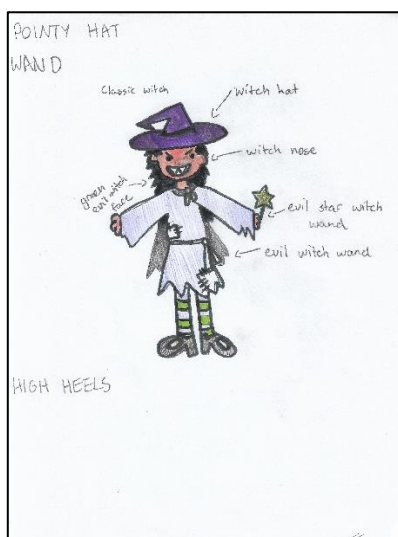
Charly played drama games with us so that we could learn about using all the space available on the stage. The games also taught us about working together as a team, and how to direct each other.

We all particularly enjoyed 'Chain Tag' which was a new game for the group. Lots of giggling ensued!



We worked in pairs to draw and label our chosen characters.

From these pictures, we came up with a list for what resources we needed to buy or borrow for the performance. Some of the things we needed were easy to get hold of – for example, we already had a straw hat for the scarecrow – while others, such as ears and a tail for Toto the dog would be a bit more tricky.



Rehearsals

Our first job was to mark out the 'stage' space so that we could imagine where our audience would be and which way we needed to face when acting. Charly encouraged us to use the whole stage like we had been doing in our games.



Next we finalised our character groups, and started to use some of the props we already had. Here you can see Haiden getting into his role as one of The Wizards of Oz by wearing a top hat. Unfortunately we didn't have all our props yet, so The Witches group below used rolled up paper to stand in for their wands!





We discussed how the different characters might move. Here, Amelia and Ivy practice walking like scarecrows, while Grace imagines how Dorothy might move around the stage during the tornado scene.



We rehearsed how to introduce each of the characters to the audience at the start of the show through a simple dance to "Follow the Yellow Brick Road"



Taylor, Lacey, Nicola, Shaun, Sarah and Haiden practice walking the Yellow Brick Road in the style of their characters



We tried out different poses for the end of the song.

Here Emilee and Grace rehearse the scene where the good witch gives Dorothy the red shoes. Ivy tried out playing a few different characters; here she is playing Toto the dog.





Charly was unwell one week so I had to step up and have a go at directing! Emily H also decided she would prefer to direct rather than be on the stage.



Here is Emily helping Charly to oversee a rehearsal.

We tried out a few different options when trying to decide what to use as wands for The Witches. We settled on these ribbon wands (usually used for rhythmic gymnastics) as they helped to add movement and interest when The Witches were speaking. The Wizards of Oz also had ribbon wands in different shades of green.



The Performance

Before we knew it, it was time for the performance! We squeezed in one final dress rehearsal before Charly welcomed everyone to see the show.



It was amazing to see such a great turn out of parents, siblings, grandparents and family friends. The Roxburgh Coordinator Val also made it along to watch.



Some group members tried out a few different roles during the rehearsals, but the cast for the final performance was:

The WIZARD of OZ

Dorothy – Grace

Toto – Ivy

The Witches – Emilee, Haylee, Alicja and
Bethany

The Scarecrow – Amelia

The Tin Men – Lacey and Taylor

The Lions – Shaun and Gordon

The Wizards – Haiden and Sarah



Director – Charly

Assistant Director – Emily H



The tornado arrives and whips everyone dizzily around the stage!



The good witch hands Dorothy her magical red shoes and tells her how to get home again



Dorothy, Toto and the Good Witch meet the Scarecrow and invite him along on their adventure



The group
meet The Lions
and discover
they really
need some
courage



The Wizards grant
everyone their
wishes! Here they
are giving The Tin
Men new hearts



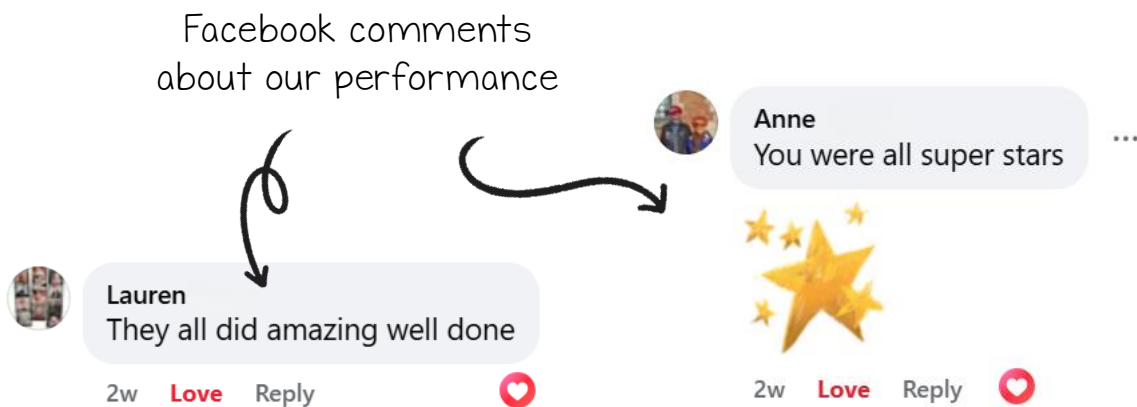
After the show finished, we invited everyone to stay for a drink and a traybake. We had a good catch up about what the group have been up to during the project, and received lots of compliments on our acting skills! As it was the end of the school year, we also looked back on the different projects we have done since August. We can't wait for another fun year at Children's Group!



Quotes and Feedback

"Where is Grace? She's very cuddly!"

- Shaun (Member) before going to find his new friend Grace for a hug. Both of them are new to the group and it has been great to watch them build a friendship.



"It's amazing seeing them come on and become so much more confident"

- Sarah (Sessional worker)

"It is an amazing group"

- Courtney (Parent)

"I am happy my daughter can feel part of something"

– Jasmine (Parent)

"You have given Shaun the opportunity to have a social life and gain friendships which is very important for us, he is very much included within the group and made very welcome when he attends"

– Nicola (Parent)

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"To see our grandchild express himself by acting out a story is special"

– Anne (Grandparent)

"[I] always feel safe with Shaun at group and he's made new friends, quite often talking about them which is a new thing for Shaun"

– Gordon (Parent)

* * *



Nicola

Well done to all involved what a super show tonight all the kids done fantastic 🍌 x

3w Like Reply



Val

Well done to you all. Fabulous performance 🤩

2w Love Reply



Facebook
comments
about our
performance



Conclusion

In relation to Interest Link aims, this project helped group members to:

- Improve their social skills
 - ✓ Very few of the group members had met Charly before so this was a great chance for them to interact with someone new in a safe environment
 - ✓ Being on the stage required group members to speak loudly and clearly so that they could be heard by the audience
 - ✓ Everyone had to learn to take turns when speaking so that they didn't interrupt someone else's lines
 - ✓ Everyone also had to work hard on listening – both to each other's lines, and to Charly's instructions
 - ✓ Acting helped the group members to think more carefully about their non-verbal social skills, such as body language and facial expressions
- Improve their self-esteem
 - ✓ This project was a chance for group members to have a go at performing in front of a live audience. Some people were very nervous on the night, but it gave everyone a self-esteem boost to hear the applause and praise from the audience at the end!
 - ✓ Emily H took her role as assistant director very seriously, and made sure to compliment all her friends on their acting and dancing
 - ✓ In previous projects, some of the peer mentors have found it a bit embarrassing to join in games as part of the group, but Charly has a way of breaking through those barriers and getting everyone involved

- Build friendships
 - ✓ Shaun, Grace, Amelia and Alicja are all new to the group and this drama project has been a superb way for them to get to know everyone else better
 - ✓ Emily H missed a few sessions due to feeling unwell, and Ivy always asked after her and let me know that she missed her
 - ✓ The peer mentor group have built a strong bond through this project and it was lovely to see them hanging out and laughing together after the performance on the final night of term

- Feel happier
 - ✓ We had lots of laughs playing the different drama games
 - ✓ Everyone was smiling and happy when we finished our performance to the audience

- Access new opportunities
 - ✓ For many group members, this was their first time working with an outside tutor at the group
 - ✓ Charly introduced us to some fun new drama games which everyone really enjoyed
 - ✓ Performing live in front of an audience was a new experience for many of the group members. They really rose to the challenge!
 - ✓ Learning lines, getting dressed up in costumes and using props were all new things for the group

Becca Duffell, Children's Coordinator, July 2025



Thank you to Burnfoot Community Futures for renting space at the Hawick hub to us for our sessions

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'The Wizard of Oz' picture on page 5 and the 'Dorothy and Scarecrow' picture on page 6 are from imbd.com

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