

An abstract painting with a central red rectangular text box. The background features bold, expressive brushstrokes in shades of green, blue, purple, and yellow. The top left corner has a dark, textured mark. The overall style is expressive and modern.

**The Baring
Foundation**

CREATIVELY MINDED AND THE NHS

An overview of participatory arts offered by
the NHS to people with mental health problems

By David Cutler

Creatively minded and the NHS: an overview of participatory arts offered by the NHS to people with mental health problems

About the Baring Foundation

We are an independent foundation which protects and advances human rights and promotes inclusion. We believe in the role of a strong, independent civil society nationally and internationally. We use our resources to enable civil society to work with people facing discrimination and disadvantage and to act strategically to tackle the root causes of injustice and inequality.

The Baring Foundation is one of the UK's best known independent funders. More can be found in *A History of the Baring Foundation in Fifty Grants*.

Since 2020, the Foundation has focused its arts programme on creative opportunities for people with mental health problems. Alongside funding we have written or commissioned a number of publications which can be found at the back of this report.

About the author

David Cutler is Director of the Baring Foundation and leads the Foundation's arts programme. He has written a number of publications for the Foundation, including in 2020 *Creatively Minded: An initial mapping of participatory arts and mental health activity in the UK*.

Credits/acknowledgements

We would like to thank all those who kindly contributed case studies to this report, as well as Sally Lewis (Arts Council of Wales). This publication was designed by Alex Valy and edited by Harriet Lowe, Communications and Research Officer at the Baring Foundation.

A note on language

We recognise that language is a very important issue but also that it is a contested one. Indeed, the very notion of mental health diagnoses, and the thinking that underpins them in making psychiatry a discipline, is itself challenged by some. For the sake of this report, we will be using the term 'mental health problem' as probably the most widely used term at the moment (for instance by Mind) but it does not command universal support. The term is intended to cover psychoses, Common Mental Disorders (including depression and anxiety) and addictions, whether clinically diagnosed or self diagnosed. We understand that some people will find the word 'problem' stigmatising and may prefer 'challenges', 'needs' or 'distress'. We discuss this in more detail in our first report, *Creatively Minded*.

Cover photo: *Down to the depths of sleep I go, where dreams uncaptured move*, 2019. Oil on canvas by Morris (40.5 x 51 cm). Courtesy of the artist and Hospital Rooms.

Morris paints evocative portraits that employ bright colours to convey something of his sitter's inner worlds. Alongside his paintings, he creates numerous repetitive drawings in biro or chinagraph pencils from life or found imagery, and refers back to these when creating his compositions. Morris was joint winner of the Dentons Art Prize in 2019 awarded by judges artist Ryan Mosley, Director of Zabudowicz Collection Antonia Blocker and BAFTA winner Angela Samata. He has an H.N.D. in Illustration from the North East Wales Institute and a BA in Illustration from the Glasgow School of Art. Morris worked with arts mental health charity Hospital Rooms as part of their project at the Hellingly Centre, Sussex Partnership NHS Trust where he was a service user.

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Foreword

BY NESTA LLOYD-JONES

This report from the Baring Foundation into the role of participatory arts in the NHS for people experiencing mental health challenges is extremely timely. Society has changed dramatically since the creation of the NHS over 70 years ago, and as we look to emerge from the pandemic – and respond to the significant impact it has had on people’s mental health – working in partnership will be essential.

Across the NHS and social care there is now a growing understanding of the impact that taking part in the arts can have on people’s mental health and wellbeing. Access to arts opportunities and participation in the arts can dramatically improve health outcomes and wellbeing, counter inequalities and increase social engagement. And being creative brings particular benefits to people’s mental health: boosting emotional and psychological wellbeing, helping build self-esteem, mitigating social isolation and loneliness and helping promote more cohesive communities. It can also, of course, support the wellbeing of staff working in health and social care.

Partnership working is the cornerstone of our work across arts and health in Wales. Through our Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2017 between the Arts Council of Wales and the Welsh NHS Confederation, we have worked together to raise awareness of the benefits of the arts and advocate for the value and contribution of creative activities in improving mental health and wellbeing. This has never been more relevant or vital as during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Baring Foundation’s long-term commitment to support creative opportunities for people with mental health problems is to be applauded

and warmly welcomed. Reports published before the COVID-19 pandemic suggested that nearly one third of people in Wales felt lonely or isolated. This number is now likely to be significantly higher and the future demand for mental health and wellbeing services following the pandemic will undoubtedly also be significant. This report provides an excellent insight into the existing range of creative interventions within the NHS that are making a real difference to people’s mental health and wellbeing across the UK and offers some innovative models that could be further adopted across the NHS. The report also makes some key recommendations to advance this important work further which deserve serious consideration.

The NHS in Wales recognises that creativity and the arts need to be part of the solution in helping tackling the indirect health consequences of COVID-19 now, and in the future, and we must work with partners across all four nations to provide person-centred care that is both compassionate and joined up across sectors.

Summary

The Baring Foundation usually publishes reports based on the experience of participatory arts organisations. This report seeks to balance this by focusing on the role and experience of NHS organisations in creativity with and by people with mental health problems. It is published during the Covid-19 pandemic which has led to worsening levels of mental ill-health and therefore likely increasing demand for both medical and non-medical approaches.

The first section of the report attempts an almost impossible task: explaining the highly complex operation that is the NHS mental health system. Also considered here are the roles of social prescribing and Recovery Colleges, as well as why Creative Arts Therapies, though important, are outside the scope of this report.

At the heart of the report is a series of 15 case studies organised by nation and preceded by a brief account of some of the relevant policies. This recognises the highly devolved character of arts and mental health provision. Examples are given from primary and secondary care. Case studies set out the local context and responsibilities of NHS mental health services, challenges to working creatively and particularly significant projects.

The last section reflects on some of the key ingredients for work in this area accepting that this is by no means an in-depth examination of a complex area. Here are some observations:

- these partnerships are based on national and local arts and mental health ecologies that should be nurtured;
 - there is an ongoing need for translation between the worlds of the NHS and the arts, as well as relevant training for artists;
 - NHS leaders have an important role and staff inclusion on projects has many benefits;
 - there is a rich seam of work in improving the environments of health settings using the arts both indoors and out;
 - creative activity is evolving to include more digital offers;
 - sustainable funding may be the most significant challenge and may grow even harder.
- Finally, the report commends to other Arts Councils the strategic approach taken in Wales; recommends that all Mental Health Trusts employ an Arts Coordinator; calls for greater networking on the issue between Trusts and in particular Recovery Colleges; and asks if there would be any benefits from Arts Therapists working more closely with participatory artists. It is likely, but we can't be certain that practice is quite varied between Trusts, in which case, the first two of these recommendations should help 'level up'.
- this work should be celebrated and more high profile;
 - each nation operates differently but Wales has a highly strategic approach;
 - the role of Arts Coordinators in the NHS is key, including in sourcing and making effective partnerships with arts organisations;

Introduction

Why we wrote this report

Since 2020, the Baring Foundation has focused its arts programme on creative opportunities for people with mental health problems. Our style is to mainly fund participatory arts organisations, in which experienced, usually trained, creative practitioners share their skills with members of the community. This often leads to co-produced work in a wide range of art forms. Our daily interactions are therefore largely with arts organisations. Our publications such as *Creatively Minded* also see the world chiefly through the eye of arts organisations.

But there is no escaping the fact that the single most important institution in the field of mental health is not an arts organisation but the NHS. The NHS defines clinically what is deemed as a mental health illness. (This is very different from our experience in running a programme for ten years on creative ageing where there is no single dominant institution regarding our experience of becoming older.)

Therefore, given how important the NHS is in the lives of many people who experience mental health problems, we wanted to begin to examine to what extent it sees the arts and creativity as relevant. Given the pressures on the time and resources of the NHS, is creativity valued as something that can improve the lives of patients, either therapeutically or more generally? Also does the NHS have a job to do in learning how to work together better with arts organisations for the benefit of mental health patients?

To those of us that do not work in NHS mental health services, the system seems almost impenetrably complex. This report can only offer a highly simplified explanation. This is then enriched by case studies, which show how creativity can be integrated into these services and settings. Throughout this report, we will refer to Mental Health Trusts. Insiders will point out correctly, that this is a beginner's error and this phrase is hardly

used any more. We understand this, but the complexity of structures across the four nations is challenging and terms aren't even consistent in England. Therefore we use Mental Health Trust for the body that has overall responsibility for delivering NHS mental health services, recognising that in almost all cases they will also have responsibility for delivering other health services too.

Timing and looking ahead

This report was written as we begin, tentatively, to look towards the end of the Covid-19 pandemic. Even before this it was accepted that roughly one in four people experience mental health problems at some point and that the mental health of young people in particular has worsened dramatically in the last ten years. There have been a series of large scale studies as to the impact of Covid-19 on the population's mental health, with, for instance, the Office for National Statistics estimating that rates of depression doubled in 2020 and some researchers speculating as to the existence of 'Post Covid Trauma Syndrome'. Overall, the Centre for Mental Health has estimated that there will be an extra ten million people in need of new or additional mental health interventions.

It seems reasonable then to conclude that the need for NHS treatment services is likely to increase very substantially in the near future and that arts and creativity can play an even more valuable complementary role. At the same time, pressure on funding for both the NHS and the arts will never have been greater.

Methodology and values

This short report is based on very limited desk research and, at its heart, a set of case studies. It has been interesting how poorly explained NHS policies, systems and structures are to the inquisitive outsider. Anecdotally it can be a maze even for professionals and service users.

The case studies are in no way to be seen as representative. They have been identified through our contacts and deliberately cover a wide geography and span primary and secondary care. It is likely that they are among the more active Mental Health Trusts. There is probably an argument for a much more systematic study of NHS performance in this area, but this would be complex and resource intensive. We did not attempt a survey as we believed it was very unlikely to get a worthwhile response rate given the extraordinary pressures all NHS staff are under.

Fundamentally, the Baring Foundation is a human rights funder and views creativity and access to culture as human rights, irrespective of their benefits. As set out in our previous reports, as a funder we work on the basis of a social model of mental health and also accept the critical significance of intersectionality and the impact of inequalities on mental health. Since the publication of our first report *Creatively Minded* in February 2020, The Centre for Mental Health has released the report of their Commission on Mental Health Inequalities which gives further evidence as to the significance of inequalities when assessing the treatment offered to different groups.¹

The NHS is of course an evidence-based institution which seeks to prevent, treat and manage ill health including mental illness. So, the question arises: how do the arts contribute to this mission? There have been a number of attempts to answer this question, especially the 2017 report of the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Arts Health and Wellbeing called *Creative Health*,² and the 2019 meta-review for the World Health Organisation by Fancourt and Finn, *What is the evidence of the role of the arts in improving health and wellbeing? A scoping study*.³

This is not an academic report – far from it – but it is probably true to say there is very good evidence for the positive effect of creativity and the arts on the wellbeing of the general

population but rather limited evidence of its positive effects on recovery from diagnosed mental health problems, including severe and enduring mental illness. (More research has been conducted on the effectiveness of Creative Arts Therapies but they are not included in this report.) However, there is a lot of more specific research underway and the advent of the MARCH network is beginning to address this.

Even so, it is also clear that Mental Health Trusts understand the need to treat the whole person and how the arts play an important part in this. And sometimes the arts have a positive effect on the wellbeing of staff as well as patients, for instance in joint activities such as choirs (see, for example, East London NHS Foundation Trust, page 14) or in creating beautiful or stimulating environments (see, for example, Tonic Arts, Edinburgh & Lothians Health Foundation (ELHF), page 44).

A word on devolution

Devolution is pertinent when considering this topic. There is not one NHS. There are national NHS structures in each of the four nations which share features and practices but also differ considerably in funding levels and priorities. This is also true of the arts, with, for instance, four very different national Arts Councils. The description that follows is based on NHS services in England but would be recognisable in the other three nations.

1 *Mental health for all? The final report of the Commission for Equality in Mental Health*, The Centre for Mental Health, 2020. Available at: www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk/sites/default/files/publication/download/CentreforMH_Commission_FinalReport.pdf.

2 All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing (culturehealthandwellbeing.org.uk)

3 WHO/Europe, *What is the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and well-being? A scoping review*, 2019, www.euro.who.int/en/publications/abstracts/what-is-the-evidence-on-the-role-of-the-arts-in-improving-health-and-well-being-a-scoping-review-2019.

The NHS mental health system

The great majority of mental health problems will be treated in primary care. Only around 5-10% of more serious problems will be referred to secondary care. The common point of referral is the Community Mental Health Team (CMHT).

See *Figure 1* below; this complex set of services is described by the authors as 'greatly simplified'.

As with physical health, NHS Services can be categorised into three levels:

Primary care

This is mainly for mild to moderate mental health problems and includes: GP; Link Worker; and Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT).

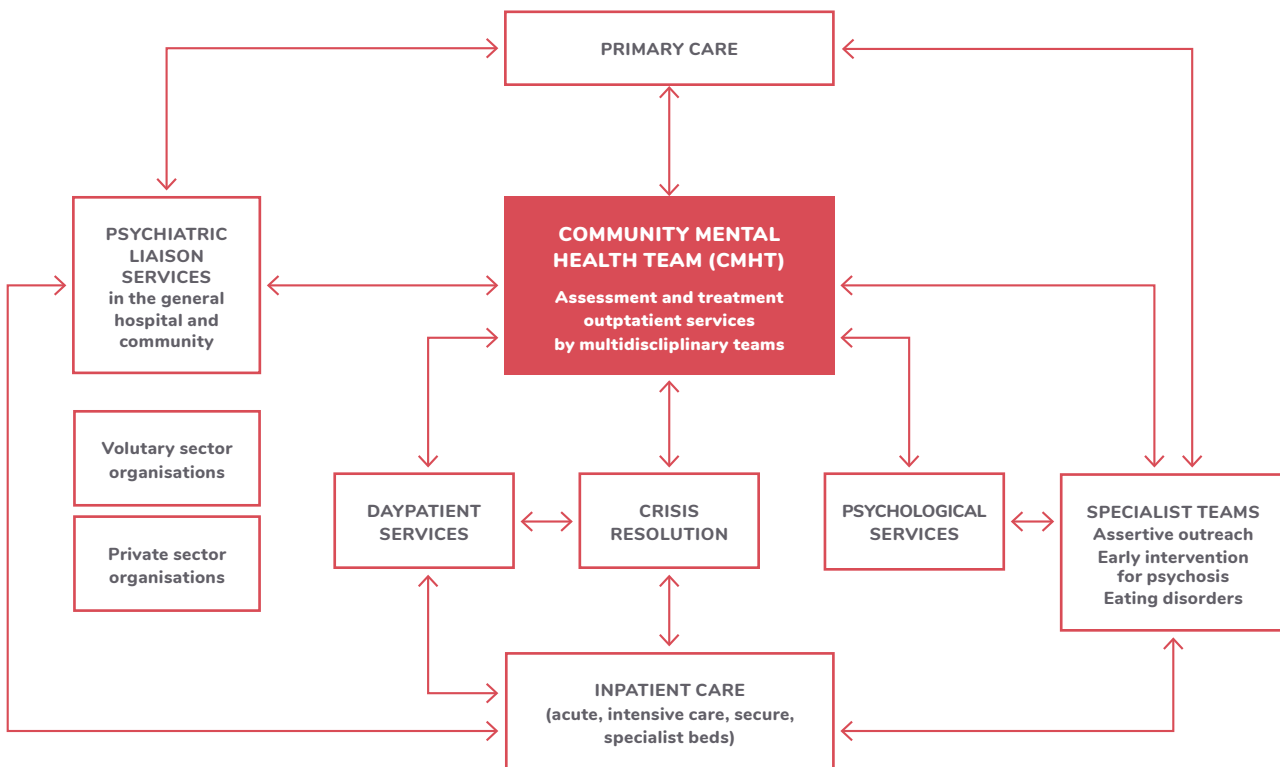
Secondary care

A referral is made to a Mental Health Team if greater support is needed. This covers a range of treatments or services in the community or as an inpatient in a hospital.

Tertiary services

These provide more specialist care and can be provided again in a hospital or in the community, through for example Assertive Outreach Teams.

Figure 1: A simplified structure of mental healthcare services in a state-funded healthcare system⁴



⁴ Figure 1 © Oxford University Press 2019. Reproduced from *Psychiatry* by Rebecca McKnight, Jonathan Price and John Geddes, 5th edition, p103. Reproduced with permission of the Licensor through PLSClear. This figure (1) must not be further reproduced or transmitted, in any form of by an means, without prior permission of the licensor.

There are different types of Mental Health Team. These are usually divided into:

Community Mental Health Teams (CMHTs)

CMHTs offer short- and long-term care.

Delivery locations will vary between Mental Health Trusts but can be a main office, or GP surgeries or health centres. Home visits are also made. These multi-disciplinary teams include a psychiatrist and will typically have a caseload of 250 patients from a population of 20-50,000 people. Often a care coordinator in the team will be assigned to a new patient to work out a care plan, usually with a number of elements for different team members. Key to this is effective collaboration including with external agencies in the voluntary sector.

Crisis Teams

These offer short-term help to prevent someone experiencing a mental health crisis in the community from needing to access hospital care. (Various other names are used including Home Treatment Teams, Rapid Response Teams and Crisis Resolution Teams.)

Assertive Outreach Teams (AOTs)

These teams work with someone in need of intensive support due to complex mental health needs. (AOTs don't exist in all Trust areas and their services might be offered by a more general Community Mental Health Team.)

All teams are multi-disciplinary and, depending on their function and Mental Health Trust, can include a psychiatrist, Community Psychiatric Nurses (CPNs), Psychologists, Care Coordinators, Occupational Therapists and Psychotherapists.

In hospitals, Liaison Psychiatry Services deal with any mental health problems experienced by patients being treated for physical health problems.

NHS services can also include employment and training through Individual Placement and Support schemes and short stay accommodation as an alternative to a hospital stay.

Mental Health Trusts will often provide specialist forensic services for people with a mental 'disorder' (including neurodevelopmental

disorders) who pose a risk to themselves or to others. There are a wide range of potential services that could be offered including secure services with locked wards.

The provision of Alcohol and Drug Treatment Services varies considerably between Mental Health Trusts. They will often be provided by voluntary sector organisations commissioned by Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs), but patterns vary. CMHT services are not specialised around addiction.

Child and Adolescent Mental health Services (CAMHS) are delivered by the NHS and again are configured somewhat differently in each of the four nations, providing services up to either 16 or 18 years of age. Recognising the importance of education, they are delivered at a local authority level. CAMHS fare even worse for funding than adult services in general and are perceived as extremely hard to access. This report is intended to cover all ages groups, but we have published a separate report last year highlighting the use of arts with children and young people.⁵

Social prescribing

Social prescribing has a long history in the UK, at least as far back as the Bromley by Bow Centre in London and Artlift in Gloucester in the 1980s and 1990s. It can be defined as a non-medical referral by a health professional that gives a health benefit. Generally, this takes place in primary care is usually by a GP. The person referred may or may not be in need of other clinical treatment. Social prescribing is not confined to the arts but could be for exercise, volunteering or legal advice. Nor is it confined to mental health; walking for instance can have physical as well as mental health benefits. However, a referral, say, to group singing for someone who is lonely and has a low mood would be quite typical.

Social prescribing is taking place to different extents in all the four countries of the UK, but it has recently expanded greatly in England, which has the best resourced and most comprehensive system. The NHS Long Term Plan for England committed to employing 1,000 link workers by 2020/2021 (one for each GP Network usually

⁵ *Creatively Minded and Young*, Baring Foundation, 2020. Available at: cdn.baringfoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/BF_Creatively-minded-and-young_WEB_LR-1.pdf.

treating 50,000 people) and that at least 900,000 people will be referred to social prescribing by 2023/4. A National Academy for Social Prescribing has also been established with a number of objectives including training for social prescribing link workers.

Although in many ways admirable, funding has been confined (other than a recent relatively small Thriving Communities Fund which included funding from Arts Council England) to paying for link workers, leaving the funding for the services to which people are being referred to come from elsewhere.

Recovery colleges

The origins of Recovery Colleges are varied, but it now appears that all Mental Health Trusts in the UK have a Recovery College (though names and organisational structures are not uniform). They are important in the context of this report as they are the part of the NHS where patients are most likely to be offered participatory arts activities rather than Creative Arts Therapies. The major reason for this is that the ethos is a Recovery College is educational more than therapeutic. Hence patients are students and staff are likely to be a mixture of people with lived experience of mental health problems and professionals such as psychologists. The focus of a College will be on courses that empower self-management of mental health problems, including through the use of the arts. Courses are co-designed with people with lived experience.

Recovery Colleges typically employ freelance artists across a number of arts forms including the visual arts, music and creative writing to deliver group classes or workshops within a term time structure.

The structure of Recovery Colleges varies but it is interesting that they feel rather separate from Mental Health Trusts. It is interesting too that the only reference in our case studies to Recovery Colleges is Sussex (see page 36), other than a case study of a College itself in the shape of ReCoCo in Newcastle (see page 27).

Why doesn't this report include Creative Arts Therapies?

The short answer is that arts funders see Arts Therapies as clinical interventions, in this sense like a clinical psychologist, and hence a treatment that should be funded by the NHS. The long answer is that it is probably more complex and less clear cut than this.

Creative Arts Therapies comprising Arts, Music, Drama or Dance Therapy are all qualified disciplines. They each have membership bodies to regulate and advance the discipline. Often an Arts Therapist has an undergraduate degree, say in Music, which is then followed by a postgraduate qualification marrying musical practice to clinical psychology. The key issue is that an arts therapist's practice is focused on the use of the arts for the recovery from illness of a patient. The therapist is clinically supervised in this endeavour. The NHS funds such work, for instance East London NHS Foundation Trust employs over 50 arts therapists (see page 14).

So, a simplistic distinction would be that a participatory artist is primarily concerned with the creative process when engaging someone with mental health problems and a Creative Arts Therapist would primarily be focused on the therapeutic benefits of creativity in the recovery of a patient from mental illness. Life, though, is rarely clear cut and Therapists will value creativity and Participatory Artists will refer to their work as therapeutic.

There is clear room for collaboration. In its case study East London NHS Foundation Trust emphasises the role of Arts Therapists in advising on the arts more broadly. A number of arts organisations that work with people with mental health problems contract Arts Therapists to work with their artists in a supervisory fashion.

CASE STUDIES

England



ELFTin1Voice choir. Photo courtesy of East London NHS Foundation Trust.

ENGLAND

Overview

Although this report uses the term Mental Health Trusts, almost no organisations exist that continue to call themselves Mental Health Trusts. Instead what would once have been Mental Health Trusts, while continuing to be responsible for these services, have expanded to take on other functions and tend to be called NHS Partnership Trusts. There are 54 in England and they are commissioned and funded by Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs).

An important strategic development in England recently has been the launch of the National Centre for Creative Health (NCCH). It can trace its origin back to the influential *Creative Health: The Arts for Health and Wellbeing* report in 2017 by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing which suggested the establishment of such a centre. It is chaired by Lord Howarth who also chairs the APPG. It is currently in its set-up phase and fundraising. The NCCH has stakeholders from across the UK but given the devolved nature of arts and health, much of its

work will be in England and it receives support from NHS England. It will use a ‘hives, hubs and huddles’ approach of three different ways of working and will take a particular interest in Integrated Care Systems. NCCH is linked to the pre-existing Culture Health and Wellbeing Alliance (CHWA) which is a membership network for people working in different sectors including health and the arts. CHWA has a regional structure and stages conferences and disseminates resources.

Over the years the degree of priority to which the Arts Council England has given arts and health has varied. Its 2007 *Prospectus for Arts and Health* document seemed a high-water mark before other issues intervened. However, more recently attention has been refocused towards this area. Now a large proportion of ACE National Portfolio Organisations, as well project grants, have a health aspect (broadly defined). ACE’s ten-year strategy, *Let’s Create*, launched in 2020 states that it sees arts and health work, including physical and mental health, to be a priority.

Hospital Rooms

Not many arts organisations work with Mental Health Trusts throughout England but one organisation that does is Hospital Rooms. Its vision is for all people in mental health wards to have the freedom to experience extraordinary artwork. To do this they have engaged some of the UK’s leading artists including Sonia Boyce, Richard Wentworth and Julian Opie, among dozens of others. These projects use a participatory approach involving patients on the mental health wards and with the support of staff.

The motivation for Hospital Rooms came in 2015 when artist Tim A Shaw and curator Niamh White visited a close friend who had been sectioned and admitted on to a mental health ward. This left them with the conviction that more needed to be done to make these attractive and stimulating environments. Their first project was run in 2016 and since then they have grown rapidly to an income of around £500k.

During the pandemic Hospital Rooms has put a lot of participatory activities online while they can’t work on hospital wards.

www.hospital-rooms.com

Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust

BY LAKHVIR RELLON AND SABRA KHAN

OVERVIEW

Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust (BSMHFT) provides a range of mental healthcare service for residents of Birmingham and Solihull, as well as some specialist mental health services to communities across the West Midlands and beyond. The Trust operates out of more than 40 sites, serving a culturally and socially diverse population of 1.3 million with a dedicated workforce of around 4,000 staff.

This case study focuses on the activity of the Community Engagement Team (CET). The aim of the CET is to promote positive wellbeing, reduce stigma and work in partnership to help the local population navigate the services that the Trust provides. A key part of our work is to improve mental health literacy and people's understanding of mental health/ill health. Much of our work is delivered in partnership with other organisations including arts and community organisations.

BSMHFT is committed to using the arts as part of the delivery of its work, in partnership with other organisations, as research has shown the value that our service users place on using creative arts in their recovery. CET is not the only team using creative activities – other services develop partnerships with artists and arts organisations to meet the needs of their service users. For example, the forensic services have an ongoing relationship with **Geese Theatre Company**; Dr Erin Turner, Consultant Psychiatrist in Early Intervention of Psychosis uses creative activities as part of her programme for trainee psychiatrists; and South Asian arts organisation, **Sampad**, is currently working with our East Team, reaching individuals further isolated by

Covid-19 by developing creative activities over the telephone and through 'Creativity Boxes' delivered to their door.

As CET, we are often asked to connect services to arts organisations or artists and vice versa. Currently, we are offering creative activities through partnerships including the **BEDLAM Arts & Mental Health Festival** (see below); an ongoing partnership with **Women & Theatre** and the ground-breaking **Shifting the Dial**. Funded by the National Lottery, **Shifting the Dial** is now in its 5th year, partnering with The REP (Birmingham Repertory Theatre), First Class Legacy and The Centre for Mental Health to support the development of a brotherhood of 300 young African Caribbean men who feel mentally stronger through using drama and the arts. We also work regularly with other artists and arts organisations, including **The Hearth Centre**, **Quench Arts**, **CBSO** and **LouDeemY**. We founded **Birmingham's Wellbeing Choir** in 2009 which was made up of service users, carers, friends, community members and staff and is still going (independently) today.

CHALLENGES

We continue to face the challenge of fundraising – the Trust is a statutory service and we do not have an arts budget so we work to create meaningful and equal partnerships that can help us to raise funds to deliver activity that we think is critical in enabling us to meet our aims. For example, we provide **Women & Theatre** with office space in exchange for creative activities, which are readily taken up by our different teams.

One of the challenges in delivering **BEDLAM**, in particular, is reaching beyond an already 'engaged' audience as we seek to engage with a broader demographic to raise awareness and reduce stigma. We continue to tackle this

through taking work into the community and using a range of communications including the Trust's own and our partners' to disseminate information. We now have a forum of service users and Trust staff who have signed up to help us spread the word. In addition, as some of the work is new and commissioned for this festival, one of the challenges that we navigate through every festival is allowing enough time in the planning to make each commission a genuine co-production between the artists and our staff and service users, so that the voices of those with lived experience can be truly reflected in the final work.

PROGRAMME HIGHLIGHTS

Women & Theatre

We have been working with Women & Theatre for over decade now through a service level agreement that provides the company with an office base at our Learning & Development

hub, The Uffculme Centre. In exchange, the company runs a programme, each quarter, of six drama workshops in our hospital settings as part of the daily activities for patients to support their recovery. These have been run in acute, forensic, day centre and specialist settings including within older adult services. The partnership has also allowed BSMHFT to benefit from other W&T programmes of work, with the company bringing performances of relevant touring shows into in-patient settings. The company is now well known within our organisation. They have developed relationships with various services which have occasionally resulted in further commissions for bespoke projects meeting the needs of specific patients or service users. For example, *All of Me*, a theatre-based piece researched with services users and professionals promoted the value of Life Story work as an approach for working

Photo courtesy of the BEDLAM Festival.



with people with memory loss, as well as encouraging more person-centred practice more broadly.

“I was impressed that people spoke up and voiced their thoughts, because that can be hard.”

Participant

“I really liked how the patients progressed from being timid to voicing their ideas with no fear.”

Staff member

BEDLAM Arts & Mental Health Festival

In 2013, BSMHFT founded the BEDLAM Festival in partnership with The Birmingham Repertory Theatre. This award-winning festival is now biennial with key partners, The Rep, Midlands Arts Centre, SAMPAD South Asian Arts, and a guest partner at each festival. The festival has established itself amongst the small number of festivals focusing on the theme of arts and mental health in the UK. The festival attracted 32,763 people to a programme that took place over 10 days in October 2019.

In Autumn 2021 the BEDLAM festival will return – with a blended programme of live and digital presentations – with newly commissioned performance pieces and a visual arts exhibition that are a result of artists researching and working with black, Asian and elderly people exploring the experiences of Covid-19 in our local communities.

Therapeutic Activities Programme to promote safety in wards

Led by BSMHFT Allied Health Professions, this is one of a few pilot projects in the Trust which aim to protect patients from significant risk of serious self-harm to their lives and safety. Through an expanded arts activities programme for patients on acute wards, the Trust is exploring if such a programme improves positive interaction, provides a sense of achievement and supports continued engagement thus resulting in fewer incidents which risk patient safety.

We are working with a number of external arts organisations offering activities including drama courses, creative arts, games and yoga. Due to the pandemic all arts activity sessions have been delivered virtually using video calling so that the engagement is safe for the service users, staff and arts providers. This has led to increased engagement in activities on these wards and feedback has been positive from all involved.

The next phase is to expand the increased arts activities to more wards and to plan towards external partners delivering arts activities both virtually and on-site face-to-face where it is safe to do so. Continued and enhanced engagement with external partners will assist with supporting the recovery journey of service users where they can continue activities into the community to support successful discharge.

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Sabra Khan, Producer, BEDLAM Arts & Mental Health Festival
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East London NHS Foundation Trust

BY STEPHEN SANDFORD AND PAUL GILLULEY

OVERVIEW

If you were to have visited East London NHS Foundation Trust (ELFT) fifteen years ago, you would have found a traditional Mental Health Trust covering the three inner North East London boroughs of Hackney, Newham and Tower Hamlets. Over the years we have expanded our mental health offer across Bedfordshire. We now provide community health services in Tower Hamlets, Newham and Bedfordshire and also primary care healthcare services in those areas. We are moving towards becoming a NHS Trust that provides out-of-hospital care.

Four years ago, following extensive consultation through our *Big Conversation*, we launched our Trust Strategy. This set us a mission: *to improve the quality of life for all we serve*.

This mission was ambitious. This extended beyond the people who were in contact with our services and included their families and their communities. We aim to achieve this through four strategic outcomes:

- improve experience of care
- improve staff experience
- improve population health outcomes
- improve value.

Our use of the arts within ELFT has played an important role in how we have achieved that improvement in the first three outcomes. Our care pathways involve the arts to enhance experience of care and using the arts with our staff to improve their experience at work and improve our team working across a large and complex organisation. Improving population health has been a major challenge. To do this, we need to engage our communities and that's where new partnerships with local arts organisations within our communities are key to our efforts.

Our strategic outcomes are all underpinned by our commitment to co-production with service users to help us achieve our vision. We have found the arts extremely useful to help us find ways to bridge the gap that can exist between staff and service user groups. The arts provide ways for a common purpose, language and vision to emerge for everyone whether that be through storytelling, singing, acting and the visual arts.

The arts at ELFT are broad and rich and involve opportunities for visual art making, and live expressive opportunities including performance involving music, drama and movement. ELFT is well known for its investment in arts therapies – we have over 50 arts therapists across music, drama, dance and movement and art therapies. These clinicians are integral to our care pathways extending into arts engagement for our service users. We recognise our arts therapists' key skills in encouraging, developing, supporting and leading on our arts in health projects alongside their clinical roles within teams.

Our arts work development has been moved on significantly by the commitment of our executive and senior leaders at ELFT engaging and modelling themselves how the arts can help everyone. They do this by getting involved, leading from the front and revealing their own creative skills. This means staff and service users see our leaders literally paint, sing, move, act and perform. This encourages others to have a go, try out and consider their own potential to use the arts as a key means to support wellbeing.

Over the past four years, all of our senior leadership team building away days and staff conferences have started or ended with an arts-based creative warm up or cool down. These short bursts of creativity bring consistent

feedback from staff on the benefits of the arts. More importantly they help us progress in building our culture by providing creative reflective space for staff to get to know each other – essential in demanding ongoing health service challenges and delivery of care.

Our arts work at ELFT is supported by a central Arts, Environment and Wellbeing Group that oversees arts projects, new partnerships with arts organisations, as well as sourcing funding from charitable funds to help start new initiatives. This group is supported with senior executive sponsorship from our Chief Medical Officer.

PROGRAMME HIGHLIGHTS

#ELFTin1Voice

Our staff and service user singing group has been a tremendous success. Over the past three years over four hundred staff and service users have now had the chance to compose songs, sing together and perform on a range of big stages including the Barbican, the IndigoO2 and at TEDxNHS. The group is led by a talented local singing leader, Leanne Sedin, and feedback from staff and service users has been consistently positive. The group has helped many find their singing voice and experience the joy of performing for the first time.

Our recent song ‘See me as I am’⁶ tells the story of how a struggling doctor is encouraged to move beyond seeing the patient as a medical problem to be fixed, but rather see the whole person and their needs as an individual. This is another example of how we are using song to promote our vision for population health improvement.

As part of our commitment to promoting dignity at work and responding to the challenge of diversity and inclusion for our BAME staff and service users, we have used drama as a means to help share challenging stories of discrimination that should be heard. We’ve done this in partnership with **PlayingOn Theatre** company through Mental Health Acts a project that culminated in a play by service users and staff that was co-produced with role reversal – staff playing service users and service users playing staff. The impact of walking in the shoes of others was deeply felt and brought a greater empathic understanding how care is provided and shared experience beyond traditional hierarchies.

It is our ambition to develop now our own in-house ELFT Theatre Company as a key means to supporting our education and training approaches across ELFT, including enabling greater reflection on the central role of compassion in care.

The essence of everything at ELFT is our Promise and creativity is at the heart of this:

“ We promise to work together creatively to: learn what matters to everyone, achieve a better quality of life and continuously improve our services. ”

Stephen Sandford, Professional Lead for Allied Health Professionals
Dr Paul Gilluley, Chief Medical Officer
www.elft.nhs.uk @ELFTArts

⁶ You can hear “see me as I am” on YouTube here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=2JnvYMmSwOA&list=PLeEBLpkk4vtNHOPc51mERmE1XlyzLk1lY&index=1.

Free Space Project, Kentish Town Health Centre

BY DANIEL REGAN

OVERVIEW

The Free Space Project is an arts and community charity embedded into primary care in the NHS in Camden, north London. We work in partnership with the James Wigg and Queens Crescent GP practices, as part of an integrated social prescribing service. This means that we take direct referrals from the clinical teams for registered patients to engage in our holistic services that contribute to and complement their medical care. We are open to our 30,000 patients and at times the wider community of Camden. Our organisation has been integrated into the practice for over a decade.

We are not exclusively a mental health organisation and run a number of projects and activities for patients. These include:

- a weekly Dance for Parkinson's group
- legal advice and support through the Citizens Advice Bureau
- a non-medical chronic pain group in conjunction with the Camden Pain Service
- a drawing group for people living with aphasia after a stroke
- activities in our *Well-being Garden*.

We recognise that alongside clinical mental health care and services, there are benefits for patients engaging in creative and community projects that positively impact their mental health. As such, we run regular creative arts projects that encourage patients to reflect on their mental health through process driven activities. Many of these activities leave them with existential questions and curiosities, alongside engaging socially with others. Our attachment to clinical practice means that participants also have a pathway into mental health services should an activity be troubling or require clinical support.

At times we run projects alongside clinical staff such as psychotherapists for safeguarding purposes, but we make it clear that we are not a mental health service.

“It wasn't as scary as I feared.”

“Using art and creativity as a tool to focus was very helpful in enabling me to talk about incredibly difficult things. It was so good to hear what we all had in common.”

Participants

CHALLENGES

Within primary care there are a number of referral pathways and mental health services that often pop up but also disappear, which can sometimes make it difficult to know who to contact. We would like to work in more partnership with specific mental health services by co-designing and delivering projects for a specific group of patients.

We would also like to see greater integration between arts and health teams, bringing together the disciplines at NHS commissioning levels to consider care as the sum of both parts. There also has to be sustainable funding that moves away from project-based funding and into long-term creative activities that enable participants to build a sense of trust, community, and ownership.

PROGRAMME HIGHLIGHTS

In 2018, we showcased an exhibition titled *I Want to Live*, made in partnership with local suicide respite centre Maytree.⁷ During the course of the exhibition at Kentish Town

⁷ www.maytree.org.uk.

Health Centre, we used the content of the project (interviews with volunteers affected by suicide and bereavement) as the stimulus for staff and patient engagement around this complex subject. The artistic content enabled us to have conversations with patients and staff alike, using the project as the catalyst for conversation. With funding from the National Lottery Community Fund, we were able to produce a book of the work and host a launch event with journalist and mental health advocate Alastair Campbell.

Internally, the project supported education around suicide and stigma for our staff by working with arts and mental health advocate Angela Samata.⁸ Angela provided suicide prevention training open to all of our staff in primary care.

Participatory arts sessions were run for our patients exploring the impact of suicide on them, either as a suicide survivor themselves or as someone bereaved by suicide. We ran

these sessions using photography, with each session differently themed. They provided the opportunity for patients to open up about the impact of suicide through a creative, process driven approach. Talking to others helped them feel less alone.

We also ran a session for clinical workers to explore the impact that their work in supporting people living with suicidal crisis has on their own mental health. We often think about how we can support our patients living through mental health difficulties, but this project also gave voices to those who experience secondary trauma from working with others. All of these sessions were supported by a psychotherapist being present in the sessions.

“I enjoyed sharing experiences of working with similar clients and the opportunity for creative expression.”

Clinical worker

Photo courtesy of the Free Space Project.



⁸ angelasamata.co.uk/about.

Exhibitions within our clinical building are a core part of our programme and often act as a guide for events such as workshops and artist talks. A previous mental health exhibition, *In the Mind*, focused on comic illustrations by artists Elsbeth van der Poel and Kathryn Watson. The exhibition focused on their own lived experiences, with Kathryn sharing her experiences of being a GP living with mental health difficulties. Recently in 2021 we have exhibited *Unseen* by photographer Suzie Larke. Commissioned by UNLIMITED, *Unseen* uses conceptual and magically constructed portraits that represent the phenomenology of mental illness based on interviews with people with lived experience. Each time we exhibit works focusing on mental health it is an opportunity for patients to use the artwork as a catalyst for often difficult conversations about their own mental health.

For a number of years we ran various iterations of a project called Focus on Feelings, run in collaboration by an artist and an art psychotherapist. The project was not an art therapy project but described as a project for people living with mental health difficulties with potential therapeutic benefits. We deliberately avoided using medicalised language or the inclusion of diagnoses, but let participants self-describe the difficulties they were facing. Referrals came directly from our clinical staff or registered patients could also self-refer.

In the sessions individual participants identified something they would like to work on over the coming months. For some it was anxiety and how that manifests in extreme nail biting, for others it was psychosis and a cycle of hospital admissions.

A key part of the initial sessions focused on building up a visual vocabulary for how to represent these complex feelings – whether it be through photography, painting or other creative mediums. Each week participants would make during the session with a guided discussion, with extra tasks to do as homework. Building trust to enable sharing and reflections was an essential part of the sessions. Many of the participants reported that the project felt that it gave voice to a mental health issue that they found difficult to express verbally. It started as an opportunity for them to share how they felt with their doctor through creating art as opposed to solely using words.

The Hera Project

(Healing, Expressive and Recovery Arts)

BY EMMA DREW

OVERVIEW

The Hera Project is an artist-led workshop programme for patients in NHS Primary Care in Brighton & Hove. Participants have a wide range of mental health concerns, and many people also live with physical health problems. We offer creative activities that people might find interesting, engaging and enjoyable.

Hera was incorporated into a new charity in 2016 – the Robin Hood Health Foundation. The workshops are free to anyone in the city facing ongoing health challenges, online and in person.

Our belief is that creativity is a basic right, regardless of health status, and that a healthy life includes creative activity.

Hera offers group activities in visual art, creative writing, photography, dance, singing and creative coding, and we partner with **Fabrica Gallery** to offer stone-carving and textile art.

Groups run as a weekly drop-in, or in eight-week blocks. People can choose what they would like to try. Where we can, we offer pathways forward to participatory programmes with other arts and culture organisations.

We also host walks, talks and outings when COVID-19 and resources allow, and train GPs.

“I love the Hera group, using different parts of my brain to create in new fresh ways and explore different themes each week. It’s also good to connect as I’m housebound due to my health. I’m really enjoying it.”

Participant

CHALLENGES

We face various challenges in integrating with local mental health services. Information about Hera was received enthusiastically by our local Wellbeing Service, but that has not converted into referrals, most of which still come from GPs. In addition, the number of people suffering with poor mental health in our city is much higher than the UK average, so services seem to be struggling, and relations with our local CCG can be inconsistent.

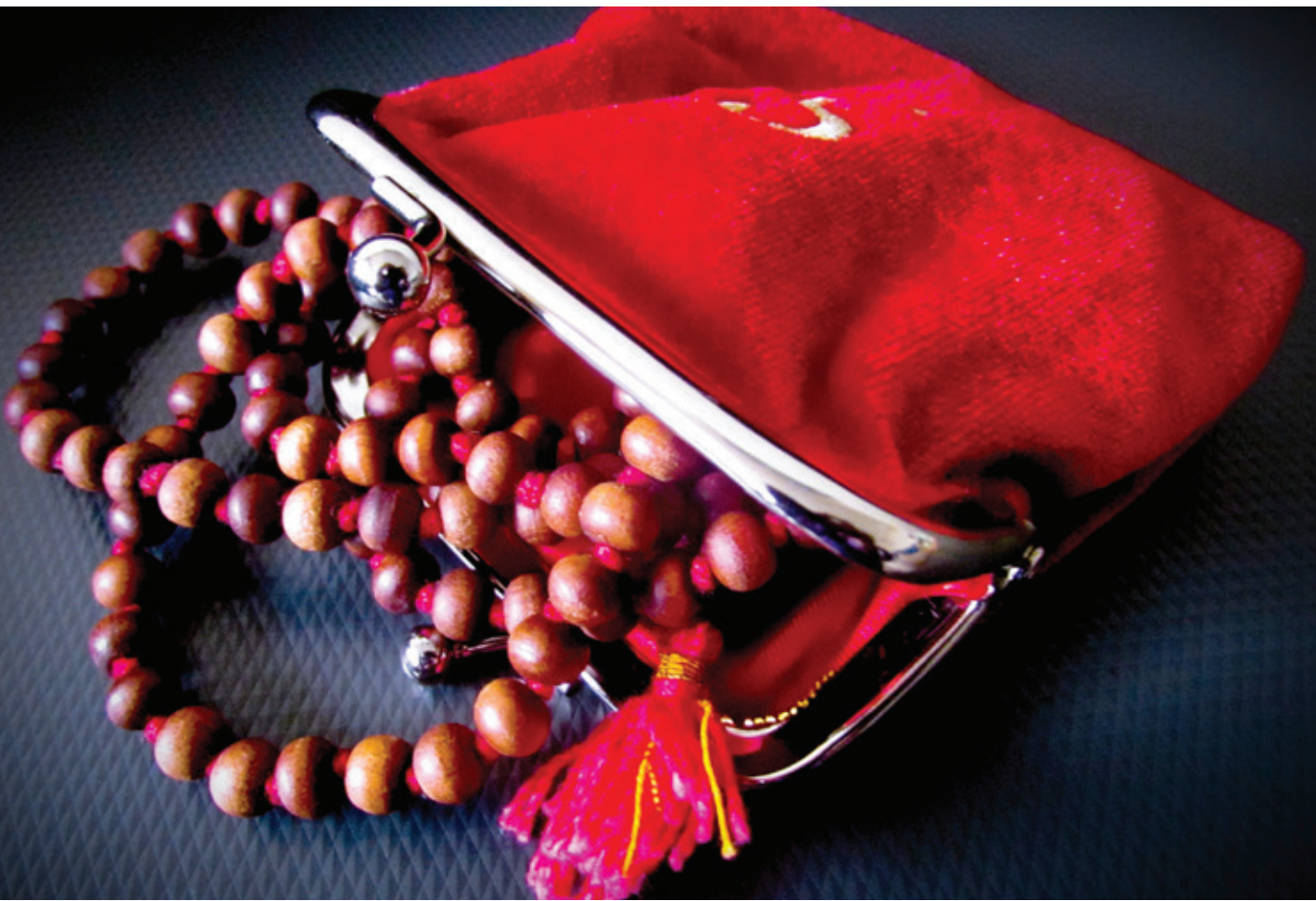
We hope to access funding this year to provide a creative link for people being discharged from secondary mental health care, so that the transition back to primary care is more supported and less traumatic.

PROGRAMME HIGHLIGHTS

Dancing Ourselves

Led by choreographer Rosaria Gracia, these popular and accessible weekly sessions provide a joyful mood-boost. Rosaria is an international specialist in Latin Dance, a researcher, and a former member of Brighton’s Carnival Collective. She also has training in supporting people with movement disorders such as Parkinson’s, who we know often struggle with their mental health too. Currently almost 50 people are enrolled and attending online. This has enabled access for people who would otherwise not attend, for mobility, health or religious reasons. The workshop can include people who remain seated or wish to have their video link turned off.

Due to the success of this group, we began a new dance session in 2020 that focuses on tap, jazz and music theatre dance, and is led by Rachel McKeague-Pittman, a former finalist on Britain’s Got Talent.



“Red Tent”. Photo courtesy of Sally Khatun / Hera.

Sing for Better Health

Choir leader Udita Everett has four decades of experience and has run a weekly singing session for our older patients since 2014. We know from a Brighton & Sussex Medical School evaluation that 81% of people taking part made new friends, and around 75% reported improved mood as well as breathing. The group performs annually at the Brighton Festival Fringe and at other events. Participants very often live with extreme social isolation, bereavement, and a range of mental and physical health challenges. Given the unfamiliarity of online technologies to some older people, we worked with AbilityNet to provide members of this group with one-to-one support to help them use Zoom/Teams – which has been a huge success.

“It has been a highlight of the week over the past twelve weeks – and the session and the homework projects have become an important part of my weekly routine.”

Participants

Two features of Udita’s group are the strength and proliferation of new friendships, and the number of participants who go on to join other singing groups around the city – all made possible by technology. This has been something of a silver lining for people in our community who have suffered the most during the pandemic.

Creative writing

Smaller creative writing groups meet three times a year for eight-week runs, exploring diverse writers, and trying out different narrative techniques and genres. The group is intimate, kind, respectful and safe, and often gets to grips with quite challenging pieces – but no-one is forced to disclose or do anything they don't want to do. The focus is on enjoyment. It is led by Emma Drew, author of *The Whole Person Recovery Handbook*, who has over a decade's experience of working with people in recovery and a background in literature. Health conditions that have been reported in this group include agoraphobia, anxiety & depression, addiction, PTSD, body dysmorphia, eating disorders and psychotic episodes, alongside COPD, kidney disease, Hepatitis C, lupus, multiple sclerosis, fibromyalgia and persistent UTIs. Recently, the group has tackled journals and memoirs as a way to develop insights and new techniques for managing difficult feelings during the pandemic – and to find and exercise their unique voices.

“ I am feeling better in myself, a new awareness. I've taken to carrying a camera whenever I go out. I feel relaxed in doing so, it's more like meditation, thinking through the problems of getting the shot right. ”

Participant

Each year Hera hosts an exhibition at our host practice, Brighton Health & Wellbeing Centre, as part of the Artists' Open House programme. Contributions in a variety of media come from both participants and artists (and sometimes NHS colleagues). Each year there is a theme – in 2021 it is Freedom, and will include visual art, text, video and music.

In 2020 we have partnered with **Creative Future, The Old Market and Diversity & Ability** on a three-year programme to widen access to Hera activities, and to provide training, networking and commissioning opportunities for freelance artists in health to showcase their work.

Watch words for Hera groups are Creativity and Community – peer support and professional arts expertise combine to generate a kind of magic that lingers in the memory and impacts profoundly on the culture of our home practice.

“ Overall positive. The course has reignited an old hobby, photography and created a new one. Bird watching. It has also motivated me to go out for regular early morning walks. This has been a sanity saver as I live in the north Laine so it's very unsafe for a medically vulnerable person to be out in the daytime. The social aspect of the group was also very uplifting. It has really helped my stress level and anxiety issues. ”

Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust

BY TIM SAYERS MSC RMN

OVERVIEW

Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust (LPT) provides mental health, learning disability and community health services across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland. The Arts in Mental Health Coordinators at LPT, Tim Sayers and Lydia Towsey, have been in post since 2007. The post was initially an Arts Council England funded pilot but following the initial success of the pilot, the Coordinators have now been firmly established within the Trust for a number of years. The Coordinators deliver an extensive range of artistic programmes, both in house and in partnership with external arts organisations, with an emphasis on service delivery to people with severe and enduring mental health conditions, vulnerable or socially excluded mental health service users and people with complex needs.

The Coordinators work is essential in delivering an evidence-based recovery focused model of care, allowing service users to engage in meaningful activity, and to become more of an inclusive part of the communities in which they live. Accordingly, the Coordinators are dedicated to a programme of research and evaluation of their work, with outcomes contributing to the growing body of evidence that engagement with participatory arts in mental health activity can play a significant role in mental health recovery. In delivering projects their work is led by the CHIME validated recovery model of care (Leamy et al 2011)⁹ with artistic outcomes measured against Tim's own research paper (Sayers & Stickley 2018).¹⁰

CHALLENGES

Alongside the usual challenges to service delivery around capacity and funding issues, the major challenge that the coordinators experience is a lack of understanding, in some quarters, as to the value that the arts can play in supporting recovery in mental health care, which can lead to service users missing out on the opportunities that can be offered from their service. In particular, mental health professionals can find it difficult to understand why the Arts in Mental Health Team accept open referrals without paperwork and risk assessments, and then subsequently treat participants as artists with artistic strengths, not as mental health service users with problems and disabilities.

“I came to your service as a Forensic Mental Health Service User with a bad reputation, now I am proud to describe myself as a writer, artist, comedian and performer. How good is that?”

Robert (see case study overleaf)

PARTNERSHIPS

One of the most significant factors in the success of the coordinators is the relationship that they enjoy with various arts organisations, in particular, with the **BrightSparks: Arts in Mental Health Group**.

⁹ Leamy, Mary & Bird, Victoria & Le Boutillier, Clair & Williams, Julie & Slade, Mike. (2011). Conceptual framework for personal recovery in mental health: Systematic review and narrative synthesis. *The British Journal of Psychiatry: The Journal of Mental Science*. 199. 445-52.

¹⁰ Sayers, Tim & Stickley, Theodore. (2018). *Participatory arts, recovery and social inclusion. Mental Health and Social Inclusion*.

A case study

Robert was referred to the Coordinators by a Community Psychiatric Nurse from Forensic Mental Health Services. No information was shared about Robert except that he displayed creative writing talents. On hearing about the referral, one mental health professional stated that Robert 'was a bad one', had a violent history and that the Coordinators should 'keep as far away from him as possible'.

Robert was immediately invited along to the LPT/BrightSparks Creative Writing Group at the local mental health unit where he soon became a regular attendee, without incident.

Over a period of time he then decided to have a go at visual arts and joined our Arts Group based at The Attenborough Arts Centre in Leicester. He became a capable visual artist and was supported in staging an exhibition of his work at the centre which was opened by one of the Directors at an official opening event.

Since that time Robert has:

- **participated** in The LPT/BrightSparks Comedy Asylum Project and performed as part of Leicester Comedy Festival;
- **participated** in the Showcase Live Creative Writing Project and performed at venues including Nottingham Playhouse and Derby Quad;
- **joined** The Smoothie Sound System with which he has performed at venues including De Montfort University and Core Arts in London;
- **been involved** in multiple artistic publications, exhibitions, recordings and films;
- **taken on** a senior role within The BrightSparks: Arts in Mental Health Group.

This relationship is based on the following strengths:

- 1.** BrightSparks is a registered Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), but is predominantly led by an open group of mental health service users with diverse backgrounds and mental health conditions.
- 2.** BrightSparks largely apply for funding with the Coordinators at LPT offering matched, in-kind, funding in supporting the delivery of artistic projects and supporting the mental health needs of service users who participate in the projects.
- 3.** In effect this allows BrightSparks to engage with the most challenging mental health service users, in particular those under the care of forensic and other specialist mental health services. As the Coordinators are based within the local NHS Trust, they can access the

necessary information and contacts to ensure early, effective intervention should a person's mental health deteriorate.

As time goes on, the Coordinators are developing similar relationships with other arts organisations allowing these organisations to deliver to a more diverse range of mental health service users in the knowledge that the Coordinators can be called upon to share their mental health expertise or to directly support service user participants where necessary.

The ethos of the Coordinators is that they cannot expect arts organisations to deliver arts in mental health projects to those with the greatest need, unless they offer the necessary support to those organisations in delivering that work.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

We sincerely feel that all mental health trusts should have Arts in Mental Health Coordinators in post and suggest that experienced community mental health arts managers contact the Chief Executive of their local mental health trust and start a conversation around creating similar posts to ours. We would be happy to support new applications and to share our original Arts Council England application to support to new ambitious applications.

We also suggest that arts in mental health organisations approach their local Recovery Colleges to start conversations around delivering arts in mental health courses, both around the benefits of arts in mental to service users and also specific arts courses.

The biggest asset that we have within our service is an extensive knowledge of the evidence base that demonstrates the benefits of engagement in participatory arts projects in promoting recovery for mental health service users. We recommend that arts organisations ensure that evaluations and research of their projects are specifically led by recovery focussed outcomes, which will put them in a strong position to put proposals forward to their local mental health trusts for partnership working.

Open Arts, Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust

BY JO KEAY

OVERVIEW

Open Arts is a community-based arts project working across Essex, run as one of the charities managed within the Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust.

We help people improve and maintain their own mental health and wellbeing through a focus on creative learning, social inclusion and self-expression rather than mental health. We offer 12-week courses of 2-hour taster sessions in visual arts. We also offer drama, digital arts and photography courses that help develop new skills and confidence. But most importantly, we offer a positive and productive environment that has been part of many people's recovery. Follow-up studio placements are available for participants who want to pursue their creative activity more independently with professional support.

Participants are referred by a mental health worker or they can self-refer, as the project is advertised publicly too. Courses are run by local artists with support from volunteers, many of whom are themselves course graduates. They take place in community venues and materials are provided, including a sketchbook for personal use. A gallery visit is arranged for each course, opportunities to exhibit are actively pursued, and in previous years optional accreditation was offered in partnership with Gateway Qualifications.

“If I feel bad, I think I've got art tomorrow. I look forward to it.”

“It's changed my life completely, I was sat indoors on the settee just vegetating.”

Members' feedback

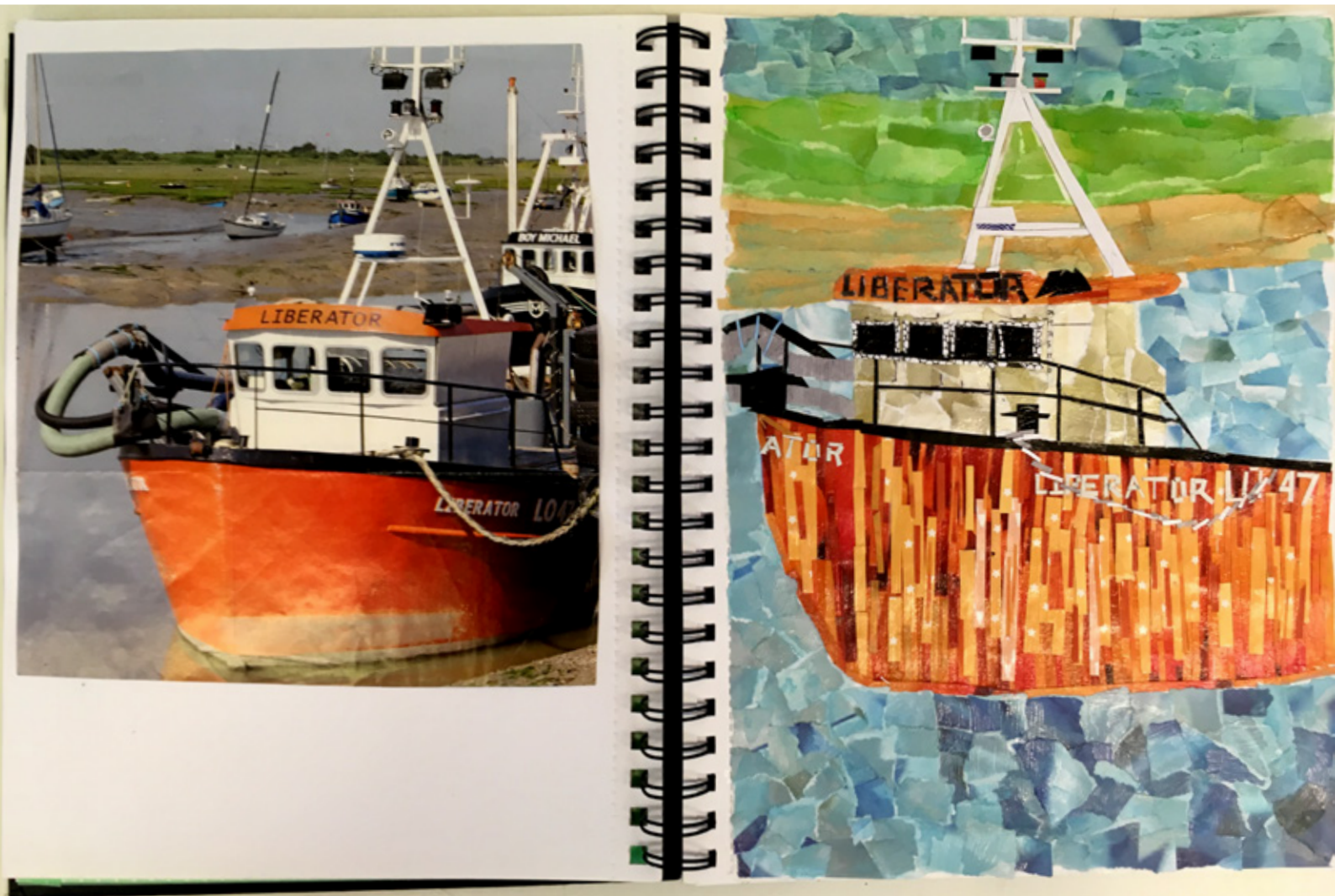
CHALLENGES

An initial challenge was the need to persuade mental health workers of the value of participatory arts and to enable artists to feel confident in working with people with mental health problems. Partnering with a local university to carry out a service evaluation was helpful in demonstrating the benefits, but most powerful was the progress towards recovery workers saw in people they referred. For artists, commissioning Mental Health First Aid training boosted confidence, alongside developing clear protocols for risk assessment and support. Twice-yearly workshops bringing the two groups together also helps overcome barriers.

Funding is of course another perpetual challenge and key here has been adaptability, for example, downsizing or suspending elements of the service as funding has ebbed and flowed.

PROGRAMME HIGHLIGHTS

Our studio was established in partnership with the **Association for Cultural Advancement through Visual Art (ACAVA)** and **Essex County Council** and is based at a former fire station which has been converted into an arts and culture facility for local artists and community groups. Here, Open Arts participants and volunteers are offered the opportunity to develop their individual arts practice over a longer period of time, with the support of local arts practitioners. Studio members are offered use of the facilities for two to six hours each week, initially for six months although this can be extended depending on take-up and needs. A studio manager provides professional support with assistance from a volunteer. Members use the opportunity to explore techniques and media they enjoyed on their course in more depth, and the regular sessions mean a real camaraderie develops.



Collage from torn paper pieces. Photo courtesy of Open Arts.

“I am not able to work but I feel maybe I am not bad at this. It gives me something inside which means it is worth being me. I run myself down, now I can say ‘I can do this’.”

Member feedback

Members also have the option to sell their artwork, take part in open day events, exhibitions, local art trails and competitions. Over the years members whose placement is coming to an end have gone on to establish their own art groups independently of Open Arts, paying a small fee for use of the facilities.

In addition to running our own courses, we also seek out opportunities to deliver courses beyond visual arts in partnership with specialist organisations. Examples include a percussion course run with **Eastern Arts**, culminating in a recording of the group’s work, and drama groups with the **Workers’ Educational Association** and **DMB Arts** which produced a DVD. We deliver digital art courses in partnership with **Metal**, while textile sessions in partnership with **Create98** created silk and batik flags used to promote Open Arts at art exhibitions and open days.

Each organisation’s role is to provide the lead artist to facilitate the courses alongside an Open Arts support artist and volunteers.

Jo Keay, Open Arts Manager
www.openartsessex.org @OpenArtsEssex

ReCoCo

(Recovery College Collective)

BY ALISDAIR CAMERON

OVERVIEW

ReCoCo provides a peer led, peer delivered education and support service for Newcastle, Gateshead, and beyond, where people can learn from each other's insights, skills and lived experience. We are led and directed by people who use mental health services/experience mental distress. Our core activities are peer production of:

- courses on self-management, psychoeducation, and life skills
- groups for mutual support
- groups for creative, physical, artistic, musical, recreational, and therapeutic activities
- training of our students in facilitation, community development, peer support work, and volunteering skills
- training for partner and collaborating organisations, their staff and service users
- training and placements for medical students, student nurses, trainee clinical psychologists, social workers and Approved Mental Health Professionals (AMHPs)
- user views and perspectives to inform service and system design
- research, evidence-gathering and evaluation
- community enhancement, developing skills and people within communities.

We offer both courses (fixed number of sessions) and groups (open-ended) based on ideas and needs expressed by our service users. Most are delivered by service users themselves utilising their own skills and talents. We do encourage everyone to look outside the mental health bubble though and we collaborate widely including with many artists and culture organisations. This leads to co-production, removing the boundaries between mental

health and other sectors, between service user and practitioner, all working in a shared enterprise.

CHALLENGES

One of the biggest impediments to integrating arts and mental health is the desire to use arts therapeutically, i.e. for a health outcome. Arts should be for art's sake and not contingent upon or subservient to some other purpose. Obviously, arts activities can benefit people's mental health, but that is ancillary to the art, not its *raison d'être*.

A further barrier in mental health relates to agency: service users ought not to be merely the subject matter of art, accessories for professional artists' output, nor should their identity as a service user overshadow their identity as arts practitioners in their own right. Funding is too often tied to arts therapy on the one hand, or artists using service users as raw material on the other, and both are instances of professionals 'doing' to people from a superior, privileged position. This can be avoided but working mutually and reciprocally relies upon lasting relationships and iterative processes which take both time and commitment.

“I loved the sessions, it was like radio, but I could see other people's reactions as they listened. And then we worked together which helped me to make my ideas more play-like.”

“It was fascinating watching peoples faces close up on Zoom as they reacted, listening to what I'd written.”

Alphabetti Theatre participants

PROGRAMME HIGHLIGHTS

We have a range of longstanding partnerships with arts organisations and collectives, and they share our vision of open-source, non-hierarchical experimentation and collaboration.

One is with **Alphabetti Theatre**, with whom we've co-produced theatrical pieces, stand-up comedy shows and, through Covid-19 lockdowns, listening parties. In these sessions, participants listen to a theatrical work in progress, a draft play (as for obvious reasons live performances are out of the question). They pass comment, express their opinions, and then embark upon their own creative writing practice. Some of the writing generated in turn becomes a draft play, which is recorded and becomes the basis for a future session.

“ I liked the way one thing led to another, so we had separate pieces by different people, but in a way they linked to each other. ”

Alphabetti Theatre participant

Continuing with the lockdown theme, because of our very well-established relationship with the **New Bridge Project artists collective**,¹¹ we co-produced a newspaper (because it's a format with which we are very familiar, using it for our prospectuses, and which we've found has a real tangible appeal as a physical artefact for people). The Lockdown Gazette has had two editions to date, each of 10,000 copies, distributed through community centres, food banks, with local authority Covid parcels, etc.

“ The newspaper let me get my work to a different audience, not just people I know. And the feedback's been great. ”

“ It made me feel part of something bigger, getting delivered to people's homes. My work! ”

“ I normally work alone, but this got me looking outwards a bit more and I hope my work helped others feel less alone. ”

Lockdown Gazette contributors

Its content features some Covid-related and wellbeing advice, but is predominantly an artistic response to the pandemic. Contributions have come from people with lived experience of mental health problems and professional artists alike (not that those are discrete categories), community groups and individuals, with no distinctions made along status or social identity lines: there is simply the output, and its creator's name.

Alisdair Cameron, ReCoCo Co-Director
www.recoverycoco.com @RecoveryCoC

¹¹ See for example this exhibition by New Bridge Project: Throughout the Fragment of Infinity That We Have Come to Know, 2020, Chris Alton, chrisalton.com/Throughout-the-Fragment-of-Infinity-That-We-Have-Come-to-Know-2020.

South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust

OVERVIEW

The South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust (SLaM) provide the widest range of NHS mental health services in the UK. Our staff serve a local population of nearly two million people, and we have more than 230 services including inpatient wards, outpatient and community services. We provide inpatient care for over 5,000 people each year and we treat more than 45,000 patients in the community in Lambeth, Southwark, Lewisham and Croydon.

As well as serving the communities of south London, we provide more than 50 specialist services for children and adults across the UK and beyond.

South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust has a long tradition of offering creative activities as an integral part of service users' rehabilitation. In aiming to provide a progressive service, it invested in a range of art studios and workshops to facilitate creative expression and to encourage clients to develop their skills and confidence in working with a range of creative media, both to assist in their personal recovery and to help them establish meaningful roles in the community.

CHALLENGES

The biggest challenges stem from differing perceptions of the role of the arts in healthcare and the impact that has on the availability and accessibility of funding streams. Within mainstream healthcare, arts funding is seldom seen as critical and is often not prioritised or seen as a luxury or add-on.

It is therefore difficult for healthcare staff to access consistent committed arts resources from healthcare budgets. If they wish to develop creative activities, they often need

to spend scarce time and resources applying for charitable funds or engaging with existing charities who may have differing priorities. Such funding is often time-limited or project focused, where what is required is consistent longer-term funding to provide confidence and reliability.

Aside from funding challenges, there are practical and operational challenges. We operate across a large NHS organisation, split across a geographically disperse area. Departments have different needs and capabilities in terms of provision, supporting short to long stay patients and the widest range of mental health services in the UK.

“No better way for me to keep my – very real – anxieties at bay, at least for short periods. I’m ever so focused when I stitch, cut, glue... And finishing something is just the best feeling!”

Patient

PROGRAMME HIGHLIGHTS

Bethlem Gallery is situated at Bethlem Royal Hospital.

The Gallery, funded by Maudsley Charity and other funding bodies, has a wide remit to develop artists' professional practice, engage the public in workshops and events including artist-led walks, and explore the role of artist-led research and agency in clinical care.

The physical space incorporates a gallery and a small studio space, where people can make or buy art and visit exhibitions. We work independently, but closely with the hospitals' occupational therapy team and our services are accessible to all hospital in-patients.



The Bethlem Gallery. Photo courtesy of the Bethlem Gallery / South London & Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust.

The Gallery works with current and former service users and is a precious, non-clinical space within the hospital, a place where art is practised for art's sake, not therapy. We support artists to develop their professional practice through exhibitions, workshops, residencies and commissions, and campaign for arts in healthcare settings. We offer artist-led workshops to both former and current patients and the general public and collaborate on projects with other organisations. The Gallery holds an annual art fair where anyone connected to the Hospital Trust is invited to submit artwork for sale.

Short courses run by Bethlem Artists: In Clay

During the pandemic the Gallery has switched to online courses, and has commissioned Bethlem Artists to run free, short courses online for small groups of former or current service users. In 2020, we ran a course about artists' books – four sessions over four weeks – and in 2021 we ran a course about working with clay.

We decided to commission pairs of artists so that they could support each other to devise the workshop, use their skills in collaborating, and push each other's practice.

“I enjoyed very much delivering the clay workshop to patients, staff and former patients – I know through my own experience the power of clay-play in improving wellbeing and bringing people together.”

Artist Karta Kaur

Running the courses online enabled participation from more isolated artists whom the Gallery had found it hard to engage since the start of the pandemic. The Gallery team helped participants to get online, providing tablets and running practice Microsoft Teams sessions, for example.

“Working with the clay felt really therapeutic and lovely to work with my hands. It was very valuable to me to be able to create alongside other people during lockdown.”

Patient

Open School Remote

As the first lockdown took hold, Bethlem Gallery, like many other organisations, switched to digital programming as a way of maintaining connections with our network of artists. *Open School Remote (OS_r)* was a reworking of *Open School*, an ongoing project on the hospital site that made use of the buildings and grounds as an impromptu space for making performative artworks. As the original project description stated, ‘*Open School* is not constrained by a formal curriculum, instructors or dedicated buildings. Instead, it is constituted by a set of practices or behaviours – activities that in some way question or make visible hidden aspects of the hospital site’. With much of the hospital site now out of bounds to residents and visitors, we had to think more carefully about how we would create and share assets that might help us through lockdown.

Hospital Rooms

During the COVID-19 pandemic, SLaM OTs have been collaborating with Hospital Rooms to run sessions of their digital arts school. These are live creative sessions streamed into mental health units and to the public every week, along with on-demand videos available on YouTube and their website. These have been very popular with our inpatient services and patients have created some wonderful art.

Arts Network

SLaM OTs have also worked with Arts Network to distribute their resource packs¹² created to introduce people to creative pursuits. They provide a printed booklet for people to engage with activities as this gives people a tangible

way to address boredom when in hospital, or social isolation, to engage with therapeutic arts-based projects and develop skills.

Bethlem Handmade Enterprise

Bethlem Handmade Enterprise was set up with support from the Maudsley Charity to extend the use of the Bethlem Hospital’s ceramic studio to provide opportunities for patients who were nearing discharge to develop confidence in their creative capabilities by participating in a vocationally oriented project. The project guided the participants to develop the skills necessary to design and manufacture a saleable ceramics collection and in doing so connect with a meaningful activity and fulfil their individual creative aspirations. Service users were expected to observe working norms in return for earning a therapeutic wage. The project also led to the opening of a new retail outlet in the Hospital called the Bethlem Makers Space where participants could gain confidence in retail skills.

Art in the Garden

The Bethlem Hospital’s art studio collaborates with the Walled Garden project and the Bethlem Men’s Shed (both supported by the Maudsley Charity) to put on regular art events in the Occupational Therapy Walled Garden to showcase art work of service users which celebrates the connection between creativity, the natural world and mental wellbeing. Over a number of years, the art works have included sculpture, woodwork and textiles produced in the Hospital’s occupational therapy studios and workshops. The Walled Garden has contributed by hosting not just the exhibitions, but regular art classes, particularly during the summer months and The Men’s Shed project has assisted by building plinths for sculptures. The project has been part of the Chelsea Fringe (a creative off-shoot of the Chelsea Flower Show). Although cancelled last year because of the pandemic, it is due to return this year and we are currently working on this year’s input.

With thanks to staff at the Bethlem Galley, Maudsley Charity and South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust www.slam.nhs.uk/about-us/who-we-are/art-and-history
@Bethlem_Gallery @maudsleycharity @MaudsleyNHS

¹² artsnetwork.org.uk/wp/stay-connected.

South West Yorkshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust

BY PHIL WALTERS, HELEN BOUTLE,
LAUREN IREDALE AND SIAN SMITH

OVERVIEW

South West Yorkshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (SWYPFT) provides community, mental health, and learning disability services to a population of over one million people in Barnsley, Calderdale, Kirklees, Wakefield and forensic services in the wider Yorkshire and Humber region. The Trust works across all age groups from child and adolescent services right through to working with older people. The organisation's mission was co-produced with people who use services and their carers to 'help people reach their potential and live well in their communities' by providing high-quality care in the right place at the right time.

The Trust's mission is key to the fact creative activities have been allowed to flourish through supporting this non-medical focus. In 2011, SWYPFT developed its Creative Minds strategy to demonstrate its commitment to having creative approaches to service delivery and provide a framework to build on current good practice. The strategy encouraged and promoted more partnerships that offered opportunities for individuals and groups to develop and grow creatively. **Creative Minds** developed into a charity in 2015 that builds community partnerships and co-funds creative projects across the organisation.

CHALLENGES

In terms of challenges to developing this work, it can be quite difficult to change NHS culture. Clearly there is a predominance of medical thinking and creative approaches can be seen by some as soft and fluffy and not producing clinical outcomes. This takes time to change and we have developed a community storytelling approach with participants

explaining how transforming creativity can be. The NHS can also be quite slow in terms of supporting innovation, especially where decision-making needs to be quite rapid to respond to new opportunities. All community partners are signed up as preferred suppliers, so we are ready to work together and we can join up community opportunities and provide match funding to develop projects together.

However, Creative Minds is now in its tenth year and continues to develop and the SWYPFT is a much more creative organisation. We have built on good practice and more ideas are generated internally, including activities in the Trust's Recovery Colleges.

PROGRAMME HIGHLIGHTS

We are supporting a new approach in Calderdale working across the health and social care networks, illustrated here by the partnership we have developed with **Artworks** (The Everybody School of Art).

“Artworks has had a major positive impact on my wellbeing. I have something to do that I care very much about that I can immerse myself in freeing up any negative thoughts.

It has allowed me to connect with and on occasion deal with my emotions.

It has increased my confidence not just with my artwork but also interaction with others.

The support from the directors and others at Artworks is priceless. ”

Participant feedback



Photos of workshop participants at Everybody Arts, formerly Artworks, in Halifax. Photo by Matt Radcliffe.

Artworks has been using art to aid recovery and improve mental health and wellbeing for people living in Calderdale for over 10 years. This work began thanks to the support of Creative Minds and a shared intuition that a simple drawing class might make people feel better. At that time we didn't know what kind of good this might do for the people who took part but over the years we have come to see, time and time again, the unquestionable positive impact art and creativity have on people's mental health and wellbeing.

Each person has their own story of transformation to tell, ranging from being able to leave the house, taking pleasure in life events, volunteering, returning to work, starting higher education and on more than one occasion saving a person's life.

Artworks are now working with Creative Minds and other partners from the public, cultural and third sectors to develop a creative social prescribing offer in Calderdale.

Another partner, **S2R**, provide mental health support in Kirklees and have been a Creative Minds partner since 2011. The partnership with Creative Minds has been highly successful. Creative Minds' support and funding for example has enabled S2R to pilot new ideas, including a public place where people with mental health issues could display and sell their artwork in a shopping mall.

Creative Minds also provided partner funds for the first environmental project in Kirklees so that people could gain better access to the outdoors and carry out a range of nature projects.

S2R offer a wide range of creative activities and learning, suggested by the people who use their service, for example, purchasing equipment like weaving looms and textile workshops and bringing vulnerable people together to create a sculpture that toured around Kirklees.

Lastly, Creative Minds also partners with **Creative Recovery**, a people-led charity that has been pioneering arts for health practice around Barnsley for over a decade. Their work became established around the same time as Creative Minds so we have 'grown up' together. The partnership began with a 'Live Arts Café', developed over a five-year period in response to a need (identified by SWYPFT Staff and service users) for a safe, creative space in the evenings. Acting a community hub, the café has been able to welcome patients from acute psychiatric wards, offering a break from the hospital environment and connection to a crucial peer support network, pre- and post-discharge. The project brought together

artists and Trust staff in a way that enabled both teams to try new approaches and share skills. Our partnership has continued with music projects, provision for acute wards, and more recently with the development of creative approaches working alongside CAMHS in Wetherby Prison.

Having a partnership between an NHS organisation and a creative organisation has been very beneficial. As well as demonstrating confidence through part funding some projects, together we have been able to grow the evidence base and profile of arts for health work. We continue to scope out new opportunities for joint working in order to broaden our collective offer in response to the changing and increasing needs we face locally.

Phil Walters, Creative Minds

www.southwestyorkshire.nhs.uk/creative-minds/home @allofusinmind

Helen Boutle, Creative Recovery

www.creativerecovery.co.uk @CreativRecovery

Lauren Iredale, Artworks

www.theartworks.org.uk @artworks_cic

Sian Smith, S2R

www.s2r.org.uk @CreateSpaceS2R



Silk and batik flag
created by Create98
with Open Arts.
Photo courtesy of
Open Arts.

Make Your Mark, Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust

BY LUCY WELLS

OVERVIEW

Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (SPFT) is a large Mental Health Trust serving communities right across Sussex, providing NHS care for people with mental health problems and learning disabilities and also providing a range of specialist services across South East England. We care for people of all ages, from children and young people through to older people with conditions such as dementia.

Services are provided in a wide range of places including hospitals, community clinics, people's homes and GP practices.

Make Your Mark (MYM) is SPFT's Arts & Health service. Founded in 2015 under Psychological & Therapeutic Services, in 2019 it moved to come under the Trust's Participation Directorate (alongside Peer Support, Recovery & Discovery Colleges, Chaplaincy & Spirituality, Family-Friends-Carers service, and People's Participation).

Make Your Mark's mission and purpose is to develop multi-arts experiences and practice across services to help us tell stories, transform environments and share new understandings of health and human experience. By integrating creativity into the fabric of health care, we strive to create new possibilities for health and wellbeing, making a difference in the lives of individuals, groups and communities, whilst also creating amazing art and cultural experiences that have value in the wider artistic and cultural landscape of our society.

SPFT provide extensive and brilliant psychological and therapeutic services, which often include the use of arts practice such as music, visual art, etc. However, Make Your Mark was born out of desire to utilise the power of the arts outside of the 'therapy room', finding

ways to embed arts and cultural activity across services, connect artists, writers, makers, performers, etc. and arts organisations with those using and delivering services, forging meaningful and mutually beneficial partnerships with external arts/cultural projects, groups and organisations. This has included engaging service users in participatory arts projects, creative courses delivered by and collaboration with artists and makers, and artists commissioned to create artworks for clinical sites.

CHALLENGES

With such a huge and diverse organisation spanning a large and diverse geography, come not just opportunities but also its challenges! With wide and eclectic use of creative activity across the Trust, having a centralised, strategic and consistent approach that responds to this diversity can be one of those challenges. And whilst there is certainly a general enthusiasm and appetite for creative activity across the organisation, existing pressures on services and resources can be a challenging environment/atmosphere in which to bring art and forge and embed an understanding of its value to people and spaces. Work around supporting and developing a culture in which new ways of working can be integrated is always ongoing. Additionally, while the role of the MYM lead is funded by the Trust, project and programme delivery is only made possible through working alongside the Trust's charity, Heads On, to secure funding. This integral partnership working of course has its benefits (partnerships, networks, etc. both internal and external) but can also have challenging impacts on maintaining consistency and ensuring sustainability.

PROGRAMME HIGHLIGHTS

Make Your Mark has developed and delivered numerous exciting projects over the past five years, all made possible through funds raised by Heads On and partnership working is always at its heart. Three key ones that really demonstrate this are:

Recovery College Arts Courses Project, 2016

Make Your Mark collaborated with **Sussex Recovery College** to develop, deliver and evaluate seven arts-based recovery college courses.

Each course was co-designed and co-delivered by a professional artist and a peer trainer with lived experience of mental health challenges, each taking place at a cultural venue in Sussex with the aim of building stronger links between the arts and health sectors, supporting greater access to the arts for people with mental health challenges, and opening up cultural spaces to be more inclusive and representative of their communities.

This project included both visual arts, music, writing and dance and was delivered in **The Hawth** (Crawley) **Ropetackle Arts Centre** (Shoreham-by-Sea), **Towner Gallery** (Eastbourne), **Worthing Museum**, **Brighton Museum**, **De La Warr Pavilion** (Bexhill-on-Sea) and **Clair Hall** (Haywards Heath).

As well as creating some brilliant art, here are snippets of the feedback from students about the benefits of working with arts organisations and spaces, building self-confidence, and learning new skills.

“...It can be hard to go into [NHS] Trust places when you're not feeling good, just sort of triggering memories sometimes. I thought it was really good to be away from the Trust... I preferred it a lot, I thought it was more relaxed and informal.”

Participant

“I now belong to about four writing groups here in [town], which is really interesting. That saves my life.”

Participant

Year of Drawing, 2017-18

This epic year-long drawing project aimed to increase access to the arts for people facing mental health challenges and their carers, reduce stigma, build community and make quality art, all through participatory drawing events across Sussex and Hampshire.

We worked with four commissioned professional artists to deliver the project, and multiple arts partners including **Aspex Gallery** (Portsmouth), **Cass Sculpture Foundation** (Chichester), **De La Warr Pavilion** (Bexhill), **Fabrica** (Brighton), **The Hawth** (Crawley), **Hastings Contemporary** (then The Jerwood), **Phoenix Brighton**, **Royal Pavilion and Museums** (Brighton), **Southampton Art Gallery**, **Towner Gallery** (Eastbourne), and **Worthing Museum**.

The project was made up of three core participatory elements: public drawing workshops at cultural venues, pop-up studios in NHS inpatient and community mental health settings, and a series of drawing-based Recovery College workshops and courses. With over 1,000 active participants, over 27,000 audience attendees and many more accessing, viewing and using the online and digital outputs, it produced two digital exhibitions, three temporary public exhibitions, a book, materials and resources for inpatient settings, training, a public symposium, a Drawing and Health network and 12 permanent exhibitions in Sussex Partnership NHS settings.

Make For Tomorrow 2020-21

Make For Tomorrow (MFT) was our creative response to Covid-19 and all the additional pressures and difficulties this placed on our services users and staff. With gathering together physically off the table, MFT took art online and created a participatory digital multi arts programme, festival and mini-series for all service users, friends, families, carers, volunteers and staff of SPFT (and wider NHS Mental Health Trusts across England).

“ Make For Tomorrow has been a lifeline and reminder that art can save us – thank you! ”

Participant

Working in partnership with three brilliant organisations – arts partners **Hospital Rooms** and **Arts Over Borders** and tech partner **Cogapp**, we brought together performance and visual arts in one exciting interactive project.

Participants and audiences had access to regular creative digital workshops, courses and toolkits delivered by acclaimed visual artists, and live talks, discussions and performances by renowned actors, writers and cultural commentators. Content for the programme was artist-led and had a focus on imagining tomorrow, the beauty and challenges of optimism in the face of adversity, and shared humanity.

With over 1,000 live participants/audience members and a growing number of post-event views, MFT opened up unique opportunities for those often marginalised from cultural experiences during a particularly difficult time of stress and separation.

It brought people together, forming and forging community; new skills were learnt, creativity discovered and recovered; and experiences shared. It also gave artists a fresh way to connect with new audiences/ participants with diverse voices and stories that often go un-heard or unvalued, inspiring honest discussions, creating new and exciting artworks, and has created an archive of resources that groups and individuals can access, use and revisit anytime.

CASE STUDIES

Scotland

Found art, Owl in the Summerhouse.
Photo by Simon McAuley,
courtesy of Art in the Gart.



SCOTLAND

Overview

NHS Scotland is composed of 14 Regional Health Boards which offer primary, community and acute hospital services, including mental health as well as seven Special NHS Boards. There are a number of differences in provision and policy between Scotland and the other nations, for instance the greater degree of integration between health and social care. Social prescribing is arguably less well resourced than, for example, in England.

The Scottish Government's Mental Health Strategy 2017–2027 makes no explicit reference to creativity or the arts and Creative Scotland's strategy for 2014–2024 doesn't reference mental health, although it does emphasise the importance of equalities which by inference can mean people living with mental health problems.

Creative Scotland has financially supported the Scottish Mental Health Arts Festival for a number of years. The Festival is also part-funded by two Health Boards, Greater Glasgow & Clyde and NHS Lothian and several of its Regional Coordinators work in the NHS. A new membership body has started quite recently called Arts, Culture, Health and Wellbeing Scotland (ACHWS).

Art in Healthcare

This visual arts charity is based in Edinburgh and works across much of Scotland. It started life in 1991 affiliated to Paintings in Hospitals in London and became independent in 2005.

Art in Healthcare has three main services: it rents artworks from a prestigious collection to healthcare settings; using a team of professional artists it offers

creative workshops in community and care settings including a social prescribing scheme in Edinburgh called Room for Arts; and thirdly, its site specific commissions can combine new work for a healthcare setting with a tailor-made participation programme.

www.artinhealthcare.org.uk

Art in the Gart, Gartnavel Royal Hospital

BY FIONA SINCLAIR

OVERVIEW

Gartnavel Royal Hospital is a 187-bed, mental health facility based in the west end of Glasgow, Scotland. It provides inpatient, person-centred psychiatric care alongside a range of on-site services in Dietetics, Crisis Response and Outreach, Dentistry, Occupational Therapy, Podiatry, Physiotherapy, Spiritual Care, and Smoking Cessation. This range of clinical interventions is complemented by the Art in the Gart creative volunteer programme; a collaborative approach to self-expression and confidence building which supports mental health recovery by enabling access to meaningful and therapeutic activity, using the participatory arts and green space.

The Art in the Gart programme is curated by the Voluntary Services Manager.

ACTIVITIES

The content and growth of Art in the Gart is determined by the particular and personal interests of patients, who in sharing this information about themselves, offer an insight into their life before and beyond their mental health diagnosis and in so doing, add new activities to the programme which remain available long after the person has gone home.

This information is received as a *gift* by the Art in the Gart creative volunteer programme and has enabled the installation of creative activities as diverse as an annual outdoor music and community festival after a young adult shared his sadness at no longer being able to access summer music festivals as he is routinely in hospital during that season; a Sunday Opera Tea, thanks to a visiting family member sharing that her elderly relative was at one time an opera singer; to the installation of raised beds

in ward gardens after patients expressed how much they missed their gardens at home or remembered gardening with their parents as a time of calm and joy; and the creation of a gallery space to give creative expression a fixed space which can be viewed by patients, staff and public alike.

Thanks to the collaborative ethos, Art in the Gart enjoys access to the skills and expertise of a range of third sector organisations, who ensure high standards in workshop delivery and any final product and who have years of experience working across a range of age groups, individual interests and skills within the acute mental health context. This experience also is key in identifying and nurturing the potential for creativity which regularly surfaces within the patient groups.

This glimpse of the potential for creativity and self-expression in the acutely mentally ill is another gift to be treasured by all involved in the activity, helping build confidence and opening a door to a possible, different future beyond the present illness.

The green space on which Gartnavel Royal is sited since it was first built in 1843, is an important and much-used asset in supporting mental health recovery. Seating installed to offer viewpoints beyond the grounds draws the eye to the world beyond, giving echo to the future. Growing Spaces, reinstated and newly installed through the collaborative mechanism of the Green Exercise Partnership in 2013,¹³ offers a walled garden and summerhouse which are cared for by the Garden Volunteers who maintain and develop these spaces for creativity, outdoor exercise, reflection and gardening. The spaces are a resource used in the delivery of person-centred creative and therapeutic activities whether

13 www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/2019-02/Green%20Exercise%20Partnership%20-%20Briefing%20note.pdf.



Gallery, Art in the Gart. Photo by Simon McAuley.

by Occupational Therapy, Patient Activity Coordinators or third sector partners, artists and volunteers.

A core belief of the Art in the Gart programme is the power of shared creative spaces in challenging the ongoing stigma associated with mental illness. The green spaces, public art gallery, large-scale, outdoor public artworks installed on site and events which encourage and invite our neighbours onsite all contribute to increasing the awareness around mental illness, and hopefully encourage greater tolerance and understanding in the local community.

The programme reaches out beyond its walls to engage with community councils, local schools and nurseries, local events and festivals happening across the city, and has engaged with partner umbrella organisations including the **Scottish Mental Health Arts and Film Festival**, the **Glasgow Jazz Festival** and **Scotland's Garden Scheme**. This outside-in engagement encourages people to visit the site and offers an opportunity for Art in the Gart to capitalise on the resources such visitors

bring, for example by becoming trustees of The Charity for Gartnavel Royal Hospital which fundraises to support participative and therapeutic activity, not ordinarily resourced by NHS GGC, or by visiting the plant donation stall in the Gardens and in this way helping to fund the inputs needed to keep the gardens operational.

CHALLENGES

Art in the Gart does not have an operational budget. The main NHS GGC resource provided is that of the Voluntary Services Manager who curates the programme and partners with a variety of organisations, artists and specialists – for example **Project Ability**, **Common Wheel**, **Solar Bear Therapeutic Theatre**, **Glasgow EcoTrust**, **Trust Conservation Volunteers**, **Music in Hospitals and Care**, the **Royal Conservatoire of Scotland** to name but a few. Resources can be made available and financial resources obtained. In addition, the Endowments Funding Programme has provided occasional funding for patient-focused, participatory arts activities.

Resourcing the programme is time consuming, a constant unknown and requires a creative and resourceful approach; hence the involvement of external partners and creative volunteers who may be looking to gain experience whilst involved in a field of study relevant for the interests and needs of patients, which are in turn addressed by the Art in the Gart programme content. The Corporate Volunteer Team Building Programme is also an important physical resource and enables access to larger groups of people from companies keen to contribute to the wider community and mental health recovery.

There is an understanding and commitment to the role of participatory arts and creative expression from staff groups in Gartnavel Royal. The hospital has a long history of using creativity as part of a patient's care plan and recovery and opened the first Occupational Therapy unit in Scotland here on the Gartnavel site in 1922. Art in the Gart is a continuation of that heritage and commitment.

PROGRAMME HIGHLIGHTS

The Growing Spaces project operates through a partnership with Trust Conservation Volunteers. After collaborating on a successful funding application, a skilled horticulturalist was employed as Project Officer to support the Garden Volunteer to deliver, develop, and maintain two of the four Growing Spaces, mainly the walled garden and the summerhouse. The gardening sessions allow for a connection with nature and the outdoors which is missed by many who are in hospital. They are available for patients and staff, along with ward-based gardens, environmental arts activities, outdoor nature and biodiversity workshops and events which connect to the seasons. Again, these activities seek to encourage an outward connection.

“ While I was an in-patient at Gartnavel Royal, a Patient Activity Coordinator brought a group of us to the garden. I'd never seen it before and thought it was a magical place. I got in touch about volunteering after I was discharged. For the first couple of months there were times when I didn't feel like getting out of bed, but this feels like a safe place to come even when I'm not feeling good. That's because people respect your privacy and there's no judgement. The problem with depression is losing a sense of purpose and hope – the garden really helps with that. I enjoy the learning too: finding out how plants grow reinforces my sense of being able to learn. ”

Garden Volunteer, Katie

Participatory art workshops, delivered by the artists of Project Ability, offer patients the chance to express themselves in any medium, whether through a mosaic, water colour, ink, block print, words and language, or photography. These workshops can be ward-based or can use the Green Spaces as inspiration through the use of found objects, the site's history or its wildlife flora and fauna, or using the summerhouse to hold the workshops.

Tonic Arts, Edinburgh & Lothians Health Foundation

BY SUSAN GRANT

OVERVIEW

Tonic Arts, Edinburgh & Lothians Health Foundation (ELHF) delivers an award-winning health and wellbeing programme at NHS Lothian, enhancing the environment and enriching the experience. As well as managing an art collection of over 2,500 works, curating a series of hospital galleries and high-quality public art and design commissioning, Tonic Arts funds and delivers a thriving participatory arts programme.

NHS Lothian supports the full spectrum of inpatient and outpatient physical and mental healthcare needs. Mental health inpatient services cover the acute needs of young people and adults across various sites, as well as specialist services: Learning Disabilities, Mother and Baby Unit, Regional Eating Disorder Unit, National Acquired Brain Injury Unit and a Medium Secure Forensic Unit.

As well as NHS Art and Occupational Therapy services, ELHF-funded arts organisations such as Artlink are active across sites, delivering specialist activities on both wards and in non-clinical spaces such as the Royal Edinburgh Hospital Glasshouses and offering much loved creative 'safe spaces'. ELHF Tonic Arts have also embedded an Arts and Greenspace Coordinator, who develops the two-stranded environmental enhancement and participatory programme at this main site.

In the development of new sites such as East Lothian Community Hospital, permanent commissions and strategic residency projects are undertaken, honouring closing sites and aiding community ownership of new facilities.

CHALLENGES

The biggest recent challenge in integrating arts with mental health services has been the Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent limiting of face-to-face contact between artists and arts organisations with patients on wards. Remote delivery programmes and distribution of arts packs have been undertaken to counter this challenging lack of onsite creative activity.

In normal times, challenges include the necessity of following the rigorous and evolving health and safety, infection control, fire and anti-ligature regulations on a mental health site. Every project needs to be carefully researched, designed and risk assessed before proceeding. Building relationships and having ongoing contact with the relevant NHS departments is time consuming, but vital. The time required to develop trusting relationships with staff and provide appropriate support for the artists is also a necessary consideration.

PROGRAMME HIGHLIGHTS

Colour for the Corridor

The Royal Edinburgh Hospital *Colour for the Corridor* Project is a collaborative, participatory enhancement and curation project, initiated by Tonic Arts, partner arts organisation, **Artlink**, and the **University of Edinburgh's School of Architecture**.

Recognising the need for visible improvements to the hospital environment during an extended period of delayed redevelopment, this participatory project aimed to use colour to improve and enhance the site's interiors. Pilot enhancement activity was developed by Artlink and the Arts and Greenspace Coordinator and undertaken with Professor Fiona McLachlan from the University of Edinburgh. A small section of the hospital

entrance and corridors were painted by hospital volunteers and architecture students from the University of Edinburgh, under the themes of Autumn and Winter. Many of the students had never been in a psychiatric hospital and time spent speaking to patients and staff was hugely beneficial, with one student choosing to specialise in mental healthcare design.

The pilot enabled a larger participatory project to be approved by hospital management to enhance the main hospital thoroughfare and involve the wider hospital community. Colour charts were distributed to all wards, departments and notice boards, asking the hospital community – from domestics to doctors – to choose preferred colours which represented Spring and Summer. Patients and staff, third sector organisations and volunteers then painted the walls using the twenty selected shades.

“We have made a dead space come alive, it’s beautiful.”

Patient

“That’s my colour, I chose that.”

Domestic

“I just wanted to tell you that I think the coloured walls in the REH corridor are a true transformation! Really really beautiful.”

Psychiatrist

“The corridor is now a joy to walk through.”

Patient family member

Individual colours are visible from one end of the corridor to the other, creating a tonal colour journey throughout the space. The colours have also been chosen to aid wayfinding along the long corridor, identifying key department entrances and services. Artwork from the Tonic Art Collection was also selected by the hospital community to be re-hung alongside framed patient artwork against complementary colours.

The corridor is now a bright, joyful space featuring non-clinical colourways. Designed and enhanced by the hospital community itself, this is a space that speaks to genuine engagement and the improvement of mental health.

Your Own Front Door

This Craft Residency was a collaborative participatory project created by Tonic Arts and delivered in partnership with **Craft Scotland** and staff at Herdmanflat and East Lothian Community Hospitals. This project spanned the period leading up to, during and after the physical relocation of services from an existing network of ageing mental health hospital buildings to a new, purpose-built site that centralised mental health services and brought them under the same roof as other healthcare services.

“This class is so amazing to me... it takes me to another peaceful place. This is an amazing place to be, I could not imagine my life without it.”

Patient

“Relaxed and free mind from usual troubles.”

Patient

The interaction aimed to provide consistency throughout a period of physical and environmental upheaval and to make this period of time as easy as possible for patients, some of whom were long-term residents in the inpatient ward at Herdmanflat Hospital and were experiencing anxieties over the move.

“This is the highest quality interaction the patients benefit from.”

Staff member

Artist Fiona Hermse worked closely with staff teams to lead weekly participatory sessions with people in receipt of care from both the inpatient and outpatient mental health departments. Her work focused largely on the introduction of comfortingly evocative, sensory

materials and creative techniques new to each group, with sessions carefully tailored to suit the capacity of each attendee.

Working in small groups, her sessions became important therapeutic and social interactions that allowed patients to relax as they became engaged in the absorbing processes of learning and making.

“Hospital staff remarked frequently upon how much of a calming influence the workshops had on the patients and how valuable the sessions were to them. The mental, visual, emotional and sensory stimulation provided by engaging in sessions was important to patients.”

Fiona Hermse, Craft Maker

Fiona's work with patients was considered so valuable by staff that the department sought funding to continue the weekly sessions after the move to the new hospital.

Bright and comforting works painted and sewn onto fabric from the project groups are now hanging in the new hospital's mental health outpatient department corridors, introducing softening colour and messages of positivity to the space.

CASE STUDIES

Wales

Photo courtesy of Swansea Bay
University Health Board.



WALES

Overview

Wales has made most progress among the four nations at creating a strategic collaboration between the NHS and the arts, especially as regards the Arts Council of Wales (ACW).

The context is provided in part by unique legislation in Wales: the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. This requires public bodies – including the NHS – to think about the long-term impact of their decisions, to work better with people, communities and each other, and to prevent persistent problems such as poverty, health inequalities and climate change.

Like other Arts Councils, ACW has had a long-term interest in arts and health and as a step towards a more strategic approach, produced a mapping report¹⁴ in 2018. This was the basis of an Action Plan for 2018–2021 with the Welsh NHS Confederation. The governing document for this approach is a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), which was signed in 2017 and renewed in October 2020. The closeness of this relationship has resulted in a whole series of projects, for instance Cultural Cwtsh, a website with creative wellbeing resources for frontline social care and NHS staff during and after the pandemic.

ACW also acts as the secretariat for the Welsh Parliament Cross-Party Group on Arts and Health. Through the Cross-Party Group, ACW and partners highlight and raise awareness of the benefits of the arts to people's health and wellbeing and share good practice and examples from across Wales.

Wales has seven regional Health Boards which have responsibility for primary and secondary care, including in hospitals. For the last four years, the Arts Council of Wales has part-funded Arts and Health Coordinator posts in each of the Health Boards to embed arts provision in their work. The case studies from Cardiff & Vale University Health Board (UHB) and Swansea UHB were both provided by and demonstrate the roles of the Arts & Health Coordinators.

Wales Arts Health and Well-being Network

In 2013, Engage Cymru established the Wales Arts Health and Well-being Network (WAHWN). Its membership comprises people from different sectors including health, arts, research and education and many are arts practitioners.

Pre-pandemic, WAHWN was organising three network meetings per year to cover Mid, South and North Wales. It has a searchable database by type of member as well as newsletters and a resource library with a growing bank of online case studies of arts and health projects.

wahwn.cymru

¹⁴ *Arts and Health in Wales: A mapping study of current activity*, Arts Council of Wales, 2018. Available at: www.artshealthresources.org.uk/docs/arts-and-health-in-wales-a-mapping-study-of-current-activity.

Cardiff and Vale University Health Board

BY MELANIE WOTTON

OVERVIEW

Cardiff and Vale University Health Board (UHB) is one of the largest NHS organisations in Europe. We employ approximately 16,500 staff, and spend around £1.4 billion every year on providing health and wellbeing services to a population of around 472,400 people living in Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan. We also serve a wider population across South and Mid Wales for a range of specialties.

Our mission is 'Caring for People, Keeping People Well', and our vision is that a person's chance of leading a healthy life should be the same wherever they live and whoever they are.

We are a teaching Health Board with close links to the university sector, and together we are training the next generation of healthcare professionals, while working on research that will hopefully unlock the cures for today's illnesses.

Our services include:

- Primary and community-based services
- Acute services through our two main University Hospitals and Children's Hospital
- Public Health
- Tertiary Centre serving a wider population across Wales and often the UK

We are rising to the challenge of embedding the creative arts as part of our Arts for Health and Wellbeing Strategy across an organisation of this size, and our Arts Programme, supported by Cardiff & Vale Health Charity, continues to flourish and thrive.

Mental Health Services within Cardiff and Vale UHB cover community and in-patient settings. Our focused service is dedicated to supporting the Welsh Government Strategy, 'Together for Mental Health'.

What we do:

- We work in collaboration, co-creating services with many engaged agencies, such as our charity and local authority colleagues.
- Our staff and service users have a long-term vision for increasing community care and shared care models.
- We are continuously raising public awareness across all services regarding mental health issues.
- We have community teams, primary mental health services and inpatient settings. We manage specialist services such as addictions, low secure and younger onset dementia care, plus many more.
- Mental Health Services embrace the recovery philosophy.
- We have a record of achieving what we set out to do to ensure the best care provision for service users and carers.

We work with several partner arts organisations in supporting mental health, including **Rubicon Dance, Mental Health Matters, Harmoni Cymru, Forget me Not Chorus, Welsh National Opera, Four in Four** and independent artists across our services. Projects are supported through Cardiff & Vale Health Charity and we work with organisations to deliver meaningful arts in health support to vulnerable patients within our hospitals and the community.

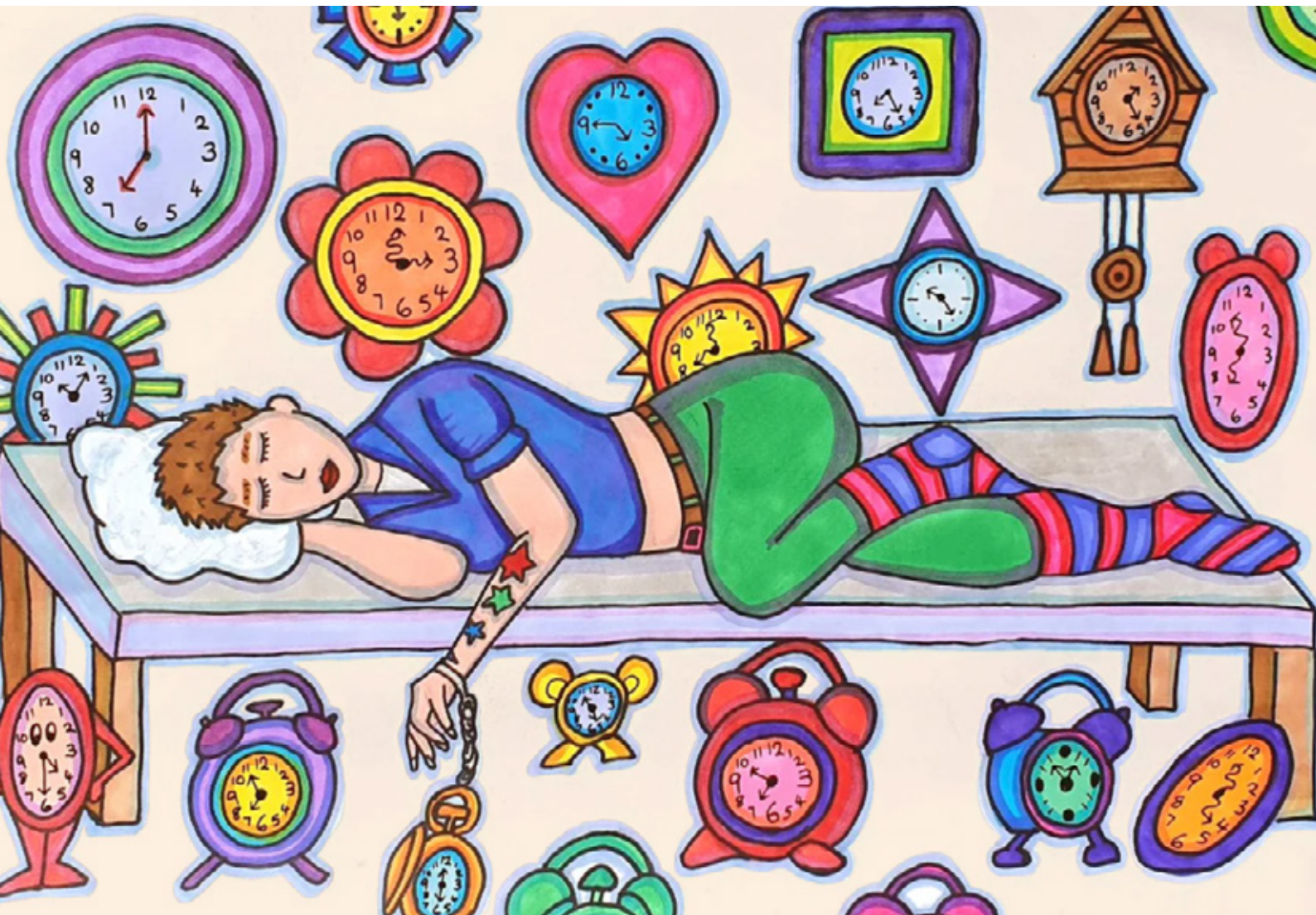


Image by Maxine, Rengarific participant.

PROGRAMME HIGHLIGHTS

Rengarific

The Arts Team, Cardiff & Vale Health Charity, took part in a cross-Wales HARP Sprint project initiated by Y Lab, Nesta's People Powered Results Team, Cardiff University and the Arts Council of Wales at the beginning of lockdown, which focused on the virtual delivery of arts interventions for vulnerable groups.

The project offered an ideal opportunity to explore the delivery of creative arts in new ways, and through a collaboration between Cardiff and Vale UHB, **The VC Gallery** in Pembrokeshire and Swansea Bay UHB (see page 53), we designed and delivered *Rengarific*, an innovative and versatile arts platform.

Rengarific's aim is to design new opportunities for adults with mental health support needs, isolated at home during the pandemic, to take part in accessible online group arts activities which could provide a creative focus, build confidence, inspire ideas, provide an opportunity to express thoughts and feelings and time to meet people with similar experiences.

We supported two groups of adults experiencing mental health problems and a third group of brain injury survivors to access creativity from home by creating story chains ('rengas') of art in any medium inspired by each other's artwork (participants 'riff' off each other's work), and which charted their feelings about lockdown and the pandemic. No previous skills were required, and all weekly sessions were open and non-instructional.

Participants were encouraged to respond through whichever art medium they wanted, working to a common, uniting goal.

Artist Lee Aspland worked with two groups of community members of The VC Gallery, and staff at the Neuropsychiatry Department, Hafan y Coed Adult Mental Health Unit, facilitated sessions with brain injury survivors. Lee began by giving each group a photograph that depicted his lockdown experience, which he described from a personal perspective. Members of the groups responded to his photo, creating art that told their experiences and stories, working from each other's art inspirations weekly, forming story-chains of art. Art was shared via Padlet platforms, so everyone could view each other's work.

In four weeks over 120 interconnected artworks were created which included paintings, 3D clay models, sketches, watercolour pencil work, poems, creative writing and photography by our participants together with innumerable discussions around their creation.

Work was displayed in **The Hearth Gallery** (University Hospital Llandough – UHL), the Virtual Hearth Gallery, and will tour to The VC Gallery.

“The group got me out more and interacting with things during lockdown which brought my mood up a lot instead of just constantly hearing about coronavirus – so that was huge.

I've never really been into art as through school it was just drawing and that's not my forte but with what we've done here expanded on that for me and gave me so many more avenues to go down which took the stress out of it and allowed me to be more creative (clay/paint/photos) which actually made me quite the fan of art in the end and will continue to be. ”

Participant, Hafan y Coed Mental Health Unit

“We have received very positive feedback from the 3 group members that took part, the general consensus is that the project has provided a focus in a time where usual routines have been disrupted. In doing so it has enhanced creative expression, social connectedness and uplifted mood. ”

The project was so well received that once the 4 weeks came to an end, the group requested that the sessions continue and they are still just as enthusiastic about creating art and engaging in discussions around it. We plan to deliver a second Rengarific session for other attendees that are keen to get involved, and provide other sessions online including music and crosswords. ”

**Staff Members, Neuropsychiatry,
Hafan y Coed Mental Health Unit**

Threads of Memory

In another project, Cardiff & Vale Health Charity supported artist Marion Cheung to deliver a series of interactive digital and craft sessions to both staff and patients at St. David's Hospital with the help of **Mental Health Matters**. The project, Threads of Memory – The Spaces Between Us, looked at innovative ways of working with craft materials, storyboards, poems and digital circuit boards to record creative responses, memories and stories. The project offered new perspectives and new ways of working for both staff and patients, was thoroughly enjoyed by everyone who took part, and inspired some amazing artwork.



Croeso
Welcome

Photo courtesy of Swansea Bay University Health Board.

Swansea Bay University Health Board

BY PRUE THIMBLEBY

OVERVIEW

Swansea Bay University Health Board (UHB) looks after all the health needs of the population of around 390,000 in the Neath Port Talbot and Swansea areas and has a budget of around £1bn. The health board employs approximately 12,500 staff. It is divided into four service delivery units, one of which is Mental Health and Learning Disabilities (MH & LD).

The Health Board has a very active Arts & Heritage team who work across all the services. The team has five part-time members of staff who mostly work around 10 hours per week and two active volunteers. The programme of work aims to address health criteria through arts interventions and ranges from digital patient story work to Covid-related commemorative projects, from dance for falls prevention to capital arts projects, and from ward-based activities to social prescribing.

CHALLENGES

The mental health of our patients and staff is at a critical level due to the pressures that staff are under, and the loneliness and isolation that has occurred as a result of the patient visiting restrictions throughout the pandemic. Although inpatient mental health services are crying out for arts interventions and activities, it has been incredibly difficult to arrange any facilitators to go in and deliver sessions due to infection control and restrictions around Covid-19.

On a more general note, art is, by its very nature, challenging to interpret in precise, scientific terms and the health service has high expectations of solid scientific evidence for the implementation of new programmes. So, when you are integrating arts interventions that

provide non-clinical, holistic activities to help people with mental ill health, there is a constant need to provide strong evaluations.

Previously, we have run a variety of mental health projects including a year-long project in partnership with **Performing Medicine** to support the wellbeing of staff in our mental health wards.

Here are a couple of new projects which have just started.

PROGRAMME HIGHLIGHTS

Digital Arts Service for the wards

We have just begun trialling a digital delivery service (using Zoom) and iPads/TVs on our elderly mental health wards. Many participatory arts projects (since the beginning of the pandemic) have been successfully delivered online via Zoom, with some participants joining in who would never have been able/wanted to in a physical space. This, along with some great feedback and learning from previous sessions, gives us the confidence to begin trialling a digital arts service within the Health Board. We anticipate that this means of delivery may well continue to be useful/successful post-Covid, which is why we are investing some time and money in getting it right the first time.

We are aiming to provide a mixture of participatory workshops, performances, live and pre-recorded streams. Much of this content will be provided in partnership with **Live Music Now**, and organisations such as the **Welsh National Opera**, who have previously worked with the Health Board to provide music on the dementia wards. We are also employing a small number of freelancers to complement the sessions led by our arts partners.

Patient digital stories

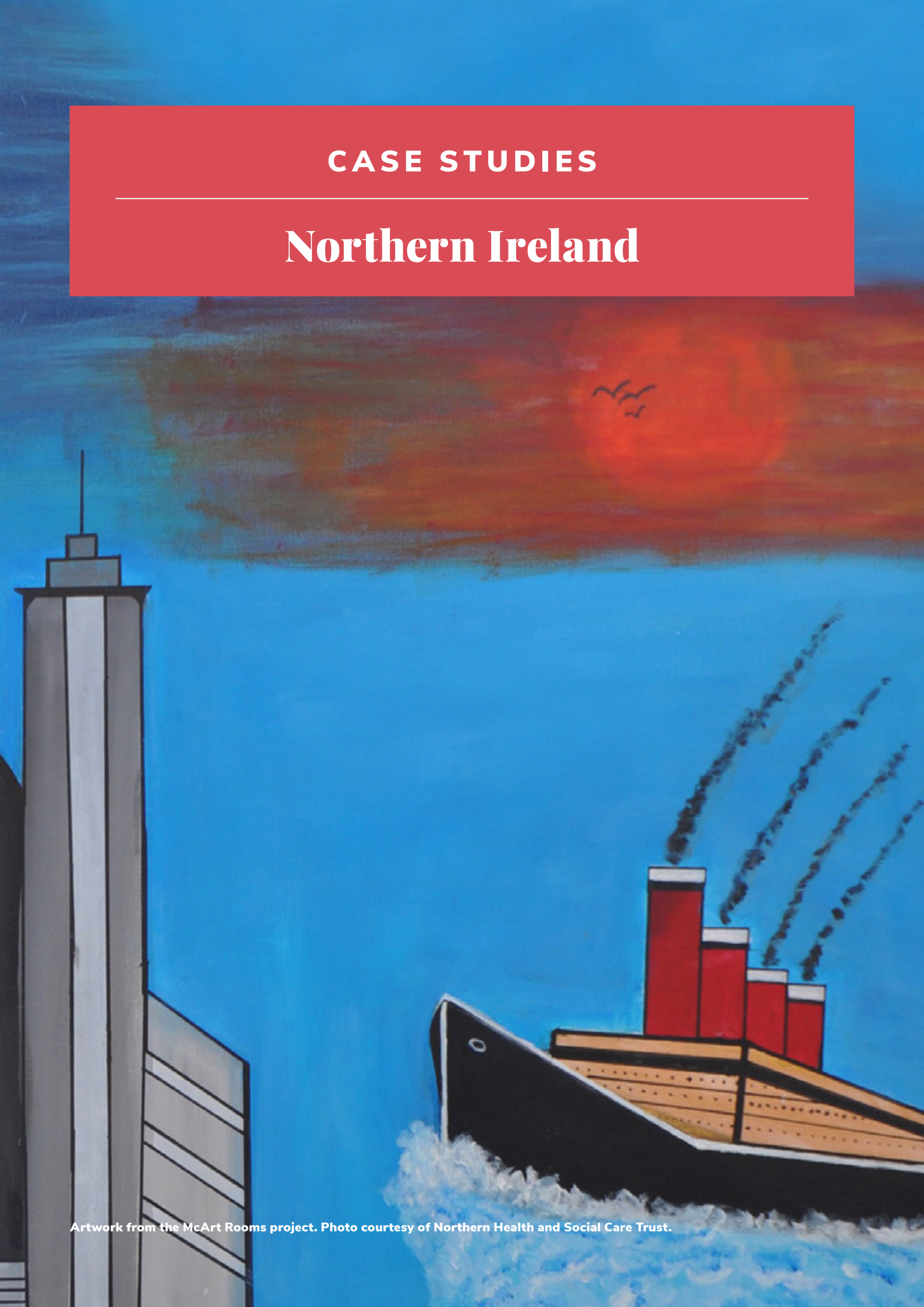
Swansea Bay Health Board is leading the way in developing patient digital stories. Digital stories are voice recordings edited to tell a two-minute first person story and put together with images. We have five colleagues across the MH & LD service who are trained in developing digital stories.

Stories may be created for a variety of reasons, for example in response to a complaint or compliment, and they are always about personal or organisational reflection and learning. The person telling the story has to be fully involved in the development and ownership of the story. Stories can be very powerful and can reach a wide audience and improve services.

Swansea UHB also participate in the *Rengarific* project, see also Cardiff & Vale on page 49.

CASE STUDIES

Northern Ireland



Artwork from the McArt Rooms project. Photo courtesy of Northern Health and Social Care Trust.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Overview

Northern Ireland has a higher degree of integration of health and social care than the other nations of the UK and hence has five regional Health and Social Care Boards. It is our understanding that each Health Board has an Arts and Wellbeing Plan and most have annual reports and a multi-year strategy.

The Arts Council Northern Ireland does not have an explicit policy on creativity and mental health as part of its strategy but it has prioritised arts and mental health for young people aged 12-18, including those at risk of suicide, through a grants programme called ARTiculate supported by the Public Health Agency, which has sometimes involved NHS organisations. This partnership gave out £600,000 between 2016 and 2019.

Arts Care

The principal arts organisation in Northern Ireland with a remit regarding mental health and working with the NHS is Arts Care. This is a role it has occupied for thirty years.

Based in Belfast but working with all five Health Boards, Arts Care's mission is to provide quality arts engagement that supports health and wellbeing. Arts Care works with a wide range of services

including Child and Adolescent Mental Health and Adult Mental Health Cancer Care. Its main model of delivery is to use Artists in Residence engaging services users. A number of art forms are used including the visual arts, singing, music and dance. Training is also delivered to health care staff.

www.artscare.co.uk

Northern Health and Social Care Trust

BY DAVE ROGERS, CIARA O'MALLEY,
LO LING HUTCHINSON AND ALANNAH SAVAGE

OVERVIEW

The Northern Health and Social Care Trust is responsible for the delivery of safe and effective services to a population of approximately 470,000 people in Northern Ireland. Psychological Therapies Service (PTS) offers a Trust-wide service for adults with a range of mental health difficulties including anxiety disorders such as phobias, panic disorder, social phobia, obsessive compulsive disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder, health anxiety and depression. The service also offers psychological interventions for more severe and enduring problems. Staff offer consultation, one-to-one treatment, group work, brief interventions, supported self-help and computer assisted treatments.

Disconnection, isolation and loss of interest in activities can be both symptoms and causes of mental health problems. To help our clients continue to connect with others and promote creativity, we offer post-therapy Art groups in co-operation with our **Arts Care** artist-in-residence. Clients are given control over what they want to create, often with the theme of improving therapeutic environments for future service users. Groups run every 6 to 12 months either face-to-face or via Zoom due to recent restrictions.

“I find it very socially engaging and look forward to the class each week. I have also learned quite a few things from yourselves as I take small notes throughout the class and can then reflect on them after it's finished. All in all, I've loved being part of the arts group.”

Participant

CHALLENGES

Finding the time and resources, financial and otherwise, to co-ordinate Arts Care groups can be challenging. Focus can drift from the arts because the conventional model of therapy is of two people meeting in a room for fifty minutes. Therapists in PTS are busy with large caseloads and administrative duties. Managers are understandably preoccupied with providing high-quality care, keeping waiting lists down and risk management. We are fortunate to have excellent support from Arts Care, our Artist-in-Residence and the dynamism and dedication of our group members. Covid-19 and its restrictions have been another challenge, in terms of managing safety, organising remote ways of working and delivering materials to service users.

PROGRAMME HIGHLIGHTS

Nature and Nurture

Nature and Nurture is the title given to a recent project that service users completed along with Arts Care artist in residence Ciara O'Malley. The aim was to create an art work for the waiting room to make this a welcoming and inclusive space for all. The group have created pieces that aim to help and inspire others waiting for appointments.

Each service user depicted the theme in unique ways – landscape paintings, abstract paintings, textile compositions, sculptures, collages and prints. One of the group collaborations is a painting of a tree with interwoven quotes and reflections that the service users have written. The group explored the use of creative writing in this way to inspire and empower. Our tree wall is titled 'If trees could talk, this is what they would say'.

“ Well what can I say, the arts projects are great to do, it gives you a sense of satisfaction. To know that it will help people feel slightly better on that day and lift their spirits. Thanks a lot. ”

“ I had a lovely time doing it though I found it stressful. The ones in class encouraged and helped me, and we all worked together. I was pleased with the finished product that I hadn't done before. Thank you for giving me the opportunity. ”

Participants

It is remarkable that these individuals were able to create such a large project given the limitations of Zoom. Despite these challenges, Ciara was able to advise and share techniques to assist everyone in developing their art. The group adapted to this environment and were able to complete art in their own homes. After the project was completed, every service user expressed their desire to be involved in future projects demonstrating that co-production is valued and worthwhile.

We received positive feedback from clients who are currently attending our service who have commented on how they value this new environment.

McArt Rooms Project

In another project with Arts Care artist-in-residence Ciara O'Malley, service users and staff produced seven artworks, which are now on display at the Whiteabbey hospital site in the waiting area of the Regional Trauma Network.

The works are inspired by the theme of the rising sun and how the path of the sun moves from sunrise to sunset. Every day the sun rises with a promise of new beginnings, a reminder that the dark times are darkest before the dawn, and the light returns once more. A massive amount of work has gone into creating this therapeutic space.

The group created pieces that aim to help generate optimism and hope to others, whilst they embark on their therapeutic journey. As their journey begins in the waiting area we felt that it would be a lovely place to exhibit the artwork and create a more welcoming space. These paintings are inspirational and have generated a lot of conversations from service users and staff members.

“ A truly wonderful space and a joy to view. ”

Participant

This was a wonderful opportunity for service user engagement, and a successful launch of our first exhibition within the Whiteabbey hospital site. Everyone involved, including staff, have all enjoyed the experience. Feedback and people's comments have been immensely positive.



Artwork from the Nature and Nurture project. Photo courtesy of Northern Health and Social Care Trust.

Some reflections

The major objective of this short report is to highlight some examples of NHS organisations that are working to offer people with mental health problems creative opportunities as part of a richer, more holistic approach to recovery. It deliberately balances the Baring Foundation's usual preoccupation with arts organisations and shows what working in partnership can produce. It can't remotely claim to map a huge and complex landscape so general observations are necessarily tentative – but here goes.

There is much to celebrate: clap for patients, carers and artists

The 15 case studies in this report show a little of the wonderful, dedicated and imaginative work that is happening across the NHS in all four nations. And on a shoestring. There is great diversity in the use of art form and in location, in and out of primary and secondary care settings. How well known is this work locally and nationally? Would it be valued more if it had a higher profile? Could it contribute more to destigmatising mental health problems?

Different nations, different models and different relative strengths – but we like Wales!

It is perhaps hard to overestimate the degree to which each nation has devolved responsibilities in the fields of arts and NHS provision for mental health services and the extent to which these are diverging. For instance, NHS England has made an unparalleled investment in social prescribing link workers which will be highly relevant to many primary care patients with mental health needs.

Although it is invidious to make national comparisons and something that we would usually avoid, the strength of the strategic approach taken in Wales is so great that it deserves more consideration for replication in the other three nations. Its key elements

are a Memorandum of Understanding between the Arts Council of Wales and the Welsh NHS Confederation with co-funding for Arts & Health Coordinator posts in each of the seven Regional Health Boards. Behind this, is probably an even more important feature – improved mutual understanding and respect between people working at all levels in the NHS and artists and arts organisations which has resulted in a rich and expanding repertoire of creative activities.

The key role of Arts Coordinators

In our case studies the role of an Arts Coordinator is mentioned time and time again. Structures and responsibilities vary greatly, as do job titles, but someone is acting as a recognised lynch pin and a catalyst. It is unclear what proportion of Mental Health Trusts already have such a role. What is clear is that all would benefit from one. We all know how under pressure NHS budgets are, but it is worth considering that such a role would be in the region of 00.01% of the budget of a Mental Health Trust. Another way of looking at this is that it might cost an additional £1million in comparison to the £12.2 billion spent by the NHS on mental health in England alone in 2018/9. It is also very likely that they would more than pay for their salary by attracting external funding for arts provision.

“The Coordinators work is essential in delivering an evidence-based recovery focused model of care, allowing service users to engage in meaningful activity, and to become more of an inclusive part of the communities in which they live.”

Leicester Partnership NHS Trust

Partnerships are central to everything

Every case study in this report is replete with examples of partnerships between Mental Health Trusts and with arts organisations or individual artists. They come in all shapes and sizes and across all art forms. Examples include Artlink in Edinburgh, Project Ability and Cartwheel in Glasgow, SR2 in South Yorkshire, The VC Gallery and the Welsh National Opera. But in every case these partnerships require marrying very different skills and approaches for the benefit of patients and their creativity and wellbeing. The NHS is a hugely complex operation with its own language and an essential task is translation into a form which can be used by arts organisations and artists. It is likely that in many of the case studies here that at least some of that translation function is performed by the Arts Coordinator. There is probably more that could be done too about learning what the elements of good partnership working between NHS organisations and arts organisations are and widely disseminating these lessons.

Creative ecologies: local and national

Those partnerships are dependent on skilled local artists who can sensitively and effectively offer creative opportunities to people with mental health problems. This doesn't happen by accident. It is due to a long history of community and participatory arts across the UK that we have literally hundreds of arts organisations keen to work with NHS providers. These arts organisations can be somewhat isolated due to the sheer pressure of keeping delivering and fundraising on very tight budgets. But the good news is that there is an increasingly strong infrastructure of arts and (mental) health networks such as the Culture, Health and Wellbeing Alliance (CHWA) in England and WAHWN in Wales. They are providing peer-led spaces to continue to develop practice. It is also the case that the breadth and complexity of the local arts ecology might mean that it is difficult for NHS staff to appreciate what is potentially on offer, which again points to the case for investing in an Arts Coordinator.

There is possibly also a case for some more specific networking on professional lines for instance between Arts Coordinators in NHS organisations and between the extensive network of Recovery Colleges specifically around the use of the arts.

Different worlds and different languages: a need for more translation

This report has repeatedly made the point that the NHS is highly complex as are mental health problems. We know from our other work how valuable arts organisations find some training to add to their understanding and Mental Health First Aid training is frequently mentioned though other courses are also available.

This report has explained why the work of Creative Arts Therapists is highly important but beyond its remit. It is hard not to speculate that there also exists an unnecessarily large chasm between the worlds of Arts Therapists and Participatory Artists. It would appear that the East London NHS Foundation Trust is deliberately involving Arts Therapists in shaping broader arts provision in their services which at least offers a different potential model (see page 14).

Staff inclusion and NHS leadership

Our previous funding in care homes has shown how valuable professional arts provision is not only to residents but also to care staff and the same clearly holds true here. Creative activities are especially good at breaking down barriers and showing the common humanity of staff and patients. Several choirs are mentioned in this report and they exemplify this power. Artistic expression also shows a patient in a new light and broadens the appreciation of them by staff beyond their illness and treatment. Also, a number of case studies talk about the difficulty of gaining support from clinical staff and again, this should help.

“Partnering with a local university to carry out a service evaluation was helpful in demonstrating the benefits, but most powerful was the progress towards recovery workers saw in people they referred.”

Jo Keay, Open Arts

It is a cliché of management that senior leadership is an essential ingredient for effective strategy and it is hard to comprehend the demands on NHS leaders. But there are certainly examples of Mental Health Trusts showing commitment at the top level for instance East London NHS Foundation Trust (see page 14). It is noticeable that both Primary Care case studies (Brighton & Hove's Hera Project and the Free Space Project in North London) arose from the personal passions of local GPs.

“Our arts work development has been moved on significantly by the commitment of our executive and senior leaders at ELFT engaging and modelling themselves how the arts can help everyone.”

East London NHS Foundation Trust

The environment: outside and inside

There is a long history of bringing art into hospitals to create a more attractive and stimulating environment. There are some exciting examples in this report including Hospital Rooms, Arts in Health, and the Royal Edinburgh Hospital Colours for the Corridor project led by Tonic Arts in NHS Lothian (see page 44).

Tonic Arts has also innovated by creating a new post of an Arts and Greenspace Coordinator. This underlines the well understood value of the outdoors in mental health and recovery. Other examples include South West Yorkshire Partnerships NHS Foundation Trust which has a specific arts & outdoors project (see page 32) and Art in the Gart at Glasgow's Gartnavel Royal Hospital with its Growing Spaces project (see page 41).

“The problem with depression is losing a sense of purpose and hope – the garden really helps with that. I enjoy the learning too: finding out how plants grow reinforces my sense of being able to learn.”

Garden Volunteer, Katie, Gartnavel Royal Hospital

Blended delivery

Given that this report has been written during the Covid-19 pandemic and associated lockdown, it is hardly surprising that so much attention has been given to virtual delivery as the Rengarific project mentioned by both Cardiff and Swansea UHBs, or Make For Tomorrow by Make Your Mark in Sussex. As in other areas of participatory arts, there is no doubt that artists will return to the in-person delivery of creative activities that they know and love. However, it is also very likely that there will be greater use of digital platforms in the future given their accelerated development over the last year.

“We have just begun trialling a digital delivery service. We anticipate that this means of delivery may well continue to be useful/successful post-Covid, which is why we are investing some time and money in getting it right the first time.”

Swansea University Health Board

Funding and sustainability

“Resourcing the programme is time consuming, a constant unknown and requires a creative and resourceful approach.”

Art in the Gart

Although this report doesn't contain systematic evidence, our experience is that arts activities supported by the NHS are in almost all cases, externally funded, often by arts funders and on a project by project basis. To facilitate this fundraising, many Mental Health Trusts have established highly effective charitable trusts, for instance Heads On in Sussex and Creative Minds in South West Yorkshire. They vary in size and the Maudsley Charity may be the largest with an expenditure in 2019/2020 of £6.6 million, including a world class museum and a dedicated gallery, described in our case studies. (Indeed, we have been told that all Mental Health Trusts have a charity.) These charitable trusts have different forms, responsibilities and relationships to the Mental Health Trusts.

There is little doubt though that the funding for the use of the arts by the NHS is woefully inadequate in total, exacerbated by the fact that so much is given on a project basis. In a period where both the NHS and the whole arts sector are under unparalleled financial pressures, it is unrealistic to propose that there is any simple solution to this problem. However closer working between the arts sector and the NHS at a national level as happens in Wales is likely to help.

Recommendations

It is impossible to know from our research what the general picture is across the UK. But it is likely that the case studies we have identified are among the more active Trusts. Therefore we believe that the first two of our recommendations combined would most help 'level up' performance.

01

The Arts Councils of England, Scotland and Northern Ireland should consider the relevance of the strategic approach to collaboration with the NHS taken by the Arts Council of Wales to their national contexts.

04

And, similarly, Recovery Colleges should exchange good practice on arts and creativity through a network or conference.

02

All Mental Health Trusts should employ an Arts Coordinator.

05

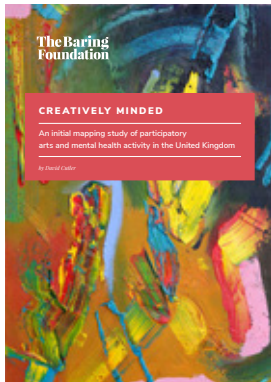
Mental Health Trusts should explore how Creative Arts Therapists and Participatory Artists can most productively share their differing skills and support each other to the benefit of patients.

03

Arts Coordinators in Mental Health Trusts should network both within nations and across the UK.

Selected Baring Foundation resources

All resources can be found on our website www.baringfoundation.org.uk



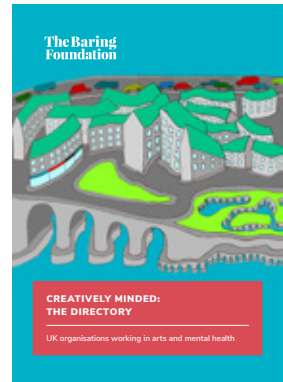
Creatively minded
David Cutler
2020



Creatively minded and young
Compiled by Harriet Lowe
2020



Creatively Minded and ethnically diverse
Compiled by The Baring Foundation
2021



Creatively minded: the directory
The Baring Foundation
2021

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