

ARTS, CREATIVITY AND MENTAL HEALTH INITIATIVE

Participatory Arts Self Evaluation
Approach Project Report (2007)

artfull

 Scottish
Arts Council

Mental Health Foundation



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This report, written by Isabella Goldie, Head of Mental Health Programmes, Mental Health Foundation Scotland is based on the findings from a small but significant practice led research and service improvement project, which supported six participatory arts organisations to pilot a self evaluation approach, over a 6 month period, during 2006/07. The Foundation editing team included: Isabella Goldie; Dr Andrew McCulloch, Chief Executive; Tina Yu Policy and Service Improvement Manager; and Robbie Campbell Research Volunteer. The individual Participatory Arts Project Reports are an edited version of final project reports and the Mental Health Foundation would like to acknowledge the following whose contributions were vital to the production of this report:

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CONTEXT

BACKGROUND

The Participatory Arts Self Evaluation Approach project evolved out of a dialogue with arts projects and service users throughout Scotland, many of whom had expressed a real concern about the lack of priority given to creative approaches within mental health settings. These views convinced us that the arts were highly valued by those who had experienced mental health problems and seen as a meaningful vehicle by which to approach their recovery. What was also apparent was the paucity of evidence on which arguments for greater development of these services could be based. Many projects were operating on short term funding arrangements and often, with a few notable exceptions, funded only for direct activity with participants. This created a void in relation to time provided for practitioners to reflect, share and develop practice together, with few possibilities for training and formal support structures to develop. We found that unlike other professions working within the field of mental health, arts projects were not funded or expected to require the time and space to come together and develop.

Despite these low levels of funding, often-rigorous monitoring arrangements are in place to ensure that participatory arts projects are accountable. Art workers, however, felt that all too often these monitoring and evaluation processes were not flexible or discreet enough to be able to capture the journey that many participants go on when, engaged with the arts, and that these structures were often imposed by funding bodies, who lacked understanding of the therapeutic process, which form such an integral part of art based activities. Many projects felt that an outcome focused evaluation structure, based on outcome measures set by funding bodies, did little to identify the therapeutic value of the process. In addition, to not receiving the same 'mental health professional status' as others working within the mental health field, many artists also felt that working in isolation from the 'Arts World', in turn, meant that these projects did not receive the same validation or checks and balances which are often applied to artists, where the quality of their work is open to peer review and public criticism. This frustrated many workers who were eager to develop their practice both in terms of the therapeutic value to participants and the quality of the artistic experience. Overall, this has limited the strategic development of 'Participatory Arts' as a complimentary, but equally valid mental health service, leaving many service users who have had direct experience of engaging with good quality arts projects, often finding it difficult to access a range of creative options.

Inspired by these early conversations, the Mental Health Foundation sought and received part funding from The Scottish Executive's National Programme for Improving Mental Health and Well-being, for a 3-year development phase of what was initially known as the Arts Therapies, Creativity and Mental Health Initiative. This development phase enabled the Foundation to undertake a scoping review, which took account of the current mental health policy context, and provided an opportunity to further explore the range of arts based approaches, which are currently being applied within mental health service provision. During this scoping

period, wide ranges of approaches were identified, which used creative activity to offer support to individuals experiencing mental health problems. These approaches included Arts Therapies, which apply psychodynamic approaches to supporting individuals to make sense of their lives, arts-in-health services, which focus on the personal development of individuals and are often accessed through community mental health services, and a varied range of community arts projects which apply community development and social inclusion approaches to support individuals, who have experienced mental health problems to connect with their communities.

In reality the picture, which emerged of artists working within a mental health service context was complex, with many projects offering one or more of the approaches described above, at times moving between approaches on a needs led basis, or not clearly defining themselves in terms of any one approach. It also became obvious that to add to this complexity, there were a wide range of projects working within community settings, which were also using creative activity as a tool to support personal and social development, but were not part of mental health service provision, and had instead developed through a wider social inclusion agenda. These projects appear to make a meaningful contribution to the mental health and well being of communities through providing an opportunity for individuals who encounter social exclusion, to develop new skills, confidence and a new medium (the arts) through which to share their experiences of oppression and tackle discrimination. On further exploration many of the projects defined outcomes for service users within three key levels:

Individual Level - providing opportunities for individuals to develop skills and resilience and to support their recovery.

Community Level - providing a bridge to connecting with opportunities within communities.

Societal Level - Providing a vehicle to tackle stigma, discrimination and inequalities encountered by people who experience mental health problems.

To take account of this wide range of approaches, the Foundation developed two distinct research and service improvement projects, the first of which was focused on the therapeutic role of Arts Therapies within mental health community service contexts, which was published in 2007 ¹.

The second approach, which forms this project, has attempted to present an overview of the relevant literature and a small but significant piece of practice focused research and development work with 6 participatory arts projects working across Scotland.

In partnership with ArtFull and with support from Evaluation Support Scotland, the Foundation developed the, Participatory Arts Self Evaluation Approach (PASEA), which has aimed to take account of the range of arts based services and address the need for these projects to develop the skills to evidence their practice, in a way

which is meaningful and able to engage participants. Based on the earlier scoping review, it was apparent that any project developed should aim to create opportunities for projects coming from different perspectives and service contexts to learn from each other. PASEA, hoped to showcase exemplary participatory arts practice and to highlight the key role that these services can play in supporting recovery and connecting people who have experienced mental health problems with the communities in which they live.

The innovative and inclusive approach adopted within this project, aimed to support the development of wider discussions on the benefits of creativity and the right of access to arts based mental health services, for those who have experienced mental health problems. To support this wider impact and the sustainability of the emerging network of participatory arts projects, it was vital that PASEA was developed in partnership with ArtFull, enabling participating projects to link with the ArtFull Learning Network. In addition Evaluation Support Scotland (ESS) was commissioned to provide training and additional support to the projects. The development of this partnership also had the benefits of enabling ESS to explore and develop its future approach to supporting the development of evaluation capacity within the arts environment.

Policy context

Culture is not just the domain of the professional practitioner, the government wants to see a culturally cosmopolitan Scotland, capable of attracting and retaining gifted people, where our creative community is supported and their contribution to the economy is maximised. We want to see access to, and participation in, cultural activities being as wide as possible. We will promote this by ensuring that local authorities include cultural activities within the community planning process. SNP Manifesto 2007 ².

Mental Health Problems affect large numbers of Scottish people, both with regard to those whose lives have been directly affected by mental health problems and those who offer support either formally or informally. Over recent years the Scottish Government has worked to improve services and choices for people who have experienced mental health problems, through the development of forward thinking policy and legislation. One example of this recent progress has been the development of the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003 ³. This ground breaking rights-based legislation and its underpinning principles, moves beyond the traditional scope of mental health legislation, looking outward beyond the points in an individual's life when they may need 'Care and Treatment', to the wider role for services to support social inclusion and promote recovery. This legislative reform has provided the opportunity now for mental health service users to expect service which 'promote well-being and social development', and which include the 'provision of social, cultural and recreational activities'.

In 2006 the Scottish Government further built on the vision of the Mental Health Act, by developing 'Delivering for Mental Health' 4, which outlined a vision to begin to address poverty, deprivation, inclusion and exclusion across Scotland and to continue to address the stigma still attached to mental illness. Central to this plan was a commitment to: the respect of equality; social inclusion; recovery and rights; and to the development of services which are holistic and are informed by evidence about what works to produce better outcomes for people who experience mental health problems. This person-centered and holistic approach is also evident in the recent national review of mental health nursing in Scotland 5, which places a strong focus on the development of recovery orientated services; the nurse - service user relationships and the therapeutic process; and the rights of the service user.

This emerging strategic direction has profound implications for the way in which services are delivered, with services required to evolve to provide person centred and holistic approaches and to provide outcomes for people in terms of social inclusion and citizenship by enabling people to remain connected to their communities, and make the transition out of services back into their lives following periods of hospitalisation. To be successful, this new development agenda needs to fully understand the barriers to social inclusion experienced by service users and build on the work of the 'see me' campaign in tackling stigma and discrimination both nationally and locally. This will mean developing services that are not only community based but are also seen as a valuable resource by communities.

The emergence internationally of the consumer movement and the concept of service user/consumer leadership has reinforced the need to take a different approach to service provision and to work alongside service users to create services which work best for them. Many service users are beginning to expect more from services and to lead the way on recommending developments that support them to retain ownership of their experiences and their recovery.

Within a Public Mental Health context, the role of and access to the arts has been championed by the Scottish Executive through the strategic leadership of its National Programme for Improving Mental Health and Wellbeing 6, which has made the following commitment to:

- 1 Support stronger, safer communities by contributing to improved community mental health and well being, social capital and social inclusion, as well as supporting the role of the arts, culture and sport in improving mental health and well being.
- 2 Raising the profile of the arts, culture and sport (physical activity) in the contributions they make to increasing awareness of mental health issues and supporting people's recovery.

The role which the arts can play has been further endorsed by the National Programme, which over recent years have invested in the development of ArtFull, which is a joint national initiative developed by the Scottish Government and the

Scottish Arts Council, that makes explicit the links between the arts and mental health, and makes practical acknowledgement of the intrinsic power of the arts to foster individual, family and community mental health, well-being and participation in society. The initiative demonstrates and supports the role that arts and creativity plays in positive mental health promotion, facilitating increased access and participation in arts activity and supporting the development of quality artistic practice in the field.

ArtFull is currently developing and building partnerships between arts providers and public sector agencies including the NHS and local authorities across Scotland. In addition, the project aims to develop a research/evidence base, which demonstrates and promotes the benefits of arts in relation to mental health and well being. Towards the end of 2006, ArtFull issued a funding call for applications as part of its Exemplar Projects Programme and received 33 applications of which 11 were awarded funding. The purpose of the fund was to demonstrate and explore the breadth and value of the role that participatory arts projects play in promoting positive mental health and well being.

As part of the ArtFull programme, a Peer Learning Network was established, designed to create an active network, focusing on mutual learning, evaluation and continuing creative and professional development in the field of arts in relation to mental health and wellbeing. A report is due to be published of the Exemplar Project and Peer Learning Network Programme outcomes in March 2008.

A significant development and endorsement of the commitment to the arts at a governmental level has been laid out in a speech given by the first minister where he introduced the new governments policy programme in relation to the arts. This programme includes legislation to establish a new body, which will incorporate Scottish Screen and the Scottish Arts Council. The development of this new body has been highlighted as a legislative priority for government over the coming year.

“We will continue to support and improve our creative sector. Culture is good for Scotland in many ways, not least in terms of generating jobs and income for our economy. We agree with the planned proposals to enable the establishment of a new cultural development body, Creative Scotland, to replace the Scottish Arts Council and Scottish Screen. We believe the measure will be important for supporting a stronger creative sector in Scotland and we will therefore introduce legislation in the spring.”⁷

THE EVIDENCE BASE

There are an estimated 2 million people in Scotland participating in the arts and crafts across 9,400 organisations with 263,400 volunteers providing support to these organisations ⁸.

To support the development of PASEA a scoping review was undertaken, within which, the literature on creativity and mental health and the arts in mental health practice, was assessed. Initially, the inclusion criteria for the review, was literature, which outlined creative theories and evidence on the benefits of art making within a mental health context. Initial exploration, identified a vast range of arts and creativity theories and evidence, however there was a paucity of evidence emerging from Scotland, and a limited amount of evidence specific to mental health. Therefore this report includes literature, which has emerged from the wider UK and some international evidence. The scope of the review also had to be widened in terms of including arts-in-health and social inclusion evidence, which whilst not always explicitly drawing conclusions in terms of mental health, have sufficient parallels to be included in the report. The literature outlined below is not a definitive list of theories and evidence, but is an overview of the recent evidence, which has most relevance to PASEA.

Over the past twenty-five years a number of theorists have looked at the psychology of creativity and its impacts on society, one such art theorist, whose work has relevance for participatory arts practice, is Ellen Dissanayake ⁹, whose behavioural view of art takes into account the role that the arts have played over history across all known cultures. Dissanayake sees “*behaviour of art*” as an evolved and unique psychological propensity in human nature to “make special” those aspects of their life-experience, which are important to them. She conceptualises art as a process (more than an aesthetic product) and variously calls this arts-making process “*making special*”, “*artifying*” or “*elaborating*”. In the human species, she sees art-behaviour as socially adaptive in that it serves to create cohesion in a community as opposed to division. Dissanayake feels that in our contemporary culture we have lost sight of the underlying function of arts-making as an intrinsic form of behaviour that supports the health or ‘*wholeness*’ of individuals and communities.

Others have acknowledged the role that the arts can play in creating cohesion within communities, but alongside this has been the recognition of the role that the arts have played within history of creating divisions between sections of society. An example of which is the literature that explores the relevance of the murals of Belfast, where at their simplest the murals can be seen as an opportunity for a nostalgic tour through the ‘struggles’, however, much of the literature focuses on their ability to provide unique insights into the political ideologies and their changing status over time. Although, the murals are often seen as being created out of a shared cause, giving voice to the collective opposition felt within the community and as important community memorials where those who died for ‘the cause’ could be publicly remembered, they have not been embraced by all. In addition to the obvious external opposition between communities, there has throughout been

opposition from within, where many people living in the 'segregated' areas saw them as adding to the political tensions and existing segregation by transforming areas where protestants or Catholics lived into 'protestant areas' and 'catholic areas.'^{10,11,12}

It is not within the remit of this report, to fully consider and do justice to the complexities of the debate around the relevance of these murals today and all that they have come to signify. However, within this specific political context, it can be considered that the arts have fulfilled a unique role of providing a vehicle, which was 'more dynamic than political commentary and to a larger extent freer from the constraints of censorship and control'¹³. Using the arts in this way to voice dissent has obvious parallels with the community outreach approach adopted by many participatory arts projects, who understand the importance of supporting people who have experienced stigma and discrimination to make their voices heard through the often safe and non-threatening vehicle of the arts. Many of these projects identified within PASEA, and in particular, those who use the medium of drama, apply the work of Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed¹⁴ as a frame of reference. Boal's work applies many of Paulo Friere's¹⁵ principles, whereby freedom from oppression is neither 'a gift' nor 'an achievement', but a mutual process, which seeks to transform society into a 'truer form of democracy'. Boal, a politician in his native Brazil developed 'Forum Theatre' and more recently 'Legislative Theatre' as an inclusive means of involving all in the democratic process.

This role of the arts in developing public awareness of the experiences of others has also been identified at an individual level, in a study by Mentality into the Health Benefits of Arts and Creativity¹⁶. This study explored the role of the arts as a medium for tackling the impact of discrimination. The main theme in the consultation was the role participation in the arts played as an antidote to racism and discrimination. For the young Black men consulted in the study 'participation in the arts was seen as a key element to empowering them to explore their histories, cultures and identity'.

At a societal level an international report from Australia for the Victorian Health Development Agency, Art for Health¹⁷ also argued that the arts could have an impact on public attitudes.

"For many people, their role in the project allowed others to see them differently... self image and community perception of participants is often damaged or precarious. Participants are, often for the first time, appreciated for their talents rather than their deficits. A 'homeless' person is recast to an active role of artist, as a contributor to society with something to say and an audience that wants to hear it. In the end, tolerance and understanding is increased from the expanded view of each other'.

This agency also gathered information on self-esteem impacts through arts involvement using quantitative methods across 90 arts organisations. It reported that:

91% 'stated that their work contributed to health improvement in the local area by developing people's self esteem,'

82% 'stated that participants' confidence increased as a result of participation,'

The report went on to state that of those that responded, the majority *'unanimously reported that enhanced self esteem is a common outcome in community-based arts projects, with project participants spontaneously articulating the benefits of an improved sense of self-worth on a regular basis.'*

Within the UK the Arts-in-Health movement has produced a growing body of research into the role of the arts in health. ^{18,19,20,21,22,23} Much of the priority for this research has been more traditionally focused on community health development and regeneration. However, a growing number of Arts-in-Health studies suggest that creative activity has positive benefits for mental health as well as physical health. These studies highlight outcomes for participants such as the development of self-expression and self-esteem, opportunities for participation and social contact and/or to providing a sense of meaning and improved quality of life. The work of the Centre for Arts and Humanities in Health and Medicine, University of Durham in 2003 ²⁴ highlighted that within England, although there has been a rapid growth and development of arts-in-health projects at a local level, there has been little advance in strategic framework and direction and points out that despite mental health being at the centre of the social inclusion agenda, there is still too little practical engagement between arts, health and local authority services.

More recently within England the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and the Department of Health jointly commissioned a study to contribute to the evidence on the benefits for mental health of participation in the arts. This study was undertaken by a team of researchers from Anglia Ruskin University and the University of Central Lancashire. ²⁵ The first phase of this study comprised a survey of arts and mental health projects in England mapping the range of evaluation activity and establishing what data each project collects. In addition, a retrospective analysis was undertaken of 2 projects to establish health and social benefits. This second phase involved an outcomes study providing quantitative evidence of the benefits of arts participation for people with mental health needs, and a series of qualitative case studies of six arts and mental health projects that explored how people benefited from arts participation. This study concluded that the results of their project survey concurred with findings of others such as White and Angus 2003 ²⁶, that support for arts and mental health work could usefully include resources for projects to evaluate their work, although evaluation 'should not lead to bureaucratised service provision that could stifle creativity and inappropriately shape projects according to predetermined outcomes and requirements.' Their findings also reinforce the importance of qualitative studies in addressing questions outcomes studies cannot address about how and why arts participation works.' Overall, this study found that 'beyond reasonable doubt' participating in art making improved levels of empowerment and that the results in relation to social inclusion were also promising.

Despite the lack of Scottish based research, one study, which sought to establish a connection between arts and improved health (and/or mental health), was a study of the social impact of the arts conducted by Francois Matarasso in 1997²⁷. His findings gave a strong indication that participation in the arts had a health benefit for participants. About half of the respondents to his survey reported an improvement in health since becoming involved in the arts. The work of Fèisan nan Gàidheal was introduced in this study, of whom Matarasso writes in his introduction: *“Rarely have I seen work whose quality and value spoke so eloquently for itself as that which I witnessed in the Fèisean in Scotland.”* Here participants were children, who clearly benefited through mastery of new skills and increased self-esteem. They also benefited socially by making new friends and their communities felt empowered by running successful Fèis.

More recently the Scottish Executive's Enterprise and Culture Committee published its 1st Report, Arts in the Community, which argued the following:

*'Having considered the evidence and seen and heard at first hand the impact that exposure to the arts can have, we are firmly of the opinion that the arts has the potential to help transform the lives of individuals and the wellbeing of communities'. The findings of the Scottish Executive's literature review of the evidence base for its culture, arts and sport policy strongly support this view 'the time is right to attempt to deliver a step-change in participation in and exposure to the arts which would bring about benefits in the following areas: children and young people, health and wellbeing, creativity and entrepreneurialism, communities and creative industries.'*²⁸

The recent report by the Mental Health Foundation of 4 Arts Therapies trial services, found that overall, participants experienced significant improvement in their mental health and social function and in particular highlighted improved self, esteem, communication skills and social interaction. In addition, to supporting them to address underlying issues, participants felt that Arts Therapy services had a potential role to play in supporting the social inclusion of participants, with a number of participants moving into mainstream activities following contact with the trial service.

APPROACH AND PROCESS

Project Scope

Despite the growth of participatory arts projects within Scotland over the last 10 years, there is currently no established or agreed process for evaluating the work of these projects. Many arts practitioners feel that they lack the knowledge or expertise to evaluate their work, and voice concerns about applying measures, which may inhibit their creativity. The difficulties in evaluating practice, has made it difficult for participatory arts projects to articulate their achievements and has hindered the recognition of the value of arts based mental health services.

The (English) Health Development Agency's report into arts in health also noted there are:

“No established principles and protocols for evaluating outcomes, assessing the processes by which outcomes are achieved, and disseminating recommendations for good practice.” (HDA 2000)

Indeed the majority of reports identified during this literature review explicitly pointed out the need to develop opportunities for arts workers to develop professionally and gain confidence in their ability to apply creative approaches to evaluating their practice. The unique approach and frameworks often applied by participatory arts projects in tackling stigma and discrimination also highlights the importance of further developing these innovative ideas and perspectives, and bringing these perspectives to the wider mental health debate. After analysing and synthesising the literature, the first thoughts of the PASEA project team were to develop a research project, which would provide sufficient scope for immersion in the arts projects, and would add to the current understanding of the benefits of the arts within mental health. However, there were real concerns that such a research approach would not be timely enough or have the necessary impact to influence the fast emerging mental health service development agenda. Therefore the second and preferred option was adopted, which aimed to focus on the capacity needs of arts projects, through developing a practice led research and service improvement model, which would support them to develop the skills to evaluate their own services and to develop the confidence to frame emerging findings within an arts based perspective. Overall, it was felt that this approach would have the potential truly to capture the benefits and experience of engaging in art making activities and could be built upon over the coming years, to create a future body of arts practitioner and user led research.

This approach to evaluating the benefits of the arts was positively acknowledged recently by the Scottish Government in its report 'Arts in the Community'. The report argued that creative approaches and practices should be developed from the 'bottom up' if they are to best meet their (project) purposes.

Objectives

The primary aim of the project is to take a 'bottom up' approach to: exploring the role of participatory arts as a mental health service, and to develop capacity within participatory arts to evidence their own practice; using this growing awareness to develop as innovative and sustainable projects, which can facilitate and support recovery, social and community development.

The key project objectives are:

- To inform future mental health service and policy development by highlighting the evaluation findings and 'showcasing' exemplary participatory practice.
- To develop the capacity and confidence within participatory arts projects to evaluate their practice, and to provide key learning on supporting participatory arts projects to develop their own body of evidence.
- To support the professional development of participatory arts workers, by providing opportunities for projects to reflect on and develop practice.
- To develop ongoing partnerships through the Learning Network to continue influencing policy and practice beyond the scope of the project.
- To provide a catalyst for wider discussions, which will enable projects to develop a common identity, and belief in the ability of the arts as an agent for social change.

Project Selection

There are many terms used to describe arts activity within a health or mental health context, however, the project made the decision to adopt the term 'participatory arts' within this project, as it was felt to capture and reflect the commonality of approach identified by many art workers, with regard to participatory practice. This term was felt by the project team to do justice to the practice of working 'alongside' service user participants, who in many cases are involved in planning, development and in some cases, evaluation of projects, together with project staff. For many projects, this high level of meaningful participation appears to be viewed in terms of participation as both a process through which the project develops, and an outcome in terms of the therapeutic benefits of participation received by participants. Indeed this was later found to be an approach to selection, which was fully justified as throughout the study a great deal of feedback from participants focused on the benefits of 'feeling included' and a 'part of things'.

"Alone in the hands of professionals we have felt compliant, fearful, hopeless, uncomprehending, isolated, oppressed, sad, surrounded by indifference and permeated with failure. Together, literally taking our mental health into our own hands, we have communicated, cooked lovely meals, dealt with issues, encouraged and been encouraged, experienced solidarity, expressed ourselves, felt our own strength, felt valued, gained confidence, helped ourselves, hoped, laughed, listened, made music, respected others and felt respected, understood and valued others. In a nutshell we have succeeded in something very special." Reachout Members Past and Present 2007

To encapsulate this, 'participatory practice' framed the basis of the selection criteria and the 6 arts projects identified were considered to exemplify many features of this approach. Selected pilot sites were projects that provided support primarily to people with direct experience of mental health problems, and were also carefully selected to ensure that their approach was congruent with the principles of recovery and social inclusion, and that they displayed commitment to the principles, which underpin the ArtFull Strategy. These projects were selected mainly based on their approach to working alongside service users to develop and evaluate the project, but also on their ability to represent and reflect some of the range of diversity in participatory arts, community based arts for health and arts-in-health projects that are operating across the country.

Support Process

At an introductory workshop facilitated by ESS, attempts were made to demystify evaluation and support was offered to the participating projects to leave behind their previous bad experiences of being evaluated and being 'monitored'. The principles of evaluation and some straightforward methods of self-evaluation were introduced, and crucially, the projects were provided with space to think through their views on expected outcomes. Overall, projects were supported to identify creative approaches and artistic activities, which could be applied as an evaluation tool. This approach was well received by the participating projects, which allowed them to share ideas and expectations and to work to their strengths.

Participating projects were then provided with individual support to improve or review existing self-evaluation methods and identify or focus on new participatory and creative methods for evaluation. At a second workshop, projects shared their self-evaluation methods and experiences and the day formed the basis of the beginning of a peer review process. At this second workshop, guidance was provided on how to analyse and report the emerging self-evaluation data in preparation for each project producing a self-evaluation report that highlighted the creative approaches they had applied to the process, and which explained the impact of their work on the recovery of participants.

THE PARTICIPATORY ARTS PROJECTS

Art Angel



"I have seen peoples' lives turned around for the good. The offering of something to do, something stimulating cannot be underestimated. If you have a mental health problem, then what the project makes possible is desirable as opposed to - medication, a hospital bed, it is a very good thing, thank you."

Background

Art Angel is an innovative arts advocacy project based in Dundee, which is run by and for people with direct experience of mental health problems. The project aims to provide an equal, friendly and inclusive environment for participants where they can benefit from the therapeutic value of participating in art making. Art Angel offers a wide spectrum of arts activities through, which participants can develop their ability for self-expression, explore their creativity, develop their art-making skills, and work alongside others to build a powerful voice within the community through publications, performances, films and exhibitions. Previous research undertaken within Art Angel by the University of Dundee in 2006, highlighted the transforming nature of arts advocacy, and specifically outlined the benefits to participants in terms of improved social interaction, an enhanced ability to cope with everyday life, a positive sense of achievement and a the development of a sense of hope and belief in the concepts of recovery. Art Angel also provides training for mental health professionals, which provides opportunities for participants to share their views and experiences of the reality of living with a mental health problem. Art Angel provided 250 facilitated art workshops in 2006/07, 40 of which were user led art workshops, these workshops offered Art, Photography and Creative Writing activities to a wide range of participants.

Evaluation Approach

Art Angel approached evaluation as a highly creative two-staged process, which aimed to provide a range of ways of engaging everyone involved in the project. Initially an evaluation-training event was held to engage the freelance arts workers and volunteers who work in Art Angel, in planning and developing a 'Creative Evaluation Day' for participants. This initial training event intended to provide an inclusive environment where everyone could explore the aims of Art Angel and discuss the current activities on offer. In addition, workers and volunteers were asked to consider the potential outcomes for participants and how these could be captured within an evaluation process. One example of a creative approach adopted within the evaluation-training day, was an exercise based on 'The Weavers Triangle', a simple planning and evaluation tool developed by Jayne Weaver for the BBC Children in Need.

Following on from the Creative Evaluation Day, Art Angel has reflected on the feedback and feel that their successes include providing:

- A safe environment for participant to access arts activities.
- Support from staff and volunteers to help participants explore their creativity and achieve their goals.
- Opportunities for participants to build confidence and self-esteem.
- An approach to support which aids recovery and development of well being for participants by valuing each individual's contribution at the level they feel comfortable with.
- Opportunities to develop a voice through arts based advocacy.
- An environment where participants are listened to and supported to develop action plans to achieve their needs and wishes.
- A form of support, which enhances the ability of participants to cope with everyday life.

Experience of PASEA and Future Plans

Art Angel has also used the opportunities provided by the evaluation process to consider where they can make improvements and how they would like to develop in the future. The future plans identified include the following:

- To develop a new evaluation strategy based on the latest information gathered from participants.
- To work on a substantial funding strategy to sustain and develop the work of Art Angel as well as encompass new beginners from our substantial waiting list.
- To provide a wider range of activities such as more Arts Residentials and more cross project working.
- To continue to work on and develop our 'inspire' Project which brings together small projects in Dundee to share a building in the City Centre, share resources, training as well as a gallery and cafe.

POLYPHONY



"It's like a family in a way. It makes me feel part of a group. I've never had that in my life you know. At school I was a loner, and have never been part of a group."

Background

Polyphony has been working in the Adult and Care of the elderly in patient wards at Gartnavel Royal Hospital since January 2004. Polyphony also works with participants from the community referred by the Intensive Community Treatment Team, Riverside Resource Centre and Waterside Resource Centre, and also 4 residential homes in Glasgow. Some of these community participants also attend the inpatient workshops, in addition to community based ones.

The project aims to take participants interests and musical ability and help them develop as a musician and as an individual as well as adapt to their changing needs. This is achieved through the continual reflection and evaluation of the service, by all involved. The project is differentiated taking account of individual needs. All with an interest are able to take part in the project, and do not have to be skilled musicians, and as a result there are participants engaged, with a wide range of musical abilities. Participants are able to work on solo and group compositions and all music performances are recorded, enabling participants to gain a copy of their recorded music. Participants have a diverse range of experience and cultural backgrounds, and these experiences are used to create different styles of music, and as a learning process for all involved. Participants are able to collaborate with professional musicians and a wide range of musical instruments and technology is available. In addition, Polyphony also provides opportunities for participants to perform their music in the wider community.

Evaluation Approach

Polyphony is the only Participatory Arts Project, within PASEA, which provides support within an inpatient setting and had, on contact with PASEA, already established the importance of regular evaluation. PASEA provided Polyphony with the opportunity and space to reflect and to revisit evaluation processes adopted and to develop two specific approaches. These approaches included an observational approach by using an observation schedule to evaluate progress and changes in participants. An adult service, the Waterside Drumming Group were observed at week one and were measured on the basis of observed improvement by week six. Observational criteria included: working together; interaction; group mood; and

engagement. In addition, 2 individuals were observed at week one and followed up at week six to establish progress cross this time period. These individual observations were measured on improvement to their self-esteem, interaction, concentration, communication and mood. This observation approach allowed participants to be viewed, whilst engaging in the music making process, in a very natural and unhindered way. Polyphony also carried out one to one semi-structured interviews with 6 participants, which allowed participants freedom to discuss how they felt about being involved with Polyphony and what they viewed as the main benefits.

Findings

Within the group observational data, the group showed significant improvement in all of the observational criteria, including working together, interaction, group mood and engagement. The individual participants' observational data highlighted that both participant A and B showed improved self esteem, increased interaction, increased concentration, increased communication and improved mood.

Within the interviews participants, focused on the importance of the structure, which Polyphony offered.

"I guess it gives me more a sense of structure to my life. Something to get out of my bed for and meet new people, make new friends. It takes up a lot of my time during the day, it's good that way."

"I think the main benefit of Polyphony for me is the fact that it gave me a bit of structure in my week because when I first came out of hospital I was lying in my bed till 5 o'clock."

Participants also highlighted the importance of being part of being included and feeling a part of something.

"It's like a family in a way. It makes me feel part of a group. I've never had that in my life you know. At school I was a loner, and have never been part of a group."

Participants also highlighted the improvement in their musical skills.

"I think there's a couple of tunes that I'd sort of written partly, I'd written bits of them. I came here and they ended up being finished products. B and S and I wrote them together I suppose, so I suppose that's a development, I've never been particularly good at writing music o I like to have people to bounce ideas off of."

Overall, participants highlighted the improvement that Polyphony had made to their quality of life.

"Currently it's the main thing in my life and I'm very enthusiastic about it. I look forward to coming to these groups all the time. I wake up full of anticipation."

"Well it's been great fun. I've only been coming for a couple of months but it's become the most important thing in my life basically and I look forward to coming and I go away with a high every time."

"It's great fun, I get a lot out of it, it's brilliant."

"It makes me feel good, we have jams, it's good."

Next Steps

The overall aim of Polyphony is to provide meaningful activity through music and improve the quality of life of service users. Polyphony found that participation in PASEA helped them to gain the feedback they needed to better achieve these aims, and to continue to develop the service in the future, taking into account the views of service users. Polyphony aims to continue to build evaluation into its project work, to ensure that its particularly disempowered participants, such as those with Dementia are able to contribute fully to the future development of the project.

POSITIVE MENTAL ATTITUDES



"I was in hospital 15 times suffering from mental ill health. I kept taking ill with nothing, no interest in life. I have never been so well since I joined my writer group." Positive Mental Attitudes Participant

Background

Positive Mental Attitudes (PMA) is a mental health awareness and anti-stigma project, based in East Glasgow. Funded by East Glasgow Community Health and Care Partnership, PMA work together with a range of local and national organisations to challenge attitudes and to support the development of people experiencing mental health problems. PMA has a range of creative groupwork available, including creative writing, drama and visual arts groups. These groups meet weekly with professional arts worker and a support worker, where participants are supported to develop their areas of interests and work towards exhibitions, publications, performances and public events. In addition, PMA provide mental health awareness training sessions and programmes, which take a mental health service user led approach.

Evaluation Approach

PMA elected to take an inclusive approach to evaluation from the outset, by holding a focus group where, arts workers, representatives from the arts groups, and PMA staff came together to discuss how best to evaluate their art activities. This focus group provided an opportunity to explore the overall purpose of evaluation, in addition to sharing their own thoughts about what worked or didn't work within their groups. The group then identified ways in which they could measure and record their outputs and participant outcomes.

Following this, PMA aimed to implement a creative evaluation approach, however, early attempts encountered some challenges. Participants and arts workers struggled to develop an approach, which would be creative but would not too complex to be achievable within the project timeframe. PMA Arts Development Worker therefore decided in the interest of expediency to develop a questionnaire which could gather qualitative information, but which could also be completed in a highly participative way. The Arts Development Worker who worked closely with the art and writing groups throughout to ensure that the questionnaire was presented in a creative manner developed the questionnaire. In addition, the drama group engaged with the process through a facilitated and recorded visualisation exercise.

The final questionnaire aimed to gather retrospective information by eliciting early memories of joining the group. Although this did present some recall challenges, it was felt to be important to gain a baseline on which progress could be measured, within future evaluation, however, thereafter this information will be elicited from new participants at the point of entry to the project.

Another form of evaluation undertaken by PMA was the evaluation of the arts groups' residency at the Gallery of Modern Art, Glasgow, working with artist Kathleen Little over two months early in 2007. This work was consistent with one of PMA's key aims of challenging public attitudes to mental health, reducing stigma and promoting equality.

The Findings

Although participants were able to freely opt out of this evaluation process, all 18 chose to participate. The questionnaire developed, focused on the quality of the experience for the individual, starting by asking participants to share how they felt about attending the project initially. Whilst 6 Respondents expressed anxiety about joining an Arts project, all respondents expressed a positive view of the process and the art making, once they began attending.

"(prior to attending the group) very lonely. I didn't go out much and always thought I couldn't or wouldn't mix with any type of group. When I was in a crowd, got quite afraid in case anyone spoke to me, as I couldn't have made conversations with anyone, even answering a question was very hard."

"I found life boring, uncomfortable and I felt lonely."

"Right from the start as I was made to feel welcome and the smiles I got made me feel part of the group. Soon we were all talking and became friends, and I realised I was not alone with some of my problems..." "I (felt) a bit nervous seeing all these people, it was a bit strange. I have got the confidence now that I can do anything like this. I am proud of myself for doing it."

When asked about the benefits of attending the project, the themes, which emerged, highlighted that a majority of respondents found attending the project allowed them to make new friends, share experiences and feel accepted. When asked specifically about how they felt within themselves prior to attending the group, the majority of participants stated that their confidence was low, they were lonely or bored or were experiencing poor mental health (expressed as illness). However, following attendance at the group all participants stated that their confidence had been raised, some also stated that they had experienced an improved self-image and had found that there had been a positive impact on their relationships out with the group. Significantly respondents also found the experience to be enjoyable and amongst the benefits highlighted were improved health and a feeling of hope.

"It has added another dimension to me."

"I can now go into a crowd and feel comfortable. I can help others as I feel I am worthy now and my confidence is so good I can go to bingo, pubs, and birthday parties. A lot of things I made excuses not to attend previously! The impact on how I get on with family members is great and they feel the same."

In addition, participants were asked what aspects of being involved with the group, contributed most to their recovery. An overwhelming majority of respondents felt that performing or exhibiting was the most positive experience and a third stated that attending the group made them feel proud of themselves and their achievements. Others stated that the feeling of respect for their achievements from others, added to the benefits.

"There have been so many highlights! But seeing one of the group members read his poems in front of a packed audience at the Arches was the best."

"I got my first poem read out on the radio.... this was a wonderful time for me. I read out a poem in the Glasgow Arches, I was very nervous but it felt good."

"The enjoyment of our poetry being read out is an achievement I thought I could never reach. I look forward to this group and feel a part of it. It makes you feel happier and helps build confidence when talking to others. It doesn't make you feel so lonely every day."

The residency at Glasgow's Gallery of Modern Art resulted in 'Positive Reflections' an exhibition of photography, computer arts and creative writing. This exhibition was displayed for 8 weeks and audiences were invited to post their comments. The gallery itself receives over 1,000 visitors per day, which ensured a high level of exposure for the art. Gallery staff collated a sample of 49 comments, which were posted in the comments box. Overall, the comments, focused on the mental health aspect of the exhibition and these are a sample of the comments:

"I think people who are mentally ill should be allowed to say what they want about life. People are afraid to talk to us, they think it's contagious."

"This exhibition is fantastic and demonstrates the power and creativity of people who have triumphed and recovered from mental health problems."

Experience of PASEA and Next Steps

PMA, like many organisations, knew that arts participation was life changing for participants and stated that:

"We watched people grow and develop, gaining confidence and forming strong, lasting relationships. We recognised the big changes - performing on stage and speaking at public events, but also the smaller ones, making the teas and coffees, meeting each other socially, expressing their opinions. Participants told us how much they loved what they were involved in and how good they felt about different experiences. What we didn't do was record these or formulate techniques, which would encourage people to record their own feelings, to track the changes in themselves. Being involved in PASEA has encouraged us to create a framework for monitoring and evaluation, which is flexible and participatory. We hope the legacy of our involvement in PASEA will be a growing body of evidence of the role of the arts in improving the mental health and well-being of our participants and the fostering of improved attitudes towards mental health problems in the general public".

The next steps for the PMA arts groups will be to continue to self monitor, recording week on week experiences, feelings and changes and to undertake a thorough evaluation, annually, refining the tools developed for the PASEA project. PMA have recently recruited an Assistant Psychologist to help them to develop tools to collect information on changes in public attitudes. PMA are currently working to support the development of the first Scottish Mental Health Film and Arts Festival (2007).

Trongate Studios - Familiar Faces, Anonymous Voices



*"The studio is a major factor in why I am able to function"
"It's the best thing that ever happened to me".*

Background

Situated in Glasgow's Merchant City, Project Ability is one of Scotland's leading specialist arts organisations. Since 1984 Project Ability have been providing a workshop and supported studio programme for people who find it difficult to access mainstream arts activities. Trongate Studios is one of the main projects within the organisation and provides studio space, materials and equipment for people, who are referred through mental health services to explore their creativity. Two trained artists provide full-time artistic support for around 90 people who attend on a regular basis. The demand for this support outweighs the available resources, with 70 people currently on a waiting list. Those on the waiting list are provided with interim support through access to the facilities one day each week.

No previous artistic expertise is required to take part in the activities on offer and the participants who attend mainly work independently on self-motivated projects, however a workshop programme is also available, which is designed to encourage development of new skills within a variety of mediums and techniques. The overall aim of the project is to improve participants' self-esteem, self-confidence, social and creative skills, while providing a structure and regular routine.

When people are initially referred to the project they are offered a short questionnaire to complete. This provides an idea of what potential participants would like to achieve within their time in the studios and how they think attending the project will benefit them. Following this, they are added to the waiting list and invited to join the waiting list workshops. On attending, participants are invited to fill in another questionnaire, which looks more closely at, their aspirations, and the kind of activities they would like to take part in, the new skills they would hope to gain and how they feel that attending the studios will benefit them.

Evaluation Approach

Projectability is a well-established organisation and as such, already had a number of evaluation methods in place, where the PASEA project has added capacity has been by providing the opportunity to review and re-energise their approach to evaluation. An example of, which is the annual questionnaire, which until recently has mainly focused on people's artistic and practical needs, but has now been improved to establish whether the support provided is meeting participants' mental

health and emotional needs. Monthly studios meetings have been one of the main forms of evaluation undertaken by the organisation, which provide a forum for participants/artists to discuss current issues of relevance and an opportunity to express concerns and voice opinions. A more recent addition to this form of feedback has been to provide a suggestion box, where participants/artists can post thoughts and express views in a way, which provides more anonymity than open meetings. Creative approaches to evaluation have also been further developed including the recent exhibition - 'In site' which was on show in the studios gallery, where artists were invited to make works that reflect their experience of working in Trongate Studios. Some portrayed a literal interpretation of the space and the people who work there whilst others chose to express a more personal connection. Many of the pieces of work produced for this show, provided positive feedback of experiences of engaging with Trongate Studios.

Findings

Through working closely with the artists and discussing their motivations for making the work within the 'In Site' project, Project Ability have been able to assess their increased artistic awareness and ability, as well as their increased self-esteem. Also evident in much of the work is the demonstration of an emboldened artistic attitude.

Another recent approach to evaluation has been the development of the Artists workbook, which provides an opportunity for artists to share their views and experiences, and this resource has been well received by participants and has provided an opportunity to gather a range of views on the benefits of attending Projectability.

"I have made a lot of new friends who are great at helping me."

"It's a godsend to be here and mixing with people."

"It's the best thing that ever happened to me."

"A place where I can work and think and relax."

"The best thing is being encouraged to do my art."

"It's been one of the most important decisions I have made."

J's Story

"One participant, J who has been coming to the project for a number of years provides a good example of the positive effects of regular creative activity. After many years of alcohol abuse and homelessness, J went through a programme of detoxification and was referred to the studios. He recently said, 'I find that coming into the studios gives me a good feeling of achievement. At the end of the day when I go home I feel that I have done something worthwhile and I have made some nice friends through coming to the studios.'

J treats his time in the studios very much like having a job. He comes in almost every day at 9am and stays for a full day. Having a sense of routine is one of the elements of attending which he feels plays an important part in his recovery, and he finds it very beneficial to take a methodical approach to organising his day. Prior to joining Projectability, J did not have any recent experience of art making art, but since attending has developed a style that is very much his own and which he feels holds great meaning and significance for him."

Experience of PASEA and Next Steps

Projectability intends to utilise conventional and creative evaluation feedback methods in assessing the outcomes of not only current projects, but also will attempt to gather retrospective data, by gathering views on recent past exhibitions, in addition to future programme of workshops. Project Ability is planning to move premises to a custom made space within the Trongate 103 development, along with 8 other arts organisations. Projectability feels that participating in the PASEA project has been timely, as this imminent move will provide an ideal opportunity to re-evaluate many aspects of how the Studios currently operate. The layout of the new space will be quite different from that of the current premises and this is being assessed in terms of how best to prepare for the changes that will need to be made. Project Ability hope that by using some of the evaluation methods currently being developed, that the best working practices can be built on in the future and the less successful can be left behind.

The Orchard Centre



"I would never have believed two years ago that folk would actually want to come and look at my work, never mind have it up in their house!" Statement from an artist/participant who sold a piece of her artwork during the 'Without Frames '06 exhibition.

Background

The Orchard Centre Services which are provided by the voluntary organisation health in mind, offer a range of mental health services designed to promote mental health and wellbeing and recovery, are based in the Orchard Centre in Bonnyrigg. They provide support to vulnerable people throughout Midlothian. The Orchard Centre project, differs from the other 5 projects, in that it provides a comprehensive range of mental health services, with the Arts and Arts Therapy Services, integral to this. It offers a range of activities, including: Arts and Craft groups; music and dance workshops; open art therapy groups; one-to-one art therapy sessions; Gallery and cultural visits; and annual exhibitions. This programme has evolved in response to the expressed needs and opinions of service users over the past ten years, and aims to give people an experience of art which is non threatening and accessible. More specifically the Orchard Centre aim to impact on the mental health and well-being of participants by increasing their confidence through the art making process; facilitating creative expression and thought; fostering positive social interaction; reducing social isolation; and promoting inclusion and challenging stigma.

Evaluation Approach

The Orchard Centre chose to focus their evaluation approach on 3 main areas of their practice- the weekly fabric group, the open art therapy groups and the annual art exhibition, which was imminent at the time of the evaluation implementation phase. The Fabulous Fabric Group had been running for over two years and takes place in the drop-in area of the Orchard Centre, making it accessible to all. Being located in the heart of the Centre, where there are people coming and going, makes the group quite informal. Participants are encouraged to come and go as they please and non-group members can watch and chat. In the spirit of the group, participants were asked to create an appliqué Fabric Tree. The leaves of the tree were 3 colours, representing:

- Dark Green - what is good about the group
- Brown - what is bad about the group
- Light Green - what we could change in the future

The Open Art Therapy Group was established approximately 10 years ago, with the aim of creating a non-threatening and facilitating environment, where participants had freedom of choice to explore a wide range of art media. The 'open' element of the group refers to an open studio model that allows members to attend on whatever level feels comfortable for the. The age range within this group spans from 16 years to 70 years. In addition to providing support to participants who have experienced mental health problems, this group also offers support to people with dual diagnosis e.g. learning difficulties and Dementia. Approximately 10 people attend each group from a list of 40-recorded attendees. The method of evaluation applied within this group, took account of the availability of an Art Therapy Student, who conducted a series of one-to-one informal interviews, with 14 group members, from this initial contact, the student then developed a questionnaire. This questionnaire focused on participants' incentives for joining the group, the aspects they found particularly helpful, and their thoughts on the therapeutic and arts based nature of the group.

The final activity to be evaluated was the Annual Exhibition - "without Frames '06". This annual exhibition takes place in a prestigious gallery, the Embassy Gallery, in the centre of Edinburgh, with the aim of promoting inclusion and challenging stigma, through involving participants in every aspect of the organisation and presentation, including: writing artists statements to accompany their work; transporting and displaying the artworks; creating publicity material; advertising the exhibition; participating in the opening evening celebrations; invigilating the gallery and welcoming the public during opening hours; and inviting written response from the public in a comments book.

Findings

The Fabric Group was initially suspicious of the motivation for evaluating the group, and were therefore slow to respond initially, however, when the benefits of evaluation were discussed, participants enthusiastically contributed. The findings, which emerged, showed that participants valued, the informal nature of the group, which allowed them to be left alone if they wanted and to have support to develop new skills if they chose. Participants, also felt that there was a good level of choice of activities, and felt that the group was very accessible and fun. Participants also highlighted the satisfaction that came from making things. Participants did however; feel that the down side of where the group was situated was the lack of storage, privacy, space and the level of noise. Participants also provided suggestions for developing the project, including visits to other artist studios and ideas about other forms of craft making which could be explored.

Within the Open Art Therapy group, all participants were keen to participate and stated that they felt that to be given the chance to articulate their thoughts and review their use of the group in this way, was very empowering. The findings from this group formed 5 main themes:

- An increase in members confidence through art and the art making process:
"It has given me the confidence to make 'good' art. It makes me feel good about myself. It's satisfying. It helps me relax and gets me away from my problems."
"Art making is therapeutic. It gives you an aim in life. It helps you to value yourself and makes you feel good about yourself. You feel inspirational and you're keeping busy. You are able to create opinions within the group."
- The groups facilitate creative expression and thought:
"It helps me to relax, its stress free. It helps me to think up ideas and encourages my imagination. It makes me think about life. I like to draw from my imagination."
"It can be helpful depending on what I'm thinking about. I can express myself. I go into a deeper thought when I'm painting. When I'm painting I let the world go by. I can forget about the big bad world."
- The groups fostered positive social interaction:
"It has helped me to learn to relate to different people in the group and be sensitive to people who need their own space. I can work as part of a team to produce better results and it helps me to think about my artwork. It's friendly."
- The groups reduced social isolation:
"It provides companionship and the sharing of problems. People have a laugh and there are general discussions about every day things. You feel like you are not on your own. It's good talking to other people. Not being a part of this would increase my chances of depressions."
"The conversations in the group bring me out of myself."
"I expected to make friends - I made friends."
- Promoting inclusion and challenging Stigma:
One of the main ways that participants felt the Orchard Centre promoted inclusion and challenged stigma was through the Annual Exhibition - "Without Frames". During the exhibition the public were encouraged to write their comments within the comments book and some examples of these thoughts are given below:
"Excellent work, wish I could do art as good as I have seen here."
"Thank you very much, there is a range of talent on display, but all show huge enjoyment and enthusiasm for art and creativity. The voices of the artist are really powerful and tell how much art can contribute to improving people's health and well-being....."
"All the art work is great - fantastic I love the sculptures hope to have another exhibition soon?"
"Such an amazing bright display of artwork! To me this work shows such a huge amount of self-expression in raw creative forms. Wow!"

Experience of PASEA and Next Steps

The Orchard Centre felt that the evaluation process was powerful in terms of providing an opportunity to celebrate success, which invigorated the groups involved and increased the sense of ownership within the group. This process also provided an opportunity, not only to celebrate the successes of the project, but also to appreciate individual successes and growth and created an important time of reflection. Participants felt that their opinions had been valued and listened to, and gained an understanding of how evaluation can support and encourage positive change. The Orchard Centre aims to continue to use the tree to remind themselves of their future plans and to show new group members to encourage participation. In addition to the group evaluation a Hurrah folder has been created which documents individual success and achievements within the group. These achievements may often appear small, but can be very significant to participants, for example - persevering with a challenging piece of work, chatting to other group members for the first time or finishing a project. The Orchard Centre aim to continue to build evaluation into the therapeutic process of art making.

"Reflecting on this process has been valuable for our own professional development. Feedback from the participants has been enlightening, allowing us to consider the issues from their perspective. We will definitely build on these methods of evaluation in the future. Knowing that the objective we had at the outset have indeed been fulfilled is motivating and will help to inspire future development across the service." Orchard Centre Project Team

Reachout With Arts In Mind



“Arts provide an expression of ideas that have meaning and resonance and can be used as an effective tool to enhance the quality of cultural identity perceived in the community and I now find it difficult to think of any situation where art could not be used as a tool. If ever I was asked to evidence this I would simply recommend that the person spend some time with Reachout as the proof is truly in the pudding.”

Trainee Development Worker Arts & Heritage in residence at Reachout 2005

Background

Reachout with Arts in Mind has developed over the past 14 years and currently supports 53 adults living in Forth Valley. Reachout is a self-help organisation, managed by members, which aims to give people who have experienced mental health problems, a sense of ownership and a creative voice. Reachout adopts a capacity building approach through its arts activities, which is built on the principles of mutuality. Reachout uses a range of arts based activities to achieve its aims and provides a supportive and stimulating group setting for members to meet, share experiences and participate in an extensive range of educational and creative projects. These projects include: drama; music; poetry; sculpture and exhibitions. In addition, Reachout works with the local community to develop an awareness of mental health, by providing outreach workshops and information events, which produce a creative platform where views and opinions can be shared. One significant approach to raising awareness has been a link to Stirling University's Department of Community Psychology, which has led to presentations to National and European Psychology Conferences. During the course of the PASEA project, Reachout has undertaken a period of growth and has been able to make its services more accessible to members by increasing opening hours from 3 days per week to 5. In addition, the project has recently relocated downstairs, which now provides disabled access.

Evaluation Approach

Reachout had adopted a number of creative approaches to evaluation over the years including a Creative Banner and a highly successful film 'Moving On' documenting the narratives of Reachout members. Where PASEA has offered additional support and value has been by developing the capacity of Reachout to take a more co-ordinated and outcome focused approach to evaluation. Through the Outreach Programme, Reachout members are now, asked on joining, to complete a new members file, which incorporates information gained at an initial interview session involving members and referring organisation. Recent introduction of relationship maps with members at the start of their membership has provided an opportunity

for members to record how they feel about themselves at the start of their engagement with Reachout and to develop understanding of their self image and self esteem. In addition, this mapping exercise outlines the relationships and networks of support that a member has prior to attending the group. All this information is collated with the aim of producing a useful baseline, from which members are able to measure progress and Reachout is able to use to measure its impact on the recovery and social inclusion of members.

Creative approaches have been adopted to document members' journey by recording participation in the activities on offer. Examples of this include use of digital photographs and DVD slide show's to record project events. Each individual member's portfolio of Artwork also provides a valuable record of the progression of individual skills and confidence in art-making. Project staff continually review the effectiveness of the activities on offer by holding one-to-one and group meetings with members to evaluate workshop content, delivery and learned skills.

Reachout also worked alongside members to identify 5 outcomes, on which progress was measured during the 6-month duration of the PASEA project.

Reachout have also recently developed a mechanism for audience feedback using participatory approaches such as an evaluation tree, anonymous comments box, comments book and video diaries.

The Findings

Through the implementation of this wide range of evaluation approaches, Reachout have gained a wealth of qualitative feedback which highlight a range of benefits of participating in Reachout including: the opportunities to learn and develop creative skills; the social support resulting from working as part of a group and the impact on the confidence and self esteem of participants.

Reachout also measured its impact over the 6 month evaluation period, between June 2006 and March 2007, based on 5 outcomes:

More people with mental health problems will be able to access the support of Reachout.

- Reachout increased opening hours from 3 days per week to 5.
- Membership increased by 23 new members.
- Re-located downstairs to enable disabled access.

Creative workshops delivered to external organisations.

- Workshops were delivered to 3 new organisations: the Whins Resource Centre; ALLOA Centre; and KLACKSUN.

Members will gain social and practical skills, which will support their social inclusion.

- 4 members facilitated and supported workshops for external organisations.
- 10 members reported increased motivation.
- 10 members volunteered to assist project work.
- 3 members moved onto community education
- 3 members took up employment opportunities.

Members will experience an improvement in self-esteem, independence and overall quality of their life.

“I've not only been learning creative skills here.... I've learnt and become more aware of my mind, body and soul.”

“Working as part of a group stops my social isolation.”

“I have to pinch myself to believe I've produced these works (paintings). I've at long last been confident enough to produce work, now I can just instinctively work on my own....”

“For ten years I wasn't capable of expressing myself. Being empowered enough to actually express how you feel - now that's power! Once you've learned how to help yourself its' harder to go back - you can't unlearn these methods.”

“If I was to try and describe Reachout in one word it would be 'nurturing' Reachout is damage reversal through nurturing; this is where you get nourishment to continue. The more positive experience you have the more positive you feel, inside and out. It's inspired me to want to move on. It's the process and journey you need to go through as an individual. I'm not perfect - but I do think I'm a better person now.”

(Reachout Group Members)

People in the local community will have a better understanding of people with mental health problems.

Reachout Community Outreach events included: 4 events at local health and wellbeing forums; a mental health marquee in Tesco car park; multimedia projections outdoors - projected onto Kilncraigs, Alloa; spring fair consultation event; and international women's day event.

Feedback from Community Outreach activities, have been evaluated through a range of methods including an evaluation tree, comments box and book. Feedback has been very positive and reinforces the importance of Reachout continuing to prioritise this Outreach work.

Some examples of comments provided by audience members and students include:

"Very informative, stimulating, inspiring and a new and hopeful way forward for the field."

"Very enlightening. All participants seemed so full of confidence. Left the lecture with a glow and a good feeling. Keep up the great work."

(Community Psychology 4th year students)

"Extremely interesting and well presented. Good to see members have gained enough confidence to stand in front of a large group of people and talk. Well Done!!! The photos of art work they have done were excellent and made a good visual impact."

(Audience member).

Andy's Story -

"Reachout has given me a lot of choice ... whether or not I choose to act on those choices is up to me.

When I first started Reachout I wasn't aware of the benefits of the arts, and what I could achieve. I've now learnt a range of creative skills including public speaking and photography. I like photography as it's so personal and individual there's no right or wrong.

The choices I make here are not life choices - but the choices you make can relate back to everyday life - art has helped me make choices. Having an idea and seeing it followed through to the end. You start to affirm in your mind that you've done something positive and do actually feel the benefits of that achievement straight away. Reachout enables you to continue building on what you've already achieved.

Even though Reachout has grown and changed over the years the ethos is still the same 'giving people space.'

You don't realise what's happened here at Reachout - just as you're not aware of your own mental health problems, a lot of people like me don't even realise they are experiencing mental ill health. Working with the Arts gives you an awareness of the Arts & your mental wellbeing... Because I'm now more aware I am more inclined to manage my own mental health. Now, when I have a thought or idea in my head I'll go and write it down, whereas before I wouldn't have done that. I also feel able to express my opinions and have respect and listen to other people, whereas before I couldn't.

Having a mental health problem sometimes feels like you're being punished for something. It's like being on a roller coaster. You can go to a psychiatrist or your doctor (which you do anyway) but coming to Reachout and talking about it is different. It helps me to face things - life in general - all the highs and lows.

I have become self empowered, more confident and a stronger person."

Experience of PASEA and Next Steps

Many of the awareness raising activities undertaken by Reachout through its Community Outreach Project, have been funded by 2 year Big Lottery funding. As part of this programme Reachout members are currently working in partnership with Klacksun, Clackmannanshire Service Users Network to produce an educational DVD, which can be used as a continuous professional development tool for multi-agency staff, working with people who have experienced mental health problems. However, gaining guaranteed income is an ongoing challenge for Reachout, despite it's conservative level of expenditure. Reachout have often relied on the goodwill and fundraising efforts of staff, volunteers, family and friends and as a service, which emerged and evolved through the needs of its members, it has not had the capacity to develop a more co-ordinated approach to fundraising. However, having the resources and support available through the PASEA project, has allowed Reachout to gain insight into the value of their work and the time to reflect and plan for the future. As vital part of this planning process, a funding strategy has been developed. Taking this strategic approach to fundraising has assisted Reachout to identify a broader range of future funding sources. As part of this plan, Reachout aim to develop the fundraising skills of members, which will include the sales of some of their own artwork. The members themselves are currently engaged in designing and developing the fundraising process, with advice and support from staff and it is anticipated, that this can result in the achievement of a regular income. This approach, will continue to call on the support of staff, volunteers, family and friends, but will adopt a more co-ordinated approach to maximise the impact.

CONCLUSION

Role of Participatory Arts

In addition to highlighting a creative approach to self-evaluation, PASEA aimed to showcase some of the exemplary practice of the participating projects and the emerging evidence from their evaluation activities. By doing so this report has aimed to provide some evidence of the key role that participatory arts projects can play in supporting service users at a individual level within their recovery; at a community level by providing a bridging function to connect with opportunities within Scottish society; and at a societal level as a medium to address and challenge public attitudes to mental health problems.

Overwhelmingly, the feedback from participants has been positive and has highlighted real benefits on all of these levels, with participants across all projects, highlighting individual benefits in terms of improved self image and self esteem, and greater self confidence. Participants across the majority of the projects also identified outcomes in relation to improved social relationships and social inclusion. In addition, all participating projects recognised the need to raise awareness of mental health issues, and tackle stigma through public performances and/or exhibitions. The success of these events, highlighted the important role that the arts can play as a non-threatening medium, through which people who have experienced mental health problems, can tell their stories and by doing so, can connect on a very personal level with others. There would appear to be real potential to capitalise on this work by linking participatory arts and the current work facilitated by the Scottish Government, on stigma and discrimination.

Evaluation

The 6 participating projects have all developed creative approaches to evaluation, which have been without exception, well received by participants and art workers alike. These approaches, have made sense to projects, both in terms of using familiar media to capture views and experiences of participants, and audiences, but have also been therapeutic activities in themselves, which have left participants feeling engaged and empowered. This response to evaluation is in stark contrast to previous anxieties and resistance to an imposed monitoring process. All of the participating projects have now expressed a commitment to build on their evaluation approaches at a project level, to ensure that reflecting on their practice and measuring the impact of their work becomes embedded in daily practice and are seen as viable activities in themselves. The learning captured within this project can also potentially be cascaded to other projects, supporting them to adopt similar approaches. The sharing of this learning could be further strengthened by the development of a creative evaluation resource.

Professional Development

Participating projects overwhelmingly welcomed the opportunities to undertake evaluation training together and to explore practice with their peers. There are few opportunities currently available to participatory arts projects that make this form of support possible. Throughout the project, the arts workers highlighted how this lack

of support isolates them and put them at a disadvantage compared with other mental health professionals. Within the literature reviewed; the discussions with participatory arts workers; and the feedback from the participating projects of their experience of PASEA, a consistent theme emerged, of the need for a workforce development agenda, which supports both artistic development, and reflection and learning in relation to mental health practice. Participatory arts projects are in an ideal position to contribute to emerging concepts such as recovery-orientated practice and social inclusion focused practice, however, they need to be provided with the same level of training, and resources to access training as all other mental health professionals.

Many arts workers already have an arts qualification, often an arts degree; however, there are currently little or no opportunities to link mental health and the arts through training, with the notable exception of the Arts Therapies. There is a gap, in relation to training and a need to develop training that would support the further development of participatory arts and mental health as a speciality. In addition, a Code of Practice, which specifically captures a participatory arts context, would not only support those working within participatory arts, but would also help to reassure funding bodies of the quality of service offered. The unique perspective of participatory arts workers, also has the potential to add much to the wider mental health and social inclusion agenda, and these workers need the space and resources to prepare to engage within these wider policy and service development debates.

Research

PASEA has aimed to provide some insights into the benefits of participatory arts by showcasing some of the exemplary practice identified within participating projects and recording the findings from individual project evaluations. There remains, however, a real gap in Scottish arts and mental health research. In addition, the level of empowerment, which participating projects and participants experienced through defining outcomes and measuring progress, can and should be further developed. Within Scotland there is currently little opportunity or capacity to develop practitioner or service user led research, which has the potential to not only empower those undertaking the research, but to also produce a body of evidence which is meaningful to the day to day work of arts projects. PASEA has aimed to provide a catalyst for the further development of this form of practice led research, and given the enthusiasm of the participating projects, there appears to be real interest in pursuing this. This research could begin to capture, some of the unique features of participatory arts projects, and further identify the role of these in supporting recovery and social inclusion and tackling stigma and discrimination.

Recommendations

Role of Participatory Arts

1.1 PASEA has provided evidence of the benefits and role for participatory arts within a mental health context, this now needs to be fully recognised by funding bodies, in particular local authorities, in terms of meeting their duties with regard to the wider social inclusion agenda, outlined within Section 26 of the Mental Health (Care and Treatment)(Scotland) Act 2003, and with regard to providing support for people who have experienced mental health problems, to move onto access mainstream arts support through the application of Direct Payments. Within the PASEA report, there has been a clear indication that participatory arts provide recovery-orientated practice, by providing a service, which is highly participatory and enables participants to define their own journey and outcomes. Expectations of NHS Boards are outlined within 'Delivering for Mental Health' which, highlights the commitment of the Scottish Government to providing services, which are recovery-orientated and which support social inclusion. NHS Boards, therefore have a clear role to play in funding participatory arts projects through, local delivery plans.

Action

Local Authorities should fund participatory arts project, as part of their duties to implement the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003 and these projects should be developed and funded through Community Planning Processes. Local Authorities should make mental health service users aware of their rights to access Direct Payments and should ensure that mainstream arts activities are accessible to those who have experienced a mental health problem, as part of their responsibilities under the Equality Disability Duty.

NHS boards should fund participatory arts projects, as part of their duties to implement the commitments of 'Delivering for Mental Health.' NHS and Local Authorities should explore the potential for joint funding through local funding and community-planning arrangements, to ensure that arts projects are well resourced and are best positioned to work to their strengths of promoting social inclusion and recovery.

1.2. The work undertaken within the participating projects, to raise public awareness of mental health problems and tackle stigma, should be capitalised on by NHS Boards, local authorities and central Scottish Government, which need to link current stigma and discrimination work with the wider social inclusion agenda, and look for creative approaches to work alongside communities to develop understanding. PASEA has clearly highlighted the benefit of using the arts to share experiences in a non-threatening way that is able to connect on a personal level with the wider public.

Action

Scottish Government, local authorities and NHS boards should fund participatory arts projects, to undertake anti-stigma and discrimination activities. Scottish Government, Health directorate should establish clear links between the arts and stigma within the future development of the current Anti-Stigma Campaign.

Evaluation

2.1 Evaluation approaches, which are creative, need to recognise by funding bodies as a meaningful way to capture project progress, and to monitor outcomes. Funding bodies, such as Local Authorities and NHS boards, should expect projects to produce evidence of their effectiveness, and should value a creative, reflective and process focused approach to monitoring. Projects in turn need to accept responsibility for evidencing their practice, by developing creative evaluation processes, which will measure their effectiveness. In addition, further work needs to be undertaken to develop outcomes, which capture some of the learning within this report on the value of the therapeutic process.

Action

LA's and NHS Health Boards should continue to require projects to evidence their practice as part of service agreements, but should accept a wider range of approaches to evaluation and work in partnership with projects to agree an approach, which will be acceptable to project participants. The National Peer Learning Network should develop outcome measures, which capture the benefits of participating in the arts.

2.2 Although ArtFull are committed to taking the learning from this project forward to cascade amongst other participatory arts projects, many projects may still need support to get started. The development of an evaluation toolkit would, provide an opportunity to support projects, to work through the process undertaken by the projects within PASEA.

Action

PASEA Project partners should support the National Peer Learning Network to produce an evaluation toolkit.

Professional Development

3.1 Opportunities to share practice and access peer review, should be available to all participatory arts workers, working in mental health, whether professional artists or service user artists. Central funding should be made available to support the development of a National Network, which will provide this support, such as the recently emerged ArtFull Peer Learning Network. This support should focus on professional artistic development. In addition, participatory arts workers, require support to develop their practice in relation to providing a therapeutic service within a mental health setting. It is vital that this support is provided by such a network, and that there is a focus on therapeutic relationships, recovery orientated practice and practice, which supports social inclusion.

Action

A National Peer Learning Network should be supported and funded jointly by Creative Scotland and Scottish Government Health Directorate; to ensure that both artistic and mental health practice support is provided.

- 3.2** Structures should be developed to provide individual supervision and professional development support to Participatory Arts Workers. This support should focus on mental health practice and support Arts Workers, to work to a Code of Practice, which includes confidentiality, equality and diversity, health and safety, vulnerable adults, child protection and data protection guidance. Where possible projects, should develop supervisory structures internally. The size of many Arts Project prohibits this form of support being provided within the projects themselves.

Action

Funding bodies should ensure that they provide sufficient resources to support the professional development of Participatory Arts Workers within any core funding. All project funding should include an element of 'professional development costs', which would enable projects to 'buy in' this support where required, or where this support can be provided internally, to enable projects to purchase supervision and appraisal training as required. In addition, a central database should be held by ArtFull of mental health professionals and support organisations that can provide this form of support.

- 3.3** Vocational opportunities should be available to enable participatory arts workers to undertake accredited training, which links the specialities of mental health and participatory arts in particular recovery orientated and social inclusion focus practice.

Action

Colleges and Universities should develop accredited mental health and participatory arts training, in partnership with the National Peer Learning Network. Service commissioners should provide sufficient funding, within either core or project funding to enable participatory arts projects, to take up vocational opportunities.

- 3.4** Mental Health professionals have the safety net of a professional Code of Practice, which frames their work and outlines their duties and obligations to service users and others they work with in relation to confidentiality, disclosure, working with vulnerable adults, child protection, and health and safety. In addition, recent work by NES has focused on the 10 Essential Shared Capabilities, which apply to mental health professions, which include practice related issues such as promoting equality and respecting diversity, user involvement and carer involvement. Participatory arts projects need to be provided with similar practice related frameworks.

Action

Creative Scotland and the Scottish Government Health Directorate should work with the National Peer Learning Network, to develop a Code of Practice. This code should be developed alongside participatory arts Workers and service users.

- 3.5** Participatory arts workers, unique perspectives, should be recognised, in particular, the role of the arts in developing community cohesion needs to be considered with regard to the development of stigma, discrimination, recovery and social inclusion approaches.

Action

Scottish Government, local policy making and service commissioning partners, including local authorities and NHS boards. Should invite participatory art workers and participants to attend relevant planning meetings that focus on recovery or social inclusion and should provide these projects with necessary funding, training and support to enable them to engage as equal partners.

Research

- 4.1** A highly inclusive approach to addressing the research agenda should be developed, which will enable Participatory Arts workers and service users to undertake practice led research. This approach to practice led research, should be supported by those who commission research, such as the Scottish Government, local authorities and NHS Health Boards. In addition, existing research organisations should support this development.

Action

Practitioner and user led research training and peer review structures should be developed alongside the National Peer Learning Network. There are a range of organisations, which can progress this agenda, including universities, Creative Scotland and the voluntary sector.

Key Terms

The project partners have defined the following key concepts for the purposes of this project:

Participatory Arts

Participatory arts projects function through collaborative and inclusive methods to enable people to express their ideas about themselves and their communities in ways that celebrate and reflect their experience and identity. These projects also seek to involve participants, wherever possible, in the design and delivery of their services, actively engaging communities and groups in the creation and execution of arts projects. They are either guided by the participants themselves or with the assistance of professional artists.

Active Citizenship

Active citizenship is when individuals have the ability and opportunities of their choice to become actively involved in defining and tackling the problems of their communities and contribute to improving an individual's quality of life, as well as to the wider society. This can include all kinds of community involvement, from volunteering in a local project right up to citizen governance, i.e. by standing for election as a local councillor.

Mental Health and Well-being

Mental Health and Well-being is the embodiment of social, emotional and spiritual well-being. Mental health provides individuals with the vitality necessary for active living, to achieve goals and to interact with one another in ways that are respectful and just.

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Mental Health Foundation

About the Mental Health Foundation

Founded in 1949, the Mental Health Foundation is the leading UK charity working in mental health and learning disabilities.

We are unique in the way we work. We bring together teams that undertake research, develop services, design training, influence policy and raise public awareness within one organisation. We are keen to tackle difficult issues and try different approaches, many of them led by service users themselves. We use our findings to promote survival, recovery and prevention. We do this by working with statutory and voluntary organisations, from GP practices to primary schools. We enable them to provide better help for people with mental health problems or learning disabilities, and promote mental well being.

We also work to influence policy, including Government at the highest levels. We use our knowledge to raise awareness and to help tackle stigma attached to mental illness and learning disabilities. We reach millions of people every year through our media work, information booklets and online services. We can only continue our work with the support of many individuals, charitable trusts and companies. If you would like to make a donation, please call 020 7803 1121.

If you would like to find out more about our work, please contact us.

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