



Older Adult Unit textile workshops
 led by June Heap
 Image: Willis Newson

Background

The Moving On project involved a three year programme of integrated public art commissions in mental health for Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust (AWP). Its aim was to enhance new facilities being created as part of a major £90m PFI capital development. The art programme, developed and project managed by Willis Newson, covered four sites and a variety of settings. More information on the project itself can be found in a case study, available from www.willisnewson.co.uk.



Water feature by Matt Chivers
 at Callington Road Hospital
 Image: Paul Highnam

To take advantage of this opportunity to understand the impact of arts in different mental health contexts and upon a wide range of service users and staff members, an evaluative study was commissioned by the Estates and Facilities Division of the Department of Health. The research was undertaken by an academic team at the University of the West of England (UWE) led by Professor Norma Daykin and was a partnership between AWP, UWE and Willis Newson.

Aims and Objectives

This research sought to explore the impact of Moving On and to develop best practice as a result. The five main aims were

- To explore the impact of the arts programme on the way in which service users and staff experienced their environment.
- To explore the impact of the arts programme on health and wellbeing.
- To explore experiences of involvement and ownership.
- To identify the added value of the use of the arts in the management of transitions to new buildings and services.
- To identify implications and develop best practice models.



Carer and child in workshop
 held by Clare Hudman,
 Coast Resource Centre, North
 Somerset
 Image: Paul Highnam



Detail of ceramic wall work
by Marion Brandis
Image: Paul Highnam

Approach

A qualitative mixed methods approach was adopted. This included a systematic literature review, analysis of project documents and qualitative research including interviews and focus groups with service users, staff, carers, artists and other stakeholders.

Findings

The literature review found very few rigorous qualitative studies of arts in mental healthcare but indicated key issues for this study and for further research. Analysis of project documents identified key successes and challenges of the project, and some key themes, including: defining the role of NHS staff; the aims and scope of consultation and participation; the role of service user art; the impact of the PFI process; the needs of artists involved in the programme; and concerns about sustainability and resources.



Room for Reflection
by Chris Ryan
Images: Paul Highnam

The fieldwork identified a number of ways in which the art enhanced healthcare environments and diminished the impact of aspects disliked by service users and staff, such as institutionalisation. These included the observations that artworks helped to create modern 'fit for purpose' environments and also helped to enhance valued aspects of these environments by using carefully chosen materials and evoking popular themes such as nature and locality. Participation in arts was found to offer opportunities for service users to re-engage with identities other than that of 'patient'. The need for genuine opportunities for service users to be involved in creative processes emerged as a key theme.

The findings also indicated levels at which art and its impact may be limited or constrained and examined project management and issues that may mediate responses to arts.

A best practice framework was developed to capture the prerequisites for successful arts in mental health strategies. This suggested five dimensions of good practice:

- Understanding the benefit of arts
- Effective and high level management, leadership and vision
- Partnership working
- Service user involvement and participation
- Developing an evidence-based approach



Tree of Light
by Kate Munro
Images: Nigel Noyes

All these findings are explored fully in a final report, entitled "Building on the Evidence: Qualitative Research on the Impact of Arts in Mental Health Care", available for download on the Willis Newson website, www.willisnewson.co.uk.