



Collages created by service users attending workshops led by Siobhan McElroy  
Image: Paul Highnam

### Background

Arts at Callington Road was a participatory arts project for service users at a large, campus style mental health hospital at Callington Road, Bristol. The project was commissioned by Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust (AWP), funded by Bristol City Council and managed by Willis Newson. It involved three artist residencies providing sequential workshops for adults and older adults using poetry, music and visual arts. The workshops were supported by staff, including staff from the Occupational Therapy and Art Therapy departments. A fourth resident artist provided a 'reflective' overarching view of the project. The research was funded by AWP Charitable Funds.



Drums and a poem at the final Arts at Callington Road celebration showcase event  
Image: Fiona Williams

A research study was commissioned to evaluate the impact of this project. This was undertaken by Professor Norma Daykin of the University of the West of England (UWE) and Barbara Feldtkeller of AWP, in collaboration with Willis Newson and the steering group for the project. Dr Tony Soterion, Director of Research at AWP provided advice and guidance.

### Aims and Objectives

The primary aim of the evaluation was to explore the potential role of arts activity in encouraging service user participation. It investigated how service users were able to engage, levels and types of participation, degrees of interaction and their ability to make choices and decisions as part of the project. It also explored the factors that encouraged and enabled participation and examined the impact of the project on participants and staff.



Artists who completed residencies – from left: Sue Mayfield, Elizabeth-Jane Grose, Justin Fellows, Siobhan McElroy  
Image: Willis Newson

### Approach

A qualitative mixed methods approach was adopted. This involved participant observation of the arts activities and a focus group with key stakeholders at the end of the project, focusing on staff experiences and perceptions.

### Findings

The results of this study highlight the benefits to participants and staff of arts activity and also raise key issues for those involved in delivering or developing such provision in mental healthcare settings.

The final report identifies a range of positive impacts of participation, including motivation, pride, expression and choice and concludes that this project offered valuable benefits to participants.

*“... and seeing some of the people’s faces when they saw their work... people that were coming over and seeing stuff displayed... they were really chuffed, which is brilliant... that meant an awful lot, really, to them, to see the things that they created looking really great on display boards.”*

[AWP staff member]

Staff also reported enhanced motivation, skill and learning, a sense of being valued and a sense of widened horizons and heightened wellbeing.

*“...the whole project has completely boosted my confidence within the job role and... it’s... pushed me to do certain things that... felt quite difficult sometimes... but I’ve achieved them. It’s hugely increased my confidence in my... job role, my career, so it’s been really beneficial and really positive for me as an individual.”*

[AWP staff member]

A number of issues were found to mediate participation for individuals including healthcare needs, cultural and personal issues, the provision or lack of support, the involvement of carers and external influences such as hospital policies and the physical environment. The facilitation skills required by the artists were captured and the need for artists to be supported and briefed by healthcare staff was emphasised. The report also made suggestions about effective organisation of project support and management, particularly in relation to the difficult issue of consent.

The final report includes recommendations to those involved in providing future participatory arts in mental health services. It also identifies areas that would benefit from further research.

These findings are explored fully in a final report, available for download on the Willis Newson website.



Felt piece created by AWP staff member participating in 2D visual arts workshops led by Siobhan McElroy  
Image: Siobhan McElroy



Detail from collages created by service users at workshops led by Siobhan McElroy  
Images: Paul Highnam



Exhibition in a box workshop tool open at the final Arts at Callington Road celebration showcase event  
Images: Fiona Williams