



“Coming here was a catalyst for my creativity; a ray of light”

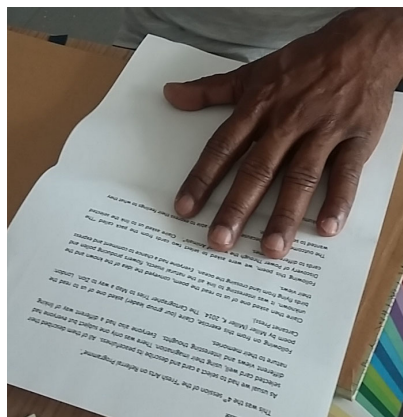
Willis Newson delivered a mixed-methods evaluation of Fresh Arts on Referral, the first arts on prescription programme to be trialled in an acute hospital. While the evidence base for Social Prescribing and Arts on Prescription is growing, there is very little evidence around how the model might work in an acute setting.

The evaluation sought to understand whether the social prescribing model commonly used in community and primary care settings might support the needs of hospital patients with a range of chronic conditions.

Fresh Arts on Referral delivered eight six-week condition-specific arts programmes for Cancer, Chronic Pain and Dementia patients at Southmead Hospital Bristol between March - July 2018.

Delivered by Fresh Arts, the arts programme of North Bristol NHS Trust, with artists Ali Brown, Rachel Davis and writer Claire Williamson, Fresh Arts on Referral included onward signposting and referrals to community-based activities to enable sustained support for wellbeing.





Evaluation findings concluded that Fresh Arts on Referral provided an important and valued source of support for the 65 patients who took part. For many, the programme was transformative, enabling them to better manage a chronic condition through the practice of compassionate self-care.

Data collected through the Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale demonstrated an increase in participants wellbeing, while analysis of qualitative data collected through a series of participant, artist and health support worker focus groups, participant feedback and case study interviews provided a rich and meaningful narrative of change.

“This is how we’re rebuilding ourselves”

Faced with the difficulty, trauma and loss associated with living with a chronic condition, participants connected with others in a similar situation, made new friends and were able to safely share their experience without fear of judgement.

“If you don’t have this group, you sit down and bottle it up. People need to talk and connect not bottle up. Take it out and share it and it puts your mind at ease.”

Creative activity enabled a shift in focus from one’s condition and provided a deep sense of enjoyment. It enabled participants to express themselves. It was liberating and gave them a taste of freedom and release.

“Really rewarding to just be me and not my condition. I’ve felt like me again”

The process of making and sharing with others enabled participants to see that they still had much to offer and enjoy. It helped them to recognise the skills and resources they have and gave them the confidence to try new things. The programme enabled participants to reconnect with themselves and remember how important it is to care for oneself. It helped them to focus on what they can do rather than what they can’t do.

“Elsewhere people do things for me - here I was able to stand and do things for myself.”



“Life begins to look brighter and we look forward with hope.”



However, the programme did not just impact patients. Artists and health staff supporting the project said that it helped them better understand the experience of patients. They talked of having come away with an *“improved understanding of the daily impact of a condition.”*

“I have more empathy for people in their situations in life; there are a lot of people holding a lot of hard stuff that you don’t know about when you see them in the street or in the hospital.”

The programme prompted deep reflection around self-care amongst participants, artists and health support workers. Self-care is important to all of us. However, it is especially important to anyone with a chronic health condition, which can affect people emotionally and psychologically as well as physically.

“Self-care gets left by the wayside”

“You need to look forward at what you can and will do. It’s about finding a new path. The path may be hidden in places but keep following and it will point to a new horizon and new direction.”

Diagnosis of a chronic condition may be experienced as a trauma which impacts on the person as well as on families, friends and relationships and necessitates finding new ways of being in the world. It becomes even more important to understand, pay attention to and look after one’s own needs in order to be able to cope with day-to-day life. Self-care becomes a priority where it might not have been before.

“You need to treat yourself well”

The experience of participants within the Fresh Arts on Referral programme suggests that practicing self-care led them to feel more confident and empowered despite often being reliant on others for help and assistance.

“I need to take care and look after myself in this process.”

For the Fresh Arts on Referral participants, therefore, developing a practice and attitude of self-care may help them maintain wellbeing and quality of life while also enabling them to develop the resilience to face future challenges.

Fresh Arts on Referral

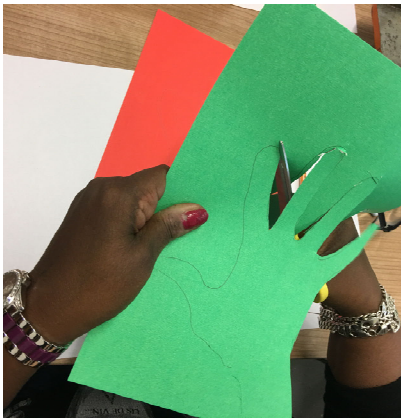
Evaluation of hospital programme to support patients to better manage chronic conditions



Fresh Arts on Referral demonstrates that the social prescribing model can be successfully applied to the acute hospital setting to deliver meaningful patient outcomes. Fresh Arts on Referral has impacted significantly on the ability of patients with chronic conditions to better manage their condition through self-care. It has also enabled health staff to empathise with and better understand the daily impact of a condition.

Fresh Arts is continuing to deliver Fresh Arts on Referral into 2019 and 2020, trialling the programme with new departments and delivering hospital-based monthly follow-on groups to support patients who have completed the programme. While this opens opportunities for further research, it also presents opportunities for sharing the Fresh Arts on Referral delivery model and resources with other hospitals wishing to explore this way of working with patients.

“Other groups (self/peer support groups) have focused too much on difficulties which is draining. Here the focus is the art.”



Fresh Arts on Referral was developed and managed by Fresh Arts in collaboration with arts and healthcare consultants Willis Newson. It was funded by North Bristol NHS Trust and Southmead Hospital Charity, Macmillan Cancer Support and Arts Council England.

To download the Fresh Arts on Referral Evaluation go to www.willisnewson.co.uk

Five years ago, everything changed for me. I was leaving the house on a Sunday morning to go to the recycling centre when I saw a young man on a bench. I parked up and walked back to see if he was ok and he just went crazy. He was someone’s son. I just wanted to make sure he was ok. I wasn’t to know.

When the attack happened, it changed my life. I had to give up my job and with that I lost contact with people. I felt very isolated. Nearly five years have passed, and I have gone from being a very capable, able, mobile lady - riding my bike, running and keeping fit - to someone who can’t even climb the stairs.

In the beginning they said it was PTSD, all in my head. But now they have a name for it - Trochanteric Bursitis - inflammation causing constant crippling pain in my hips. The pain management course warned us - how someone can start off taking paracetamols and two years down the line they are on morphine and opiates, anxious and depressed. It spirals.

I do get very down. I’m a single Mum. I have got two children. I struggle with my mental health and I am a carer for my son too. So, I have to push on through and try and help myself so I can look after them.

So, last year when someone came to the pain management group to tell us about various groups that we could take part in, I just signed up to Fresh Arts on Referral right there and then! I went to the first group at Southmead Hospital. It was lovely!

I love crafting and making things and I got to be creative again. I found that enjoyment again, of making and creating and thought perhaps it will spill over into my life at home. And it has. I’ve really got into crafting. I set aside time for myself at home, do my own little thing.

But meeting people has been important too. Apart from hospital visits, mental health appointments and things like that, this is the only thing that I do all week, just for me. I look forward to seeing people. I know that there are people who understand me there. We are respectful of each other and I have grown to trust them. It’s a safe place for me.

The Fresh Arts programme went so fast! Only 6 weeks. Just before the end of the programme, Julie came to talk to us about other groups we could join, and I have been going to Arts on Referral Group at the Greenaway Centre. There are some weeks I cannot make it, if I am on more morphine and can’t drive, I can’t get there, and I am so disappointed.

It is something that I look forward to all week.

I still struggle to keep on top of my pain. I do get down. Sometimes, I have a terrible week, but I just sit and craft and it’s a kind of release. It lifts me up from that dark place.

I was in the Macmillan Cancer Wellbeing Centre at Southmead because I had been doing the Living Well course and there was a poster for Fresh Arts on Referral on the table while we were having coffee. It appealed to me.

At first, I didn't think that Arts on Referral was much to do with my cancer diagnosis. I felt I was getting really good information and advice from the Living Well course. It was about wanting to write.

But I really surprised myself at what I wrote. Even though it is two years since my cancer treatment, I found that those emotions were still there, and writing brought them to the surface. Feelings of being lost and not knowing how to find my way home.

Even the very first exercise we did surprised me. It takes me a long time to write anything, so I was apprehensive when Claire read us an extract from some writing and afterwards said "write something in response, write for 4 or 5 minutes". I thought 4 or 5 minutes, that's not long enough. But I found myself writing and becoming quite emotional. There was a box of tissues on the table. Claire invited us to share what we had written with a partner. I wanted to share, but I said I'd probably cry.

I live on my own. There has been no husband or partner to share this cancer journey with. No one I could come home and talk to. There has been support from friends, Church, the community. But no one here with me at home. I think a lot. Things go around your head. Being in the writing group with others on the same journey has helped me to really release some of those feelings. With friends and family, it gets to the point when you can't talk about it anymore. "You're really looking well" they say, and that's what they want and need to see.

In the writing group, we really bonded with each other, and we keep in touch. I think the closeness has come through being able to share what we wrote with each other, sometimes sharing things that are very personal.

When the six weeks came to an end, we were all so sorry it was ending. There is nothing available like this where I live. So, I was delighted when we were told that there was going to be a monthly follow-on group.

Claire has given me tools I can use to write. I didn't realize how many different ways there are to be creative with writing. It has opened my eyes to the possibilities.

I'm not doing as much writing at home as I'd like. But I have got the tools. I just need to make time and space. And, going along to the monthly follow-on group gives me motivation and encouragement.

When I went to the last group, I walked into the room and greeted the ladies I had really bonded with. I could have burst into tears right there and then with the sheer relief of being there, with those people, on the same journey as me. It was liberating. It was a relief. I felt safe.

I was up at Southmead Hospital because of my cancer. I had just been for a consultation and Margaret and I came out and saw the table in the atrium with the Fresh Arts team. We met Rachel and heard about the project. Margaret used to be into art and painting and all that and, with her dementia, we thought it would be a good idea.

Margaret's dementia had not long been diagnosed and we were in a quandary about where to go, what was available, what provision there might be for support. We thought if we went along to Fresh Arts on Referral, we would be able to find out more.

The first session was slightly worrying for me. I was interested in the arts, but I have never practiced since childhood and I was apprehensive about taking part. But it was all very easy. We were heartily and happily welcomed into the group. I remember, there was even tea, cake and grapes on the table.

Rachel's input was quite incredible. Not just her technical ability, which was paramount, but also her personality. There was absolutely no sense of being pushed around or being told what to do. It was very gentle, and great fun!

Taking part gave me a degree of self-confidence in my own abilities. There was no judgement. We looked forward to Monday afternoons every week.

Getting to and from the hospital was a bit of a challenge. Luckily for us there is a bus that takes us straight there, but you tour a fair bit of Bristol to get there - it took an hour and a quarter each way. Having said that, I think having it at the hospital was important. We took it more seriously, the fact that it was supported by the hospital.

Taking part in the group, I came to realize that this - Margaret's situation and my situation caring for her - is a common experience for folk. You often feel that this is us and us alone. Sharing with other people was important. By the 4th or 5th session you really got to know each other, and people were very open with each other. It often doesn't happen. But we chatted as we painted or made things, sharing what we were doing, and the activity and structure of the group seemed to help us open up to each other.

Through the group, chatting away with others, we discovered that there is all sorts of support available. We looked into going to a local group here but, since the Fresh Arts Group, Margaret has had a fall and I have now been diagnosed with liver cancer, so we haven't been able to go. But it has helped, just knowing that there are groups there to help and support us.

One is not in this alone. That's the thing that has helped us the most. A feeling of not being in this alone. That has been very important.

If anyone in a similar situation is not sure about going along, I would say "Give it a go!" It was jolly good fun. It lightened our day, our whole week. In fact, I even mentioned it in our annual Christmas letter this year, telling friends how the group helped us along our way.

Fresh Arts on Referral Purpose	Fresh Arts on Referral was a pilot to find out whether participation in arts activities in a safe group setting might enable patients with chronic conditions to better manage their own health and wellbeing.
Fresh Arts on Referral Aims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide a non-medical referral option that can operate alongside existing treatments to improve health and well-being • To support patients with chronic conditions to better self-manage their condition • To reduce symptoms such as stress, social isolation, boredom, pain, anxiety, depression, mobility or dexterity issues • To provide opportunities for patients to meet others with shared experiences • To improve quality of life outside of the hospital • To support patient discharge through signposting to resources within the wider Community
Artforms Used	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual Arts • Creative Writing
Project Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fresh Arts, the arts programme of North Bristol NHS Trust • NGS Macmillan Cancer Wellbeing Centre • North Bristol NHS Trust Brain Clinic • North Bristol NHS Trust Pain Management Clinic • Willis Newson Arts and Health Consultants
Cost	Programme delivery cost (artists fees, materials, catering, exhibition costs, Bristol Arts on Referral liaison) £20,900
Funders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arts Council England • Macmillan Cancer Support • North Bristol NHS Trust • Southmead Hospital Charity
Artists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ali Brown • Rachel Davis • Claire Williamson
Participants	65 Southmead Hospital patients with chronic conditions including cancer, chronic pain and dementia
Location	Southmead Hospital, Bristol
Dates	March - July 2018
Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50 two-hour arts workshops • 6 focus groups • 3 participant case studies • 1 artist training day • 50 artist-health worker debriefs
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved patient wellbeing (primary outcome) • Improved self-management of chronic conditions • Increased sharing and connection with others in a similar situation • Increased sense of freedom, expression and release • Increased enjoyment • Increased confidence and self-esteem • Increased motivation to manage self-care

Quality Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project devised to meet specified healthcare need • Project planned in collaboration with clinical partners • Experienced artists recruited and given full training and induction to the programme • Recommended rates of pay for artists including payment for training and preparation • Artists' support, debriefs and supervision provided • Health support workers in place to support all sessions
Evaluation methodology	<p>A mixed-methods evaluation was carried out by Willis Newson. Participant wellbeing was measured at the beginning and end of each 6-week programme using the Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale. Qualitative data was gathered through a series of Participant, Artist, and Health Support Worker Focus Groups, participant feedback, semi-structured Interviews and case studies. Artist and Health Support Worker debriefs were held at the end of each workshop. Data was analysed using a simplified form of thematic analysis.</p> <p>All participants were invited to complete the validated questionnaire, to use the Feedback Box, to take part in a Focus Group and Case Study Interview.</p> <p>All participants who volunteered to take part in Focus Groups were included in the Focus Groups. 33 participants volunteered to take part in interviews. Since we could only carry out 3 interviews, 1 person was randomly selected from those who volunteered to take part in each clinical group by allocating each participant a number and drawing the numbers from a hat.</p> <p>Ethical principles were adhered to throughout. Evaluation Information Sheets and Consent Forms were given to participants. Participants were invited to take part, but it was made clear that this was not compulsory and that participants could withdraw from the evaluation at any time.</p> <p>Participant codes were used to ensure anonymity. All data was stored securely and treated with the utmost confidentiality.</p>