



ARTS

ON PRESCRIPTION

"A MEANS TO A NEW BEGINNING"
(Participant)



arts and minds

Charity No: 1122845

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Foundation
for the Arts and Mental Health

www.artsandminds.org.uk

In October 2009, 'Arts on Prescription' (Cambridgeshire) was born.

Inspired by the success of similar projects which have long been running elsewhere (including Stockport's PCT funded 'Arts on Prescription', Sefton's 'Creative Alternatives', 'Time Being' in the Isle of Wight and 'Open Art' in Essex), Cambridge based charity Arts and Minds decided it was time that people experiencing mild to moderate mental health issues in Cambridgeshire should have the option of engaging in arts workshops instead of, or as well as, the conventional treatments prescribed.



Spiral



Fruit paintings

Initially funded by the Transformation Fund (managed by NIACE), the project was piloted in three locations across Cambridgeshire.

GPs and other health professionals referred patients with mild to moderate mental health issues (such as depression and anxiety) into the scheme and participants were also invited to self-refer. The pilot received extremely positive feedback from GPs and participants alike, and demonstrated the need for such a provision. This enabled Arts and Minds to secure future funding (from the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust), allowing 'Arts on Prescription' (Cambridgeshire) to continue in the county.

At any one time, around 20% of women and 12.5% of men in England are experiencing common mental health problems such as depression and anxiety¹ and mental health services account for one pound in every seven the NHS spends².

Research has shown that taking part in arts activities can help to promote well-being, by offering a chance to relax and concentrate on something absorbing³. Drawing, painting and creative writing can offer a distraction from feelings of anxiety and distress and may open up new ways of looking at life.

¹NHS Information Centre (2007), Adult Psychiatric Morbidity in England, 2007: results of a household survey.

²New Horizons: Towards a shared vision for mental health (Department of Health consultation, July 2009).

³Secker et al, 'Mental Health, Social Inclusion and the Arts: developing the evidence base', Anglia Ruskin University/UCLan Research Team, 2007



Abstract painted ball

Participants attend weekly creative group sessions, led by an experienced artist and supported by a therapist.

While 'Arts on Prescription' may use the therapeutic benefits of artistic activity, it does not constitute art therapy. Instead, participants come together to work on an arts activity in a supportive environment.

“The social nature of the activity was felt to be very important.”

(Josie Aston, Research Manager, Arts on Prescription (Cambridgeshire))

“I felt meeting others and listening to them, plus spending time for myself was helping me. I feel I need this type of therapy and encouragement to relax and give me ‘me time’.”

(Participant)

“A wonderful experience – we all had problems that won’t go away but we’re starting to support each other.” *(Participant)*

“I enjoyed the social interaction between the group and supportiveness – enjoyed having the opportunity to experiment and ‘play’ with the art materials: relaxing and soothing.”

(Participant)



2D work



Making papier maché pigs

How are participants referred?

Participants are referred through their GP or other health professional. Alternatively they can contact 'Arts on Prescription' (Cambridgeshire) to refer themselves, in which case the therapists supporting the sessions will go through a referral process with them. Therapists meet all participants individually, regardless of how they are referred, to discuss their needs and expectations and make sure the project is right for them.

Trying new things

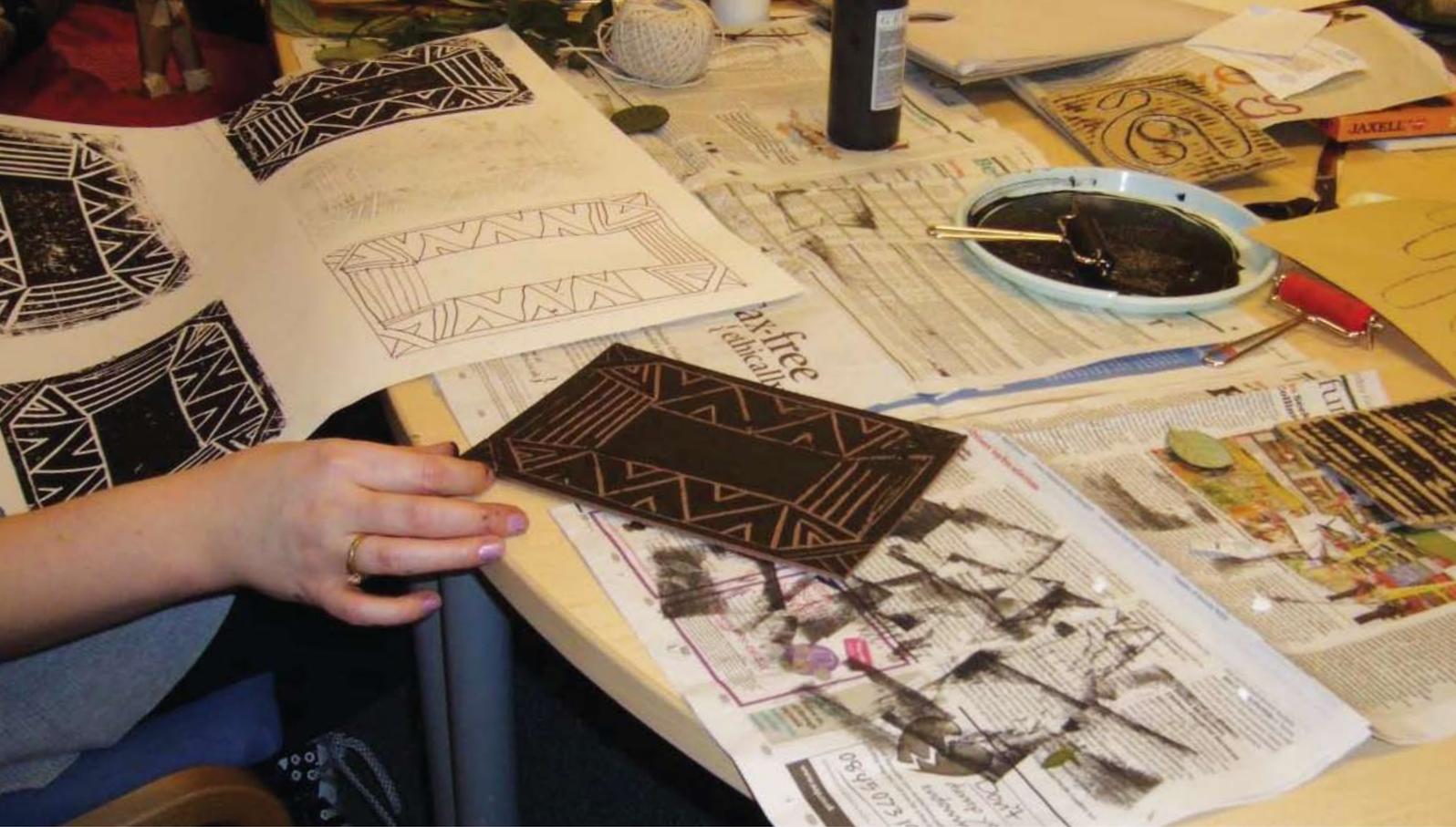
As well as the weekly arts workshops, participants are also offered the chance to participate in one-off sessions held in cultural venues such as museums and art galleries.

“Previously, I’d be too inhibited and unconfident to visit, but after filtering this out, I enjoyed seeing it and having the opportunity to respond to it afterwards.” *(Participant)*

Following the project, participants are sign posted on to other arts and cultural activities that they can access within mainstream provision or mental health services, depending on their particular and ongoing support needs.



Painted bags



Printmaking

Effectiveness

During the pilot, we used the GAD-7 (Anxiety) and PHQ-9 (Depression) scales to assess participants' level of depression and anxiety at the beginning, mid point and end point of their participation in workshops. While the time period of the pilot (10 weeks) and lack of a control group made it difficult to draw definitive conclusions, the vast majority of participants, when asked about their mental health using the GAD-7 and PHQ-9 questionnaires, showed an improvement in mental health. 80% of participants who completed questionnaires showed a reduction in levels of anxiety and 90% in depression.

Taken in combination with the positive comments received from participants, and the fact that some participants suggested a link between their improved mental health and the sessions, 'Arts on Prescription' may indeed be "a means to a new beginning." *(Participant)*

What participants say:

"It gave me something to look forward to each week, knowing I could get out of the house...also having something to do at home helps with stress."

"I love coming here."

"May it continue – both the course and the banter!"

'Arts on Prescription' can mean "leaving your problems at the door for a couple of hours."

"We may all have our own reasons for enjoying being creative and for those of us for whom it is a way of life we know how it can nourish the soul. For those whose self-belief has taken a battering it may well be a crucial turning point."

(Clarissa Cochran, Art Therapist involved in 'Arts on Prescription' (Cambridgeshire))

"It works."

(Rowena Granville, Occupational Therapist involved in 'Arts on Prescription' (Cambridgeshire), previously Senior Occupational Therapist, responsible for setting up Day Services, Mental Health Team, South Cambridgeshire)

'I have really benefited from [Arts on Prescription] and continue to do so...It is the highlight of my week.'

(Participant)



2D work

Poem by a Participant

I love Fridays because...
We come together for our special time
Laughing, talking and sharing our week
Sometimes quiet, sometimes just listening
It's all OK
Making and painting, sticking and gluing
Pigs and boxes, rag rugs and lavender bags
Time flies, oh no, the session's over
Looking forward to the next one already.

HOW DO I FIND OUT MORE?

If you would like more information about 'Arts on Prescription' (Cambridgeshire), how to refer patients or get involved, please visit

www.artsandminds.org.uk

Email: info@artsandminds.org.uk

Or phone:

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With thanks to all those involved in the 'Arts on Prescription' (Cambridgeshire) pilot 2010



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