

Restoring the Balance



the effect of arts participation
on wellbeing and health

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Forward

FOREWORD



The importance of wellbeing as a concept is gaining increasing recognition. Money and income may contribute to people's sense of wellbeing but the two are not always completely interdependent. Our wellbeing is vital to our health and to our effectiveness at work and in the community. The place of art in creating and supporting feelings of wellbeing is vital.

Art is based on feeling - be it a Mahler Symphony, a Rothko masterpiece or a Sylvia Plath poem - art can raise the spirits and strengthen the soul, it can help us make sense of our surroundings and, as Sir Brian McMaster put it in his review, Supporting Excellence in the Arts, it can fundamentally affect and change an individual. It is precisely this quality that

gives art both its intrinsic benefit and its power to make a positive impact on people's wellbeing.

It's something that artists have known for thousands of years. As Aeschylus, father of the Greek tragedy said "words are the physicians of a mind diseased." But it's something that policy makers and funders are only beginning to fully understand.

So I'm delighted that Voluntary Arts England have brought together some of the people who are leading the way in improving people's wellbeing through participation in the arts. They are the ones who can see the effect it can have at first hand and the ones who must help spread the message more widely.

I hope that this publication can further the debate, and lend greater weight to the argument that the arts and wellbeing are indivisible. They should be treated as such, both by artists and health practitioners, and by those in charge of arts and healthcare policy.

Margaret Hodge
Minister for Culture & Tourism
Department for Culture, Media and Sport

Foreword
 FOREWORD



Acknowledgments

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Introduction

Voluntary Arts England works towards an empowered, participative, fulfilled and healthy civil society by promoting practical participation in the arts and crafts. We do this primarily by advocating for increased resources for voluntary and amateur arts and crafts participation, sharing best practice and empowering ordinary people to make, do, promote and present the arts and crafts for themselves. We raise awareness of the contribution that arts participation makes to the wellbeing of communities, social inclusion, lifelong learning, active citizenship and volunteering.

According to 'Our Creative Talent: the voluntary and amateur arts in England' commissioned by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and Arts Council England in 2008, there are currently in excess of 49,000 voluntary / amateur art and craft groups in England, accounting for an estimated one fifth of all arts engagement. These groups play a vital part



in offering over 9 million people the opportunity to participate regularly in the arts and crafts. They help to unlock potential, eradicate apathy and build strong, happy, independent and fulfilled individuals and communities.

Restoring the Balance: the effect of arts participation on wellbeing and health is a collection of interviews conducted between May 2009 and July 2009. People from a wide range of backgrounds explain how their wellbeing, their health and, in some cases, their lives have been transformed as a result of arts participation. Also included is testimony from a range of experts offering insights into why the arts and crafts play such a fundamental role in aiding peoples' wellbeing and health. Details of the recently launched manifesto for participation in arts and crafts offer a model of best practice, as do links to related reports, research and organisations.

The focus of Restoring the Balance is very much on how the arts contribute to good health rather than how the arts are used to combat ill health. While some of the people featured have suffered from medical ailments and disability the emphasis is not art therapy in the traditional sense, as valid as that may be. The emphasis is firmly on how regular participation in creative activities has benefited people physically, mentally, emotionally and socially, whether that be from access to the arts as a result of illness, as part of a quest for a better work / life balance, seeking to deal with stressful situations, or, in some cases, simply having a desire to be alive in more than just the physical sense. The interviews will also show a range of benefits to participating in arts activities such as increased physical fitness, social contact, lower levels of



stress, and increased education and skills. More importantly they also capture the fact that creativity on its own merit has an equal if not much greater foothold in the reasons behind improved wellbeing in people.

A message that will be reinforced early on is that in many cases people do not immediately think about the benefits to their health or wellbeing when they join an art or craft group or start an individual creative endeavour. Over recent years, however, it has become more accepted that this is exactly what they are doing. It is the aim of this publication to reinforce that message and, as a consequence, give wider recognition to the value of arts participation. The recent Foresight report on Mental Capital and Wellbeing found that to 'Keep Learning' is one of the

cornerstones of maintaining positive mental health and wellbeing. The other four steps: 'Connect with the people around you, be physically active, take notice of the world around you and give to others' are all very strongly linked to participation in the arts and crafts.

The people we have chosen to feature, for various reasons, have recognised the huge contribution that arts participation has made to their lives. They eloquently communicate the direct correlation between participation and wellbeing and show that the opportunity to do arts and crafts in their own time and on their own terms has had a phenomenal effect on their wellbeing. Indeed for these people a world without the arts and crafts would be a much less healthy place to be.

Introduction

INTRODUCTION



Section One

WHAT THE EXPERTS THINK

Lord Howarth of Newport was a Member of Parliament from 1983 until 2005 becoming Minister for the Arts at the Department for Culture, Media and Sport in 1998 and a life peer in 2005. He continues to take an active interest in the contribution that arts and crafts make to peoples health and wellbeing.

“The debate continues among professionals and practitioners about the language that we ought to be using and what language we can most productively use in our dialogue with Government – should we talk about ‘arts in health’ or ‘arts and wellbeing’, should the emphasis be on the arts contributing to a vibrant and healthy society or should the emphasis be more specifically on what the arts can do to improve recovery rates on the part of people that are sick in hospital. Clearly the arts can make a contribution at all these levels.

“The power of participating in the arts in changing people’s lives has to do with the fact that it is so often an experience of achieving psychological or spiritual integrity. There is a healing process that is inherent in artistic activity, and one of the reasons that the arts matter so very, very much is that artistic creativity is an experience of committing yourself to something non material. Self-expression commits the whole of your being, your personality and your faculties to an activity, and that I think is an inherently healthy and good thing. The very act of expressing individuality in an autonomous fashion is at the same time an activity that draws on what others before you have done, draws on tradition and inheritance, and brings you back into relationship with your own society and with posterity.

“Research has documented and demonstrated the very concrete benefits of the arts in terms of good health. For example Dr Rosalia Staricoff’s arts research project at the Chelsea and Westminster hospital is a classic reference point where she did very rigorous research, examining patient recovery times and staff turnover. On a variety of measures she was able to convincingly correlate improved performance with the impact of the arts. Additionally, some of the new technologies that are now available, for example non intrusive brain mapping, are being used very excitingly and instructively, and we are now much closer to a precise understanding of what happens in the brain when someone has an aesthetic experience, and what the psychosomatic links may be that make these experiences physiologically beneficial. More recently a new international journal for arts and health has been founded and one of its main purposes is to provide a forum for research findings. There has been a wealth of sufficient and rigorous research in this field – a lot of anecdote, a lot of assertion and lot of appeal to common sense but, while it has been enough to persuade me, unfortunately it isn’t necessarily enough to persuade funders. Statistics will probably show that there has been faster growth in public funding for other areas than there has been for the arts, which is a shame. We know that funding is very tight, but let’s hope that when we get past 2012 the pendulum will swing back to the middle and there will be a better balance of distribution.

“When I was at DCMS I worked vigorously to build up links between DCMS and the Department of Health and the work was progressing rather encouragingly. My counterpart Minister in

the Department of Health at the time readily saw the point, and I think that the benefits of good design and the very immediate and measurable link have been understood and are now part of the orthodoxy. I have always felt though that when you leave a particular Department or a particular Ministerial responsibility, it is not the best thing you can do to keep hassling your successors so I left it alone for a while. More recently though I became aware that fresh efforts were being made and important work around arts and health was being done, and as a result in the spring of 2008 I introduced a debate on arts and health in the House of Lords.

“Following the debate I sought a meeting with the then Secretary of State for Health, Alan Johnson, to discuss with him what the Department of Health might do. I was hoping that as Secretary of State he would endorse in ringing terms the validity of the link between the arts, health and wellbeing, and the validity therefore of commissioners and decision takers across the health service and social services investing not just money, but also time and energy in helping to promote this link. He readily agreed and made a significant and important speech in September 2008 at the arts and healthcare event ‘Open to All: Mental health, social inclusion and museums and galleries’, and I was extremely happy with what he had to say. He subsequently followed this by also setting up an arts and health group within his department. I have had a meeting recently with the National Director for Mental Health [Louis Appleby] who is jointly coordinating the group and I know they want to do their best.

“It should also prove to be good news that

Andy Burnham is now back in the Department of Health having previously been Culture Secretary and that former Health Minister Ben Bradshaw has recently been appointed Culture Secretary. I have had a discussion with Ben, and he is entirely enthusiastic to the possibilities of getting closer working links between the Department of Health and DCMS and wants to see this programme of work pushed forward energetically by officials in both departments. I think that is encouraging.

“The real energy however will always come from the grass roots – from the practitioners and artists. The arts create some of the most supreme and lasting achievements of society, and great artists are remembered long after great bureaucrats are forgotten. Arts are the index of the health of a nation and not the ill health of society, and the process of creating art is healing for the individual artist as much as it is for all of us collectively. It’s not just about a remedy to certain ailments, but it is certainly about maintaining a good life balance. Thriving arts are characteristic of a thriving society. I would hope that whether in the continuing recession or as we move into recovered prosperity, whether in sickness or in health, we have more and more people engaged in the arts and crafts.

“One of the projects that I hope will prove beneficial is the UK City of Culture. It is my hope that that we can establish that one of the key criteria for a UK City of Culture is that it should be a city in which the arts play a very important part in wellbeing. I recall at the time when I was Minister for the Arts we had a wonderful case of how the arts uplifted people and uplifted both individual and collective

achievement at a school in Bristol. I think every one would have acknowledged that the school had been in some difficulties. However, it got into a relationship with the Royal Ballet and when these 15-year old kids, boys in particular, started to dance and learn the ballet, their sense of self-esteem soared. They discovered the benefits of application, of learning techniques, of self-discipline and of teamwork and this had effects right across the school. The whole level of performance, not just in the arts but academically and socially was said by those that knew the school to have soared. I have long thought that in the educational curriculum going back 150 years we have had an excessive emphasis on the rational and the analytic and too little emphasis on the imaginative and the creative, and while I think some progress has been made in recent years to improve that balance, I hope that those who have policy making responsibility in this area will be mindful of that need. We certainly need public funding to support people in study and practice, and we need a society with better values and, in particular, a society that better balances work and life.

“Remember the great saying of John Ruskin –there is no wealth but life”.



Louis Appleby is the Department of Health's joint lead on arts in health as well as the National Director for Mental Health in England. Since 1996 he has been Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Manchester and, since 1991, a consultant psychiatrist in Manchester. Professor Appleby's current priorities are psychological therapies, stigma, race equality, suicide prevention, public mental health, inequalities and dementia.

"As National Director I see a lot of mental health services and I often come across groups which could broadly be referred to as arts groups and, they are often doing really good work but in a fairly individual way and not necessarily connected with a lot of other arts groups around the country. Sometimes they are doing different sorts of arts: visual arts perhaps have stronger history within arts and health

over the last ten years or so. But arts is a much broader thing; music, singing, reading, you could even say that it extends to the design of NHS wards and units, into the design part of architecture. It is quite a broad area, and I think that one of our tasks should be to try and set out the kind of activities that people are already engaged in across the whole spectrum of the arts. One of our first initiatives therefore will be to map what arts activities are currently happening across the health service, and we are hoping to do that jointly with partners in the arts. It isn't just a Department of Health initiative, it's one on which we hope work jointly on with the arts world.

"One of the ways that we can give the arts wider recognition is to make it clear that they are not just a marginal area that people might enjoy but actually isn't very serious – that there is a science behind it as well. So we want to review the evidence for the health benefits of the arts. And again, I mean that in a rather more broad sense of what the benefits of getting involved in the arts are not only to an individual who is recovering from an illness and whether it confers any additional benefits from their more conventional treatments, but also what the benefits are to the health of a family or a community to engage in arts activities. There have been one or two reviews on this over the last couple of years so the first task is to make sure that we are not going to repeat what has already been done, and we will be bringing together a lot of arts academics and researchers to talk through what kind of review might be needed.

"We would also like to raise the profile of arts in health. One way of doing that may be to have arts awards, and we are already in discussions about how best to

Professor Louis Appleby CBE

ensure that artists get recognition. We are also looking at the possibility of having certain days in the calendar when arts activities are particularly highlighted and profiled.

“There is momentum and it has got certain people interested. For example, Lord Howarth recently asked some Parliamentary questions about what work we would be doing. When people who are in his position take an interest and want to see progress it is very helpful. I think the recent momentum prompted the Government to ask if I would put some of my time into leading the arts and health initiative with the Department of Health. It’s a very interesting area which is why I have taken it on.

“The way we view health as a society has changed over the last five to ten years. People are much more interested in promoting better health as well as treating illness and in the idea of prevention, public health and public wellbeing. Although the health service isn’t necessarily the only group responsible for promoting wellbeing, I think that people have expected something of a lead from the Department of Health and the NHS on these broader questions of how we create a healthier society, how we create a healthier community and how families and individuals can be healthier and not just free of illness. I think that the arts are a part of that.

“There is also a connection with social inclusion. The Government for some years now has been highlighting social inclusion as an aspect of health because without decent health your prospects for getting a job, holding down a stable income, perhaps even your prospects for decent housing and social networks are

reduced. It makes sense to see social inclusion as a ‘healthy initiative’ and the arts I think are also a part of that. A lot of arts activities are group activities and some of them lead directly to employment skills – so there is a strong connection between the arts and social inclusion, and this reflects the point we have reached in the evolution of health and health care.

“The more rigorous that we can be about the benefits of arts participation then the better it will be, because in the end we have to be making arguments which the commissioners of services are impressed by. However, the measurable benefits could come in different forms. I think it is much more difficult to do a randomised trial on the arts in the same way that it is, for example, on a new drug treatment. The evidence will always look a little softer I suspect. On the other hand if you have a mass of people saying that the sense of pleasure, the sense of creativity and the sense of emotional identification which comes with arts participation helps maintain their wellbeing or helps their recovery then that is bound to be a powerful influence. One of the main drivers of the health service in future is going to be individual experiences so, although we are obviously entering time when money will be a lot tighter and commissioners will need greater persuasion that the benefits are there, I think that the most powerful persuasion that the arts will have will be that strong sense of public and patient support.

“People do perhaps get more direct access to the arts when they are in hospital or when they have had a period of more serious illness. The arts become part of their recovery, a sort of pleasurable part of the experience. One of the reasons that people view it this way is that they don’t

necessarily think of certain things as being preventative – we don't immediately think of health when we take part in the arts. It is often the case that when people join a group, perhaps a choir or to dance, that they don't join for health or wellbeing purposes, they go along to take part in the creative activity but actually, aiding their wellbeing is exactly what they are doing."

Professor Louis Appleby CBE
WHAT THE EXPERTS THINK





Mike White is Senior Research Fellow in Arts in Health at the Centre for Medical Humanities (CMH) at Durham University. He has been awarded a fellowship of the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts to research community-based arts in health and build national/international links in this field. His work in the arts in health field for CMH has included workforce development and training programmes, audits, evaluations and literature reviews. His book *Arts Development in Community Health: a social tonic* (2009) is published by Radcliffe.

"In the 1980s and 1990s the debate was very much around the economic importance of the arts, but in the past ten years we have had a shift towards investigating the social impact of the arts. The evidence that has come out to date suggests that there is a potential link between engagement in cultural activities and improvement in wellbeing, but there is no causal link that can, as yet, be demonstrated. The issue therefore is for funders to determine whether this indicative evidence is sufficient on which to make policy decisions around engagement in cultural activities and, more specifically in this case, arts as good for health and wellbeing. It has always struck me that

intuitively it is the right thing to do, and that if we are just waiting for firm scientific evidence of a causal link then we may be waiting for some time yet.

"When Arts Council England conducted its national Arts Debate back in 2007, looking at what the public thought of the arts it was interesting to note that the most commonly cited benefit by the public was that getting involved in arts activities contributed to overall wellbeing. This connection is being borne out of not so much arts-based evidence, though I think we are getting there, but in evidence from the field of epidemiology and particularly within the thinking around what has come to be known as the 'new public health'. Important research into health inequalities by people like Richard Wilkinson and Michael Marmot is further supported by social capital studies that show that social integration and social support contribute to people's wellbeing. Clearly arts engagement can be an important part of that social engagement and that sense of support.

"There is a very substantial body of evidence within the public health arena that engagement in social activity contributes to health. There is also evidence coming through from the New Economics Foundation about the impact of cultural participation on overall health and happiness. The problem is not so much the lack of so called 'hard evidence', it is more a reticence until recently on behalf of the health sector and Government to see that testimonial or qualitative evidence is of significance.

"There are intrinsic therapeutic qualities within arts activities; dance, creative writing and singing are obvious examples, but I

think that we need in our enquiry into the evidence of benefit to be looking beyond the art forms themselves. If we are simply looking at arts as a form of treatment, then we might as well just focus on art therapy. Clearly we are looking at arts participation as having a wide spectrum of potential benefits, and it's the activities and conversations that go on around arts participation that I think are interesting pathways to determining what the benefits are. Participants in projects will say quite clearly that what they get out of it are the social and connection opportunities on top of simply a pleasure in practicing the art form, and I think we would be wrong if we thought that that wasn't somehow of any importance. You could look and say "well doesn't bingo do the same thing?" Well, no it doesn't. I think that the more the activity has intrinsic quality then the greater likelihood that it will impact on social and educational benefits.

"The single greatest determinant of health is the extent to which we are socially connected and the trouble with purely evidence-based points of view are that they are looking at only assessing the efficacy of arts as a form of treatment. They are blind to a wider range of benefits. The last major review of Government health services determined that the overall impact of our health services on all of the population amounts to at best one fifth. Public health needs significant levels of investment if we are going to achieve Government targets around the health of the population by 2020. What has focused peoples' attention is the nature of health inequalities and the clear correlation between income inequality and health inequality. Societies that have a steep gradient between the rich and the poor also have great extremes

in terms of the overall health profile of the population. I think that work around adjusting health inequalities has brought about the complexities of how you attempt to do just that, but it has also accentuated the degree that income inequalities are the root of all of our problems. It is now getting to a point that certain people involved in health economics are arguing that actually all of our spending on our health services is doing nothing to turn around the overall health profile of our population. Unless we are dealing with the reality of poverty and income disparities we can do very little. There are also very interesting arguments that suggest that a lot of the ills of our society are generated within our culture, and, therefore, we need to get into the culture and identify the benefits from cultural participation in order to change things around.

"I think the secret is to not look at arts as something delivered by an artist or by an arts organisation. It happens best when it comes out of a dialogue between different sectors, and we need this hybrid way of working to develop. I think that the crucial connections are between the art, health, education and local government sectors, and it is entirely through the partnerships of those sectors that we are going to get a form of practice articulated that is supportive of this work, helping it develop and also identifying what the best venues and situations are for the public as a whole to engage with the arts. Personally I would like to see what we would normally understand as a library, a health centre and an arts centre coexisting in the same building or space. Healthy living centres were a first attempt to try and articulate those kinds of relationships. We need to move away from the monolithic approach

to health care spaces to looking at spaces which are much more hybrid and much more interconnected. I think preventative health care is also important – not just simply telling people not to smoke, drink or eat too much but more about looking at how we conduct our social lives in public spaces. I don't think that the arts are simply an add-on to healthcare. I think by the very nature of what they do they are in the business of public health and wellbeing.

“The pathological effect of your environment has a significant impact on your overall physical and mental wellbeing. We know that within hospital environments a pleasant atmosphere and nice views from a window speed recovery, but in our day to day lives I think our environment also impacts upon us. It would be interesting to see in ten years time the connection between some of the regeneration programmes that have taken place and the effect they have had on the overall health of the population. I suspect that there are significant connections to be found between the two.

“Arts participation can do a very significant thing – it can identify a problem and it can start to address it at the very same time. I can't think of other interventions that can quite do that – arts have that unique quality. They immediately open up dialogue between all of the stakeholders in a problem within a community as to where a solution and ways forward can be found. This is why increasingly I'm seeing arts in health as being a global phenomenon. I have had the opportunity in recent years to visit a number of countries across the world to see how this area of work is being articulated and developed, and it's interesting that

participants say very similar things about the perceived benefits. There is also a commonality in terms of identifying the key issues that aid or hinder the development. I think the more that the value of arts is perceived in looking at a whole range of social problems the better. My only fear is that sometimes the larger agencies like the health sector or local government want to see the arts as instrumental solutions to problems – turning the arts in to 'social elastoplasts'. I think we have to recognise that these are medium- to long-term approaches that require the arts to be placed alongside and integrated with a range of other interventions. Don't just look to art alone to somehow have a magic solution as it would be foolish to think that it has. It would be even more foolish to try and prove it.

“The main focus in the next decade will be in the area of mental health. The World Health Organization predicts that in ten years time mental ill health will be the second greatest cause of morbidity in populations within advanced economies, second only to heart disease. We have a growing epidemic of distress. The London School of Economics made the case to Government a few years ago that there should be 10,000 more trained therapists in the country. Depression affects one in three of the population at some time in their lives and yet only 2% of the national health budget is spent on interventions for depression. We have to start shifting the balance towards addressing these insidious and often invisible illnesses which impact upon our society. They impact upon our ability to be a well-functioning society, on our economy through lost hours of work, and they raise serious moral questions as to whether we are heading in the right direction as a society. What is it that is

causing increasing numbers of the population to succumb to stress? I think that the most significant statistic in the past ten years is that two years ago urban dwellers became the majority of the world's population. Here we are, piling ourselves into towns and cities, generating more heat, competing for resources and succumbing increasingly to the stress levels that that this places upon us. All of our problems are interconnected, and I think that an important way of finding a solution to such complex interrelated problems is to look at what we can shift within our culture to help us to address this and live better lives that will impact on our relationships and on our environment.

"I would like to see arts having a prominent role in building those connections. What we have come to understand in slogan terms as 'joined up thinking' is actually about joined up practice. We probably need to look at what kind of economy we can have that can enable the establishment of long term connections between culture and wellbeing. I think that when you have the British Medical Journal saying that 1% of the total health budget should go to the arts then there is definitely a way forward. It's probably not going to happen in our lifetime, but I once calculated that this 1% transfer of health spending would equate to a 70% increase in arts expenditure in the country. This would not only significantly change our understanding of what the arts in society are about, it would probably even influence the content and direction of the art forms within it."

Mike White
WHAT THE EXPERTS THINK





Stephen Clift is Professor of Health Education in the Faculty of Health and Social Care at Canterbury Christ Church University. He is also Director of Research at the Sidney De Haan Research Centre for Arts and Health, one of the Executive Editors of *Arts & Health: An international journal for research, policy and practice*, and Chair of South East Arts and Health, a regional networking and advocacy organisation covering South East England.

How did you first get involved in the field of arts, health and wellbeing? In the context of my work in health promotion, I have always been interested in the contribution that the arts can play in communicating health messages and engaging people in thinking about health issues. My more direct involvement in the field of arts and health came about as a result of two influences. Firstly, during six years of analytical psychotherapy, I discovered for myself the power of creating and reflecting on a series of paintings. Jung called this process 'active imagination' and when it occurs images

take on a life of their own and offer opportunities to engage with the unconscious. Secondly, my love of music and particularly singing lead to a fruitful research partnership with Grenville Hancox, Professor of Music at Canterbury Christ Church University. Over the past ten years, we have explored the wider field of arts and health, and have pursued a progressive programme of research on singing and wellbeing.

Tell us more about the Sidney De Haan Research Centre for Arts and Health.

The Sidney De Haan Research Centre for Arts and Health was established in 2004, with generous support from the Roger De Haan Family Trust, and Canterbury Christ Church University. We have completed a number of research projects focused on singing and health, and reports are available through our website. Currently, we are engaged in three new projects: the development of an East Kent network of singing groups for mental health service users; a randomised controlled trial of singing groups with older people and a project to assess the value of participation in group singing for people with chronic lung disease. We are also exploring new directions for the Centre's work in the areas of drumming, dance, theatre and reading for wellbeing.

A major achievement of the Centre to date has been assisting with the development of a charitable company 'Sing For Your Life Ltd' which provides opportunities for elderly people, many of whom are affected by age-related health issues, to come together and sing on a regular basis in 'Silver Song Clubs'. More than 50 song club sessions are organized every month across the South East of England.



Simon Lee (far left) leading a drumming circle, at the Sidney De Haan Research Centre, Folkestone.

Why are the arts and crafts important to people's health and wellbeing? Basically because we all have a deep need to be creative and our lives are affirmed and enhanced by the creation of beautiful things.

What evidence have you encountered to support the claim that arts have a positive effect on health and wellbeing?

The De Haan Centre has undertaken a systematic mapping and critical review of all the published research related to singing and wellbeing. The published literature is very diverse, both in content, methods and quality, and there is a need for further research in this area. Nevertheless, the findings from a number of recent studies in this area point to the considerable benefits for wellbeing and physical health which can come from active participation in singing. Key studies have been reported by Gene Cohen in the United States, which show

that for people in post-retirement, regular experience of group singing has considerable benefits for health. A recent controlled trial in Brazil has also shown some benefits from group singing for people with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

Are the arts and crafts generally recognised as important to health and wellbeing by policy and decision makers regionally and nationally or is there more that could be done to raise awareness?

I think the answer has to be 'no' – and certainly there is nowhere near the same attention given to the arts as there is to the value of exercise and sport in relation to health. I think this is probably a reflection of the stronger evidence base for the importance of physical activity for both physical and mental health. Some progress has undoubtedly been made in the arts and health field in recent years.



The Mustard Seed Singers, Canterbury, a singing for mental health group founded by Elle Caldon (far right) is helping the Sidney De Haan Research Centre establish an East Kent Network of singing groups

The Cayton Review was very welcome, as was the Prospectus for Arts and Health, produced jointly by Arts Council England and the Department of Health. Lord Howarth has recently made a valuable contribution in advocating within Parliament and Government departments for arts and health. But there is still much that needs to be done to stimulate developments in this field. My hope is that the kind of research being pursued by the Sidney De Haan Research Centre, and other research groups around the country, will help to encourage policy-makers and commissioners to embrace the value of arts and health work.

Should we be doing more to enable everyone to participate regularly in creative activities, whether they are healthy or have problems with their health? I think we need to consider a broad spectrum of arts activity in relation to health – from prevention to treatment to rehabilitation, as well as recognizing the importance of vibrant community arts activities for people across the whole of the lifespan. Engagement of young people

in creative activities is so essential – which is why projects such as ‘Find Your Talent’ and ‘Sing Up’ are so welcome.

Is it only art forms that have a physical aspect to them, such as singing or dance, that are of benefit to people? Of course not! In so far as singing and dancing involvement movement and exercise, they are clearly of benefit, but we have to remember that such activities motivate engagement because they are social and fun – and above all give people the opportunity to develop skills, self confidence and engage in creating something beautiful! I have no doubt that involvement in the visual arts (through looking at and discussing paintings, and through drawing and painting) can have as much value as singing and dancing for a sense of wellbeing. The same is true of reading literature, going to the theatre, listening to music, attending concerts, and so on. The arts offer such a tremendous diversity with something for everyone.

How far have we come in the last ten years on recognising the importance of the arts and crafts as a way of achieving wellbeing? I think we have made tremendous progress with wonderful practical projects across the length and breadth of the country; an increasing body of well designed research projects; new journals dedicated to arts and health work, and many conferences reporting on new developments. What is needed now is a clear strategic vision on a national basis.

To find out more about the Sidney De Haan Research Centre for Arts and Health visit www.canterbury.ac.uk/centres/sidney-de-haan-research

What is your ultimate vision for the arts and crafts across the county in ten years and beyond? Currently, I am devoting my energies to taking forward the research programme of the De Haan Research Centre, and hoping that this will help us to firmly establish networks of singing for health groups across East Kent – particularly in the interests of mental health and chronic lung disease. If in ten years, such networks are in place and thriving, I will feel that I have made an important contribution to the wider field of arts and health. If other people in different parts of the country are inspired by this work, perhaps there will be singing for health groups everywhere! What we are doing in relation to singing, other practitioners and researchers need to do for dance, drama, creative writing, reading, visual arts, ceramics, embroidery, quilting, storytelling, and every other form of artistic and craft practice which can help to enrich people's lives.

Professor Stephen Clift
WHAT THE EXPERTS THINK



Section Two

CASE STUDIES



'Flock' the work on glass measures 700 × 900 mm and features staining, enamelling and hand mirroring. Image: Andrew Stott

Following 25 years of printmaking and 13 years working therapeutically with the human body, John de Mearns now brings meticulous care and attention to the unique process of pyrocorpography. Working with individuals across the spectrum of wellbeing from the exceptionally healthy to those dealing with the most challenging of diagnoses, John guides his clients through a collaborative art making process wherein their body is the brush and a sheet of glass the canvas.

"My journey has had a creative/self healing focus since a bipolar episode 14 years ago. My interest lies in how wellbeing can be enhanced through the cultivation of creative self awareness. I believe the body to be fundamental in this endeavour. I have been making art for a very long time and while it has very much been a career direction for me, what happened to me

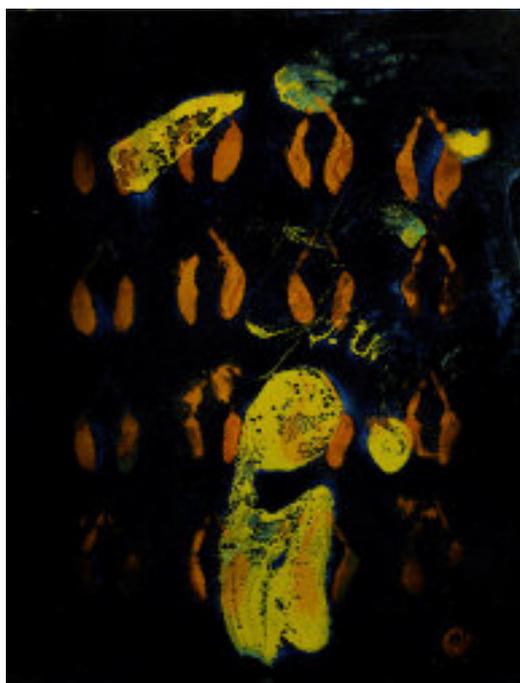
about 14 years ago stopped that career in its tracks. Art began for me long before when I was floundering in my A level career, and when asked, at age 17, what I wanted to be doing I said that I liked doing batik. I was doing it the art department during all the break times and had become completely enthralled by it. It was craft based, arts based and involving. The conversation lead to me being told that I could do arts as a subject! This was news to me but I ended up getting an A as I was so enthusiastic about it. I then went to Bath Academy of Art and blossomed. I loved the life drawing and the liberation of art college.

"My instinct was for printmaking. I relish that place that both craft and art inhabit – being the maker, being the person who actually creates something. I don't generally subscribe to the concept of having an idea and then paying someone

else to make it a reality. I really enjoy being in the process and how it feeds back to me. I find it deeply engaging to be in that intense creative place. You are consciousness immersed in activity. I relish that, it's such a delicious place to be. My guess is that the sensation of connection is the same whatever creative form you are practicing, be it jewellery, pottery, printmaking or the finer arts of painting or sculpting. All that defines them is the intention of the maker; why the maker is making, that changes the outcome. A lot of what fine art is about is consciousness and ideas and trying to express the human condition as opposed perhaps to solely making a beautiful object.

"After finishing a BA in fine printmaking I left the country, I spent 5 years living and working in Paris; drawing and painting, art directing and freelancing for advertising agencies, and generally soaking up the French lifestyle I adore. When I came back to England after a few weeks in Bristol I travelled up to London working on a performance designed by Keith Khan and found myself making kings and queens for Notting Hill Carnival. I also started doing an MA in printmaking as well as setting up a studio and eventually a gallery. After several years working in this very driven and projected way, I didn't have the means either financially or energetically to support the activities I was doing and so had as much an economic crisis as a physical and a mental one.

"I think of the work I was making before I went though my crisis (transformation is probably a better word). The art I was making was enquiring and in a sense dismantling in a modernist way – almost in the same way that medicine seeks to understand us by cutting us up into bits. I think though that this was an adolescent



'Carla' Pyrocorpograph on glass 700 × 900 mm.

Image: Julian Welsh

and a nihilistic as opposed to a holistic approach, and I think that we can often in that adolescent state of mind try to dismantle the world around us in order to try and understand it, which leads to deconstruction and leaves a mess rather than actually achieving any real comprehension. But the art making since has been restorative and very much about rekindling, restructuring, manifesting and approaching art as a means of rebuilding perhaps even regaining a consciousness, certainly as a way of redefining a consciousness.

"They were extremely dark times for me. I could see absolutely no light and spent a good couple of years in a tragic state of mind. There were a few things that helped though. Someone told me to think of it as a blessing and that completely changed my perception of where I was and what I was experiencing into one of potential rather than one of just negation. Another really significant thing was my sister's partner taking me to a yoga class. This was huge because it wasn't someone helping me it

was someone giving me something that I could help myself with. That was really fundamental because you are driven to places inside yourself in those situations and you can receive some help, but what you really need is people to show you how you can help yourself. Otherwise you are being saved and being saved doesn't teach you a thing. Being saved doesn't make you stronger and help you to change things or regain control of your direction.

"The other major thing was arts therapy with Roy Thornton. I went through cognitive therapy, but I knew through my own creative experience how powerful arts therapy could be for me. I loved the art making process, and I knew there would be things that would be real for me. I pestered and pestered for it which took about six months.

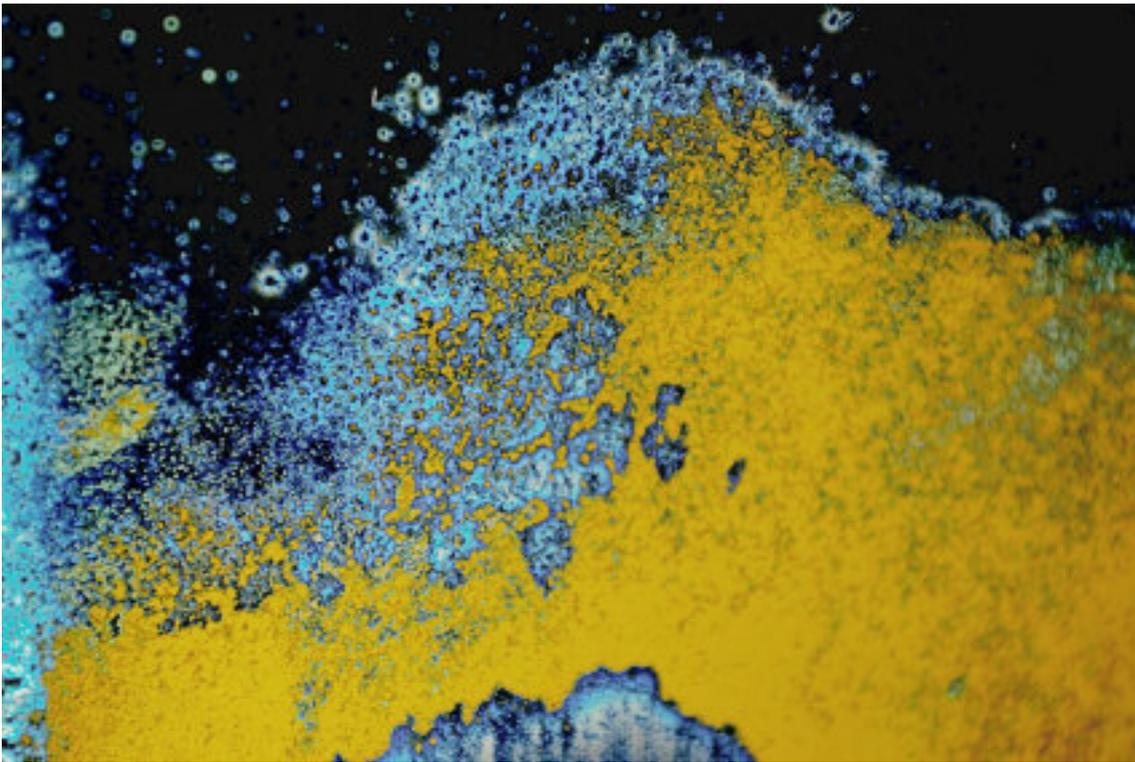
The analogy that I would offer is that if you come off your motorbike at 120 mph you need scraping off the pavement – that's what cognitive therapy does. It scrapes you off the pavement. But it won't help you rebuild yourself. If you want to become useful again or you want to become a conscious creature again and be able to start exercising some control over your endeavour you need more work than just being picked up of the pavement. You need the equivalent of pretty serious reconstructive surgery and physiotherapy but on the level of consciousness. Depression is a lot more complex and more intricate and more peculiar than a motorcycle accident (I have experienced both). I didn't know much about art therapy but I knew about art, and I knew that it was a powerful place to be able to understand myself from. The invitation to submit to emotions through paint on to paper or through some other application of colour or form and the simplicity of that

process is essentially what a lot of mental health work centres itself around. The mind is an intensely, magnificently powerful place and when we find bits of it challenging we inevitably find other places to go and escape to.

"After the art therapy I tentatively started to look forward. I took a studio about 13 years ago, and it has been a long process of making often very subtle, fragile, very reflective work. Not work that was necessarily for display but work that explored the tenuous, very much about rebuilding myself from within. Now I'm finally being able to work with glass, making large fired work that is ambitious and challenging and very much about my own personal experiences, injuries and journey. It's been a long journey. It's not something that happened in a flash.

Gradually I have whittled back the fear of the blank page, mostly using scissors and ink. Since I discovered that art was a legal and even a permitted activity, it's been my way of adhering to some form of authenticity, a reality of experience. I think it's for my wellbeing, for my sanity and for my joy that I make art.

"Without art I would probably be a lot less robust, a lot less determined and I would have less potential as someone who can give back. That sense of being invested in is part of what drives me to want to give back what I know, and support in ways that I know I can. Living without art would diminish that ability and that determination. Art allows you to rise above, to be able to dream, to play and have some fun. The processes in themselves are really fun and really enjoyable and that is intrinsic to the art of living – to be able to acknowledge that art is momentary but is also utterly delightful. It reminds us of our obligation to stay light in life.



'Andrew' (detail) pyrocorpograph on glass 700 × 900 mm. Image: Julian Welsh

"My process doesn't end and that is also part of the delight. The potential is there to keep going onwards in terms of consciousness and in cultivating my presence of mind and presence of being. I don't stop on the therapeutic level. Imagine on a physical level if you were to break both of your legs. You would get 'fixed', you would have an operation but you would have to do regular exercise, you would have to do things that kept your body strong to enable you to keep moving and to do what you wanted to do perhaps even before any 'accident'. I don't just want to stay kinaesthetically strong. I want to be stronger, better at using (and more conscious in) my mind so I choose to cultivate and practice activities that will help me to become mentally stronger so

that I'm more and more able to be clear, able to iron out the bad habits of previous negative experiences.

"The arts offer people an immersion in creativity which is so rare in our society. So many work based activities that people are told they should do are totally uninvolved and totally disengaging. They are mechanical and we are not designed to be like that. We are designed for immersion in activities that are enthralling and engaging, designed to be delighted. More and more we are going to find that this is the area that people are going to move into because it is so cohesive and authentic for us all both as individuals and as members of a society."

John de Mearns
CASE STUDIES



“I started drinking when I was about 13. I didn’t look at it as something bad – I came from a house of alcoholic parents anyway so it didn’t matter much. I was being sexually abused by my father and found that when I was drunk I didn’t feel anything. For me alcohol was an escape – almost an out-of-body experience. I didn’t think of it as being a problem because it was something that everyone I was around was doing.

“I left home when I was 21 and alcohol became another yet another coping mechanism because I didn’t really know how to relate to other people. The alcohol gave me a bit of an edge which made me quite popular. By the time I reached 23 it had reached the point where I couldn’t function without alcohol. My life wasn’t going anywhere and on top that I had developed bulimia because I wasn’t eating – all I was doing was drinking alcohol. I started stealing to pay for my drinks. It just became that I had to have alcohol every day. My whole life stopped. I wasn’t interested in going to college any more. I became a recluse and paranoia set in, I lost a lot of weight – going down to 6 stone. I was at death’s door. This went on for 20 years.

“As a child there were never any photos around. Being brought up as a Muslim, the only thing we had was the Qur’an and

images of Allah. I began to find though that I could mimic people by drawing caricatures of them. When my dad found out he would punish me and tell me that drawings were evil and that I would be capturing people’s souls. It became though the only way that I could get my own back – by doing pictures of him being hanged or decapitated or things like that. He would find them of course and I would get beaten, but I carried on doing it. At first I only drew to get back at him. I had control and a secret of my own. I began to realise though that I could look at someone for only three or four minutes, pick out their features and be able to draw them. I started to enjoy it. When I drew I forgot all of the pains.

“When I left home and needed money for a drink I would go into the pubs and draw pictures of people sitting having their drinks. Random people just sitting enjoying their pint. I would sit at the other end of the pub, draw them, show it to them and they would pay me. Other times I would walk into pub and look at their chalk display boards and think ‘I can do better



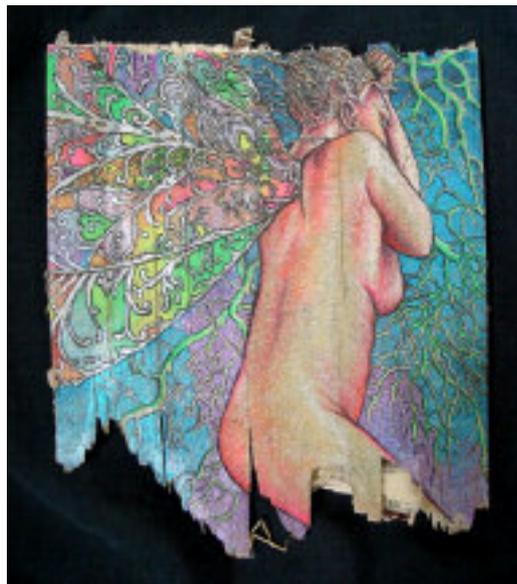
than that', and I would copy what the original was like but made it better and show it to the landlords, and they would then pay me to do them. I also did caricatures at Covent Garden. I started off sitting doing a caricature of a friend of mine as people walked by and all of a sudden there was a queue of people wanting a picture done of themselves. People were impressed, but when people were telling me how good it was I didn't really take any notice because as far as I was concerned painting was still a bad thing.

"Over the years the drinking really took its toll – I lost my flat and had nowhere to go. I ended up lived on friends' couches. I used to have blackouts, waking up in a gutter somewhere not remembering a thing. One day though I started coughing up big clots of blood and I realised I needed to go to the doctors and get some medication. The doctor told me that my liver was so badly damaged that I only had six months to live. Some people may think this is sick but I was a very unhappy person and so it was the best news I could have had.

"The only thing that made me go into treatment was my sister – I could see the sad look in her face so I agreed to it. I thought though that I would go in for the 30 days in which time my liver would heal enough, and then I would just come out and start drinking again. I quickly realised, though, that it was just a whole new world to talk about the reasons why I started drinking in the first place as up until that point I had never spoken to anyone about my sexual abuse.

"I also did some art. Instead of talking about how I felt I began to draw and paint how I felt which was really good. I started

to be able to express my feelings through art and it made me feel really good. It was also the first time that any one had told me that art was not evil. I had never been to an art gallery before, but I was taken to one and I had a look at all of the art work and realised that they weren't evil. That's what made me look at my drinking, my bulimia, my lifestyle, and it changed me. I went into treatment for 30 days but I stayed there. I'm still clean now.



"With art you can do whatever you want, you can use any colour that you want and you can really express yourself. Being brought up as a Muslim, I used to wear the whole costume where I was covered up. I used to walk around wearing black all the time. My world was very black. When I found art and started mixing colour it all changed. Now I have red hair, I have yellow hair, I have pink hair, all of my clothes are very loud. I express who I am. I have suffered from racial abuse in the past but in my paintings I can be white, I can be yellow, I can be pink, I can be whatever I want to be. Long hair, short hair, shaved head. I have done some very expressive paintings, but I don't have people looking and thinking that I am mad.

I love the idea that people look at my art work and think that it is great. It's like being 'accepted'. I love the positive attention rather than the negative attention that I used to get.

"When I left my home town I got in touch with an organisation called Art + Power. I wanted to tell my story but I wanted to do it visually and they helped me do that by giving me a space where I could go and paint every day. I have had my work displayed in three exhibitions and have even organised my own. Now I would also like to do some outreach work myself and I'm hoping to go to college to do an art therapy course.

"Doing art didn't stop me from drinking. Nothing and no-one other than myself could have stopped me from drinking but art had a part to play. I enjoy doing art. I love painting and it is a great way to express myself. I don't need to talk to people about things; I can put it all on a piece of paper. When I was drinking I didn't listen to anyone. I didn't want people telling me what was best for me. You can't tell people though – you have to show them. Not many people think that they are good at a certain thing unless they have the chance to try it."

Syberine D'zenya

Syberine D'zenya
CASE STUDIES



Image: Kate Foster, Tiger Aspect Productions

Julia Hall is Chairperson of Concorde Wheelchair Dancers and is also Regional Chairperson of the England Region of the Wheelchair Dance Association. Concorde Wheelchair Dancers consists of over a dozen dancers in wheelchairs of all ages and disabilities. They do formation ballroom dancing for both wheelchair users and able-bodied partners, have weekly practices with a dance tutor with over ten years' experience and do regular demonstrations and fundraising events across the country.

"When I was ten years old I joined a local Sunday afternoon sports class. A lot of the members also belonged to a wheelchair dancing club and I went along to see what it was like. I have been there ever since – I'm 42 now. As far as I'm concerned dancing is a great social thing and a great physical thing. I have had a lot of health issues over the years but have kept as mobile as much as possible and I think that in addition to helping with my health, dancing has also enabled me to see a lot of places and to have a lot of fun.

"Doing something creative like dance has been much better than other non creative physical activities. Dance keeps your brain active a bit more – you can learn and you can get better. I enjoy not only the dancing but also the music the social aspects even the confrontations during the major arguments when something goes wrong! It is just a fantastic thing to do. We have one little girl who has recently joined us and on her first night she hated it, she even hated hearing the music but now she absolutely loves it, and it's great to see young kids progress and get stronger through dancing."

"Wheelchair Dancing is just like any other dancing. Participants do disco, formation dancing in teams of between six and eight people and ballroom couples dancing including the waltz, jive and cha-cha-cha. There is also a section called PHAB Dancing, which involves both a person in a wheelchair and a standing partner. The standing partner has to do all the usual steps and in a wheelchair we have to mimic that as best as we can whether that would be with our arms or generally in the way that we move. It's great fun and very hard work, but thoroughly enjoyable.



"Up until a couple of years ago I was a very physically fit disabled person, but now, because of my condition, I am not as strong as I used to be, but I try to push myself as much as I can. I have been told that I have got the most serious form of a

Julia Hall

condition called pulmonary hypertension, and I am probably going to be on oxygen for the rest of my life. It's quite tough but when I go dancing I really do push myself. I could sit at home and mope, ponder and not do anything, but I want to get out there and do the best that I can with my dancing.

“When I was a young kid learning ballroom dancing may have sounded to me like a bit of a daft idea, but it's very good and really gets your mind working. It's a great physical thing, especially as over the past couple of years my health conditions have changed and it has been quite hard to be able to dance, and sometimes just to be able to exist. But when I have felt good then being able to dance has been a great morale thing. Every one really cares and everybody is really helpful and it has got me through some tough times. During the times when I have been unable to dance, I have been absolutely determined to get back to it and having that goal to work towards has really helped me.

“Last August I became very ill and missed one of the dancing competitions. I went along to support my team, but I couldn't dance – I literally couldn't do anything and it was just horrible sitting on the sidelines and not being able to perform. I was glad that I was there but there were some very mixed feelings. I am certainly getting stronger now though so hopefully at the



next competition I will be back up there doing some dancing.

“Wheelchair dancers like in other activities are categorised as to their ability. Perhaps some people are physically or mentally stronger than others in the group. As a result some of the dances are quite complicated and quite fast, others less so and others much slower and less complicated so that everyone is included and can get something out of it no matter what their physical or mental abilities are.

“The Concorde Wheelchair Dancers have a very good website, we put posters everywhere possible and every so often we have publicity in the local newspapers and try to get on the local radio as often as we can. A lot of people though have problems financially with getting transport to venues. If they can't drive then they usually have to get a taxi which can be very costly. One of the other wheelchair dance teams in the region down in Cornwall have managed to find funding for their own bus. Years ago we used to have our own bus but you would be on it for such a long time picking people up before you got to the dancing. The only solution was that we tried to find somewhere central so that no one has to go too far. But money is an issue and we often have to fundraise and run competitions. Ideally though the solution would be if there was more free transport. There is a local dial-a-ride service, but they don't work at night. It's almost like disabled people shouldn't go out at night!

“As with any charity, there needs to be a committee. I have been on the committee for a long time, becoming Secretary and now Chair. It's really good. Even during the times when I physically can't do the

dancing, I am always doing my best to get the message out to people as much as possible, I'm always organising demonstrations, checking the website and making sure that everything is running well and that people are enjoying it.

"I have worked full time all of my life up until about a year ago so I was going out and meeting people. But you need to do something else. Life isn't about just going to work, coming home and doing nothing else. I probably would have given up if I hadn't have had the wheelchair dancing to keep me going. I like to dance and it is very beneficial especially in light of my health conditions.

"You never know what is around the corner but if you keep yourself physically and mentally strong by doing something like dancing then whatever does happen around the corner probably won't be as bad. Give it a go – it's great fun and I love it."

**To find out more about Concorde
Wheelchair Dancers visit
www.wheelchairdance.co.uk**

Julia Hall
CASE STUDIES





Postnatal depression affects one in ten mothers. For Melanie Uys, the arts proved to be essential in helping her to feel less isolated and enabled her to make sense of her emotions and feelings.

"After the birth of my first child I found that I had lots of symptoms of anxiety. I felt quite breathless a lot of the time, my heart would race and there seemed to be points in a day when I just felt like I couldn't leave the house. Although I wanted to leave the house and my main objective was to take my child out for a walk, I felt that I was finding it very difficult – I couldn't do simple things like pack a bag, I would leave the house without my keys, some very 'unlike me' behaviour. I also had lots of worries about my child, thinking that they were going to get hurt if I left the house or hurt if I went for a drive in the car.

"I knew something wasn't right but I didn't know what was going on at all and in the end I went to see my health visitor. I told her that I was having feelings of anxiety and that I needed some help. Her response was 'I think it is just you'. Those were her exact words and they made things even worse for me – I sank even lower and didn't seek any more help after that.

"When I had my second child two-and-a-half years later I started to suffer from much stronger feelings of anxiety. I'm a fairly independent lady so I was trying to get out of the house. I knew that mixing with people would be a good thing and so I tried my best to see friends and tried simple exercises like deep breathing, but I really needed some proper help. Having talked with other mothers I was a little more clued up and wasn't as naïve as I may have been the first time around. I made a list of all of the unusual feelings and took that to the GP who, in addition to putting me on antidepressants, also put me in contact with a local children's centre that in turn introduced me to an arts course which was fantastic.

"I own an art gallery in St Ives, which I have been running for 12 years, and I have a degree in art but when you are running a business and you have two small children there is so little time for creativity in your life. I was doing things with the children, but I wasn't doing anything creative that was solely for me.

"The course ran during the summer, and was in a lovely space. The children went into a crèche which was just next door so I felt very relaxed about them being safe. Also on the course was a small group of around six ladies who were having similar feelings to me. It was run by someone that I knew, not particularly well but it was a familiar face which helped. There was nothing complicated about it at all. I think what the course director was encouraging us to do was to express ourselves, which was a skill that all of us had lost. I couldn't do it wrong, it was purely subjective. Whatever I put down on the piece of paper just came from me and how I was feeling. That's something that as a new

mum you don't often get – the chance to express your own feelings. You have to put the baby first all of the time even if you are feeling angry or sad or just plain knackered, you have to put the baby first.

“It ran for about 12 weeks and I can remember feeling sad when it ended. I definitely think that arts courses should be offered to every new mum whether she recognises or not that she has feelings of postnatal depression. When you are a new mum all of your time is taken away from you. On a weekly basis though I could go somewhere and express how I felt and not feel judged. You do get judged so badly as a mum – everywhere that you go people are judging you – but here, in this space was somewhere that I could take a few deep breaths and not feel like I was being judged at all. I have never met a new mum who doesn't at some stage feel emotional, tearful, a bit out of control or just completely overwhelmed by the responsibility that they now have. I say to new mums all the time to do something artistic.

“There was one girl in particular that I remember. At first quite she was quite dismissive of the creativity that we were doing, perhaps a little embarrassed about doing it herself. I think that she thought that we were going to laugh at her which of course we would never have done. I don't know what changed, but in the in the end she just relaxed into it and got so much out of it. Doing something artistic and creative helps you to release emotions

that you may or may not be aware of. You may not know why you are feeling a little bit crappy that day but once you start to make something and literally piece things together, it strikes a chord with you and it helps to put you in touch with your own emotions, to make sense of your own situation and your own feelings. It validated my own feelings. I could look at the work that other people were doing and see that they were using very similar words or images to myself which made me feel less isolated and less like I was failing as a mother or a woman. My friends were having exactly the same feelings as me.

“I still have feelings of anxiety now and the course wasn't a cure as such, but it most definitely alleviated the symptoms. I started to feel more in control and importantly it helped me to make some friends in my neighbourhood that I'm still friends with now. The arts were essential to me. They turned what was a really difficult time into something really positive. They helped more than the antidepressants. I took antidepressants for about a year, and it was only when I started to forget to take them every morning that I decided that I probably didn't need them any more. The creativity however is something that I still do now.”

Melanie Uys
CASE STUDIES



After a promising academic start, Tim Kidner's life was shattered by alcohol dependency, psychosis that led to 20 years in and out of psychiatric hospitals and emotional demons anyone would balk at. Now, off all medications and alcohol-free he is starting a voluntary post with the local authority as editorial assistant with their housing tenant magazine. He credits photography as saving his life.

"Photography as well as a spot of poetry and outsider art – all of which have had public displays in their various forms – remains my new 'addiction', fresh still after 35 years of doing it. It's my 'higher power', or should I say the places and environments that I become part of, entwined amongst, giving me the ability to translate that for others so that they feel 'like I was actually there'. I've often thought, as I intermingle with ponies and cattle in the New Forest on a crisp, clear morning, 'people spend thousands on therapy in an attempt to feel like this; but what do they have to take away?' I create something, something for others to enjoy.

That is what I'm good at.

"I never studied photography. My mother had an old camera which had no instructions that I used when I was in primary school around the age of nine. I remember taking the camera to school and asking if I could take a photo. There were only about 15 pupils as it was a small village school. All of a sudden I got the photography bug. OK, the pictures weren't great but that was the first time that I had ever done it and I loved it. After that I used to go and explore every forest, every wood and every enclosure in the New Forest. Photographing trees is quite difficult as they tend to all look the same, but it was escapism from a domestic situation that wasn't great – sharing a bedroom with my brother and having to do lots of physical work on the farm that we lived on. I'm adopted, as are my step-siblings, which may have relevance to my feelings of alienation and 'not fitting in'. Going out and photographing New Forest, I was one with the place.

"Photography is way of downloading and channelling one's anger, anguish, disgust and self-loathing through the viewfinder. A beautiful landscape or form of nature then brings harmony, respect and peace. An urban hell, such as graffiti or burned out car fires that anger – you use techniques to accentuate those feelings of claustrophobia and tension. Photoshop allows one to play with those in art-form way – that in itself disperses those feelings as one is making something fun and creative out of all that hostility. The cycle of downloading / editing / viewing / making space / file management gives order. You don't sit in the pub for hours waiting to put the film in – you get home and download. You make slideshows, travelogues. It makes people



Avebury, Wiltshire

believe that you're rich in creativity and soul – that almost makes up for being totally broke!

“When I go to places and can say to people ‘I’m a photographer’ it puts me in a place where I am able to see how I fit in. If you don’t fit into society for whatever reason or feel awkward or anxious, the camera can give you a real sense of purpose. You could pretend to be taking pictures, but it does show intent. One becomes a custodian, guardian of how a place or person is represented – either in a manipulative, profitable and distorted way or to help that subject. You have that power to choose either to promote it as a place that others feel they want to visit or to help someone feel better in themselves. Possibly to help them get a job or to be a model or giving them a kick start in something they want to try.

“Now, I’m off all meds and have been alcohol-free for three years I am starting a

voluntary post with the local authority as editorial assistant on their housing tenant magazine. That starts this Friday. I’m a bit excited, as I’ve not worked since being medically retired from the Civil Service 18 years ago.

“While some people could argue that photography hasn’t saved my life, photography has saved my life and it keeps me alive. Medication may well have kept me more ‘alive’ than photography but there is being alive and then there is being alive - being alive spiritually.

“Photography has been the underlining thing throughout. It is something that people have respected me for and let me get on with. Half of the people that I was an in-patient with are now dead, and that is a frightening figure. It’s not just people who took their own lives or starved themselves to death. It’s people who have died of natural causes because they have been unfit through medication and other things. Photography though has brought me solace and wellbeing. If I didn’t have



At Salisbury Racecourse

the camera I would have no reason to go to places. The camera has made me friends, and helped my confidence.

"It's really special too when people comment on your photographs. They don't think of me as a professional going out with stacks of equipment, staying in posh hotels driving a four-by-four and having a caddy. They realize the hard work that has gone in to it and they equate it to themselves doing it.

"More and more younger people are getting involved and joining photography groups and camera clubs – they want to do something creative but don't want to have to a degree in exposure light! Being part of a photography group has also given me a say. When you are told all of your life 'that you can't do this and you can't do that' it's so good when people take notice of you for your knowledge.

"People realize that you are better beyond what is on paper."



Tim Kidner

Tim Kidner
CASE STUDIES





Maggi Gamble only went along to a couple of art sessions during her treatment for breast cancer. It was enough however to give her the confidence to do an art degree. After giving up a career as a nurse due to illness, she is now looking forward to working again, only this time in a very different way.

“I worked as a nurse for most of my career, later becoming a health visitor and eventually moving into working with travelling families – going out and giving general health advice to them.

“After being diagnosed with breast cancer, I had a mastectomy and began a course of chemotherapy. My employers were great, allowing me to take as much time off as was necessary. The nature of the job was too demanding though – working with the travellers was very full on and you had to give 100% all of the time. I knew that I couldn't give myself completely to the job if I also had to keep myself well.

“Mentally I coped quite well and had lots of support which helped, but I also went to a local cancer centre Helen Webb House in Leicester where I would get free reflexology sessions. At the same time my husband was doing a fine art degree, and I used to go down and see him in his studio and think it was lovely and how I would love to be able to do something similar. When I saw that Helen Webb House also ran arts sessions I thought I would have a go. Although I only went along to a couple of sessions it was enough to give me the confidence to know that I wanted to do more. Being in an environment that was so encouraging and then bringing the drawings home to show to my husband and having him tell me that they were really good was excellent. I just enjoyed it and found it so relaxing. It is the thing that I have found with all of the arts that I have done since – they have all changed my state of mind to a much slower, relaxed, contented and enjoyable pace.



“I tried to go back to work about four times but I just couldn't do it as I also had lupus which had just floored me. The lupus manifests itself as chronic fatigue – some days I can't get out of bed and am barely able to walk. I had to give up work. It wasn't the cancer but the lupus that had stopped me.



"I didn't know exactly what I was going to do or what type of art I wanted to do, but I wanted to find another way of working that I could do at my own pace. I went along to the local college and had a chat with one of the tutors who turned out to be the ceramics tutor. We got on really well so I signed up to do a two-year A level course. I found it so relaxing.

"I hadn't done arts since I was in school aged 16, but I had always been creative in other ways, in the way I dressed and in the way the house was dressed. Nursing had stifled that creativity because of the energy that I had to give to it. Having to stop working allowed me to develop that creativity again.

"I went on and did a foundation course and I'm in my third year now of a design crafts degree. We cover jewellery making, metal-smithing, ceramics, glass, textiles, the whole range but my main area is ceramics. I'm also getting into print at the moment. I was mixing plaster in the plaster room the other day, and I found myself thinking how

lovely it was and how lucky I feel to be able to do it. For a lot of older people you are just settled and there is no chance of doing anything else. I think if I hadn't had to give up work I would never have taken up art as financially it would have been very difficult, but as the situation was thrust upon us we had nothing to lose by me going to university.

"I think that my health is lot better since I started doing arts and crafts. I have been happier. It's been very stressful over the last few months as I have been preparing for an assessment especially as I get so tired. But I think it is nice that my husband and I have this common thing in our lives. He is so encouraging, especially as I haven't done arts for so many years. Sometimes it is really difficult when I come in from university feeling really tired and have to go to bed at 6pm – it can be so hard. It really is a pleasure though to be able to make things that people appreciate.

"A lot of my pieces are based around body image and making the irregular, beautiful. At a recent exhibition it was lovely when people were coming up and reading about what I was trying to make and looking at my bowls and telling me how brilliant they thought they were. It gives you a massive good feeling, and it's something that I hadn't had before. As a nurse, yes, people got better and it was great but this is different – it makes you want to go on and on.

"I would hate it now if I had to give up as it makes me feel better and makes me feel calmer. When I'm throwing pots on a wheel I almost go into a meditative state. I lose myself in it. I think about really positive

things as I am making, channelling that energy into what I make. I think that I haven't had the space in my life before where I can have those positive thoughts that I get when I am doing arts activities.

"My son who is 14 now is doing art for his GCSEs and has already had art in an open exhibition selling a piece. We are careful not to push art on him, and I don't want him to think that we just want him to do art because we do. I think that it is good though that he has seen both of his parents studying at a later age as he can see that learning isn't just something that you do when you are younger, but it is a continuous process. Art is a good way of getting people to take education up. Arts are often not immediately seen as education and can be dismissed as more of a 'play thing', but education is exactly what it is.

"I have been thinking a lot about what I am going to do after I finish my degree. I would like to do something around arts and health. Whatever the future holds though, I'm looking forward to working again only this time in a very different way."



Since this interview in May 2009, Maggi has passed on the terrible news that she has recently been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. "No wonder I've been feeling rough all summer! I have started chemotherapy but there is no point in being miserable. I feel OK at the moment, so I'm just getting on with stuff. My tutor at university has been amazing, and I'm going to continue my degree. They are arranging for all my work to be done at home, materials to be brought to me, and technicians to make models up to my design. I can also have tutorials at home. Being able to continue in my art/ creative stuff will, I feel, really be beneficial in helping to keep me well for as long as possible. I am really looking forward to getting on and continuing with the work I started last term."

Maggi Gamble
CASE STUDIES



Kevin Brennan is Minister for Further Education, Skills, Apprenticeships and Consumer Affairs. He recently launched the Learning Revolution Festival, part of the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills Learning Revolution, which sets out the government's plans for informal adult learning in England and highlights the real benefits of learning for enjoyment. He is also the guitarist in Parliamentary rock group MP4.

When did you first learn to play the guitar? My sister played so there was a guitar around the house. I picked it up when I was about 14 and taught myself.

Can you play other instruments? I have a self-taught rudimentary piano technique, which is useful for writing songs and for my own entertainment.

You are also a member of the parliamentary rock group MP4. How did this come about and what does it involve? Pete Wishart, SNP MP for Perth, was in a well-known group before parliament called Runrig. He linked up with my Labour colleague Ian Cawsey and Tory

drummer Greg Knight. They let me join when I begged them. We do a few gigs a year.

Given what must be an incredibly hectic work life, why is it so important to still make time for music making? What benefits does it bring to you personally that drives you to make time for it? For me it is my therapy – a complete escape from politics and work and the stresses of a high-profile profession.

At the recent launch of the Learning Revolution Festival you said that “informal learning brings proven mental, physical and social benefits”. What is it about informal learning and more specifically creative activities that bring about these benefits in individuals? We all have a creative part within us which can sometimes be suppressed unless you are lucky enough to have a job which expresses it. Man cannot live by bread alone.

In your previous role as Minister for the Third Sector you were directly involved with the voluntary and community sector. How significant is the role that arts and culture play in aiding community cohesion and why are the arts often the first thing people use when attempting to tackle social exclusion? Creative activities bring people together, encourage cooperation and reminds us all of what it is to be human. The voluntary and community sector can help that to happen better than most.



Image: Paul Jump, Third Sector magazine

What message do you have for people that would like to learn an instrument themselves or indeed anyone that would like to start participate in any arts or crafts activities? My advice would be “just do it”. Choose something you’d really like to play (not too complicated) and have that as your goal. Then just take a few minutes every day to practice. Forget anyone who told you that you were tone deaf – anyone can play guitar.

Kevin Brennan, MP
CASE STUDIES

To be taken once a week. Side-effects – may induce laughter, a sense of fun and new friends. Guaranteed improvements in health and wellbeing and a decrease in stress level. No experience or ability necessary.



As Bristol City Council's Neighbourhood Arts Officer for North Bristol, Hannah Carrant manages the Bristol Wellbeing Choir alongside other arts and health activities. Here she tells us more about the choir, the many ways that it contributes to health and wellbeing, and why it is so important to its members.

"Colston Hall, a music venue in Bristol and my team, Neighbourhood Arts at Bristol City Council, partnered up to look at providing a music-based intervention as part of a much bigger programme of arts and health activities across the city. Around the same time the Government had created a Neighbourhood Renewal Fund which aimed to raise lower socio-economic areas up to par with other areas in the city. The fund also had a stream for health and wellbeing and so the Bristol Wellbeing Choir was born. It started with

a number of different activities, including taster sessions in doctor's waiting rooms, which was the main way in the beginning that people were encouraged to join the choir. It's not a singing on prescription scheme though – we have other art on prescription schemes in the city – this is much more open for anyone to come along to and we have developed our marketing around that concept. We have flyers all around the community as well as in doctor's surgeries.

"The Choir is self referring, and it's open to anyone – there's no audition, there's no requirements to have any previous experience, you don't need to be able to read music – or even words! It's equally enabling and supportive for people with health issues, be they physical, mental or emotional. It really supports the development of all participants' health and wellbeing, regardless of what brought them there in the first place.

"There are now around 60 regular attendees and over 100 other people that have come through since the choir began. One of the things that I love about the choir is the diversity of people that are drawn to it. People attend from a range of very different backgrounds and each with very different reasons for coming along. There are some people who have never sung before and have decided to join because they understand that it may help with their health issues. Some join more for wellbeing – to do something in a group and perhaps help with isolation or depression. The choir operates within a broader context of values, not just musicality.

"A young mum in her late teens joined

when she was pregnant as she thought that it would help her with her pregnancy, with her breathing and labour, etc. Before she joined she didn't feel very confident, didn't like being in crowds, didn't like talking to strangers, was suffering from depression and would never have dreamed of performing. Now she feels a lot calmer, her depression has lifted, and she has a huge amount of confidence to the point where she has sung solo in performances. As well as helping with her health issues it has also helped her socially. She goes out to karaoke nights to sing and has made a lot of new friends including an older woman in the choir who is from a very different background. They go out shopping together and do other things like visiting the zoo – there is a real bond between them and they would never have met in any other circumstances and certainly wouldn't have formed the friendship, which has now extended out of the choir. It's amazing to see her development and that can be said for a lot of the people that come to the choir that never thought that they would be doing some of the things that they are doing now. They have confidence in their ability, not just in singing but in interacting with other people and doing things that they would not have done before.

“Another young girl came up to me after her second session having just joined the choir. She was quite a timid young woman who was so delighted with the experience saying that she was so incredibly happy after the previous session that she just sang all the way home and was feeling very upbeat. It had really changed her outlook and she was very excited to have joined the choir.



“There is another woman who has had a lot of major health issues in her life coupled with her life circumstances changing dramatically including the end of her marriage. She had lost all sense of herself and her identity in the world. She was feeling so incredibly low, had isolated herself quite a lot and had hit the bottom – a ‘sink or swim moment’ in her own words. She had always loved singing though and saw the advert for the choir at the doctors’ and thought that it would be great for her. It has been a huge aid to her, and she credits it with getting her through a very difficult time. As part of her medical support she was having hydrotherapy which by chance ended up being on the same day as the choir. She realised though that she was getting more benefit out being at choir than she was with the hydrotherapy so she stopped going to hydrotherapy and came to choir instead. Again she is someone that is now a figurehead in the choir and is performing not only with us but has also joined a lot of other music groups in the community. What she loves about it is that it is singing without pressure. In the past she felt the pressure to perform and to be ‘good’. Now it is much more gentle and for the joy of singing, not about being the best. The choir gives people that confidence to go on and do other things in life that they might not have done otherwise – be it to then go on and join another choir, to join other activities within their community or to take up other activities to improve their

health / wellbeing which would have been too daunting or difficult – physically or emotionally.

“People also bring their children along so we have a few teenagers in the choir. It’s lovely as they have started bringing along other friends. We’ve got people with learning difficulties, people with physical disabilities, people who have got some really serious health issues – angina, heart problems, rheumatoid arthritis, asthma, stomach problems, stroke sufferers, diabetes, high blood pressure, back problems, depression, lots of different things.

“Singing has been medically proven to assist especially around respiratory ailments such as asthma and also with circulatory problems. For a lot of people that have a long-term illness, the prospect of going to a gym to get fit is totally out of the question and is very, very scary. A lot of the work that the choir does is around increasing lung capacity and getting the heart going, but it is a lot gentler and a lot more accessible to people than going to a gym. People go home and practice on their own and singing becomes part of a routine that they can use to help with their stress. Whatever their ailments are, singing can be applied in various different ways and can physically have a significant impact.



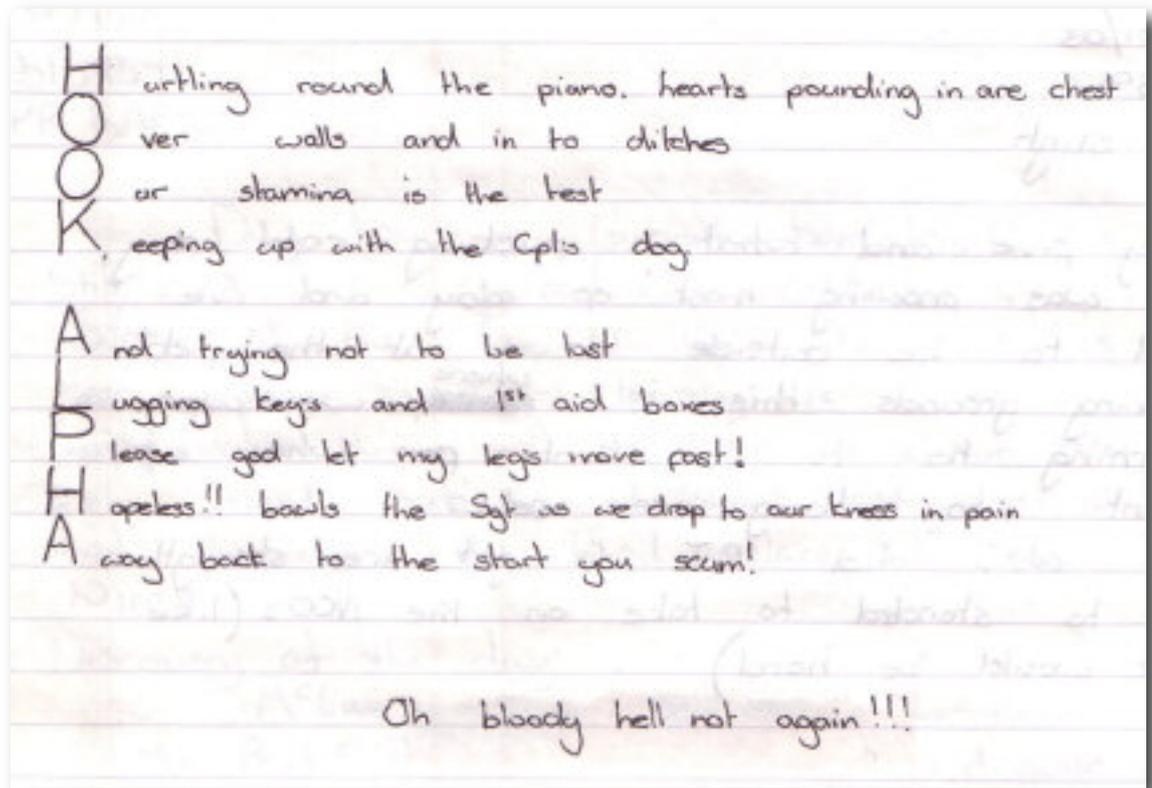
“Being part of something bigger than yourself is also important. It’s not about you as an individual creating something. It’s about being a part of something bigger that allows you to let go and be yourself. We offer a really broad range of music so that there is something for everybody. It’s not just choral music. Whoever you are there will be something that you like and that resonates for you. When new members join the choir midway into a term they don’t have to worry about not knowing any of the songs – every week new songs are being introduced so everybody is always learning something new. It’s not about getting weighted down by the technicalities of getting a particular song to its highest conclusion – it’s more about giving people the opportunity to feel included and to feel welcome with everyone at the same level learning all of the time. Of course we revisit songs and build a repertoire, but it’s always new and it’s fresh, and there is always a broad range of music. We have a number of guest tutors who come for a couple of sessions, and each of them have had a very different musical background. For example, one tutor did a lot of world music and the choir did songs from Africa and traditional Eastern European music. People were totally surprised by it, finding themselves singing in languages that they had never heard of before.

“The Wellbeing Choir is inundated with requests to perform, from small local community events – to much bigger events, and there is a real value for those that want to perform to the public. To get that round of applause at the end is a hugely satisfying achievement, and it really validates who they are and what they are doing. It’s about having their musical contribution recognised as being much more than simply meeting in a community centre once a week to sing. People believe in who they are, in what they are doing and in what they are getting out of it and it means a huge amount. It’s not for everyone to perform though. For some it’s about the coming together on a weekly basis, belonging to something and singing together. That’s where their needs are met and they don’t need any thing more than that. We need to recognise as facilitators that it is quite a fine balance between rehearsing the choir to where they feel confident to go out and perform but also not pushing them.

“It certainly can be seen as a success by the attendance and retention rates, and from the anecdotal evidence – we know members have stopped taking antidepressants, have reduced or stopped other costly therapies, in favour of the choir and have decreased their visits to their GPs. It’s been medically proven that singing together releases endorphins and makes people feel happier, and it certainly does that for a lot of the people who come along.”

Bristol Wellbeing Choir
CASE STUDIES





While the arts are understandably not the priority in the army, former soldier Christopher Dawson tells us why the need to exercise some form of creativity such as writing poetry helped him to maintain his mental wellbeing and why the rest of his troop were more than happy to join in.

“Growing up in Middlesbrough, there wasn’t much opportunity for me to achieve the physical fix that I needed, so I decided that the only way I could do this was to join the Army. I wasn’t interested in going down any academic route and thought it would be good to see a bit of the world. I went down to the local army careers office and sat a series of exams and tests. They gave me a list of the jobs that I could do, and I chose to be in the Parachute Regiment. It’s one of those regiments where not many people make it through, and it has the hardest course that you can do in the army so I thought I would challenge myself and aim for the

top. I sat a fitness test and had a full medical in Scotland over a weekend. I did the standard, height, weight and other tests; press ups, sit ups, pull-ups, a couple of academic tests too. I was refused entry at my first attempt because they discovered that I had a heart murmur. I was sent away to have tests done which came back showing that it was benign so they allowed me to join. I had to do basic training for 34 weeks and eventually I ‘passed out’ with my battalion.

“There are a lot of times in the army when you are sat around doing nothing, just getting your head together and getting your kit prepped. You would maybe rest for a couple of days then go out for a couple of days and so on. For recreation it is all about what you do for yourself rather than what the army provides for you. It was important though that we did something creative so we would put on music, sing, have karaoke sessions, fancy dress, all sorts of stuff. I think it was

everyone's way of dealing with things. You would get bad news on a daily basis sometimes even every hour, and it wasn't good to keep in that negative frame of mind so every once in a while it was good to have a laugh and try to get over it all. We could have just sat around playing cards or something else but creative activities got more people involved.

"After a short time in the Parachute Regiment I realised that I also wanted the mental fix so I joined the Royal Engineers as a communications specialist. When I left Para Reg for the engineers I had to do my engineering course with blokes who have just left basic training so I decided that I would put together a diary to capture the daily work that we had to do and get everyone's little spin on how they thought the day had gone. I spoke with my training sergeant, and he suggested that we would hand it out to the best recruit at the end of the 12-week course. The idea of the diary was to simply get things off your chest that you can't say to the staff face-to-face. Also during training you meet loads of awesome blokes, but at the end you all go separate ways, so the diary was a good way to help remember them in the future as we had a fantastic time over those 12 weeks.

"People in the forces don't usually like writing. The people that you meet tend not to be academic types, other than the officers, and are pretty much there for the same reasons that I was. If there was

more stuff in schools for them to do other than basic maths and English then things would be very different. I met some fantastically intelligent people in the forces; they just didn't have a GCSE to their name. Their skills were more involved in mechanical engineering, but because the schools didn't provide the opportunity for them to do well they ended up in the forces.

"The diary was written into everyday even when some of the blokes had been out at the weekend they would come back and write in the diary. They started drawing in it, writing poems and really expressing themselves creatively. Everyone enjoyed doing it. It was a good way for them to get their problems off their chest. You could tell if someone was feeling a bit annoyed or aggressive because of the way that they wrote in the diary. It's a fantastic read, full of pictures, poems, drawings and more, and as chance would have it I won the best recruit award and got to keep it. I don't know if any of them kept up writing or doing poems or drawing. When you leave you don't really keep in contact. I think though that being in the army makes you look at different ways of keeping yourself mentally stimulated and for us writing was a great way. A lot of people in the forces have a selective memory too. Sometimes they can't remember things. Other times they refuse to remember. It's nice though to be able to have the diary that we all wrote in to look back on to trigger happier thoughts."

Christopher Dawson
CASE STUDIES



Once a week Daphne Cushnie leads a dance session for people with Parkinson's disease. Here she tells us more about why dance and performance is so important, and we hear from one of the groups members Maggie Sorbie on the benefits she has gained from dance.

Daphne Cushnie

"I am a neurological physiotherapist and also a community dance artist with a degree in performing arts. The sessions that I run are an integration of both fields. It was through my NHS work that I first saw that there was a gap in provision for people with degenerative neurological disorders like Parkinson's disease, and multiple sclerosis. It seemed to me that dance filled this gap very well indeed and encouraged people to explore movement, express themselves, and relate better to themselves and to others. It works because for the complex problems that these people have, dance fits in a way that conventional physiotherapy doesn't.

"The group dynamics and the expressive / creative elements account for much of the benefit. Yes, dancing plainly helps with mobility and breathing, and so on, but actually it is more about engagement of

the whole person and the ability to be expressive. Dancing is about encouraging relationships between people, which is absolutely priceless especially when you have a condition which is very isolating. Bringing people together who have got the same condition helps, but here the focus is on something completely separate from their illness. There is no medical label attached to dance. It is important to measure objectively the physical benefits of dance, and equally important to ascertain how it impacts on our overall wellbeing. Within the research system it is important never to lose sight of the latter.

"Parkinson's disease makes you lose the 'felt' connection to the body. It includes inability to initiate movement, to carry movement through, to stop movement, and causes people to freeze and become completely locked and experience extreme stiffness and rigidity. In other words, the automatic movement we all take for granted is seriously compromised, and all areas of life can be affected. That is why working in this way is so effective because it encourages natural sequences of movement, and liberal use of the cues we know are so important for people with Parkinson's disease. Visual, auditory and tactile cues are an integral part of dance as are visualization, imagery, and the breaking down of sequences of movement. Moving becomes conscious as the mind and body find each other. It's a terrible thing to be cut off from your own body and to be a prisoner in it. Knowing you still have a pelvis, knowing that you still have ribs, having that really deep sensation in the body through dancing is so important.

"Sometimes we work towards a performance, giving the added incentive of

a shared goal. Having something to work towards in a social sense is encouraging for people. Additionally, being witnessed by an audience lifts the work to a whole other level. Having people witness what you can do creatively and applaud helps you see that they value your expression, when perhaps you have lost confidence or faith in yourself or thought that having Parkinson's disease was some kind of awful sentence.



"Nobody is excluded because of the level of their disability or condition. It's very inclusive. I don't believe in prescription. I think that you have to explore your own body and its potential for creative movement for yourself. We try to give people a lot of room for improvisation and have various materials such as coloured elastics, lengths of jewelled coloured saris and textured balls that we use to aid in the exploration of movement. These things act as an intermediary between yourself and your environment, influencing your movement and allowing you to engage with the world around you rather than going in on yourself. This approach can help you to widen your definition of yourself and others.

"You might expect there to be much sadness in groups like this but in fact there is a great deal more humour, camaraderie and positivity. People are very resilient. Sometimes people do have difficult feelings

to deal with, and it's rare in our society to have a place where you can express the poignancy and sadness of parts of our lives without it being somehow maudlin or misunderstood. Dance can allow a fullness of expression.

"Many of our members bring their partners along which can give an extra dimension to the dance. The couples who have been together for years are so tuned into each other and you can just see the harmony of their movement. Something magic happens. I have found that older people are much more willing to have a go and be expressive. Younger people can be quite self-conscious, but that seems to drop away as people get older.

"While medication is a vital part of treating Parkinson's disease, it is obviously only part of a much bigger picture. We are complex beings, and above all we are social animals. We need to come together and create. Creative expression has a vital part to play in our health and wellbeing. Many people have a well of creativity that seeks expression. Maggie is one of those people."

Maggie Sorbie

"Medication can bring back automatic movement without any thought but that is not consciousness. Medication isn't enough. You have to be able to think and you have to know what to think in order to give yourself instructions. Dancing is so important in enabling that. With Parkinson's disease you need to be able to move before you can be creative and through these sessions I can now move and can now express myself. The movement



stimulates endorphins and makes me happier and more secure. It is so beneficial. I miss the sessions when they aren't on. My body goes back quite a long way. I feel stiffer, less mobile and get a lot more pain. I feel less happy. Not only am I getting physical benefits I also get a silent understanding. It's a great equalizer and it's comforting and reassuring. It's not competitive at all – you want to help people enjoy it. It's a beautiful thing to know that you can use dance, movement and music to help yourself.

“The dancing has benefited me in lots of different ways. I can now get up in the middle of the night and go to the toilet! I can give my body instructions that I couldn't do before. I can break movement down and learn to get movement started.

“Having that place to go where you can discover that you can still ‘work’ balances it all out somehow. You cannot fight or control Parkinson's but having this to think about makes me feel better. Just knowing that the learning process is going to be there makes me think forward. I used to just sit and I didn't have the awareness of my body, but being in a group of people and getting those verbal cues and watching and listening makes it a lot easier. With the music going through your head as well, it is just a whole lot easier to move.”

Maggie Sorbie @ Daphne Cushnie
CASE STUDIES



Gus Garside is Mencap's National Arts Development Manager. Mencap is the largest learning disability charity in the world, campaigning with and on behalf of people with a learning disability, their families and their carers. They offer small grants and resources to their several hundred affiliated groups, promoting learning disability arts and disabled role models. They also work with the 'mainstream' arts world on inclusion via training and partnership projects, consulting with people that have a learning disability on their aspirations and the barriers to participation that they face.

"I have a passion for the arts. For me it is a spiritual quest. I've worked as a cinema manager, actor, theatre administrator and musician. I'm still active as a performing and recording musician. I mainly play improvised and contemporary composed music, and I play double bass. The journey to Mencap began when I got involved with running creative music sessions and, as part of this, received training in working with people with a learning disability. I found it far more rewarding than traditional teaching technique. I extended this work into managing participatory projects across a whole range of art forms. When the job at Mencap came up it combined my passion for the arts, my knowledge of the arts infrastructure and

the delight of working 'outside of the box'.

"The arts provide perhaps the most potent and individual ways we have of exploring who we are and our relationship with the world around us creatively, regardless of our intellectual abilities. If we choose to make our art public then we are sharing our perceptions of the world. That has the potential to enrich everyone. It's part of being human. It is an entitlement. It's about social inclusion. It's a way of expressing who we are and having that acknowledged. It's about social change. And it's about fun.

"I think of Chris Pavia, who is now a professional learning disabled dancer with StopGap Dance Company working internationally. I've known Chris for some time. I saw him performing recently, and I've seen how stronger he has grown; he manifests immense power and fluidity. I've seen his stature and stage presence change. He is a strong and powerful man with a sparkling ability to interact with an audience.



Gus Garside & Brian Rogers

"I think of Jez Colborne handling the crowd as he won a song contest in front of over a 1000 people in Hamburg. Or his first ever jazz gig when the legendary trumpeter Kenny Ball asked if he could sit in with him and he finished his set with Kenny, Terry Lightfoot (the greatest English jazz clarinetist) and John Dankworth (leading British saxophonist) all sitting in. Jez is a professional performer with a clear insider's view of impairment and attitudinal barriers. I think of watching people with a learning disability interact with a piece of forum theatre by Mind the Gap about the barriers they face in theatre-going – the skill and wit of the actors and the integrity of audience members addressing real issues that affected them with clarity and creativity and the effect that had on the non disabled theatre professionals who witnessed it. I think of a profoundly learning disabled woman exploring her own portrait and realising that she was making her mark. I could go on. You know the life expectancy of someone with Down's Syndrome has radically increased over the past few decades? There are a lot of reasons for that but I think supporting and acknowledging creative processes is a big part of it.

"It's getting easier for people to participate in arts activities, but there is still a long way to go. People with a learning disability tell us about the barriers they face – transport, money, support, information and people's attitudes. I think they can still be seen as a nuisance. I don't think the 'mainstream' arts world understands or contextualizes the work clearly. There is still an attitude that they are helping out or being kind. Until we get beyond that to the point where the mainstream feels genuinely enriched by learning disabled artists and performers, they will still treat them as outsiders. Artistically that can have its advantages of



course, to be part of something that is still an avant garde. But not everyone wants that. Mostly people with a learning disability want to be fully included. So the barriers need to be addressed and that's part of our job. And the more solutions that are put in place the better it will be for everyone.

"Often it's about confidence – being surrounded by a world that praises a uniformity of technique and where celebrities are seen as something to look up to doesn't help. You can't force people to be creative but I would say try it. The rewards are profound."

Gus kindly agreed to conduct the following interview with Brian Rogers

Brian is 72 and has a learning disability. He now lives in a Mencap supported house with three other people and a cat. But for many years he lived in a long-stay residential hospital. He didn't like it there and says the staff were lazy and nosy. He wasn't given any choice of what to do.

When he left his life changed and he began to try out a few things like drama, pottery and sculpture, and he also started to go on trips. He comes from a creative family. Both his sisters paint and the walls of his bedroom are adorned with a lovely portrait that his sister who now lives in Australia did



of him along with a gallery of his own work.

About 11 years ago he enrolled in a mainstream painting class at Merton Adult Education College. About 20 people go to the class every Friday. He is the only person in the class with a learning disability, but he feels very welcomed. He has learnt a range of specific skills such as use of ink and has built up good friendships in the class. He talks more than usual and 'comes out of his shell'.

He paints a lot! Sometimes at home, sometimes on the beach. He will be going on a cruise to Spain in July and will, as always, take his paints. He uses watercolours and acrylics and usually paints in a bold, abstract and colourful style. Some of his work is impressionistic – landscape, buildings, etc. He like bright

colours that make him feel happy, though darker colours and shades creep in when he has something on his mind or he is feeling down. Every year there is an exhibition at Wimbledon library which has always included half a dozen of his paintings. He is hoping next year to have a solo exhibition of his work. He has sold some of his work and gives quite a lot away to family and friends as presents. He also does hand weaving and has sold some of this work too. He intends to keep painting and taking his paints out with him when he goes on trips. "Painting makes me feel good about myself. I like talking to people and showing them my work and getting good feedback. Painting is a good thing to do."

For more information about Mencap's arts work visit www.artspider.org.uk

Gus Garside @ Brian Rogers
CASE STUDIES



Image: Elizabeth Fenwick

Some readers may recognise Brian Bell as Director of Be Brave Fundraising Consultancy. Others may recognise him as a former staff member at Voluntary Arts England. Some of you however may know him better as Widow Twanky and a range of other stage characters! Here, Brian tells us why being a member of his local Pantomime Society helps him to maintain a good work / life balance and why during his travels across the UK, local theatre groups have always been his first port of call.

Brian Bell, Performer...

"I came from a small market town in Scotland and grew up appreciating the value of money. My mum worked on a farm and my dad was a plumber. School holidays were spent on the farm picking raspberries in the summer and 'tatties' in the autumn. I needed to earn enough to pay for my school uniform each year and any extra money I could spend or save.

"My dad started to lose his sight when I was three years old and despite several operations on both eyes, he went completely blind when I was four. Whilst in hospital he was encouraged by his surgeon to rediscover his love of music and I suppose that is where it all started for me. My dad had some amazing skills – he was a musician and played both the accordion and the piano, a composer – he wrote over 1000 tunes and as an arranger he had his own Scottish dance band making records and regularly played on the radio. I believe he regained his passion of music when he lost his sight. He taught music to hundreds of pupils, started a local accordion and fiddle club, organised music festivals and played at concerts and competitions all over the country.

"So here I was growing up in an environment where there was always music in the house. People would come around to play and jam – someone playing double bass, a couple of fiddle players, drums, piano and accordions. I played the piano too from an early age and from about the age of seven I was taken out to sing with the band at various events. I then joined the school choir and from there I joined the recorder group, playing percussion and glockenspiel. Music was a big part of my life.

"At the same time I joined the school drama group and took part in interschool drama competitions. Some teachers who ran the school drama group were also in the local pantomime society and they encouraged me to go along. So I joined my first pantomime society when I was about nine putting on around seven performances each Christmas in

Blairgowrie Town Hall. Once a year though we would have the chance to perform in the main theatre in Perth. The smells, the lights the boxes, the atmosphere... it was fantastic.



Tynemouth Operatics, Wizard of Oz (2009).

Image: George W Knox

Brian Bell, Fundraising Consultant...

"After losing his sight my dad became a volunteer for the Royal National Institute for the Blind in Perthshire. He had amazing organisational skills and arranged many fundraising events and eventually was offered a paid job as a charity fundraiser. My mum gave up her job and became his chauffeuse and together they would organise sponsored walks, flag days and collections. During almost every school holiday I was helping to do street collections, raffles and sponsored walks. I was fundraising from a very early age – I grew up raising money for charity.

"I left school at 17 and became a trainee manager at a local supermarket and went on to a career in retail working for Wm Morrison and Marks and Spencer. I worked all around the UK, getting promoted and relocating to different areas. When I met my wife and settled down in Newcastle, I got a job at a local hospice and eventually became Director of Fundraising and Marketing, responsible for raising £3.5 million a year. I also headed a £5.1 million capital appeal to build a new hospice for children. During my 12 years there people used to come to me asking how I did things and how I was able to run such large campaigns. They used to say to me "you should set up your own business". One day I did. Now as a consultant I go in and help charities to fundraise, helping them with operational reviews and strategic planning. I also do lots of training.

Brian Bell, best of both worlds...

"When I first moved away from Blairgowrie when I was 18 and indeed during all of my many moves across the UK I knew that joining a local theatre group was a really good way to quickly make friends and socialize in new towns. Rather than feeling lonely and isolated in a new town or city, here I had a really great way of getting to know new people and making new friends.

"Having joined a variety of groups all over the country I am now a member of Tynemouth Operatics and The Whitley Bay Pantomime Society – a group that has been going for over 40 years with a lot of the members having been in it since the very beginning. I liked the panto group because it was friendly and the scripts

were good, but one of the biggest things is that they spent a lot of money on the production values, sets and costumes so even though it was an 'amateur' company it looked very professional compared to what I had been used to and produced top quality shows. Another thing that I liked about it was that any surplus that they make always gets given away to charity, which is great. It has people of all ages from junior dancers up to the people that have been there for 40-odd years. Like any club you get to enjoy other people's company and you get the chance to do something that you enjoy doing. I think it's great fun and a really good laugh.

"I love the buzz of the first night just before the curtain rises. You are in the theatre with all of its fantastic smells, hearing people on the other side of the curtain, the band warming up – the hair on the back of my neck and on my arms stand on end. That's when the adrenaline kicks in.

"People join societies because it is fun, for others it can be the first opportunity to work on a stage and work with people that have lots of talent. It clearly benefits the wellbeing of the members of the group enormously. I think there would be big gap in my life if I couldn't do acting. I would miss it because it is something that I can look forward to. At my busiest and most stressful times I can look forward to performances coming up. It's an escape for me. It gives me an extra dimension to my life and I use my acting abilities in my day job – in both presentations and interviews. Part of joining groups is networking – you get to know who people are, what jobs they do, what interests them and how they could help



Whitley Bay Pantomime Society – Aladdin (2007)

you in the future. For example, when I have organised fundraising events and have needed lighting or PA or props or costumes then I can use my contacts through societies to help me. Equally I have used my work skills to help groups with marketing, publicity and finance.

"There are a variety of skills that people can learn by being part of a group. Members do everything from lights, costumes, makeup, acting, advertising, etc. The theatre must be in my family – my wife is part of a props team and my 7-year-old daughter is in her first panto this year. Groups like ours are based in the community and are for the community. They are excellent at bringing communities together

"I think that you always have to make time in your life to do something artistic and creative in order to maintain a good work life balance. It's not too onerous though – the biggest time commitment is probably

the week before the show, the tech and dress rehearsals. When I first did it I tried to work at the same time, but what some people do is to take some time off during the show week so they can be fresh for each performance.

“I have the best of both worlds. I do a job that I enjoy, but I also get to do acting. When I tell people that I perform on stage it relaxes them. They don't see me as just the 'professional in a suit'. I become someone that they can relate to.

“Without acting and music I wouldn't have the qualities that I have inside me that add a huge part to my life that would be sorely missed.”

Brian Bell
CASE STUDIES





Darlington Openart Studio is an open access art studio for anyone over the age of 18 living in the borough of Darlington. Partnership work with the Primary Care Trust means that charities and public health professionals can refer their service users, but the facility is open to all. Education and Outreach Officer Bonnie Davies tells how giving people a physical space and the freedom to express creativity in a safe, welcoming and supportive group environment can benefit their wellbeing.

“Darlington Openart Studio is a space within Darlington Arts Centre that is open to everybody as long as they are over the age of 18 and have a bit of enthusiasm. They can come and work in any medium and get the support of other members along with the opportunity to be supported by professional artists. There are some people who come along who have an interest in something that they haven't done since they were at school. This is an opportunity for them to explore that interest. Some people aren't sure where they want to go artistically, but equally we have specialists in various art forms such as ceramics, textiles, jewellery, film-making and painting. They can come

in and try it out and choose how long they spend here. That freedom can be a little daunting, but it means that people have that time and support to investigate art forms that they wouldn't normally have access to at a pace that suits them.

“While the studio is funded by the Primary Care Trust to support people with mental health issues – and the broad spectrum this term encompasses – we are an artistic opportunity, not a medical provision. Some of our members may have undiagnosed depression or perhaps they are being treated by their GP for depression and they self refer themselves to the studio because they feel that doing something creative will help them. People are not here because of their conditions. They are here because they want to do arts. Whereas people may normally expect to come to a place like this for a time limited six-week course or similar, here there are no time limits. People can come as many times as they like. This takes away the pressure as they no longer feel obliged to come because of any forced timescales. The fact that it is so open and relaxed means they can dip in and out of it to suit themselves. That freedom is important to help with some of the mental health issues that some of the people have.

“A lot of members have also developed further interests and are so much more confident. Some have even joined up to be involved in other formal adult arts courses that perhaps early on they didn't feel they could commit to. Perhaps in the beginning they just wanted to explore art before they decided whether they wanted to take it further. Now through the mutual support of other members some have

applied to do the Foundation course in Fine Art at Cleveland College of Art and Design. But this space is non judgmental. It recognises that everyone involved has an interest in the arts and crafts, and it offers the opportunity to pursue those interests.



“Your environment is important, and a bad environment can act as a reminder of the problems that you are going through. Here nobody knows about the problems that you may have. Being recognised and being missed when you are not around and getting a good response to the work that you do is important. We have a really positive atmosphere here and that mixed with creativity of the individual members of the group makes for something very special. It raises their expectations of themselves, and because they are also creating something tangible, they can see vast improvements in their work and in their creativity as time progresses. They are on a learning curve and are supporting other people. As an artist working on your own it can be very isolating. The benefits of working as a group mean you get different perspectives on your life and your work.



“It has to be a combination of both providing a space and enabling people to do art. The Openart Studio is non prescriptive and is not an accredited course or art therapy. We are not trying to make people better. It is the freedom to express yourself creatively that does that for people.”



*Summary of the key elements
from the case studies*

Proving it

One of the difficulties that the arts and crafts have faced in the past is that it can at times be a lot more difficult to prove their benefit on individual health and wellbeing than for other activities, such as sport and other more physical activities, or for medication that is subjected to clinical trials. Equally when people join an art or craft group they often don't immediately equate their participation as contributing to their wellbeing – or as Professor Lois Appleby puts it, “They go along to take part in the creative activity but actually, aiding their wellbeing is exactly what they are doing.”

“Music, poetry, dance, drama and the visual arts have always been important to our mental and physical wellbeing, and collective participation and engagement in the arts is a fundamental element of any civilised society. In the community, research shows that active involvement in the arts – whether by volunteering, taking a painting class or joining a music group – can have a profoundly positive effect on patients’ wellbeing, particularly patients suffering from mental illness, or at risk of developing mental health problems. Access and participation in the arts are an essential part of our everyday wellbeing and quality of life.”

Rt Hon Alan Johnson, MP, then Secretary of State for Health, 16 September 2008: Arts and Healthcare Event – ‘Open to all: mental health, social inclusion, and museums and galleries.’

More recently, however, there has been a wider recognition and consequently more evidence of the role that arts participation plays in relation to health, including both the prevention and treatment of illness and the overall wellbeing of communities. Lord Howarth calls it ‘an appeal to common sense’, and Professor Appleby takes this further by suggesting that “if you have a mass of people saying that the sense of pleasure, the sense of creativity and the sense of emotional identification which comes with arts participation helps maintain their wellbeing or helps their recovery then that is bound to be a powerful influence.” Mike White warns that “the trouble with purely evidence-based points of view are that they are looking at only assessing the efficacy of the arts as a form of treatment. They are blind to a wider range of benefits.” He offers a positive outlook though when he tells us that the British Medical Journal suggested 1% of the total health budget should go to the arts which could equate to a 70% increase in arts expenditure.

Recognition

Professor Appleby highlights that “One of the ways that we can give the arts wider recognition is to make it clear that they are not just a marginal area that people might enjoy but actually isn't very serious – that there is a science behind it as well.” He also goes on to suggest that in the future individual experiences are going to be one of the main drivers of the health service and that “the most powerful persuasion that the arts will have will be that strong sense of public and patient support.”

“Participating in arts projects has a positive impact on the mental health of participants by raising self esteem, and reducing social isolation. In acute care, the arts have proven effects on wellbeing, recovery and perceptions of pain.”

Report of the Review of Arts and Health Working Group. Department of Health (2007)

Why arts participation?

Mike White states that “Arts participation can do a very significant thing – it can identify a problem and it can start to address it at the very same time. I can’t think of other interventions that can quite do that – arts have that unique quality.” But what is that unique quality? The case studies in Restoring the Balance go some way to answering that question. Rather than attempting to put words into people’s mouths about what benefits to their health and wellbeing they may have taken from participating in arts activities, it is perhaps more powerful to draw together some direct quotes from those featured:

“The power of participating in the arts in changing people’s lives has to do with the fact that it is so often an experience of achieving psychological or spiritual integrity. Self expression commits the whole of your being, your personality and your faculties to an activity and that I think is an inherently healthy and good thing.”

“such activities motivate engagement because they are social and fun – and above all give people the opportunity to develop skills, self confidence and engage in creating something beautiful.”

“The arts offer such a tremendous diversity with something for everyone.”

“The arts provide perhaps the most potent and individual ways we have of exploring who we are and our relationship with the world around us creatively, regardless of our intellectual abilities.”

“The choir gives people that confidence to go on and do other things in life that they might not have done otherwise – be it to then go on and join another choir, to join other activities within their community or to take up other activities to improve their health / wellbeing which would have been too daunting or difficult – physically or emotionally.”

“Being part of something bigger than yourself is also important. It’s not about you as an individual creating something. It’s about being a part of something bigger that allows you to let go and be yourself.”

“Life isn’t about just going to work, coming home and doing nothing else. I probably would have given up if I hadn’t have had the wheelchair dancing to keep me going. I like to dance and it is very beneficial especially in light of my health conditions.”

“Doing something artistic and creative helps you to release emotions that you may or may not be aware of. You may not know why you are feeling a little bit crappy that day but once you start to make something and literally piece things together, it strikes a chord with you and it helps to put you in touch with your own emotions, to make sense of your own situation and your own feelings.”

"It is the thing that I have found with all of the arts that I have done since – they have all changed my state of mind to a much slower, relaxed, contented and enjoyable pace."

"When I'm throwing pots on a wheel I almost go into a meditative state. I lose myself in it. I think about really positive things as I am making, channelling that energy into what I make. I think that I haven't had the space in my life before where I can have those positive thoughts that I get when I am doing arts activities."

"it puts me in a place where I am able to see how I fit in. If you don't fit into society for whatever reason or feel awkward or anxious, the camera can give you a real sense of purpose."

"It's like being 'accepted'. I love the positive attention rather than the negative attention that I used to get."

"I think that you always have to make time in your life to do something artistic and creative in order to maintain a good work life balance"

"I really enjoy being in the process and how it feeds back to me. I find it deeply engaging to be in that intense creative place. You are consciousness immersed in activity. I relish that, it's such a delicious place to be."

"the art making since has been restorative and very much about rekindling, restructuring, manifesting and approaching art as a means of rebuilding perhaps even regaining a consciousness, certainly as a way of redefining a consciousness"

"Without art I would probably be a lot less robust, a lot less determined and I would have less potential as someone who can give back. That sense of being invested in is part of what drives me to want to give back what I know, and support in ways that I know I can"

"Art allows you to rise above, to be able to dream, to play and have some fun"

"I want to be stronger, better at using (and more conscious in) my mind so I choose to cultivate and practice activities that will help me to become mentally stronger"

"The arts offer people an immersion in creativity which is so rare in our society. So many work based activities that people are told they should do are totally uninvolving and totally disengaging. They are mechanical and we are not designed to be like that."

"Having people witness what you can do creatively and applaud helps you see that they value your expression, when perhaps you have lost confidence or faith in yourself"

"Creative activities bring people together, encourages cooperation and reminds us all of what it is to be human."

"Man cannot live by bread alone"

"We are not trying to make people better. It is the freedom to express yourself creatively that does that for people"

What becomes clear after reading the stories of the people in this publication is that each person has strongly felt that arts activities have given them confidence to become engaged people full of life, creativity, positivity and a better sense of self.

“The arts encourage people to participate, which raises their self-esteem and makes them more open to change, which is often important in improving their health and lifestyle. It is now widely recognised that experiencing the arts and culture can create a sense of wellbeing and transform the quality of life for individuals and communities.”

A prospectus for arts and health (2007). Department of Health / Arts Council England

Education and skills

It is no coincidence that the Minister for Further Education and Skills, Kevin Brennan, MP, is included. A number of the people featured in Restoring the Balance have highlighted the educational benefits to their arts participation and placed importance on education and skills development as contributing to their overall wellbeing. Maggie Sorbie refers to dance as a learning process, Bonnie Davies highlights progression of the Openart Studio users to more formal college courses. Sylvérine D’zenyo made contact after her interview to tell us that she is now studying at Bristol School of Art. Maggi Gamble expands on the topic of education by saying that “learning isn’t just something that you do when you are younger but it is a continuous process. Art is a good way of getting people to take

education up. Arts are often not immediately seen as education and can be dismissed as more of a ‘play thing’, but education is exactly what it is.” Lord Howarth also calls for greater emphasis on the “imaginative and creative” over the rational. It is positive therefore to see the emphasis placed on informal learning and creative activities within The Learning Revolution White Paper in which the Government recognises that informal adult learning can transform individual lives and boost our nation’s wellbeing:

“At its best, it can bring people and communities together, challenge stereotypes and contribute to community cohesion. It can unite the generations and help people remain active and independent into old age. At its simplest, informal learning can help build people’s confidence and add to their personal fulfilment.”

The Learning Revolution White Paper (2009).

Creating an enabling environment

In his case study John de Mearns explained that “Since I discovered that art was a legal and even a permitted activity, it’s been my way of adhering to some form of authenticity, a reality of experience.” Sylvérine feels that “not many people think that they are good at a certain thing unless they have the chance to try it” and everything about the Openart Studio in Darlington looks at creating a safe environment for people to participate in. However, while many people have been fortunate enough to have had regular and

easy access to the arts and crafts, there are also huge numbers of people in England who are being denied access to regular opportunities to participate, and as a result are not able to feel the benefit to their health and wellbeing that arts participation offers. In the next section of Restoring the Balance we will present a recently launched Manifesto for Participation in the Arts and Crafts as a potential way of creating an enabling and healthy environment for everyone.

“We believe that active participation in the arts can have a significant impact on the wider determinants of health such as improving living environments, increasing educational attainment and building social capital.”

Peter Hewitt, former Chief Executive, Arts Council England. The Arts, Health and Wellbeing – Arts Council England’s first national strategy for the arts, health and wellbeing.



*A Manifesto for Participation
in the Arts and Crafts*



Manifesto consultation event (2008). Image: Daniel Carpenter

The need to establish a manifesto arose as a direct result of the involvement of Voluntary Arts England, the National Association of Local Government Arts Officers, Disability Cultural Projects and the National Campaign for the Arts; in advising the Department for Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) on their Public Service Agreement on participation and through the Taking Part research undertaken by Arts Council England. Since that time, the manifesto's initial development group expanded to include the Foundation for Community Dance. The group believes that arts participation should be open to all because they believe practical participation is a fundamental human expression of culture, identity and community and is therefore valuable in itself. It is central to the development of many art forms and crafts. It also produces social, personal and, on occasion, economic benefits for the participants, their families and the communities in which they live and work.

The manifesto is needed precisely because of the dispersed and uncoordinated way in which arts participation happens – most

arts participation happens in small, local organisations who do not receive Government funding and cannot easily be mobilised to play into a national 'participation agenda' yet, from research and networks, we know they almost all have an interest in increasing and diversifying participation: a manifesto provides a way to pull all these organisations together to work coherently towards a shared goal.

The manifesto is about all arts and crafts participation; professional, amateur, voluntary, community, temporary and on going. We believe this to be a good and necessary way forward because it will work in parallel to other work already happening on the participation agenda. Furthermore, it will raise awareness amongst all those who get involved in the development of the manifesto as to the many considerations that must be born in mind if they / we are to be inclusive as an arts-ecology.

To pledge your support to the Manifesto for Participation in the Arts and Crafts visit <http://participationinthearts.net>

MANIFESTO FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE ARTS & CRAFTS

Introduction

This manifesto for public participation in the arts & crafts has been developed by representatives from national organisations, with the support of Government departments and Arts Council England. The manifesto addresses how everyone, regardless of who they are or where they are, can find meaningful ways to participate across the whole spectrum of arts and crafts. Its development comes at the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, of which Article 27 states:

- (1) Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.
- (2) Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author.

Statement of Intent

We believe that participation in arts and crafts activities should be open to everybody, and we are particularly keen to encourage those who tend to be under-represented in arts participation (including the most excluded socio-economic groups, people with a limiting physical or learning disability or mental illness and people from black and minority ethnic groups).

We believe active participation:

- is a fundamental aspect of human expression
- plays a valuable role in developing culture, identity and community
- produces personal, social – and on occasions, economic benefits – for participants, their families and the communities in which they live and work.

By 'participation' we mean active, practical involvement in arts and crafts, either as an individual or in a group – in anything from karaoke to quilting, from line-dancing to decoupage, or from singing to storytelling. It might be to create something original – or a way to explore ideas, feelings and emotions, or be entirely for fun and enjoyment – not as a viewer or an audience, but as a maker or a participant. It includes amateurs, volunteers and paid staff sharing what they do.

We intend to promote an ethos of cultural entitlement where:

1. Even more people are encouraged to participate in arts & craft activity
2. Private, public and third sectors are persuaded of the benefits in investing more of their resources in arts & crafts activity.

Vision:

"Every person in England is able to participate in the arts and/or crafts, moving confidently

between different styles. They understand, appreciate and interact with arts and crafts as an accepted part of everyday life. Every person has the opportunity to lead and develop arts and crafts activities in their neighbourhood if they so wish, and are able to progress as far as they wish. This activity is valued and supported throughout people's lives through policy initiatives at national and local levels."

Mission:

"To inspire people in their everyday lives to participate in arts and crafts across the wide range of amateur, voluntary and paid activity, with support and investment from local, regional national organisations."

Using the Manifesto

We invite people and organisations to use the Manifesto as a framework for achieving one or more of the following aims and objectives:

1. identifying how and where participation takes place, eg:
 - disseminating examples and case studies
 - identifying current barriers to participation by target groups
2. finding ways of increasing and widening participation, eg:
 - removing barriers and improving access to support and resources
 - publicity and awareness campaigning through conferences, presentations and events.
3. investing in, and developing, the infrastructure which supports participation, eg:
 - creating working relationships with other community and health development agencies and networks.
4. developing a strong coalition and a joined-up approach to participation, eg:
 - bringing the influence of Manifesto supporters to bear on other networks and organisations
 - dovetailing with other manifestos and initiatives
 - promoting the Manifesto and its aims
5. bringing about a step change in the current support for participation, eg:
 - incorporating stated levels of participation at the planning stage or in the terms of reference of community development projects
6. sharing best practice and showing that there are many approaches and delivery mechanisms for participation, eg:
 - publishing leaflets aimed at project planners, and briefings for Manifesto supporters
 - developing and sharing information around partnerships and cultural democracy
 - contributing to websites such as the IdeA Community of Practice area

7. raising the status of amateur/ voluntary participation, eg:
 - the use of champions and sponsors
 - a 'think-tank' convened to consider specific areas
 - an annual round-up of interesting and effective examples of participation
8. raising the status of leaders and facilitators of participation in the arts, eg:
 - consultation through the sector training agencies
 - developing LA guidelines on salaries and opportunities for CPD
 - taking advantage of training including ongoing CPD
9. acknowledging the robustness and stability of the voluntary/amateur arts movement by directly involving it in the development of any subsequent policies, eg:
 - convening a standing contact group
 - developing an appropriate on-line forum as a point of reference
 - including them in local consultations
10. increasing and developing the role of the participant in setting the agenda, defining the language and being actively involved in the entire process, eg:
 - deploying Manifesto supporters to encourage and moderate the use of the on-line forum as a means of developing further the Manifesto and using it as a benchmark.

Call to action

Supporters of the Manifesto are asked to:

1. pledge support for the Manifesto
2. share experiences, skills and best practice in participation
3. work to increase participation through the stated aims and objectives, either as individuals or groups and organisations
4. develop working relationships, partnerships and networks to increase participation across the widest field of personal and community development.

Manifesto



Further Information

WHERE TO GO NEXT

National accounts of well-being

nef (the new economics foundation) has set out a radical proposal to guide the direction of modern societies and the lives of people who live in them. In contrast to a narrow focus on economic indicators, it calls for governments to directly measure people's subjective well-being: their experiences, feelings and perceptions of how their lives are going. These measures should be collected on a regular, systematic basis and published as National Accounts of Well-being. They provide a new way of assessing societal progress, based on people's real experience of their lives.

www.nationalaccountsowellbeing.org

Alan Johnson speech

Speaking in 2006 the Rt Hon Alan Johnson, MP, then Secretary of State for Health spoke about the links between arts participation and health at the Arts and Healthcare 'Open to All: Mental health, social inclusion and museums and galleries'

www.dh.gov.uk/en/News/Speeches/DH_088160

Craft hobbies 'can delay memory loss'

According to an article on the BBC website (which cites a recent US study), engaging in a hobby like making a patchwork quilt or knitting can delay the onset of dementia. Watching TV however does not count – and indeed spending significant periods of time in front of the box may speed up memory loss, researchers found. The researchers from the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota asked the volunteers about their daily activities within the past year and how mentally active they had been between the ages of 50 and 65. Those who had, during middle age, been busy reading, playing games or engaging in

craft hobbies like patchworking or knitting were found to have a 40% reduced risk of memory impairment.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/7896441.stm?lss>

Making music makes the world a better place

As part of its 'Big Idea' section, the online BBC Magazine featured an article from neuroscientist Gregory Berns, suggesting that if everyone learned to make music, the world would be a better place:

"When I say make music, that means sing, play an instrument, or simply bang out a rhythm by whatever means that are available to you... It doesn't matter whether you have talent or if you think you're tone deaf - the simple act of producing a rhythmic or harmonious statement, teaches us skills that so often fall by the wayside in modern life. I think it's a shame that we take music for granted now, perhaps it is because music is so ubiquitous. But I see music as something to celebrate humanity..."

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/magazine/7942349.stm>

Guidelines to Art – non painters guiding non painters

Care of the elderly, infirm and housebound has to do with the practical needs of shelter, food, cleanliness and comfort but also the mental wellbeing of those concerned. Art and especially practical art that has a successful outcome is of great benefit and should be heavily promoted and supported. The Society for All Artists launched 'Guidelines to Art' a watercolour painting method that allows a non painter to guide a small group of non painters to achieve success in about an hour, this is aimed at care homes, hospices, hospitals and one-to-one for

people confined to the house. Currently being installed in over 300 BUPA care homes, supported by the Young Foundation and many other care and support suppliers.

For more information contact
john@saa.co.uk

Foundation degree in Arts and Wellbeing

Norwich College offers a two-year foundation degree in Arts and Wellbeing
www.ccn.ac.uk/course/foundation-degree-fda-arts-and-wellbeing-1

How singing improves your health (even if other people shouldn't hear you singing)

A collation of results from various studies and research into why singing is good for you, including reduction of stress and pain, for elderly people, for those with Alzheimer's disease, to boost the immune system and wellbeing, and the wider acceptance of singing and the arts as a health tool.

www.sixwise.com/newsletters/06/06/07/how_singing_improves_your_health_even_if_other_people_shouldnt_hear_you_singing.htm

Mental capital and wellbeing

Research by the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) concluding that it is necessary to boost mental capital and wellbeing for economic and social benefits in all ages.

www.foresight.gov.uk/OurWork/ActiveProjects/Mental%20Capital/ProjectOutputs.asp

Clem Burke drumming project

Playing the drums for a rock band requires the stamina of a Premiership footballer,

research suggests. Tests on Clem Burke, the veteran Blondie drummer, revealed that 90 minutes of drumming could raise his heart rate to 190 beats a minute.

Despite rock's reputation for unhealthy living, Dr Marcus Smith, from Chichester University, said drummers needed "extraordinary stamina". An hour in concert could burn between 400 and 600 calories.

www.clemburkedrummingproject.com

Your health and the arts: a study of the association between arts engagement and health (2005)

This report presents key findings on the associations between engagement in the arts, health and illness. The study is based on population surveys carried out for Arts Council England by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). It describes attendance, participation and access to the arts by sex, age, socio-economic status and region. The report also explores the relationships between involvement in the arts and health and illness, taking account of age and other characteristics of respondents
www.artscouncil.org.uk/publication_archive/your-health-and-the-arts-a-study-of-the-association-between-arts-engagement-and-health

The impact of the arts: some research evidence (2004)

This document draws together research evidence on the impact of the arts on employment, education, health, criminal justice and regeneration. It presents findings on the impact of the arts on individuals and on communities.

www.artscouncil.org.uk/publication_archive/the-impact-of-the-arts-some-research-evidence

The arts, health and wellbeing (2007)

Arts Council England's first national strategy for the arts, health and wellbeing. www.artscouncil.org.uk/publications/publication_detail.php?rid=0&sid=&browse=recent&id=580

A prospectus for arts and health (2007)

This prospectus produced jointly by the Department of Health and Arts Council England celebrates and promotes the benefits of the arts in improving everyone's wellbeing, health and healthcare, and its role in supporting those who work in and with the NHS. The prospectus shows that the arts can, and do, make a major contribution to key health and wider community issues.

www.artscouncil.org.uk/publication_archive/a-prospectus-for-arts-and-health

Dance and health: The benefits for people of all ages (2006)

Produced in partnership with the Department of Health and the DCMS, this outlines the health benefits of dance and provides examples of dance projects in a range of health settings.

www.artscouncil.org.uk/publication_archive/dance-and-health-the-benefits-for-people-of-all-ages

Review of arts and health working group (2007)

Recommendations of the Review of Arts and Health Working Group, commissioned by the Department of Health.

www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_073590

Arts & Health South West aims to raise the profile and influence the development of the Arts and Health sector across the region.

www.artsandhealthsouthwest.org.uk

London Arts in Health Forum (LAHF) is a London-based networking organisation for health and arts professionals.

www.lahf.org.uk

South East Arts and Health Partnership

For anyone with a commitment to developing Arts, Health and Wellbeing across the South East region to tackle underlying health inequalities.

www.seah.org.uk

Mental health, social inclusion and the arts (2007)

A study commissioned by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and the Department of Health in response to the Social Exclusion Unit's report on mental health and social exclusion.

www.socialinclusion.org.uk/publications/MHSIArts.pdf

The King's Fund

An independent charity working for better health. Their library catalogue is accessible via the web and features numerous publications on arts and health, some of which can be downloaded for free.

www.kingsfund.org.uk

Arts for health at Manchester Metropolitan University

The UK's longest established arts and health organisation. With specialism in research, advocacy and development, it is working with Arts Council England, the

Department of Health and a range of partners to better understand the impact of creativity, culture and the arts on health and wellbeing.

www.artsforhealth.org

Evaluation guidance for artists and arts organisations

This simple step-by-step guide provides a process for evaluating the impact of the work of arts projects. It will also assist arts practitioners and organisations to build capacity for self-evaluation. The guidance has been developed in partnership with arts practitioners, arts organisations, arts therapists, academics, people with mental health problems, carers and commissioners.

www.socialinclusion.org.uk/publications/Evaluation_Guidance_for_Arts_Practitioners.pdf

Sidney De Haan Research Centre for Arts and Health

The primary aim of the Sidney De Haan Research Centre for Arts and Health is to promote the value of music and the arts for the wellbeing and health of individuals and communities.

www.canterbury.ac.uk/centres/sidney-de-haan-research/

Music making has a positive impact on the development of a child's intellect, health and perceptual cognition

To tie in with the launch of Tune In, the national year of music running from September 2009 to September 2010, Professor Susan Hallam of the Institute of

Education has collated current research on music, education and neuroscience to put together a comprehensive picture of the benefits of music.

www.ioe.ac.uk/Year_of_Music.pdf

The Centre for Medical Humanities (CMH) -

A research centre based in Durham University's multidisciplinary School for Health. The Centre's aim is to pursue interdisciplinary research and educational initiatives that will explore and extend the relationship between the humanities, the arts and medical and healthcare practice.

www.dur.ac.uk/cmh/cahbm2

Sidney De Haan Reports on Arts and Health

A series of review papers, research reports and documentary material from the Sidney De Haan Research Centre for Arts and Health.

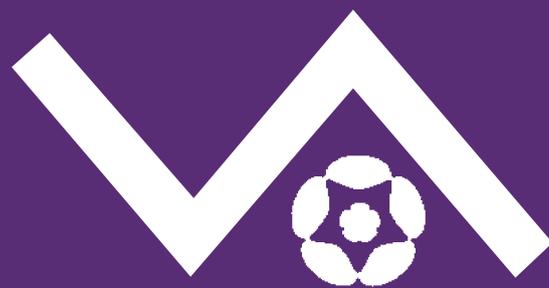
www.canterbury.ac.uk/centres/sidney-de-haan-research/arts-health.asp

The National Center for Creative Aging (NCCA)

The National Center for Creative Aging (NCCA) in America is dedicated to fostering an understanding of the vital relationship between creative expression and the quality of life of older people.

www.creativeaging.org

Further Information



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