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‘Participation in the Arts – A Prescription for Health Improvement’

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Outline of the Presentation

1. Health - ‘No health without mental health’
2. Activity, participation and health
3. Participation in the arts
4. Arts and health, arts and mental health
5. Arts on prescription – arts participation and arts therapy

Major health problems in the UK

Heart Disease, Cancer, Stroke, Diabetes, Obesity, Sexually Transmitted Diseases, Problems associated with alcohol and drug misuse. Mental Health, Dementia

The World Health Organisation Definition of Health

Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. (WHO, 1948)

Activity, participation and health

Glass et al. (1999)

2761 American participants aged 65 and older interviewed to assess their level of involvement in physical, social and productive activities and followed up over 13 years. ‘All three types of activity were independently associated with survival after age, sex, race/ethnicity, marital status, income, body mass index, smoking, functional disability, and history cancer, diabetes, stroke, and myocardial infarction were controlled for.’ ‘Social and productive activities that involve little or no enhancement of fitness lower the risk of all cause mortality as much as fitness activities do. This suggests that in addition to increased cardiopulmonary fitness, activity may confer survival benefits through psychosocial pathways.’

Agahi and Parker (2008)

This study examined the associations between participation in leisure activities and mortality risk among older men and women. A representative sample of 1,246 Swedish men and women aged 65 to 95 were interviewed in 1991-2 and followed for 12 years. Participating in only a few activities doubled mortality risk compared to those with the highest participation levels, even after controlling for age, education, walking ability and other health indicators.

Arts and health

From the Foreword of *A Prospectus for Arts and Health*

Those who are involved in the wealth of activity across the country have amply demonstrated the tangible benefits of arts and health. Hundreds of research projects, organisations and individuals are showing that the arts are an integral part of the nature and quality of the services we provide. They reveal the effectiveness and value of arts and health initiatives, and the benefits they bring to patients, services users and their carers, and to communities and healthcare workers in every sector. (2007: 2) (Andy Burnham (DoH) and David Lammy (DCMS))

Alan Johnson's speech on arts and health 16 September 2008

'I would like to see the benefits of participation in the arts recognised more widely by health and social care professionals, particularly those involved in commissioning services for people with mental health problems. This is not some kind of eccentric add-on – it should be part of the mainstream in both health and social care. And through the Arts/Health group that's been set up in my department, we will be looking at what more we can do to provide guidance, where to go for advice on best practice and sources of funding for clinicians and arts professionals.'

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

Spend (slightly) less on health and more on the arts

Smith, R. (2002) British Medical Journal

'The British government spends about £50 billion a year on health care and £300 million supporting the arts. My contention is that diverting 0.5% of the healthcare budget to the arts would improve the health of the people of Britain.'

Participation in choral singing

Clift, Hancox, Morrison et al. (2008)

1124 choral singers drawn from choirs in England, Germany and Australia completed the WHOQOL-BREF questionnaire to measure physical, psychological, social and environmental wellbeing, and a 12-item 'effects of choral singing scale'. Written accounts of the effects of choral singing on wellbeing and health were given in response to open questions. The average age of choristers was relatively high (57 years), and women outnumbered men (72 vs. 28 per cent). Choristers reported engagement with choral singing for a mean of 27 years. High average scores were found on all WHOQOL-BREF scales, pointing to good levels of perceived wellbeing, although 49 per cent of respondents reported long-term problems with their health. A high degree of consensus also emerged on the positive benefits of choral singing, but substantial variations were also found, with some singers regarding the impact of singing on their wellbeing as less significant than others. Particular attention is given to the accounts of participants with low psychological wellbeing and strong perceptions of benefits associated with choral singing. Four categories of significant personal and health challenges were identified in this group: enduring mental health problems; family/relationship problems; physical health challenges and recent bereavement. Their accounts also identified six 'generative mechanisms' by which singing may impact on wellbeing and health:

positive affect; focused attention; deep breathing; social support; cognitive stimulation and regular commitment.

Enduring mental health problems

I have had to stop working due to an on-going medical condition (bi-polar disorder). I have had several episodes of this. Requiring varying lengths of time spent in hospital, followed by months of time needing support for depression and lack of self-confidence. Being a member of this particular choir has lifted my self-esteem again and restored self-belief. English Female 54

I had a full time panic attack last week. Tried some swimming exercises which made it worse - then sang in the car for half an hour. By the end my heart rate and breathing had returned to normal, neck and shoulders relaxed, stomach unknotted. Generally find it unwinds and relaxes me. Always feel 'looser' after rehearsals. Australian Male, 38

Significant family/relationship problems

As a carer of two relatives stricken with schizophrenia, I have suffered from reactive depression. (...) Having a pleasant start to the day knowing I shall meet like-minded people and enjoy music making, hopefully having a laugh along the way. Hearing the harmonies helps me forget family worries. English Female 70

Able to enjoy companionship and makes me feel I am able to do something. My husband is depressed and this helps me to 'keep going'. Lifts mood and helps to forget problems in life. English Female 65

Arts and mental health

Mental Health, social inclusion and arts: developing the evidence base

This study was commissioned by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and the Department of Health (DH) in response to the Social Exclusion Unit's report on mental health and social exclusion. The team undertook a survey of arts and mental health projects across England and gathered information from 102 projects out of 230 identified. Attempts at internal evaluation was a feature of almost all projects, with the most commonly assessed outcome being 'self esteem' or 'confidence', and only a few endeavouring to assess health or social inclusion.

In order to assess the effects of involvement 22 projects agreed to recruit participants into a non-controlled outcomes study using measures of social inclusion and mental health completed at the start of their involvement and then six months later. The aims of the assessment were 'to measure change in medication and service use, occupational activity, empowerment, mental health and social inclusion and to assess the extent to which change could be attributed to arts participation.' In total 88 participants (60 women and 28 men) were involved initially and 62 people completed the follow-up questionnaire. Statistically significant improvements were found for the empowerment, mental health and social inclusion measures, and there was a significant decrease in the extent of regular or frequent service use, but no changes were found in medication use or involvement in education or employment.

In addition to the quantitative element of the evaluation, six projects were the focus of case studies which explored 'the processes through which projects achieved benefits.' Thirty-four participants were interviewed and three key processes were identified in all six projects:

- Motivation to engage increased activity and inspired hope
- Focusing on arts activity encouraged relaxation and distraction
- A supportive social environment reduced a sense of isolation and increased self-confidence

These processes helped in different ways to reduce mental distress, improve mental wellbeing and increase a sense of social inclusion.

Evidence of five additional processes was also found for some participants and projects, each of which had positive implications for improved personal wellbeing:

- Self expression assisting catharsis and self-acceptance
- Sense of pride and achievement in using personal abilities
- Having time out from day-to-day concerns
- Rebuilding a personal identity beyond being a service user
- Developing wider aspirations and a sense of self-esteem

Overall, the authors concluded that their findings 'provide sufficient evidence of mental health, social inclusion and in particular empowerment gains to justify support for arts and mental health work' (2006: 9). Nevertheless, they are careful not to exaggerate the power of the arts and suggest that involvement in creative activity is not a panacea, with guaranteed benefits for everyone:

While creativity might be viewed as an essential human need, not everyone will find a route to recovery through arts participation. Despite the importance of arts participation for many of the individuals involved in our case studies, we cannot necessarily assume this is a universal feature of recovery. Art may be important for some people, but arts participation (or for that matter involvement in any other activities) should not be predetermined as 'good for' people with mental health needs and thereby imposed on them.' (Spandler, Secker, Kent, Hacking and Shenton, 2007:797-8)

Arts on Prescription

Open to All – Museums, Galleries and Mental Health

http://www.socialinclusion.org.uk/work_areas/index.php?subid=93#section001B

Social inclusion and mental health awareness training for museums and galleries

A training package designed to encourage museums and galleries to involve people with experience of mental health problems has been commissioned by a partnership of NSIP, the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, the V&A, Tate Modern, The Wallace Collection and Portugal Prints, and developed by the University of Nottingham, Nottinghamshire County Teaching PCT and the Lost Artists Club. It aims to help build the bridges needed between people with mental health problems, museums and galleries and the wider community. Open to All has been devised to raise awareness and support museums and galleries to create a more accessible and inclusive environment for all their users.

Prescription for Art – Dulwich Picture Gallery

www.dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk/education/community_outreach/prescription_for_art.aspx

Dulwich Picture Gallery has teamed up with local doctors' surgeries to reach out to older people that other institutions have passed by. Doctors and nurses with special responsibilities for older people invite patients they feel are at most risk of isolation to creative workshops in the Sackler Studio. Several years of experience have shown that the stimulus art delivers is a real tonic. Participants begin to feel more confident and positive, concentrate better, and forget their aches and pains. Previously neglected participants learn new skills in sympathetic and stimulating surroundings, make friends, and start to feel part of a community.

Art on Prescription – North Devon College

http://www.ndevon.ac.uk/information/14/artsopresp/aop_home.htm

The Arts on Prescription supports people aged 16+ who are experiencing mild to moderate depression and/or anxiety. We support people to make life that bit easier by introducing creativity, opportunities for friendship and a professional package of support in a confidential environment. *The Arts on Prescription supports people to make life that bit easier by introducing creativity.* The short Art course will be an introduction to a range of drawing and painting techniques as well as some printing and clay. Importantly, you do not have to be an artist to take part! There will time to learn some new techniques, experiment and practise in a relaxed and supportive atmosphere. Discuss the scheme with your GP or Practice Nurse and ask them to refer you to the Community Art Team who will contact you, confirming your place on the scheme, along with the start dates and arrangements. If you wish, you can contact us direct (see contact details below).

Arts on prescription – South Tyneside Arts Studio

www.bbc.co.uk/tyne/content/articles/2007/12/06/south_tyneside_arts_studio_feature.shtml

South Tyneside Arts Studio (STAS) is open to everyone in South Tyneside but with priority for people living in the community with established mental health needs. It offers a huge range of possibilities for people to have a go at "doing" art and when we visit there are people painting, screen printing, making sculptures with clay and working with stained glass. Other activities available include silk painting and digital photography and experienced artists are on hand during every session to help and give advice. About 50% of the people using the studio have mental health needs and GPs, social workers, community mental health workers and other health professionals can refer people to the project – in the early days they literally had a prescription pad for referrals!

Time Being – Healing Arts, Isle of Wight

'A programme of 'arts in healthcare', Time Being, was established and delivered as arts on prescription by Healing Arts on the Isle of Wight over the period October 2002-March 2005. Its aim was to demonstrate and identify the benefits arising to an individual's health as a result of participation in structured creative programmes and activity, with the objective of the programme becoming part of the locally commissioned NHS services of the primary care trust. Evaluation and testimony from participants demonstrate the impact creativity has in contributing to the improvement in health of an individual and the individual's appreciation and understanding of their own health. The response to the evaluation by the commissioning sector of the NHS primary care trust indicates the difficulties and reluctance of this sector to embrace and commission arts in health programmes. The conclusion is that providers such as Health Arts are required to undertake further detailed cost-benefit, cash-efficiency, and quantified health-gain analysis on the role of the arts and creativity as part of healthcare for it to become integrated into NHS healthcare delivery.' (Eades and Ager, 2008:62)

Arts on Prescription - Creative Alternatives

<http://www.creativealternatives.org.uk/>

Comments from *Creative Alternatives* participants:

"I think this could be a real milestone for me. Everyone was so welcoming and kind, and I feel I made some real friends. I thoroughly enjoyed the workshops. As I mentioned to you, I've done a great deal of choral singing in the past, but it is something I haven't felt able to do recently. To sing again in harmony from music felt wonderful, and was a very important step for me."

"I like doing art because it helps me express something which is beyond words. Because it relieves me. I don't have words for everything I feel but I can express my feelings through drawing or mask making. I always feel better afterwards."

"I just want you to know how special and important these arts workshops are to me. They are a lifeline. They are the only moments in a week when I feel free to share and communicate. They draw my emotions, and make me feel vulnerable but somehow safe too. They give me a confidence to try to express some of my fears and deepest feelings, and there are always people there who are willing to listen and encourage."

Testimonies from people in art therapy

Source: <http://www.baat.org/clientscomments.html>

"I wish other professionals had pointed this out to me much earlier. Sometimes we are so involved with something/someone we can't get a handle on it. Art therapy has helped me to deal with issues that are hard to verbalise. If I'd been helped to understand part of the nature of obsession like this earlier I might not have wasted so much time"

"Sessions have helped me express things inside me which would otherwise have been suppressed. They have helped me gain insights into myself & my life situation and highlight issues that I didn't know were inside me. Sometimes, when just using words, my real feelings are avoided & drawing & colour helps me to get in touch with what is going on at a deeper level.

"Art therapy has helped me to see & deal with issues in a more conscious way. It has helped me to speak my mind & even be open with others about what I think & how I feel. I'm beginning to see that it's OK to have my own opinions and views that may differ from others & that if I am hurt or upset about something it's OK to talk about it."

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