

Welcome – I'm Richard Taylor – Chair of Arts and Minds – the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Foundation for the Arts and Mental Health

I'm delighted to see so many people here and that all our stakeholder communities are represented – service users and carers, statutory services, voluntary organisations – health and social services and arts, health and social care staff including clinicians, artists and funders – statutory and charitable – a 'sell out' – I hope you're reasonably comfortable

Your support and encouragement are very important. Thank you

Thank you as well to Michaelhouse for hosting this event. Peter Hilken trustee will be saying a few words shortly

I'm going to say a few words by way of introduction

This is Arts and Minds second event. Many of you were at our launch in May and many were kind enough to say how inspirational you found it. The programme this evening is designed to inspire and excite you in the same way

At our launch, I made the point that we are one of a number of organisations seeking to promote access to and engagement in the creative and expressive arts for vulnerable people throughout the county. At that stage we were relatively new but had grand ambitions and designs. I want to spend a minute or two reminding you of our aims and telling you what we've been doing this last 6 months – how we are trying to translate our aims into practice – make them real – and transform the experiences of service users

We have worked hard to build our networks and partnerships as part of our campaigning role – making people aware of our existence but also about what we do and why we think it is

important – that participation in the arts is good for everyone but especially good for people whose imagination and creativity may need help and support to enable its expression, or whose stamina and resilience are sapped by their conditions. This we believe will lead to greater involvement in this type of endeavour and we hope a growing acknowledgement that statutory services ought to support and accommodate this within the fabric of services that they commission and provide – it is at the heart of the health and well-being agenda.

On funding, at our launch I said that Arts and Minds had already received support from the MH Partnership Endowment Funds and AdeC in East Cambridgeshire. More recently we have received support from the Friends of the Phoenix Centre, the Friends of the Princess of Wales Hospital, a significant second grant from the Mental Health Partnership Trust Endowment Funds – and we hope to announce shortly a grant from Awards for All – and more applications are in the pipeline. This is all very good news. We are extremely grateful to all our supporters.

These grants are made to enable us to establish projects which enable vulnerable people to achieve new insights, to express themselves in new ways, to develop new skills, to socialise and meet new people and to have fun

Since May, thanks to Christina Rowland-Jones' sterling fund-raising efforts and the generosity of local people, the Millennium Arts Project (MAP) projects have continued and been extended as a result of our collaboration with the Fitzwilliam and Kettles Yard. In addition, we have run projects with young people with eating disorders in Fulbourn, adults with enduring mental health problems in Peterborough, teenage mothers and their babies in Cambridge and older people with dementia in Ely. We have also supported a project for people with profound physical and learning disabilities in Ely.

We are actively planning other projects in Cambourn, March, Soham, Huntingdon, Fulbourn and Peterborough – with the Pakistani community there and the prison, and we intend to participate in the Community Radio 209 project which offers opportunities for technical skills development for our participating service users and a platform for performance.

As I hope this demonstrates, one of the key features of the way we are trying to work is partnership. We believe we can achieve more if we work together with other stakeholders in terms of engendering a much more holistic integrated philosophy of service more relevant to people's real experiences and needs, and we are delighted to have worked with the Fitzwilliam Museum, Kettles Yard, CAM-MIND and Romsey Mill in Cambridge, Peterborough and Fenland Mind and Mosaic in Peterborough. We are planning collaborations with other arts organisations as well, notably Escape Artists and Inspire.

This is the bit where I begin to sound like a front bench spokesperson at a political party conference.

This evening we are delighted to announce a new partnership with our hosts for the evening Michaelhouse with whom we shall be establishing a choir, the Michaelhouse Chorale. There is strong and growing evidence about the physical, psychological and social benefits of singing – and some excellent local experience in the Inspire Arts for Health singing group. With Michaelhouse we are establishing the chorale for mental health service users, their family and professional carers, friends and volunteers. The chorale will meet on Friday afternoons here at Michaelhouse. The repertoire will include songs from the shows and other music reflecting the tastes of its members - and this may include fuguing so if you want to find out what it is – and to do it - please come along to our first session at 2.30 on Friday 9 November

Thank you all for your attention and support