



# Arts for Health in Blackpool

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## Project Overview

The 1930s and 50s were the heyday for Blackpool and other coastal resorts. An irony perhaps is that most coastal resorts begin life as therapeutic venues for the rich and upper classes, but now contain above-average numbers of unhealthy people. The availability of cheap rental accommodation is attractive to many benefit claimants and these families and individuals place additional burden on health, social and educational services.

Blackpool has disproportionate levels of benefit claimants in the Town along with high numbers of people claiming sickness and disability benefits.

Blackpool has the highest suicide rate in England. There are above average levels of depression requiring treatment in the over 65s (an estimated 34%). Around 3,000 people in Blackpool are receiving Disability Living Allowance because of mental health problems.

The North West Mental Health Survey 2009 used the [Warwick-Edinburgh Mental health and well-being scale](#) to score 18PCT's within the North West. Blackpool's scores for wellbeing were the 2<sup>nd</sup> lowest. This is consistent with the district having the highest level of deprivation.

Blackpool [Arts for Health](#) is funded by Blackpool Council and Blackpool Public Health. Arts for Health uses creativity as a way to target adults 18+ at risk of developing/ or who have mental health difficulties to offer supportive and creative groups with the aim to;

- Decrease social isolation
- Increase wellbeing for adults suffering with ongoing mental health problems
- Provide opportunities to move onto mainstream community groups
- Offer a creative and supportive programme

Blackpool Arts for Health service helps adults with on-going mental health difficulties by:

- Increasing confidence and self-esteem
- Building new friendships and support networks
- Boosting motivation and energy levels
- Enabling people to move on to further education, volunteering, employment
- Decreasing social isolation and developing social skills
- Part of a meaningful day, giving a purpose
- It can prevent hospital admissions

Arts for Health offers a 20 week pathway and then further opportunities for group members to set up their own creative group, move on to college courses etc. Arts for Health work with the wellness service, libraries, adult learning and mental health professionals to obtain referrals and develop opportunities for Arts for Health members.

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The majority of the clients referred to the service are considered moderate to severe by mental health professionals and for almost all of the clients referred their mental health difficulties are ongoing. Clients can be at risk or have a history of; Severe self-neglect, prison, detention under the mental health act, hospitalization, alcohol misuse, drug misuse, suicide attempts, expressing a wish to commit suicide, self-harm, violence to others

### Project Outcome

Between April 2011 and April 2013 143 two hour creative sessions were made available through the Arts for Health programme



On average each participant engaged for 20 weeks and the total number of engagements was 1,034. During this time 98% of clients showed a significant increase in their wellbeing Using the Warwick/Edinburgh Scale, on average participants wellbeing increased by 15 points after 10 weeks of Arts for Health and continued to increase after a further 10 weeks.

#### Testimony:

"Being distracted from problems of life for a couple of hours was very good. Also meeting others and finding we all have things in common."

"I started talking about things that I'd not said for 30 years, things that were bottled up. Now the bottle is smashed."

"It's not any one thing; it's the whole that has affected me. Taking work home has been important for me. It's given me something to think about. There's been days when it's been hard to make something. But now where there would've been nothing to show for a day, nothing but sadness, there'll be a little drawing or a piece of writing."

"I was frightened to do anything at first because of my reading and then I got the courage. The group gave me the courage" (This participant had no literacy skills)

"It has helped me look forward instead of looking back."

### Contact details for further information

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