



Arts create a welcoming sanctuary within a hospital

Project Overview

Zoofish Arts CIC recently received funding to run a 10 week series of art workshops, *The Art Project*, at St. Ann's (psychiatric) Hospital, Poole. The project has been especially timely as there is current ongoing building works at the hospital. The construction work has unsettled the patients and the calming, welcoming sanctuary of the workshops has provided a needed "refuge" where service users can relax, have fun and be creative. Also, because of the new building plan, the old art rooms have been demolished with no plans to reinstate them so patients now have little recourse to these types of activities.

The Richmond Fellowship are also very keen to work with Zoofish Arts on a funding bid to set up art/photography/web design workshops for the service users who have made the move from a secure unit like St. Ann's to an independent life. There is a great need to continue offering support at this stage and it would be great if the service users that we worked with at St. Ann's could seamlessly continue with workshops in this new environment.

At each weekly session Zoofish artists offer two hands-on art workshops using varied range of media with service-users across all wards in the hospital. To date the project has been working on enabling service users to engage with the natural environment of the hospital, using collage, photography, watercolours, poetry, mosaic and ceramics. We are currently creating some mosaic seats that will be installed in the grounds.

Project Outcome

It has been notable how in each case participants have entered into a spirit of experimentation and exploration, resulting in a strong sense of achievement and satisfaction. Participants have produced work depicting something personal and important to them, and the work has been appreciated by others.

Over the first 7 weeks of the project (still ongoing at time of writing), 28 patients and 16 staff have taken part in the project, with 11 returning for at least one more session. This is against the background of fluctuating health each week, and a largely transient population of mainly short stay patients, including elderly and wheelchair users.

Service-users and staff alike have spoken of their appreciation of the project – its availability and easy access across the day, the enabling and welcoming nature of the artists' leadership, and the deep sense of satisfaction in producing a piece of art . The social and supportive nature of the group has been of great worth in developing relationships and confidence in service-users.

I include two recent comments from the OT Technician, Debbie McCutcheon, who is accompanying the project as a staff member:





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Alumhurst Ward Community meeting 10th April. Comment from patient Mavis
"Relaxing effect when I went to the Art Friday group. Well done."

Also patient Colin was so pleased with his pottery boar's head and the photograph in the Trust Link that his wife bought him art set/paper and he is using this independently when he is well enough.

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