

Case studies: How have culture and creativity been supporting people in health, care and other institutions during the Covid-19 pandemic?

Organisation: Oxford Health Arts Partnership (Artscape / Creating with Care)

Region: South East and South West



“Thankyou – I feel young again and I haven't felt like that for a long time”

Image credit: Oxford Health Arts Partnership

Introduction

[Oxford Health Arts Partnership](#) is made up of Artscape and Creating with Care who both work closely with Oxford Health Charity. Oxford Health Arts Partnership has worked across Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust throughout the Covid crisis on Community and Mental Health wards, as well as with community teams.

Arts projects have included:

- virtual concerts
- visual arts sessions for staff and patients
- online workshops for service users in the community
- online arts courses with Buckinghamshire Recovery college
- garden concerts
- staff projects including a memorial project to create a mosaic for a member of staff who passed away
- the creation of art carts with individual arts activities for patients on all our community wards and
- co-production of artworks for our green spaces and wards with local artists working with staff and patients, including a peace and tranquillity Garden and large wall murals
- the creation of activity packs for inpatients on both community and mental health wards
- provide support to young people in mental health wards whilst the hospital school was closed by running face to face workshops.

Funders

Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust
Oxford Health Charity

Partners

- The creation of activity booklets in partnership with Oxford University Hospital and Creative Dementia Arts Network

- [Concerts with Oxford Contemporary Music, Instruments of Time and Trust and Creative Dementia Arts Network](#)
- Visual Arts lessons with Abingdon and Witney College and Fusion Arts
- [Collaborating with crafting groups to support staff and patients](#)
- [Concerts in the garden](#) funded by Arts Council England (a reworking of a ward based project)
- [Garden Concerts in partnership with West Oxfordshire District Council](#)
- [The Orchestra of St John – Oxford](#)

Who is it for?

- Community Hospital Patients (70% of whom have some form of cognitive impairment) and stroke rehabilitation ward patients and staff from all wards.
- NHS Staff across Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust
- Mental Health ward and community patients

Are these people you have worked with before, or new participants?

Both

How many people took/are taking part?

CWC: approx. 400 since March

Artscape: approx. 1500 since July

Where is it happening?

Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Wiltshire

For how long has it been happening?

These are ongoing programmes

What were/are the main outputs?

(See Introduction.)

- We still aimed to create work we could put on the walls via the online art workshops. Participants would email artwork and photographs that we could print and put on the walls.
- Anti-boredom packs designed for dementia patients at the beginning of lockdown
- Working with staff on music videos to reduce stress: [Down at Witney Town](#)
- [Art Installation with Staff for VE day](#)

What outcomes were/are you aiming for?

Staff wellbeing, combatting boredom for patients, connecting with relatives and the outside world during lockdown. The arts have given patients not just meaningful activity but an opportunity to be seen, to be heard and for someone to listen and feel valued, have supported staff and helped patients feel more relaxed and reduced boredom.

Have you adapted existing work to make this happen? If so, how?

Yes, by working with the wider OHFT team on risk assessments to make sure work with artists can continue but in different formats. During lockdown our CWC arts Co-ordinator worked on the ward of one hospital and was able to facilitate creative sessions with artists via virtual platforms and in some cases bringing relatives and patients together virtually. Then as lockdown lifted, we were able to bring artists first to the garden spaces and in some cases onto the wards with PPE and training in place.

We have worked with the Early Intervention Service running face to face art sessions before. When Covid happened, we moved all the session online. We adapted the way we work to fit the groups we

could reach. We did the same with the Bucks Recovery College but this has been more difficult and taken longer to establish.

Does your work support people who identify with one or more of the protected characteristics¹?

All our work is inclusive and, for the community hospitals mainly with the older population.

Evaluation & Feedback

We are using the normal project questionnaires and data recording for projects. It has been difficult to get participants taking part in online workshops to complete any formal evaluation. This has been a challenge that we have not been able to address very easily. Evaluation for the creative Connections Booklets is written into the booklet itself in the form of a feedback postcard.

“Thankyou – I feel young again and I haven't felt like that for a long time” (patient at City Hospital after a dance session)

“I feel rejuvenated” (Staff Comment at Abingdon EMU after staff dance session)

“This is the best day I have had in a long time.” (Bicester patient after virtual session)

“Kingfisher patients (and I!) are full of positive feedback about the musicians from the Orchestra of St John's who have been visiting. This week's violinist in particular, they found very engaging and enjoyable, and they were insistent that I pass on their thanks. The effort is very much appreciated, and it's been lovely to have such a perk in these very strange times.”

What is your own impression of how it has worked? What have been the challenges and successes for you?

Over all I think Oxford Health Arts Partnership has had a positive impact during the Covid crisis and has come out of it in a stronger position. We have been able to carry on delivering to patients and staff in a variety of ways both online and face to face.

We are used to working in partnership with individuals in the hospital and organisations in the community and with limited budgets to deliver high quality work. This has meant that we are more suited to a fast-changing environment and we have been able to adapt easily and offer solutions.

Patient and staff wellbeing have been a priority over the last six months, the arts have been recognized as a key part of delivering wellbeing and raising moral in healthcare.

It has been challenging to deliver workshops remotely, learning to use new technology and finding ways to make engage with people often tired of looking at screens.

The successes have been forging new partnerships in the hospital and wider community that will carry on long after Covid.

Are you reaching more people/fewer people/different people?

I think we are reaching more people because the wards are asking for things and funding is available to engage people, like musicians and artists that are currently unable to do their normal jobs.

What new skills have you or your colleagues had to develop to deliver this work?

- Self-taught IT support for virtual sessions

¹Protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation (Equalities Act 2010).

- I think it is less about new skills learnt but being able to use different skills or bring the skills we have in project management and problem solving into other areas of the hospital.
- Working in a slightly different role has been enjoyable.

What would you say has made this project possible?

- Supportive management/ leadership within the trust who have seen the benefits of arts projects and have helped to develop risk assessments/ ways of working with our arts managers to allow artistic work to take place.
- Funding support from Oxford Health Charity
- Wellbeing for staff has been pushed up the agenda within the hospital. The arts are a recognised way to achieve this.
- Cultural organisations have also had more time and funding available to offer to hospital settings.
- Artists and musicians are not working in their usual roles so are more available for work and willing to try new settings like hospitals
- Working in the arts means that you have a flexible approach to work and are used to adapting to a changing environment.
- We are used to delivering high quality work, quickly and on a small budget.

What would have made it easier?

There is nothing specific that would have made the work easier. In some ways it has been easier than normal to get projects off the ground and funded. It will be more interesting to see what happens in the future and if the arts in healthcare retains the boost it has seen during Covid.

Further information

[Oxford Health Arts Partnership](#) is made up of Artscape and Creating with Care who both work closely with Oxford Health Charity.

Artscape is an innovative arts project across Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust, providing opportunities for mental health services users, their carers and staff to engage with the arts to enhance health and wellbeing

Creating with Care a project which runs across community hospitals in Oxfordshire delivering arts and wellbeing for staff and patients

Oxford Health Charity supports the development and funding of arts projects across Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5umqHDvEjBo>

Our groundbreaking arts partnership demonstrates just how much cultural activities like art, dance, and music can enhance patient and staff wellbeing. More than eight out of 10 people say it has helped them. Activities help relieve anxiety, depression and stress. In fact, music is known to reduce agitation and the needs for medication in 67% of patients