

ARTS IN HEALTH AND ARTS THERAPIES – A STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

Arts in health encompasses a number of different areas of practice including improving healthcare environments, participatory arts activity, medical training and arts therapies. Historically the practice of arts therapy has been held as distinct from the broader field of arts in health; this has been an artificial and unhelpful separation.

While acknowledging that there are different competencies and areas of practice, arts therapists, like artists working in the field of health and wellbeing, share a conviction that creativity is intrinsic to health for both communities and individuals.

A group of practitioners from the organisations represented on this flyer working in arts in health including academics, art therapists, music therapists, dramatherapists and researchers met to discuss and agree a shared vision.

This signals a new collaboration between arts in health and arts therapy in terms of practice, professional development and research.

The group agreed that we share the following principles: -

- The arts can benefit individuals and communities in a range of contexts and in a range of ways.
- Health is not only the absence of illness in an individual but is affected by social factors including social cohesion and inequality of opportunity. There is strong evidence that the arts can have a positive impact on these factors.
- The field of arts in health should optimise the benefit for NHS service users through the use of diverse arts practices.
- That collaboration between clinicians and artists is the best way to provide individualised care.
- People who use the NHS should be able to benefit from the professional application of the arts through access to arts in health programmes.
- Safe and informed practice is a prerequisite in using the arts with NHS service users, visitors and staff.
- Through collaboration, arts in health professionals, NHS service users and policy makers can develop the craft of working with the arts to benefit our nation's health.
- That we share an interest in developing broader psychological and social theory to support the use of the arts in health, along with appropriate research methods to provide evidence of benefit.

To achieve good practice:

- Those working in arts in health must understand the aims and scope of arts in health work in relation to the needs of different NHS service users.
- There is a need to develop models of professional support, development and training.
- It is essential to expand and enhance the knowledge base for arts in health through ongoing research and reflective practice.