

Arts for Health Networking Day – Feedback

Thanks again for attending, or showing interest, in the Arts for Health Networking Event held last month.

The afternoon session consisted of structured one to one interviews between delegates followed by discussion groups exploring the questions further. The answer sheets and notes from these were collated and analysed for themes. This summarises what you, the delegates at the event, feel about arts and health as a whole and hopefully this will provide a platform for further discussions. In addition, this information will enable the Invest to Save team to explore the issues which you, the projects, and people working in the area, feel are important within research and practice.

The one to one interviews were based on 4 set questions. These are shown below along with a summary of what was said.

Question 1

Can you tell a story of how you came to be doing the work you are doing and what it is about it that means the most to you?

What are the values that underpin your practice?

What would you most like people to recognise about the work you are doing?

Delegates generally talked enthusiastically about working with people, both as individuals and communities. Values consistently came up about making the arts accessible to everyone and giving people a voice, hope, aspiration, joy and the opportunity to learn new skills. Delegates talked about improving wellbeing through equality and treating the whole person. What was also clear was the belief in the power and value of creativity.

“Most practical workshops can see small changes in people, help people see things differently – confidence, excitement, inclusion, accessibility, fun...”

“A holistic approach to a persons wellbeing”

Themes of the value of creativity and the importance of looking at wellbeing in terms of health have been a focus of the Invest to Save research protocol, and so more information will be available in the future about this area.

Question 2

What evidence/experiences are you aware of that might help more visibly and meaningfully demonstrate the impact of arts and health for participants, staff or communities?

Delegates talked about two different types of evidence which could be collected. The first type is mainly quantitative and a few people talked about methods such as likert scales, questionnaires and attendance figures. The other type which came up far more frequently is more qualitative in that people talked about personal stories, smiles, the journey travelled, enthusiasm, pride and achievement.

“A balance between stats and people stories – likert scales to measure individual outcomes”

“You see change in the way people function – they may smile more or dress differently, wear makeup, develop confidence, more positive outlook for the future”

This outlines the common feeling that one type of evidence only, is usually not sufficient and that you feel it is important to both understand what is happening and how and then what that means more broadly. This ‘mixed methodological’ approach is one that is at the heart of the Invest to Save research and is perhaps an area of experience where you as individual projects would like further training, tips and support. The team are open to suggestions in this area.

Question 3

What (if any) are your concerns about the development of both your project and arts and health as a 'movement', and what particularly are your views of arts and health professionals/organisations collaborating or working in partnership?

People's primary concerns seemed to be around funding and money. Sustainability and potential unemployment is often a worry due to financial issues, but also because people feel the area is vulnerable and not taken seriously enough. Some people mentioned concern around the differences between the agendas of art and health and also the differing terminology and language. Delegates felt that collaborating or working in partnership was both useful and necessary, although it could lead to misunderstandings and tension especially due to these language differences.

"Sustainability, unemployment for project workers"

"Finances are stretched"

"Concern is that PCT don't recognise it as valuable form of treatment"

"Collaboration should continue, increase, a strength for everybody"

The Invest to Save project is aiming to look at Arts and Health partnerships to highlight priority areas such as supportive evidence and funding and the challenges involved.

Question 4

What are your hopes and fears for evaluation and how do you believe that:

- a) Training and support could best enable you to conduct meaningful evaluation?**
- b) Your projects experience could enable or help others in the field?**

People's hopes were around having strong evidence, a good evaluation and securing funding whilst fears were around evaluation not working, overloading people with questionnaires and the area being too bureaucratic.

With regards to future training and support, a lot of delegates called for further networking days which showcased projects with good examples of evaluation. People wanted ideas for more creative and exciting evaluation methods. Meeting other projects and sharing information was also seen as important as were methods to increase sustainability. The strongest theme to emerge was definitely peoples desire to meet other projects and learn from good practice.

"How to of ideas – examples of good practice, more examples of mainstream success projects, exchanging information... website sharing"

"Workshops on more creative methods of evaluation"

The Invest to Save team hope to respond to your ideas for further networking days that are tailored to meet these needs and we will keep you informed of developments in this area.

I hope you find this information useful. If you wish to comment on any of the themes generated or if you would like to add a point to them that you feel has been missed out please get in touch. I would also be grateful if you have any further comments, if you could complete the form below and return it to me either by email to c.garner@mmu.ac.uk or by post to Charlotte Garner, Arts for Health, Manchester Metropolitan University, Loxford Tower, All Saints, Oxford Road, Manchester, M15 6BY.

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Do you have any specific requests or ideas for what you would find useful at the next networking event?

Have you taken any further actions as a result of attending this event?

Any further comments?

Thank you for your time.