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Company no. 5260817
Charity no. 1107757



Impact Report 2022-23



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Arty-Folks

Trustee Directors' Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2023

Company Registration no. 5260817

Charity Registration no. 1107757

Charity Information

Charity Name: Arty-Folks

Charity Registration Number: 1107757

Company Registration Number: 5260817

Registered Office
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Trustee Directors	Peter Young, Chair	Co-opted 30 March 2022
	Laura Wilde, Vice-Chair	05 November 2020
	William Brian, Engagement	Co-opted 30 March 2022
	Miho Taka, Service user	10 November 2022
	Mike Baker, NHS	Co-opted 24 January 2023
	Dan Sharkey, Treasurer	Co-opted 25 January 2023
	Barry Day, Chair	Resigned Feb 2023, served full term
	Ian McFarlane-Toms, Treasurer	Resigned Nov 2022, served full term
	Ceylan Thompson, IT	Resigned July 2022, working internationally
	Laura Quirke, Marketing	Resigned June 2022, sought new NHS role
	Lis Shrimpton, Legal	Resigned September 2022

Company Secretary	Hayley Cartwright	January 2021
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Staff Team	Lorella Medici	Chief Executive Officer
	Liz Harvey	Art Programme
	Tasz Bailey	Peer Support Worker

Bank	CAF Bank Ltd. 25 Kings Hill Avenue, Kings Hill, West Malling, Kent ME19 4JQ
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Insurers	Markel (UK) Ltd., Verity House, 6 Canal Wharf Leeds LS11 5AS
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Policy Number	CD42569	02.04.23 to 01.04.24
	Period of Insurance	£10,000,000
	Public Liability	£10,000,000
	Employers Liability	£250,000
	Professional Indemnity	

Independent Examiner	Azets Audit Services 3Mc Middlemarch Business Park Siskin Drive Coventry CV3 4FJ
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Chair's Welcome

This is my first Arty-Folks annual report for the financial year 2022/23 as Chair of the Trustees, and I would like to begin by thanking our outgoing Trustees Barry and Ian for their tireless support and commitment to Arty-Folks, particularly through the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic.

This report comprehensively presents our activity for the year, in which 525 residents of Coventry and Warwickshire have benefitted from our services. I would like to highlight three aspects that recur throughout:

- The considerable needs of the local community for mental health support were already well known to us. Sadly, pandemic induced isolation, increases in the cost of living, and challenges in accessing social and medical support services have increased these needs yet further. One positive development is the gradual increase in mental health awareness. Though we cannot measure this directly, it is likely that this is leading to an increased willingness to seek support from organisations such as ours.
- Arty-Folks has responded admirably to this changing environment. Income growth and innovations in our service delivery and programme design have allowed us to significantly increase the number of beneficiaries and to support a wider range of mental health needs. We are proud to have supported the formation of new community groups such as Arty-Avon and the Trustees are considering whether building a wider network of such groups would be appropriate and impactful.
- Further change is ahead, with property and leadership succession planning being priorities for the coming year. We also have an opportunity to reframe our service provision to suit changing the mental health landscape. The charity is in a strong position with committed leadership and staff, robust finances and an excellent local reputation all contributing to deeply impactful outcomes for our many service users. We go into a new year with an excellent foundation on which to build our future.

There are many moving case studies in this report, which lay bare the complex challenges many face. There are several stories of lives turned around and user feedback which highlights the impact our support can have, all of which I hope you enjoy reading. To choose just a few:

For its simplicity: 'I feel respected, accepted and not judged for my illness'.

For its honesty: 'I was able to stay with other people and didn't run away. My first try to meet other people for many years.'

To acknowledge the care and effort of the team: "This has been far more effective than any therapy or medication I have ever had."

And to summarise: 'It's been incredibly hard and incredibly uplifting, and I can say that it has changed my life.'

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I would like to thank all of our funders for their continued support and, of course, our dedicated, talented, adaptable team of staff and volunteers – thank you for your commitment to our local community.

Pete Young
Chairman of Trustees



Chief Executive Report

During a workshop a member puzzled exasperated: "Why does life after the pandemic feel like a malfunctioning roller coaster? Surely by now we should all be ok!" Reviewing what we have achieved this last year, I realised the shock of Coronavirus mask wearing and lockdowns may be in the distant past, but we're still grappling to understand how it has changed our lives, our social fabric, our trust in things to come.

The extent of burnout across all background, ages, and social standing we have seen during 2022/23 is staggering! People's lives are under pressure with bad news coming in from all sides; the ever-rising waiting lists, inadequate services, surging living costs, the hottest summer on record and threat of global warming, the uncertainty of local and international politics topping it all. There's a widespread feel that something fundamental has shifted in our collective consciousness, and it will take time to work through and make sense of it.

Since our establishment in 1995, our mission has been to provide immediate support to those in need. However, the landscape has shifted dramatically, and the pressures our small charity faces today is unparalleled. In a world focused on quick fixes, our participants present with complex issues that demand time and care to navigate. Among them are mothers whose children are under CAMHS care, grappling with the toll it takes on their own mental well-being, and a significant rise in individuals diagnosed with autism such as we have not encountered before.

Our Creative Peer Support groups provided isolated and marginalised people with opportunities to meet kindred spirits where they shared their confusion, their sorrow, their fears, their frustrations, and discovering a lifeline in the process. I would like to thank our amazing staff team and peer volunteers who provided participants with stability when they wobbled, fun and laughter to soothe overwhelming feelings, and a creative sparkle to shine through dark thoughts and despair.

Our Liz often jokes that "we are small but mighty!" and with so much support from our members, our peer volunteers, our funders and donors, we certainly are. I would like to express my gratitude to Barry Day and Ian McFarlane-Toms who navigated us through the most challenging 3 years, and to Pete Young and Dan Sharkey (my personal mentor for many years) for picking up the gauntlet. Most of all, I would like to thank our member C.C. for nominating us for a BBC Make a Difference Award which shortlisted Arty-Folks in the community category!

In this report you will learn about our journey, that we don't profess to have all the answers, that we encourage our service users to own their progress and claim their achievements. We are so proud to see many members reach full recovery and leave our service with a newfound confidence in themselves and their ability to direct their future. None of them left our service looking for a bigger house, a better career, more friends, but as better people with clear values, a strong sense of purpose, and confidence in what gives their life meaning.

But don't take my word for it: 'a picture speaks a thousand words', and nothing illustrates how the creative process changes mindsets better than the art work and feedback of our members.

Lorella Medici, CEO



Trustees' Governance Statement

The Trustee Directors ("the Trustees") present their report and the financial statement for the year ended 31 March 2023 examined independently by Azets Audit Services, Coventry.

Arty Folks is governed by a Board of Trustees who bring a wide range of skills to the charity. As a member-led organisation we are fortunate to have two service users appointed, Vice-Chair Laura Wilde and Miho Taka who ensure the needs of participants and the living experience of members are included in every decision.

After serving over 3 years on the Board and supporting us through the Covid-19 pandemic, our Chair, Barry Day stepped down and Trustees elected Peter Young who ensured a smooth transition. We also thank Ian MacFarlane-Toms for serving his term as Treasurer and we welcomed a long-term supporter of Arty-Folks, Dan Sharkey who has been a mentor and advisor since 2019. Mike Baker, GP & ICB Medical Director for Primary Care, joined the Board bringing knowledge and insight from his clinical work as well as to the changes within the NHS and ICB (Integrated Care Board).

The Trustees confirm that, in the carrying out of the charity's activities, and in the exercise of their powers and duties as Trustees, the Trustees have acted in compliance with their duty to have regard to the Charity Commission's public benefit guidance. A Register of Interests, Hospitality and Gifts received by Trustees and employees is maintained. All Trustees elected at Annual General Meetings may serve for a maximum term of four years and shall then be eligible for re-election. All Trustees agree to comply with a Code of Conduct.

Our Board of Trustees is very clear about our purpose, our mission, vision and aims and the impact we are seeking to make. All Trustees take part in an induction programme and all have the opportunity to take part in regular training opportunities. Our Vice Chair, Laura Wilde completed the ICAEW Trustee training in May 2022 and this is recommended for all Trustees. The Board is scheduled to meet 6 times per year, with formal agendas and papers issued in advance for consideration by Trustees. Draft agendas are set by the Company Secretary following discussion with the Chair and Chief Executive Officer, and Board meetings are formally minuted.

Trustees monitor all key strategic and operational risks and conduct a full risk review annually. Health and Safety and safeguarding are standing items at every Board meeting. Risks are scored based on their impact and likelihood both before and after the impact of mitigating actions. The execution of operational plans is delegated to employed and remunerated managers who are generally invited to Board Meetings to update the Board on operational performance. The Board monitors financial performance at each Board Meeting as well as operational metrics and agrees any actions which need to be taken.

"Working from home left me feeling isolated and lacking social confidence which is why I signed up. I learnt so much and I loved every minute of it! It was so easy talking to staff and other people while doing painting. It really helped me silence all those negative nagging thoughts."



Arty-Folks' staff team is supported by Peer Volunteers who have grown through the service, and there is a strong programme in place for their support and supervision, with a number of policies specifically approved by the Board for such purposes. Formal processes are in place for every volunteer and employee to raise a concern, if they wish to do so. All users are encouraged to complete service satisfaction questionnaires and we have an approved complaints process for users of our services.

The Board follows an agreed programme for key policy review and, in that regard, reviewed the following policies in 2022/23:

- Anti-bribery
- Expenses Policy
- Safeguarding
- Environmental
- Modern Slavery
- The Board Code of Conduct was updated in line with these policies.
- Reserves Policy

Reserves policy

The objective of the reserves policy is to maintain sufficient cash to enable Arty-Folks to continue and give confidence to funders that we can withstand any shortfall in income or unforeseen expenditure. The Trustees have revised the reserves policy in light of the anticipated exceptional costs in property and succession planning, and the short term fundraising outlook. All risks have mitigating actions in progress and will be managed and monitored by the Board.

The Trustees have determined that it would be prudent to increase operational reserves by 2 months, to 6 months of operating costs, to provide resilience for our transition from a long-term statutory contract and provide adequate protection whilst we are both fundraising for new projects and increasing the size of the team as part of the succession plan. *(More detail is given in Business Planning)*

The research conducted to inform the property risk and eventuality of a move from Eaton House has led the Trustees to increase the designated fund from £10,256 to £44,822. The fund is set aside to cover the cost of the move from Eaton House and costs associated with unexpected lease termination in the event that we must vacate immediately. The reserves will be reviewed during the year as the plan is further developed.

Due to the nature of the risks that the reserves are needed to cover, the reserves will be held in cash.

The Board has appointed Azets Audit Services as its External Examiner. Their report is appended.

What did you like about the course?

- *"Taking time to be in the moment"*
- *"Switching off and being creative again"*
- *"Lots of tips and information about coping with stress"*
- *"Learning without pressure or judgement"*
- *"Enjoying myself for once!"*
- *"Being free at least in my artwork"*
- *"A great sense of achievement"*



Mission and Vision

Charitable Objects

'To relieve persons living with mental health conditions or suffering emotional distress by assisting such persons to realise their full potential and lead fulfilling lives through the provision of visual arts and wellbeing related activities.' We focus our support on adults 18+ of working age in Coventry and Warwickshire.

Our Vision

People in Coventry and Warwickshire will feel empowered to own their mental well-being and will realise their potential.

Our Mission

We will paint a brighter, more compassionate world for all!

We inspire adults with mental ill health through the visual arts to regain self-belief to overcome challenges in life, and take control of their personal journey to recovery.

Service Aim

We run a creative programme structured into stepping stones to recovery, providing:

- **early intervention and prevention** support to adults with **low to moderate** mental health needs, thus reducing the need of more costly and longer-term interventions later. For example people struggling with financial pressures and life circumstances or waiting for therapies, including people in employment, parents, carers, students.
- **holistic and person-centred** support to adults with **severe and enduring mental illnesses**, thus reducing dependence on NHS services and increasing community integration. For example people with diagnosed conditions such as anxiety, OCD, Psychosis, PTSD, Schizophrenia, eating disorders, etc.

Service Objectives and Outcomes

- **Reduce social isolation and loneliness**

We run a range of courses online and in-person that help people feel anchored in the community and enjoy being part of social networks.

- **Inspire people to achieve stability and self-manage their mental health conditions**

We support people to tackle obstacles in their daily living so they are able to maintain a lifestyle that is conducive to good mental and physical health.

- **Unlock people's creativity for self-discovery and confidence to live purposeful lives**

We teach people to use the creative process for self-healing so they are more able to talk about, understand, and own their mental health and well-being.

- **Build resilience for social, community, and economic engagement**

We provide 1:1 mental health coaching and mentoring to empower people to live self-motivated and productive lives, embark on their vocational choices confident that they will be able to withstand knockbacks in life.

- **Foster art for mental health and community wellbeing**

We challenge the medical perspective of mental illness through our members artwork and recovery stories. In future, people will understand their creativity and connectedness are fundamental pillars to good mental health, promoting healing, empathy, resilience, and a deeper understanding of the human experience.

Operational Report

Arty-Folks has excelled against its ambitious Strategic Priorities set for 2022-23:

- **To deliver the 2nd year of Art for Wellbeing to the highest expectations of ourselves and funders Warwickshire County Council by meeting all targets in full.**

During this 2.5year commission we will engage 1,200 participants with low to moderate mental health needs and deliver 145 courses. To-date we have met all the requirements of the Warwickshire County Council contract for Art for Wellbeing in course numbers, attendance, reach and impact and the commission is on target to complete June'23.

- **To gather data consistently through the service and work with Coventry University to evidence the impact of Art for Wellbeing through research, measurement and monitoring.**

We have received a favourable interim report by Coventry University confirming that the programme measured through the SWEMWBS scale demonstrates a statistically significant positive impact on participants wellbeing. Accompanying the quantitative assessment is a wide range of qualitative work based on interviews and feedback from participants showing the positive and lasting effect of attending. (SWEMWBS - short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale)

- **To increase positive outcomes and overall satisfaction in living despite the ongoing mental health and economic crisis.**

We are now offering placements to Coventry University Occupational Therapist students to provide more practical support to members with poor financial literacy, physical health concerns, or facing loneliness or retirement. Many of our service users are facing complex interdependent issues that take time to resolve and need focused 1:1 attention. By increasing our person-centred support at point of need we can ensure participants remain positive and focused on their recovery journey.

- **Increase marketing and outreach to reach people in need across Coventry&Warwickshire.**

While we use all major platforms, Facebook has remained our main tool and this year we have been able to substantially increase reach: from 76,195 to 131,797, and the number of Followers has passed the 2,000 mark.

- **Develop our Online offer further and establish it as a permanent part of our service.**

The Covid-19 pandemic has most definitely changed our engagement methods for good. Online workshops and courses are now a must in our programme as it enables us to reach people in the furthest corners of Coventry and Warwickshire, and provide support to people in work, parents, carers, and those who are not able to leave their homes.



“Sometimes I would arrive so stressed out into the Zoom and it would take me ages to relax. But staff were amazing and helped me calm down just by saying the right thing, the soothing tone of voice, the reassurance that it’s ok to be me.”

During this financial year, we focused on delivering the following projects:

1. WARWICKSHIRE – low to moderate mental health needs

1.1 Art for Wellbeing online and in-person at various community venues

Warwickshire County Council commissioned Arty-Folks to run a 30-month programme of courses and workshops to provide early intervention and prevention support to adults with low to moderate mental health needs.

1.2 Developing Creative Communities

We are proud we empowered numerous residents to form their own creative support groups including Arty-Avon and Bedworth Heath.

The 1st workshop ran January 2021 and we are on target to deliver 145 courses and support 1,200 individuals by July 2023 when the programme completes.

2. COVENTRY – moderate to severe mental ill health

2.1 3-week introduction to Arty-Folks studios

Funded through donations and sales income, we ran a total of 16 blocks of 3-week courses for adults with moderate to severe mental ill health at our Eaton House studios.

2.2 New Perspectives IV

A 9-months project funded through Groundworks UK European Social Fund, supported participants to progress to education, employment or volunteering. The project is in its 4th and final year due to Brexit.

2.3 Cost of Living

A 4-months project funded through the Heart of England Community Foundation in conjunction with Coventry Building Society, turned our studios into a warm hub and offered additional support to our members through the winter months.

2.4 Creative Employability

A 3-months project commissioned by Coventry City Council Job Shop, supporting young people 17-29 years old to gain access to opportunities in the creative industries.

2.5 Unseen Stories Vol.II

A 9-months project funded by Coventry City Council Arts Panel, employing local film makers to facilitate skill-building workshops and empower our members to create short films charting their recovery journey through art.

Total number of individuals supported during 2022/23: 525 participants

Art for Wellbeing: 396 participants

Coventry Studios: 129 participants

3. Awards, Training, Partnerships, and Community Development

3.1 Arty-Folks was nominated for the prestigious BBC Make a Difference Award by a member.

3.2 Commissioned by NHS Coventry&Warwickshire Partnership Trust, we supported four members to complete Peer Support Worker training

3.3 Commissioned by Coventry University, we provided a placement for a BSc Occupational Therapy student

Additionally, we have delivered art&mental health workshops for Groundworks Coventry at a local primary school for parents, for The Carers Trust members in Coventry, for CRASAC staff away day, supported ROSA to start their peer support programme, and a social prescribing event in partnership with the Belgrade Theatre.

1. Warwickshire

1.1 Art for Wellbeing commissioned by Warwickshire County Council

This is a 2.5year programme of courses and workshops offering early intervention and prevention support to adults across Warwickshire with low to moderate mental health needs. The first workshop, Come Connect, was held January 11th 2021, and we are on target to deliver 145 courses and engage 1,200 participants by programme ending July'23.

Our aim for this year was to deliver more in-person courses in the community to enable people to regain their social confidence and to kickstart new creative community groups. We ran 6-week in-person courses in Bidford-on-Avon, Bedworth, Bedworth Heath, Nuneaton, Stockingford, Lighthorne Heath, Bramcote, Rugby and central Coventry. We have continued running daytime online courses as well as in the evening for people in employment.

On-line evening courses for people in employment were filled quickly and as working arrangements changed over the year and pressure to return to the workplace increased, the opportunity for relaxation and self-care was valued even more. The courses provided the outlet and support needed to stay in work and cope with strains of working and the worry of the rises in cost of living.

45 courses and workshops delivered

396 new participants across all demographics and socio-economic backgrounds

596 course registrations were made

17% were signposted to us/prescribed

83% self-referred

MENU OF COURSES

Come Connect, 1 hour workshop to gain an overview of what we offer.

Lunch & Learn, 30 minute workshops for employees looking to break up the working day.

Art for Relaxation, 3-weeks or 6-weeks, introducing participants to effective creative techniques to reducing stress and promoting a calmer frame of mind.

Painting for Pleasure, our most popular 6-weeks, step by step instruction to build essential skills for acrylic painting and explore painting as a hobby.

Passion for Plants, 6-weeks daytime or evening, a very popular course inspired by artist Georgia O'Keefe and Victorian Botanical Artists. Participants learn to collage, draw and paint from observation and use their passion for plants to express themselves.

Mindful Crafts, a very popular 6-weeks daytime and evening course, for people who enjoy crafting and making things. Participants complete 6 projects including crochet, Mexican weaving, dream catcher and macramé.

Creative Mindfulness, a 6-week online course, exploring journalling and water colours.

Aboriginal Art, a 6-week course developing painting with acrylics techniques.

Uniquely Vincent, 6-weeks daytime or evening, learning Van Gogh's approach to landscape painting, and application techniques with acrylics to create depth and movement.

77% Courses Attendance

We pride ourselves on the person-focused support we provide to all participants, right from the start. Our tutors are expert facilitators and enablers of conversations that help people break out of social isolation and bond with like-minded people. This person-centred approach is essential to connect with participants, ensure they attend regularly, and feel they are a valued member of the group.

1.1 Art for Wellbeing

Reaching adults with low to moderate mental health needs across Warwickshire

Age Range

87% were of working age, the client group we are aiming to reach through this programme.

Note: 26-45yr olds showed a consistent positive change in each quarter and overall benefitted the most from creative engagement.

Ethnicity

16% were of diverse minority ethnic backgrounds

Note: This compares very favourably to the Warwickshire average of 10.9% and demonstrates that creative engagement to reduce mental stress is of interest across all ethnic backgrounds.

Gender

87% female, as expected particularly in day-time courses. Men mostly attended evening courses.

Note: Males and females benefitted almost equally from the courses attended.

Locations

91.3% were either residents or have a connection to Warwickshire through work or family members.

Locations include Bedworth, Nuneaton, Rugby, Stratford, Warwick, and many rural villages, demonstrating our reach and the popularity of the programme.

Areas of Deprivation

33% live in areas of multiple deprivation

Note: a greater number of attendees were in the 1-4 decile than the Warwickshire average demonstrating that our courses reached out to those in areas highlighted by the council as needing support.

Economic Activity

49% are Parents/Carers

42% are unemployed

Reasons for enrolling

44% to de-stress

13% to improve my weekly routine

32% to develop my art skills

11% to have more social contact

*"I felt so stuck in myself, in my life, in my role as carer.
It was so good to chat about normal things with others."*



Art for Wellbeing Impact Data

Arty-Folks has long-employed the use of recognised scales for measuring change when working with adults experiencing mental health problems. To assess the impact of Art for Wellbeing, Arty-Folks is using the 7 item Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing scale (SWEMWBS) which has been widely adopted for use in clinical and non-clinical settings for outcome measurement.

The SWEMWBS scale ranges from a low wellbeing score of 7-19, a moderate wellbeing score of 20-27 and a high wellbeing score of 28-35. The questionnaire is simple to complete and participants rate themselves on their mental wellbeing at the start and end of every 3 and 6 week course.

The course is aimed at participants with a before intervention score of 20+. Participants were just below this mark in the first two quarters of the year at 19.9, 19.8 as mean scores. Participants in the latter part of the year were just over this at 20.8 and 20.5 in the final quarters.

All quarters in 2022/23 showed statistically significant improvements in wellbeing as measured by the SWEMWBS scale on average across all participants.

39.2% of participants report a statistically meaningful positive change.

Data evaluation by Coventry University

At the start of 2022, with the endorsement of our commissioner, we revised our course numbers to allow for smaller groups, greater 1-1 time and support with practical issues preventing recovery through signposting and referrals to specialist voluntary sector partners. This approach has been proved to be effective as our SWEMWBS data showed each quarter that courses were delivering statistically significant improvements in wellbeing.

Along with four partner organisations in the Creative Health Alliance, we were delighted to be funded by Warwickshire County Council, to share our anonymised data with Coventry University for external review. In addition to this, they conducted several interviews with participants to gain the full picture of the impact of arts on mental health. In their interim report they shared the qualitative assessment which echoed the questionnaire feedback, case studies and personal stories we routinely capture.

Quantitatively, **Coventry University concluded that attending a 6 week course had a statistically significant improvement on mental wellbeing** as measured by the SWEMWBS scale. We are delighted to have this review and be robustly assessed and look forward to the final report coming out in September 2023 when all the 5 programmes have concluded.



Participant Feedback



"Putting time aside
for myself each week
and being with
people"

"Thought provoking
and helped me look
at things more
positively!!"

"The course was the
highlight of my week,
the only thing I really
wanted to get up for"

"Explore creativity in a
range of ways and well
balanced with theory
and explanation"

"Encouraged me to
use these skills
outside of sessions
and share them with
friends"

"Get used to
socialising while
having a shared
activity took the
pressure and focus
off"

Art for Wellbeing Case Study

C.C.

Female, 44yrs old, lives alone in private rented accommodation in a small Warwickshire town.

Outcome: reduced social isolation, reduced dependence on statutory services, volunteering

Medical diagnosis includes: severe and enduring mental illness of psychosis, PTSD, anorexia, self-harm, numerous suicide attempts, Tourette's syndrome, as well as several physical health issues including autoimmune deficiency.

Following a heart operation 2018, she suffered a severe stroke that disabled her reading and writing. With Covid, she had become completely isolated and her speech and language had deteriorated to very basic one-word sentences.

CC. explained that the NHS regard her as non-compliant and resisting treatment, but that they do not understand her complex trauma that began in childhood. She was sectioned under the Mental Health Act many times, the last time in 2019, and she was discharged at the start of Covid'19 lockdown. She was promised a care co-ordinator and trauma therapy but became angry with mental health services who did not provide her with any support since the start of the pandemic.

CC started attending Arty-Folks online in January'22 and we invited her to attend in-person at our studios in July. It became immediately clear that she was not able to travel on her own from her village via Birmingham New Street to Coventry. She had not left her home for four years and she was not able to communicate, or find directions. Additionally, with increased anxiety, psychotic visions, and voices added to Tourette's, unfortunately members of the public reacted aggressively towards her. The cacophony of sounds and movement at train statins disorientated her and caused her severe panic attacks and allergy outbreaks.

Our Progression Support Worker provided one-to-one support for 6 months to help her gain the skills and confidence to travel on her own. Now, she is able to use phone apps to book train journeys and voice apps to read notices and other instructions that help her find her way independently.

CC nominated Arty-Folks for a BBC Make a Difference Award.

She started volunteering March'23, supporting staff to deliver art workshops and providing refreshments to members.



"If it wasn't for Arty-Folks, I wouldn't be here anymore. Life has started to feel worth living now."

1.2 Creative Communities


Working closely with Social Prescribing partners, Community Development Workers, and library staff, we have learnt that creative provision for adults has taken a serious knock and is struggling to return to pre-pandemic levels. Community venues run at reduced capacity and are often not able to open as they are struggling to attract and retain volunteers.

Whilst delivering the programme of 6-week courses, we explore different approaches to kickstarting new community groups and supporting community assets. On completion of a course, participants often discuss how they could continue meeting and pursuing their arts practice, with most opting to meet informally in small friendship groups.


In Bedworth Heath and Bidford-on-Avon, we were able to support participants to establish their own community groups which continue to thrive and increase in membership. This was only possible because group leaders had been attending Arty-Folks since the start of the pandemic and had developed a good understanding of group-work through our service.

The group in Bedworth Heath opted to run informally and is open to anyone who visits the community centre. Arty-Avon is now a CIC led by two members of Arty-Folks, and serves Bidford-on-Avon and surrounding areas. We continue to act as an umbrella organisation, support both groups with marketing and outreach, and manage their grants.

We are delighted to have supported Arty Avon with three grant applications that were all successful and provided artist-led workshops to over 20 mostly elderly participants per week.



ARTY AVON ...beginners to experts - all welcome
every Monday 1-2.30pm
come and join us @ Church Hall, Bidford on Avon, B50 4DA
bring along your latest project, try a taster craft and chat with like-minded people



FREE - donations towards resources welcomed

For more info contact artyavon@gmail.com
Community group led by Amy and Lisa - Supported by Arty-Folks, Bidford Parish Council & WCC



Painting Group at Bedworth Heath Community Centre

Do you enjoy painting and want to meet like-minded people?

We are a friendly and sociable group and we welcome people of all abilities.
£2 per workshop
Everyone is welcome!

Bring your own art materials and just come along any Mondays 10am-12pm at Bedworth Heath Community Centre, Smorrall Lane, Bedworth Heath CV12 0JN

For more information visit Bedworth Heath Community Centre call 024 7636 2512

Mondays 10am-12pm at Bedworth Heath Community Centre



2. Coventry

Pre-Covid-19, around 120 service users enrolled per year in Coventry. Our ambition is to ensure that everyone who needs us can access us without delay. Since reopening our studios August '20 we have had to continually expand our programme of groups to cope with demand. **We have seen the biggest increase in enrolment this year, from 57 in 21/22 to 129 this year**, and we have seen the biggest increase in mental distress as well as complex financial needs.

April '22 we introduced our **third weekly Creative Peer Support group** to meet demand, and give staff the opportunity to improve how we assess clients' needs, and improve referral routes for those best served by our voluntary sector partners. Rather than run an open access group, as we have done in the past, we continue to use the booking system on our website implemented during Covid. Booking is an effective way of regulating the number of people starting our service to ensure a calm, positive and productive experience for participants, staff, and volunteers. <https://arty-folks.org.uk/whats-on/>

We are acutely aware of the ever-growing demand and that we are not able to meet the wide range of needs in the community. Our website clearly states our limitations and that **to be eligible** for enrolment participants need to be:

- of working age 18-65yrs old.

At present we are not looking to support teenagers or children. We are not supporting the elderly as their needs are more social and longer term, and our creative programme is designed as a stepping stone into employment.

- living in Coventry or Warwickshire.
- experiencing mental health difficulties such as anxiety, depression, psychosis, personality disorders, schizophrenia, or self-diagnosed psychological distress.
- able to engage in creative activities unaided.

There are many creative groups specialists in supporting adults with cognitive needs, and we work closely with those community partners. **Note that Arty-Folks is the only creative charity focused on adults of working age experiencing psychological distress.**

- able to engage in a small group environment appropriately.
- able to attend independently without any support.

Family members and Professionals can accompany participants to our studios but cannot stay at workshops as this hinders the nurturing of a cohesive peer support group.



"It helped me in other areas in my life, almost immediately, as I learned to chop down tasks into a step by step process- and to breathe through it - just like we learnt in class."

The relaxing atmosphere and positive feedback made me review how I look at myself and stopped me being overly self-critical. It helped me develop my own style and feel good about it. I loved every minute."

2.1 3-Week Intro Course

Coventry Studios Participants Data

During 22/23, Arty-Folks delivered 16 blocks of 3-week courses (48 weeks), through which we engaged a total of 129 participants. We call every individual enrolled through our website or the Recovery Academy prior to starting their 3-week block to ensure that we can meet their needs and that they are able to engage without support.

Coventry art studios participants 22/23	Total enrolments	129	Did not attend	23	Attendees completed baseline	96
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23 people enrolled but did not attend. The main reason given was social anxiety, not being able to leave the safety of their home, or change of circumstances. Many explained that since the pandemic they had lost their social skills and confidence and did not feel able to relate to others.

At the start of the course, 96 participants completed online questionnaires. Through this data we are better able to understand their background, present life circumstances and support needs which feeds into 1:1 wellbeing conversations that take place during session 2 and session 3.

Background information of 96 attendees at Coventry art studios			
Age range	30 aged 18-30 41 aged 31-50 23 aged 51-65 2 aged 66+	Education	8 no qualifications 24 GCSE 26 A-level 30 University degree 5 Masters 3 PHD
Gender	62 Female 26 Male 8 Non-binary	Economic activity	28 working/studying 62 unemployed 6 retired 27 parent/carers 8 volunteering
Ethnicity	70 White British 26 non-White/British	Income	51 basic benefits 20 salary 20 no income 5 pension
Locations	80 Coventry 16 Warwickshire	Additional benefits	36 PIP/DLA 60 none

Demographics 22/23 to note:

Increasing highly educated and qualified participants and more in employment. Many received some mental health support through GP's and employers, yet felt the therapies they were offered were not beneficial and medication was affecting their ability to concentrate, leading to further distress.

Increasing no. of migrants, refugees, and people from ethnic minority backgrounds. Participants explained feeling uneasy discussing mental health issues and accessing medical help as it is still very stigmatised in their communities.

Participants needs at baseline			
Reasons for enrolling	47 to de-stress 16 weekly routine 13 art skills 20 social confidence	Who is supporting you at present?	17 have no support at all 10 family/friends only 7 private counsellors 5 Voluntary Sector support 18 GP only for medication 29 NHS support services 10 NHS IAPT talking therapy
Health needs	69 mental health 4 physical health 23 cognitive needs	How did you hear about Arty-Folks?	11 attended before Covid-19 20 word of mouth 28 internet/social media 35 health professionals 2 picked up a leaflet
Use of emergency services prior to attending	71 none 11 admitted to hospital 20 used A&E 10 called an ambulance	Are you taking medication?	68 Yes 28 No



100% of participants would recommend Arty-Folks to friends and family.



During the 3-week introduction to Arty-Folks art studios participants learn foundation skills of painting with acrylics inspired by the art and world view of Australian Aborigines.

Participants who completed the 3-week introduction course moved on to one of these destinations:

- Activities in the community more tailored to their needs, for example Men's Shed, groups for women, art groups specifically for neuro-diverse adults.
- Creative Employability project if 16-29yrs old (Wednesdays).
- Creative Peer Support group for people with longer-term needs (Thursdays pm).
- New Perspectives, if looking for work, education or volunteering (Thursdays am).

45 participants completed the end 3-week course questionnaire	
Service Exit routes	32 community activities 7 education 20 employment 4 training 5 volunteering



2.2 New Perspectives IV

July'22 to March'23 - project funded through Groundworks UK European Social Funds

We believe that everyone, irrespective of circumstance, deserves to be given the best chance to reach their potential and lead a fulfilling, healthy, and economically active life. Social and economic inactivity has a huge impact on a person's health and wellbeing and the Covid-19 pandemic has considerably worsened the prospects of individuals with complex mental and physical health needs.

New Perspectives IV (the fourth consecutive year funded through ESF) enabled us, again, to focus on a small group of 10 of our most vulnerable and disabled participants, and support them to access volunteering, education, training or employment. Building on 3 years previous experience, we provided intensive, flexible and tailored support to remove personal barriers in a holistic and integrated way, by supporting early action, by enabling access to locally provided services and opportunities, and by building their skills and resilience to realise their ambitions.

10 participants enrolled background information

- Medical diagnosis included: anorexia, psychosis, depression, PTSD, OCD, bi-polar, personality disorder, anxiety, and depression
- Gender: 8 female, 2 male
- Age: youngest 23, oldest 60yr old
- Ethnicity: 7 White British, 3 Ethnic Minorities
- Domicile: 9 Coventry, 1 Warwickshire
- Educational background: 7 up to GCSE, 3 completed University degrees
- Employment history: 4 had worked less than 12 months, 6 had never been employed

On completing their 3-week introduction course, we provided a structured programme of Creative Peer Support groups combined with 1:1 coaching&mentoring that included attending in-person:

- weekly 2hr group art therapy workshops - creative projects included: photography (doors, cardboard scenes), painting (Aboriginal art, mapping), mixed media (soup of potential), acrylic pouring, drawing from observation.
- weekly 1:1 sessions with our Wellbeing Mentor for mental health support and to identify needs, ambitions and opportunities for personal change.
- weekly 1:1 with our Progression Support Worker to realise personal action plans.

New Perspectives IV - Project Impact

- 2 participants gained full-time employment
- 3 participants started training or education: English GCSE, Peer Recovery Worker with ImROC and Foundation in Art&Design at Coventry University
- 1 participant assumed full-time caring for two family members
- 3 participants moved on to volunteering in the community including training guide dogs, designing a sensory garden with the Royal Society for the Blind, running an art group for neuro-diverse adults
- 1 participant was not able to complete the programme

New Perspectives IV Case Studies

Case study A.D. – Outcome: Full-time Employment

At the start of the service, A.D. kept his eyes fixed to the ground, shoulders hunched forward, voice hardly audible. He explained he had been a live-in carer for his father who passed away with cancer, unfortunately in his absence, leaving him feeling guilty and grief-stricken as well as isolated.

After a suicide attempt, his GP recommended joining Arty-Folks. We supported him to write a CV, attend job fairs, and apply for suitable positions. His mental health and resilience improved greatly and he started working again full-time.

Case study A.F. – Outcome: Volunteering

A.F. has an extensive history of drug&alcohol abuse, homelessness, and domestic violence. She was moved into a small bedsit at the start of lockdown but she felt in limbo, lost and without direction.

Our Progression Support worker spent time talking through various options to move forward and she has found her vocation training guide dogs for the blind.

Case study E.E. – Outcome: Full-time Employment

E.E. had never worked before.

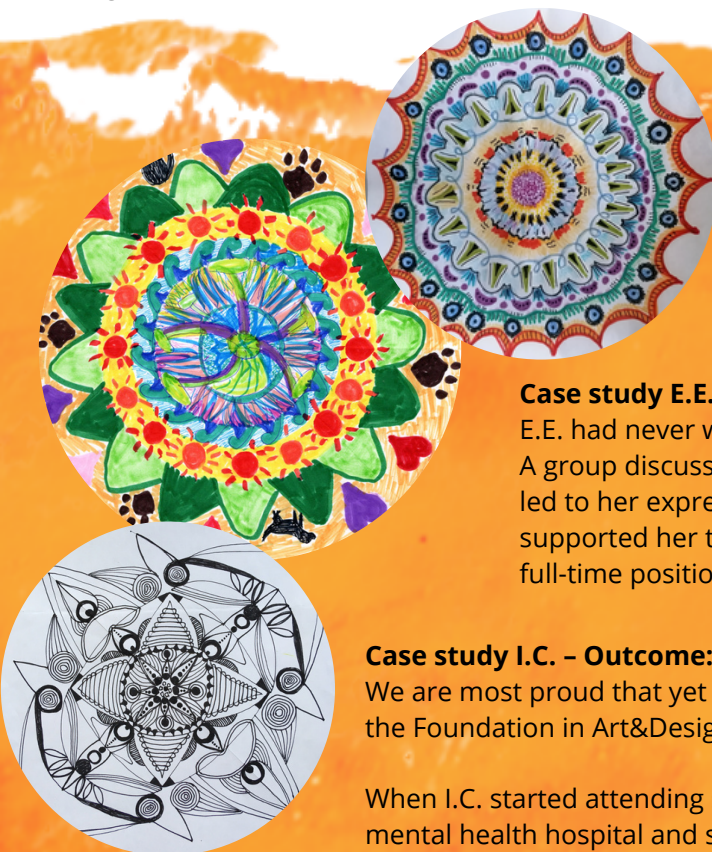
A group discussion around 'Can you become anything you want?' led to her express her aspiration to become a bus driver. We supported her to apply to West Midlands Travel, and she gained a full-time position as fully qualified bus driver.

Case study I.C. – Outcome: Education

We are most proud that yet again, we have enabled an ESF participant to join the Foundation in Art&Design at Coventry University.

When I.C. started attending she had only just been discharged from the mental health hospital and she was living in supported housing to help her overcome alcohol&drug addictions and psychosis.

Attending the group she reduced feelings of social isolation and thereby also her dependence on statutory services. She called her transformation 'miraculous'. She has now a new sense of purpose, she is enjoying learning and being challenged creatively, and lecturers inform us that she is on course for completing with a recommendation.



2.3 Cost of Living Fund

Funded by Coventry Building Society through the Heart of England Community Foundation

From Sept.'22, we were experiencing unprecedented pressure on our service to provide more social contact and 1:1 support. Participants feedback demonstrated that since the pandemic participants have felt more isolated and distressed, and the current cost-of-living rises had substantially increased pressure points in families, highly increasing the risk of self-harm and suicide.

Through questionnaires and 1:1 mentoring, we monitor the financial, social, environmental and mental health of our service users, many of whom are suffering with substantial and complex medical conditions. They needed regular check-ins and ongoing 1:1 support to overcome destructive urges and continue pursuing healthy lifestyles. Their consumer behaviours had changed to either "I don't care, I will deal with bills later." or, "I need to manage without heating."

This grant enabled Arty-Folks to support 54 members through the worst of the cost-of-living crisis by offering a warm hub at our Coventry studios and a wrap-around service during the winter months January to March '23.

The grant also enabled us to employ part-time, Tasz Bailey, a participant of our Creative Employability group. Tasz is a qualified Nutritionist and she introduced our members to vegan cooking on a budget.



"Hi, I am Tasz and I have started working for Arty-Folks part-time.

I am a Nutritionist and during these next few months when we are all feeling the pinch I am cooking up tasty meals for our members at our studios.

Today we had delicious bowl of pasta, and yes, that's me looking very happy in action!

12 people, members and staff sat down for lunch and I spent a total of £6 for tagliatelle, peppers, tomatoes, mushrooms, courgettes and gooey melty cheese—a colourful, healthy and tasty combo!

Sitting down to a relaxing lunch and a chinwag is a fantastic way to finish off a creative session."

With this grant, we were able to increase staff capacity and give participants much more time to talk through their circumstances and engage them in a process of review that left no aspect untouched. Sadly, we found that many had simply accepted their struggles 'There are many far more worse off than me', but more often than not they simply, 'do not want to make a fuss.' Incredibly, many had to be convinced to apply for PIP, bus passes, council tax rebates, or query their energy bills.

Cost of Living Fund Case Study

D.M. 61yrs old, started attending on a bitter cold grey day in January. When he entered the room he looked very pale and he seemed in pain when walking. He greeted everyone politely but remained very quiet. When he started painting staff could see that he struggled to move one of his hands but he persevered with tasks. He explained he had suffered a heart attack and then a stroke in 2021, and had to give up his job.

"Work was very important to me to help me manage my thoughts and painful memories. You can say I was a workaholic and it was my way to cope. Now I just don't know what to do with myself. I don't have a routine, no contact with others, and it's driving me mad!"

The cost of living crisis made a huge impact on him as he found it difficult to cook for himself and he was used to eating out. He had seen his GP who referred him for social prescribing through which he found Arty-Folks, remembering that he used to enjoy art at school. At the end of the 2hour workshop he enjoyed a vegetable soup with crusty bread with his peers.

6 weeks later he felt able to open up and described how difficult it had been following the stroke - losing some mobility, affecting his self-esteem and his relationships. Another member, P.A. had only just joined the group and he listened to D.M.'s story with great interest. P.A. then opened up about having suffered a devastating stroke and how it had affected his mental health and social confidence. During lunch (pesto gnocchi) the two men shared their experiences as well as their hopes and ambitions for the future.

Learning how easy it is to create nutritious meals on a budget made D.M. rethink his daily routine and eating habits. D.M. took a membership at a local gym and started swimming every morning. He now feels much more positive and optimistic about the future as he is focusing on what he can do and on what he does enjoy, rather than on what he lost.

This transformation would not have been possible without the additional communal meal sharing at our studio, and the warm and welcoming space we were able to offer through this grant. This encouraged them to share their own recipes as well as personal experiences living with anxiety following the Covid-pandemic and now with the continuously rising costs of living. Participants were able to let their guard down and relax into a communal atmosphere that nurtured emotional healing and new friendships.



2.4 Creative Employability

Commissioned by Coventry City Council

The Creative Employability project was a 12-week intervention October to January'23, commissioned by Coventry City Council Youth Employment Initiative to support a group of 18-29yrs old to step closer to creative career paths. Arty-Folks was chosen for the quality of our art programme, our experience of running similar projects with young people since 2016, and for our extensive knowledge of the local creative sector.

We proposed an exciting and inspiring programme of activities that included:

- Weekly creative skills workshops in a range of media such as photography, film, written word, drawing and paintings, to develop participants skills and confidence and help them build a portfolio for entry to college or University, or job interviews.
- Introducing young people to relevant industry professionals to improve their knowledge and understanding of employment and training opportunities in Coventry&Warwickshire.
- 1:1 wellbeing mentoring and support to resolve personal issues, career and progress planning.
- **Creating an exhibition of artwork and semi-permanent installation at the Job Shop to create a welcoming and inclusive space for future generations.**
- End project celebration event, led by the Job Shop with invited friends, family, and special guests.

14 young people aged 18-29yrs old enrolled on the project and built a portfolio of self-portraits, collage, paintings and drawings to express how they feel looking into the future.



Above, Creative Employability participants with Rachel New, BBC Coventry&Warwickshire presenter.

During the project, young people met professional artists working in film, radio, events, and community arts to learn what it takes to work in the industry.

Creative Employability Case Studies

Education

J. - After finishing my Fine Art Degree I felt quite lost. Arty-Folks gave me a taster of art therapy and how it can be helpful to open up therapeutic conversations. I have now started a placement at a school and I'm training to become an art therapist for children.

L. - I am working part-time at the Showcase Cinema until I start my Art Degree in September. Creative Employability has made me think further than those 3 years at Uni and I think I will be much readier and clearer about my career moves in future.

S. - Soon after I started Creative Employability my mum lost her battle to cancer. I'm ok, but it's hard to put into words how I feel. I appreciated Arty-Folks staying in touch and I'm slowly regaining my feet. I will be continuing to attend and build a portfolio to start the Foundation in Art&Design in September.

Employment

K. - As a neuro-diverse artist finding employment can be quite tricky and I'm looking to become self-employed. At present, I am selling my artwork at craft fairs and I lead art workshops in the community, something I want to develop further. I have started to work with the Belgrade Theatre on a project raising awareness of neuro-diversity.

Volunteering

T. - I was working part-time at a chemist when I started Creative Employability but I knew it was a dead-end job. I am now volunteering with Arty-Folks and exploring the different roles within the charity that suit my skill set.

A. - Before starting this project I had nearly stopped being creative because I felt I couldn't make steps forwards on my career because of my autism. This project has opened so many doors for me and I have gained a placement with a local creative organisation.

'The inevitability of change'.

The three panels 'Motherboard', 'Mother Ship', and 'Mother Nature' were created in a collaborative process of participants with local artists, and are now displayed at the Coventry JobShop.



2.5 UNSEEN STORIES Vol.II

Funded by Coventry City Council Arts Panel.

Covid-19 may have lessened the stigma around stress, depression and anxiety to an extent, and we can talk about our mental wellbeing more openly now. However, in Arty-Folks members day-to-day experience, this newfound **empathy and understanding does not extend to those suffering with more severe illnesses** like psychosis, Tourette's, eating or personality disorders, schizophrenia, which are still very much misunderstood and sometimes even feared.

Public discussions are lacking around the fact that many who have been diagnosed with substantial mental illnesses actually do make a full recovery with the help of family, friends, services and mental health support groups like Arty-Folks. **Unseen Stories Vol.II** enabled us to fulfil a long-held ambition and employ local artists and filmmakers to help our members find their creative voice and tell their story with dignity and privacy through film and animation.

'Unseen Stories Vol.II' project was launched on 10th October '22 World Mental Health Day and challenged sessional artists, Arty-Folks staff, and participants to think about how a personal mental health recovery journey can be expressed in a positive and constructive way without leaving the person feeling exposed and vulnerable to ridicule, judgement, discrimination, and risking their prospects for the future.

Having engaged many artists for one-off workshops, our members chose No Class as project lead and we have been most impressed with their skills, creativity, and professionalism throughout the project. No Class brought a huge range of ideas and techniques to inspire each workshop. They gained the trust of our members that enabled them to open up and tell their story warts and all. It's been brilliant, and we could not have wished for a better creative partner to work with.

10 members were expected to participate but the interest was huge! We are proud 'Unseen Stories Vol.II' boasts a total of 16 short films of 14 members and 2 members of staff charting their mental health experiences, how it affects their daily lives, and how being creative with like-minded people supports their recovery journey. Photographs, animations, and films were screened on 14th May '23 at the Tin Arts&Music venue to an audience of over 50 family and friends, and supporters of our charity to mark Mental Health Awareness Week.

"I would never have imaged I could do this. It has really stretched my skills and yes, there were times when I wanted to throw the towel down.

But Arty-Folks staff was always so encouraging and helpful, full of ideas whenever we felt stuck.

Particularly the editing side was difficult for many but everyone was helped through and the sense of achievement we have now is immense!"

Participant Unseen Stories



The collection of 'Unseen Stories Vol.II' 15 videos short films is now available on Arty-Folks Youtube channel <https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLUxzObWCJD9QV60-d8mJKjBfIQy3pEzy5> and highlight how mental health is affected by

- death of a child
- death of a parent
- bullying
- domestic violence
- parental child abuse
- alcohol and drug addictions
- parental mental illness
- sibling suicide
- being a parent of a child with severe mental illness
- gender discrimination
- child carer
- growing up in a war-torn country
- parental neglect
- discrimination at work
- family rifts

Note that 'Unseen Stories Vol.I' is in printed format and available on [Amazon](#). The book charts the remarkable journey to recovery of nine Arty-Folks members aged 18 to 30 years old through their artwork and personal stories.

Outcomes and Impact

14 members reported

- Improved overall health&wellbeing
- Increased digital skills and creative confidence
- Improved mental health&wellbeing
- 7 members have since started volunteering
- 1 member has been fully discharged from NHS CMHT
- 1 member has made 'miraculous' progress and has moved to a stable home
- 3 have now taken on caring roles
- 6 are now in employment



Unseen Stories Feedback

Members' feedback on screening of Unseen Stories:

"It's been incredibly hard and incredibly uplifting, and I can say that it has changed my life. Working on something for such a long time in such a focused way makes you look at all the things you would avoid or blank, and it has helped me push through from a muddy place to clarity and a different way of looking at things."

"Even though we worked alongside each other for so many weeks and I did have some idea what their story was about, it was still hugely moving seeing it on the big screen. It was an amazing experience seeing the room packed out, every seat taken, and we all felt such a wonderful wave of love and belonging."

"It was great that staff also created a video of their own story. It made me feel that we are truly in the same boat, that they have been through their own stuff and so can truly understand what I am going through."

"I have put everything into my film and I think I did a pretty good job. Showing it to my family and friends felt great. I could see that they were impressed and I think it has changed a bit the way they perceive me. I am not just a loser anymore. I am somebody with skills and a story."

"Many of the stories made me cry, and I hadn't appreciated before how much we actually have in common. I think I understand now that we don't have bad mental health. We just have bad experiences that are difficult to digest, and sometimes we need a bit of help."

Feedback from No Class, appointed by members to deliver Unseen Stories full project:

"At first we were a bit apprehensive about the mental health needs of participants, and worried that we might inadvertently trigger thoughts and feelings that could plunge them into darkness. We are so proud of what they have achieved, the resilience participants demonstrated, and we would love to work more in this kind of setting."



Arty-Folks Trustees:

"OMG you made me cry! This was so incredibly moving and it really shows how important being creative is for the mental health recovery journey. A cathartic experience for many."

"I am not creative myself, so this was really important for me to see, to better understand how art can help people rebuild their lives. Some of the stories really resonated with me and I can see how impactful this project is for participants."

3.1 Make a Difference Award

BBC Coventry&Warwickshire Make a Difference Award

We are so proud participant C.C. nominated Arty-Folks for a BBC CWR Make a Difference Award and we were shortlisted in the Community category. C.C. felt our team, as well as her Creative Peer group members, listened with compassion and patience, and went a considerable extra mile to support her rebuild her independence and social confidence.

C.C. lives alone and she suffers with a number of serious conditions that massively impact on her ability to deal with daily living issues independently. Additionally, a huge range of external issues had piled up, since the pandemic started, including anti-social neighbours, sexual and financial exploitation, poor housing, missed medical appointments, etc.. Her mental health had spiralled out of control and we worked closely with her in a co-productive process to establish trust and willingness to be helped.

Meeting her at her home, we discovered that the heating had not been working for over 9 months and through the winter. Additionally, burst pipes had flooded the cellar, leaving the property in a constant humid state. Private landlords failed to fix it professionally and accused her of causing black mould.

Unable to make herself heard, she was hospitalised four times with pleurisy, and both her and her dog struggled with respiratory problems as well as skin allergies. Her heating bills escalated to over £300 a month and she lived off cuppa soups.

We supported her to report landlords to Warwickshire County Council and move into new accommodation where her physical as well as mental health began to improve rapidly. Additionally, we supported her to improve financial stability, attend medical appointments, gain the confidence to use public transport on her own, cooking healthy meals on a budget, and start NHS trauma therapy.

We are humbled and most grateful to C.C for nominating us for this prestigious BBC Make a Difference Award.



3.2 Peer Support Worker

Commissioned by NHS Coventry&Warwickshire Partnership Trust

The role of a Peer Support Worker has been developed specifically for people who have lived-experience of mental distress and are able to use their own experience to inspire, encourage, motivate, and assist their peers to engage with appropriate services and access opportunities in the community.

We supported four Arty-Folks members to complete the Peer Support Worker training with ImROC which is envisaged to secure them employment within the NHS Innovation streams. Tasz Bailey, our Progression Support Worker was recruited to Arty-Folks from this cohort, and will be supporting future members to complete ImROC training.

3.3 OT students

From September to March, Arty-Folks served as a practice educator to Kylie, a BSc Occupational Therapy Student in her final year at Coventry University. In this 10-week placement, the student job-shadowed members of staff to learn how the role performs in a non-clinical community setting.

The student attended in-person arts&crafts groups in the community that help reduce social isolation, enable sharing of information, and provide OT's an opportunity to lead conversations around healthy lifestyles and how social connections can help to maintain health&wellbeing. Kylie worked in a focused way with two participants to identify barriers to engaging in everyday activities providing them with information and support that are central to their health and wellbeing, to their sense of who they are, and to the life they want to lead.

We are looking to forward to providing further practice placements to MSc OT students in the coming year.



Business Planning

In June 2022, the Board set strategic targets and priorities for the financial year 2023/24:

PROPERTY

Arty-Folks has enjoyed peppercorn rent at Eaton House since 2014, operating with a termination clause requiring vacation within 21 days. In October 2022, the first floor on which we are located suffered a flood from a rusted heating pipe which caused significant disruption. Eaton House is earmarked for demolition, the façade is crumbling and has permanent scaffolding around it. Subsequently, landlords informed us that, should such an event occur again, rather than make repairs, they would serve notice.

Given the dilapidated state of the building, premises are a high risk reflected both on the risk register and in the reserves policy. The Trustees have initiated a project to find alternative premises in Coventry and in the eventuality of a sudden evacuation.

Securing a short term let for continuous operation of services could come at a high cost especially given the low availability of suitable premises in the city centre. Many business and charities are currently re-locating prior to the Coventry South development starting in November 2023. The leadership team have done a property scan and background work to establish the nature and scale of the costs to arrive at a reasonable provision to be made within the reserves. The Trustees have raised reserves previously held at £10,256 to £44,822 to cover both the moving cost and contingency for immediate vacation.

SUCCESSION PLANNING

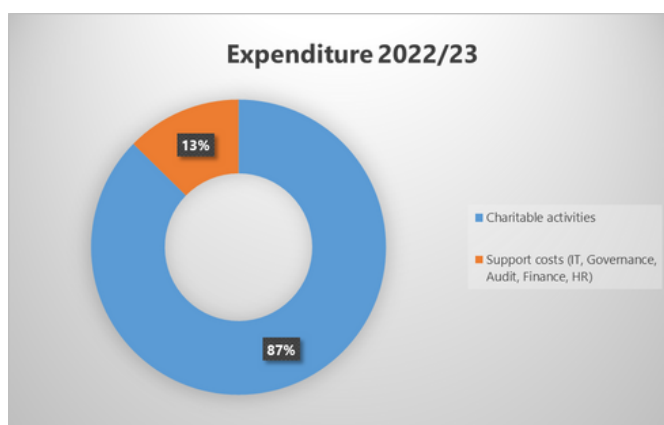
Our CEO and Founding member, Lorella Medici, is aiming to retire in 2028 and we will be working towards a succession plan. Over the next 5 years Lorella is looking to reduce her working days and the Board have agreed a recruitment plan recognising that 2 (or 3 part time) new posts will be required at a senior level to cover Lorella's workload and grow the charity in response to the huge and increasing demand for our services. We anticipate new managers to take 4-6 months from induction to become fully effective and have planned our operations and finances accordingly.

PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT

June '23 will mark the official end of 2.5 years of services delivered as part of the Art for Wellbeing contract with Warwickshire County Council. We are extremely grateful to commissioners for their support over this period and for the opportunity to reach over 1,200 people struggling with social isolation and low to moderate mental health needs.

At this point, whilst we have a number of funding proposals submitted and some shortlisted, we have no firm contracts or new grants. In light of this position the Board increased operational reserves from £30,012 for 4 months running costs to £47,634 covering staffing and overheads for 6 months.

The Trustees will continue to monitor cashflow closely with the Treasurer taking a lead role in timely reporting to the Board.



Arty-Folks is a 'lean' charity with mere 13% of annual expenses for overhead costs as we are committed to channelling our resources to directly benefit our participants.

However, we recognise the need to invest in our infrastructure and the longer-term sustainability of our service. With plans to replace ageing IT hardware, and expand our staff team and creative programme, we expect overheads to increase in 2023/24.

Arty-Folks at close of the financial year ended 31 March 2023 held a total £162,979 in funds, of which

Restricted funds:

- £8,662 for grant funded projects to be completed in 2023-24.

Unrestricted funds:

- £44,822 designated for evacuation of Eaton House within 21 days and moving to new premises
- £47,634 operational reserves to cover staffing and core costs of 6 months
- £61,901 general funds committed for projects such as succession planning, co-creation of service and Creative Peer Support groups.



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