

Art and inspiration

Facilitated by Sylvie Fourcin, supported by Hannah Verrow, Artlink West Yorkshire

We will show images of some of the workshops we have carried out within mental health settings, including working with people with eating disorders, long term hostel residents and Studio 3 members who come regularly to Artlink. We will then explore some themes and questions surrounding the use of arts as a vehicle to recovery, with a practical exercise to get people thinking creatively.

Sylvie presented an outline of Artlink's work, with photographs illustrating the various projects. Artlink works with a diverse variety of groups and they use art as a medium for recovery and engagement. Many of the people who come to Artlink have low self-esteem and very little confidence.

At Artlink there is no pressure to achieve outcomes and there are no targets. People come when they want to; they do not have to agree to attend a set number of times. Everyone is encouraged to talk about what they want to do.

For example, a group of people who were moving from a hostel to independent living, used art to help the transformation in what, for many, is a frightening and uncertain time. The participants were encouraged to work outside their comfort zone, but in a constructive way.

A project with the Centre for Eating Disorders meant that people who had a serious illness were able to take back some power and control over their lives through using art.

For young refugees, the language barrier was overcome by using animation techniques.

For the workshop activity, we divided into two groups and were asked to draw a self-portrait which illustrated our creative aspirations and hopes and encompassed any obstacles to achieving those and how we would overcome them. We then shared the results and out of this came some very personal comments on hope and creativity and the value of both to our mental health.