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Syma

Even if you're going through it yourself, you would keep your feelings away, then, from others. Whereas, you know, ideally, it would be the wider, you know, your family, and your wider sort of community supporting you.

I think within every community, there'll be a different spin on it, when it comes to mental health.

Mental health affects all of us. So I think we really need to sort of grasp it.

We just need to sort of provide avenues for people to feel better, and to allow platforms for people to be able to communicate and allow them to express themselves.

Sheena

Words are not always the easiest.

How are you? They'll say fine. But if then if you give them a lump of clay or a musical instrument you'll hear, or you'll see that they're not fine.

We can't always put our feelings into words. We need other languages and that's what the arts are.

Ruth D

If I went to my GP and said to my GP, I'm really struggling, I've got really low moods or I'm really anxious and then he said, [laughs], I'm going to prescribe you, I don't know, a book, or a writing class, I would be furious, you know, I'm not coming to you for your opinion on my, you know, [laughs], my social life.

It is kind of putting yourself in other people's shoes.

The ability for people to define themselves in a different way.

Something that really naturally emerged was, that people that maybe had been, you know, Jimmy the schizo-phrenic, or you know, Brian, the alcoholic, or whatever, was defining themselves as an artist or as, you know, a writer or even as a participant or a volunteer or a friend or that, that stuff to me was incredibly powerful and did a lot.

Ruth

There were people who could sell their paintings, they were so good. And then there were people like me that were sort of really struggling to do anything that looked any good, but it didn't matter.



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Ruth

You could do your own thing, so I tended to do my own thing, because I felt quite shy talking to people.

Richard

So, I mean generally speaking I want art to reflect life, the odd time you want art to have the escape for a little bit, I can appreciate that too, but so I just think that it's a necessary part of what art should do. So, if art is not addressing mental health, then it's not addressing life.

Mahmud

I suppose for a lot of people, there was almost an embarrassment of what they were producing; that maybe, this isn't good enough, or it's maybe a private thing and not for sharing with others, but I think that has changed over the years.

You can read volumes and volumes of books but if you don't experience things in more than one dimension, it's not going to be real.

You're exposed to stories and things in different elements, whether it's visual as well as reading or if it's music and listening and hearing, if you use all your senses.

Have it ingrained and embedded within you.

Larry

And just that encouragement to people to just let their pen do the work and don't try and think too much about what's right, to really just get down your feelings, your thoughts. First thoughts are best thoughts. If it's frightening, write it down. And just by really emphasising the therapeutic potential of that way of working.

I have plans, I will go in with plans, but sometimes I abandoned them because I'm listening to a conversation as I arrive, informal conversation, and somebody's just been sectioned, somebody's just got a diagnosis, and that becomes much more the topic and I will create a prompt out of that, a way in out of that.

Keith

I think the important thing about what we're doing is it isn't so much about the outcome, it's about the process and it's the process that is most valuable there. And that's a really difficult thing to sell to a funder.



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John S

We debated whether that would stigmatise us or not, and we decided that we would own that. Other people said oh, they're just mad jam people, so we'll own that, we'll call ourselves that.

John Mc

Battering a big drum, it was better than battering somebody else.

Jane

Creep up from the grassroots.

Year by year, it expanded and began to prove itself and become much more accepted, and people could see the reasons why.

There was quite a lot of resistance from a lot of people at the start.

I nearly went down that route at the start and then didn't, music became the thing. Because, again, just because you have, you know, a particular condition, doesn't mean you always want to make art about it, or to write a song about it. Sometimes you just want to write a song, or make some art [laughing].

Jan-Bert

I think the essence of art is the cultural expression of who we are and what we see, and what we like and what we dislike, and what we're thinking.

Isabel

Not political in the sense of different parties but what's going on in the world, what's happening, why are we in this situation, and get the people's views.

There is no medication that can do that, none.

People just feel like no one, nobody knows their name. You go to the doctor, they don't know you, you go to somebody else, what's your name, you've to tell your story over and over and over. Nobody knows your name.

Hugh

There were many people who might not be accessing the countryside for a variety of health conditions.



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Hugh

But the more things I did, the more convinced I became that people in a hospital or in any setting who use mental health services, they'll have a better life if they're accessing the arts

and accessing the woodlands and the countryside and the local history of things. I absolutely felt up against it at times.

There's a link in there to good mental health and creativity, a human link in there.

Graham

Like just in the COVID thing, in the lockdown, everyone's talking about the impact on people's mental health as if it was an issue, whilst in the '80s no one would have even thought about it.

Gerry

After my own personal breakdown I wrote a series of poems about that which were published as a book later, and I realised that, yeah, well, shit, I got that out of my system.

I still bear the scars and I still bear the residue of that time.

I can say quite clearly, a, it's fun, b, it's healing, c, it's challenging.

It's those small interventions in streets which are going to aid.

People are going to ask...begin to ask, how is this happening, why is this happening, and help them make more of it happen.

Rachel

Building blocks to empower confidence.

Completely been taken away somewhere by it.

Quite often people want to, kind of, escape the kind of, humdrum of feeling rubbish.

Any creative processes at all, whether it's digital or if it's drama, or like you say, or writing, creative writing, or patchwork, or, you know, anything like that that can bring people together, only good things come from that, you know.



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Douglas

For me it was about communication and making connection with other fellow human beings.

Melody and humour are almost the greatest tools an artist can have, because they bypass the intellect and they go straight to the heart.

I guess part of your physical wellbeing and your mental wellbeing are so tied in with each other, and also your environment.

So kind of the busy mind, busy hands stops from going down certain rabbit holes.

Dougie

But I'm just a beginner no matter, even at 66.

But I keep pushing myself to do things, I like doing things, and every time I finish something, I think that's it finished, that's an endpoint, and after a wee while a new idea starts coming up and I have to do that.

Donna

When was the last time that you laughed, and I couldn't remember.

I was confident with who I was, and for anybody to scrutinise that, so I could, you know, put my work up for scrutiny, because it's my work.

I think that there's definitely more talk about mental health and mental illness, and it's okay to talk about it, and that's much better.

Chris W

My memories of being in hospital often were negative, often felt that I'd lost liberty and didn't have any kind of power or self-control. But actually when I was in the community and I was struggling with identity and feeling safe and feeling vulnerable, those feelings existed anyway.

So kind of trying to use something, parts of hospitals that were not used for other clinical purposes.

Chris K

Community are interlinked as well.

It's no longer, you know, George in the chair, it's George who did the Andy Warhol print, you know, or whatever.



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Chris B

The fact that Shakespeare wrote his great tragedies it's thought after a nervous breakdown, and various other leading artists have been on the edge, between what society calls normal and what society deems to be worthy of being locked up.

It's small steps, but they're important steps.

Chris K

And something just happened and I, kind of, went, yes, for the job sort of thing and the audience laughed. And I thought, oh, I like this power [laughs] and that was me, I was hooked.

Carole

I would always be looking for people in the cast who were less confident, people who wanted to push themselves.

Creativity should be for everybody.

We never handed our work over to actors, or performers to perform for us. We created something that we were comfortable with, that we could put in front of an audience, and we performed it.

Brian

Everybody having responsibility to get wood for the fire.

You open up the room, or walk into a room where the art activities are going on, and there's a quiet, people are really engaged in something. I really love that.

It's just about centring you in the moment, at that time, how you feel at that time, and just being able to express yourself, or to take yourself out of yourself for a wee while.

They're having this frenetic, accelerated thought, thinking, and no peace from their thoughts, and to just see them relax for an hour, it's so rewarding.

Anne

Over the past forty years, I think it is much easier for people to say when they've got a mental health problem. And I think that people are more likely to be open than they ever used to be.



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Anne

It's entirely up to the people in the group what they want to do with this piece of art. They can cherish it or push it to the side.

If you've been so caught up in a problem that you can't really find any way out of it, if you're getting a chance to work it through in some way, or talk about it, or sort of describe it to someone else, it's helping you process it, and helping you possibly see it from a different perspective, find different solutions to it.

I don't think you need to be very skilled to get a really powerful message across when you're using art.

Would you rather live in your own home or would you rather live in the hospital?

But it would be really nice if, in the community, we could still value places for people to...nice places for people to be.

People will quite often be very, very compassionate for other people, but they're not compassionate for themselves.

You're in flow.

Self-worth, self-esteem.

If we had hospitals and health services that were designed with art in mind, I think that would be...we'd have much better environments to live in. I'd love to see art being given a good valued place in terms of therapy, and community.

Andrew

Constantly being involved in work that is about mental health is a kind of constant reminder of mental health and it can be, it can be more stressful sometimes.

I think the thing we are constantly asking ourselves is: Who are we missing? You know, who is not able to attend our events who would get something out of it?

Alison

My son struggles with anxiety and depression and I know when he's having a hard time I can hear him on his guitar and singing, you know, so I think, oh, right, you're obviously struggling but that's your way of getting things out there.

It's not just, oh, yeah, they're doing that as a therapy for something to occupy them. It's actually what's it doing, how's it making your mind work? Whether it is go and do something that doesn't make you think, you know, it can be taking you completely away from it and that might be what you need.



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Alina

It was not just the state of physical, mental, emotional, social well-being but also enabling a person to fulfill their creative potential.

Abi

We're not therapists, we're creating a therapeutic space.

I need a bit more distance and, yeah, in order to do that I have to, sort of, leave my stuff at the door.