

Open Arts

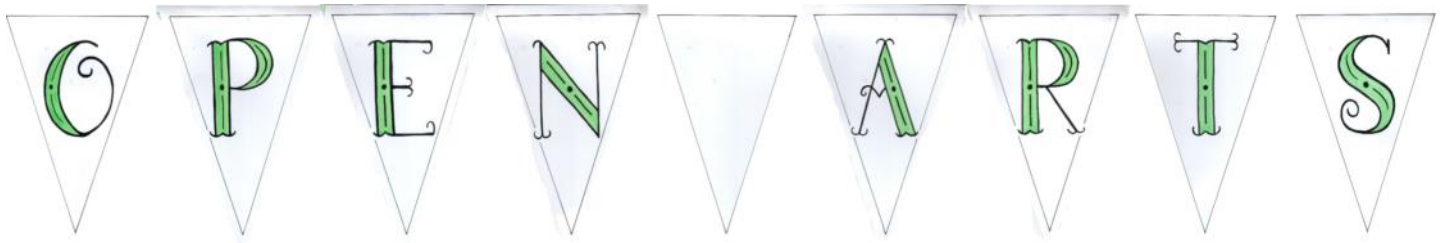
mental health and wellbeing
through creativity



Essex County Council



Essex Partnership University
NHS Foundation Trust



Open Arts Promotion Pack

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Introduction and background to Open Arts

The report from the UK government's Social Exclusion Unit (ODPM, 2004) on mental health and social exclusion highlighted the importance of access to arts opportunities for people with mental health problems.

In the following year, as part of a 27-point action plan in response to the report, the Department of Health and the Department for Culture Media and Sport jointly commissioned a study aimed at developing the evidence base for arts participation. The study was carried out by a team led by Jenny Secker, Professor of Mental Health with the South Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust (SEPT) (now known as Essex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust 'EPUT') and Anglia Ruskin University.

The report from the two-year study, launched at Tate Modern in September 2007, produced promising evidence of benefits from arts participation in terms of empowerment, social inclusion and mental health. As an organisation committed to evidence-based service development, EPUT was keen to build on its employment and other social inclusion initiatives by developing arts opportunities for people experiencing mental health problems in south Essex. In discussion with representatives from primary care trusts (PCTs), arts and local authority organisations it was decided as a starting point to develop 'Open Arts' courses similar to those run successfully by Arts on Prescription in Stockport (Rigby, 2004). A funding application to the East of England Development Agency was successful in securing part funding over four years, the balance being found through match funding.

Open Arts is a community based arts programme. It helps people improve and maintain their own mental health and wellbeing, through creative learning, social inclusion and self-expression. All our participants are aged 16 or older, who have either experienced mental health problems or are a carer.

Open Arts works in partnership with Essex County Council, Rochford District Council, Southend Borough Council, Brentwood Council, Basildon Council and Castle Point Borough Council, Metal Southend, Eastern Roots and Workers Education Association (WEA). The aim is to provide relaxing, welcoming art groups for people with mental health problems and to carers. Introductory courses run for six to twelve weeks, depending on commissioning arrangements, with sessions in a variety of media, including drawing, painting, collage, print, sculpture and photography. Courses are also run in digital art, drama and percussion.

The sessions are unpressurised and adapt to participants' ability and interests so they can work at the level that suits them. Participants can be referred by a mental health worker or they can self-refer.

The programme can help people in their recovery from mental health problems, as well as those at risk of mental ill health and isolation. The groups aim to be socially inclusive by reducing stigma and working in partnership with other organisations. Signposting to community arts opportunities is an important part of the project, and vital in offering the support that is needed in helping participants move on to their next stepping stone. Participants are offered information on other courses at their local adult community college, as well as information about other local arts events and groups. Participants are also offered the opportunity to apply to become a volunteer with Open Arts to help out with future courses, exhibitions or community events. They are also offered a studio placement at The Art House, part of the Hadleigh Old Fire Station (HOFS) arts and culture centre. Here they are supported by a studio manager and volunteers and encouraged to progress in their artwork, with opportunities to exhibit in local art trails and competitions.

In March 2015 Open Arts gained charitable status and is now run as one of the charities managed within the Essex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust Charitable Trust. This has opened up other funding avenues for the programme now that it has a charity number.

For more information, please visit: www.openartsessex.org

www.eput.nhs.uk/our-services/essex/essex-mental-health-services/adults/open-arts/

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Open Arts
Community Arts and Mental Health Service
Managed by
Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust

Activity and Outcomes
April 2019 to March 2020

Open Arts

mental health and wellbeing
through creativity

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Summary

2019 has been another busy, creative and successful year for Open Arts. Feedback from participants, referrers and the outcomes for our participants continue to be positive and the service continues to make a real difference to those with mental health issues and to carers.

To save costs and ensure the service was still able to continue, the manager continues as a studio manager three days a week, alongside service and course delivery.

Open Arts met all our targets and outcomes:

- **Improved wellbeing for people with mental health problems, as a result of self-expression has reduced stress and anxiety.**
- **People with mental health problems will report feeling less socially isolated, as a result of taking part in accessible community arts activity that improve self-identity, confidence and choice.**
- **Carers of people with mental health problems will benefit from respite, peer support and improved self esteem, thereby maintaining their wellbeing and increasing their own capacity to care.**
- **Artists will increase their skills, experience and knowledge of mental health group work, improving their employability and work options.**

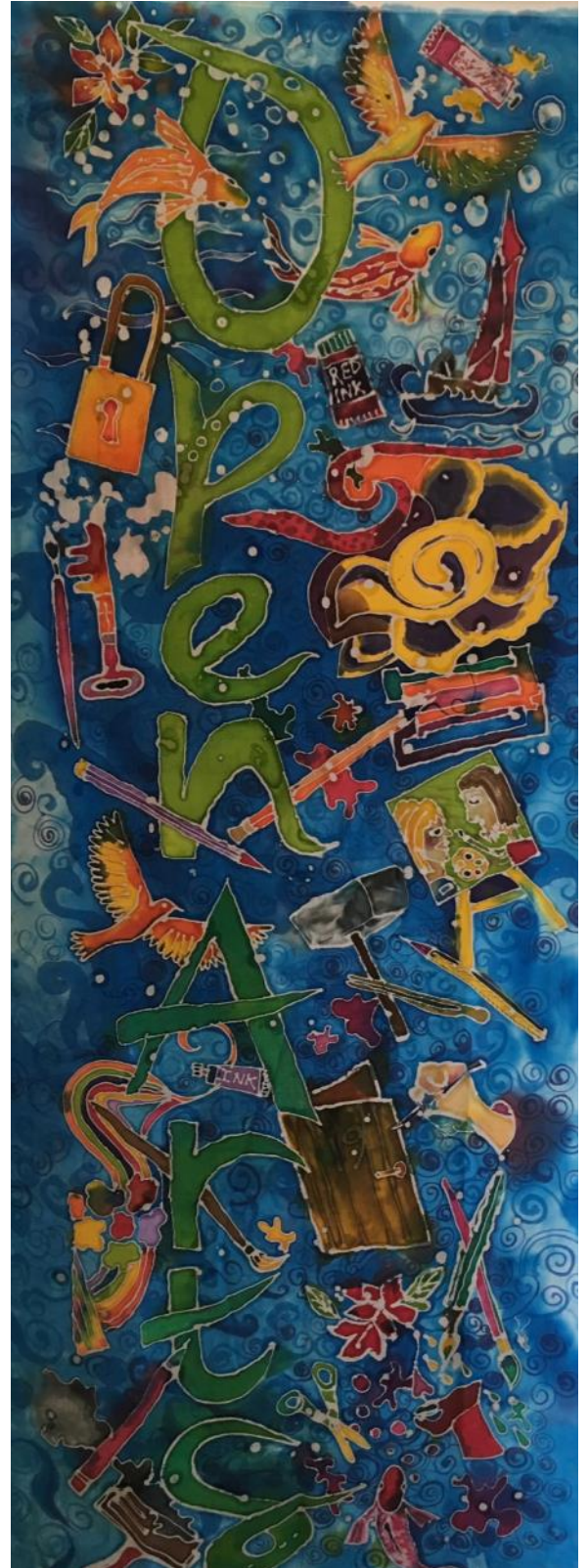
We are extremely grateful for the funding we received from Essex County Council Cultural Strategic Fund, Waitrose Community Matters scheme, Coop, Southend Council Community Wellbeing Grant, Create98, Hadleigh Rotary club and support from EPUT Charity Fund. Our fundraising events and the partnerships we have enabled Open Arts to continue to play a vital part in people's recovery, developing their confidence and self-esteem and self-identity. The service allows participants to be part of their community. We have succeeded in doing this through the following:

Overview of activities

- **1403** Client Studio and Course Sessions **in 2806** hours
- **1403** Volunteer Studio/Course & Community Engagement hours
- **22271** Estimated People Attending Community Engagement Activities
- Studio members art sales **£400**

Projects: developments & outcomes

Open Arts have delivered 1123 studio sessions, 1111 volunteer hours at the studio. 101 sessions on the Brentwood art course, 207 volunteer hours on courses. We were able to deliver a twelve week art



course in Southend, Priory Park thanks to part funding from Southend Council. Delivering 118 sessions to **16** people who regularly attended. We also delivered an 11 week art course in Hadleigh Old Fire Station thanks to funding from Create98 and self directed support budgets. Delivering 162 sessions to **19** people that regularly attended.

The **Art Studio** at Hadleigh Old Fire Station continues to provide supported art space to **44 people over 4 days, with support from 5 volunteers**, (2 of which are studio managers on a Wednesday), **and 2 studio managers**.

Studio members pay £3.50 per session if their placement is not covered by a Personal Health Budget/Recovery budget or Self-directed support.

Managing demand and waiting list: We continue to invite participants that are on the waiting list for courses to have a 2 hour session whilst we wait for funding to be secured to run visual arts courses. We have 60 people interested in doing our art courses; 24 in Brentwood/Basildon, 6 in Thurrock and 26 in Southend/ Rochford and 4 in the north of Essex. 12 attend the studio.

Events:

Open Arts has increased **opportunities for community engagement** through community arts events and installations which **promote understanding and challenge stigma**. Close working with other community and learning providers on special events mentioned below, have improved our links with voluntary and community services.

- Lions Club Quiz evening- Open Arts team of 6 came 5th. Won £100
- Mental health and wellbeing week - open studios
- Presentation to Hadleigh Rotary club
- Poetry Raw at The Miley in Rochford raised £115
- Village Green - promo stall
- Open Studio weekend exhibition Sept
- HOFS exhibition / Open weekend
- World Mental Health Day- Open Studios (October)
- Poetry Raw 2 at The Old Waterworks in Southend (November) £131.20 raised
- Open Arts Christmas get together
- One of our studio members who had written a suite of music inspired by his visits with Open Arts to Two Tree Island and Hadleigh Castle, proudly performed at The Mall galleries during the exhibition. He generously donated all the sales from the CD to Open Arts.



Collage by Emma

Courses and creative excursions:

- One 12 week visual art course in Southend
- One 11 week visual art course in Hadleigh
- Visit to the Mall galleries in London with studio members
- Essex Summer of Art Launch at Hyde Hall

Taster sessions:

- Lino printing and textile workshops with Sally Chinaea - Rochford Art Trail prep
- Silk and batik workshops with Sally Chinaea
- Textile memory books with Sally Chinaea



Exhibitions:

Open Arts have been part of six exhibitions – including Canvey and Rochford Art Trails. A joint exhibition at The Forum gallery in Southend, two exhibitions in Hadleigh and one at Hyde Hall, part of the Essex Summer of Art launch.

Creative Professional: Two Artist Reflection Meetings

Steering Group meetings: Two steering group meetings – March and October

Achievements:

- **It looked likely that Open Arts was coming to a close at the end of December 2019 however several weeks before Jo's contract was ending** a meeting with the Trust's Finance Department confirmed that her role had been built into the skills review until the end of March 2021-Horray! The studio needs to be self-sufficient and this is achievable.
- Open Arts shortlisted for national Hearts for the Arts Award, best arts project; arts, health and wellbeing 2020
- 1 studio member had a solo exhibition in Rayleigh
- 1 studio member was commissioned to illustrate 3 posters for events locally
- 1 studio member spoke about her experiences and read her poems at EPUTs annual Spiritual and Cultural Appreciation Day in Chelmsford
- 1 Studio member organised two poetry nights fundraising for Open Arts
- Open Arts were one of the chosen charities for The Coop Community Matters scheme and were awarded over £5000
- members to fundraise for and raised over £5K
- 1 peer support group continues to meet independently
- 3 studio members are now in further education
- 3 studio members are now in paid work
- 3 studio members are now in voluntary work
- 2 studio members have joined 2Create
- 3 volunteers are at University
- Open Arts featured regularly in social media and the press

End of course review	
What do you feel you have achieved?	How has your art learning developed?
Working with other people in the room can sometimes make me anxious but at the same time it's good for me to work with company	Love to try new techniques and materials
Achieved some new pieces, even ones I'm not too happy with it's been nice to even have carried out the processes and lose myself in art. I really enjoyed being able to talk to people	Greatly, am thinking am going to do more now
Experimenting with different mediums	Broadened my horizons by using different and experimenting with different mediums
Pleasure and confidence in various media, using Modroc again, I love it	Getting more focus, even in the abstract
Confidence in trying new mediums	I feel more open to using different techniques and a little more confident in general
Learnt new skills such as Modroc, clay work and many others. I have gained confidence around others	By using mediums I have never used and gain confidence around others and managed my anxiety through art
I've learned to use Modroc	I'm taking more risks and being less of a perfectionist, which is good
Lots, my health has improved. I have something to look forward to from my love of arts and what I have learnt	Lots and still eager to learn more
I have learnt many things during the last 12 weeks of which I shall take with me and pursue some of that in the future.	I never knew there was so much to learn
I've been able to try out new art techniques that I wouldn't have	I have increased my confidence in what I can do and this helped me highlight what areas to focus on.
I have had a lot of fun and enjoyed all the company and the whole experience. I have tried new things which I would not have done without Open Arts' help. Thank you.	I am still very tentative but am sure in time it will improve. Lorraine has been so helpful with the acrylics
Have learnt a lot about so many different media and gained confidence in trying things out. I have found the course liberating and very calming.	I have developed more ability with brushes/ materials and seeing the work of others in the group has inspired me to continue.
The course has helped me to maintain calmness when I feel anxious and motivated me to take steps to cope e.g. going into my art room. Plus given me more social confidence again, within this group	Yes definitely, I've learnt a lot of new theories and methods and have found what I really want to explore further. I feel rather pleased that I have found a bit of myself again.
Feel more confident and relaxed around people	I've learned some new techniques which has given me new ideas and inspiration
Learnt a lot of other disciplines that I probably not have known if it wasn't for this course. I have also amalgamated work with other things	I've learnt to come out of my box and be a bit more adventurous
To have explored more methods of creating art and to feel less pressure in perfectionism of doing it. I want to one day make an exbo! I am enthused and happy in my little arty-crafty bubble, I am developing myself and an artistic style... this is only the beginning	I have found this particular course so valuable to me and thank you Create 98 for funding this. You have brought happiness, comfort, security and therapeutic out-letting of emotions for people with mental health problems. Art helps control my interpersonal and internal BPD illness.

- 2 volunteers have completed an Access course and are at University to study Fine art and Illustration
- Volunteer recognition at CAVS celebrations
- 2 volunteers exhibited at the Beecroft Gallery in Southend
- 12 studio members sold their artwork over the year and 4 donated the sales back to Open Arts
- Following a presentation to Hadleigh Rotary club £500 was donated to fund two places on our art course.



Background

Open Arts was established by South Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust (SEPT) in January 2008, as a community based arts provision for people with mental health difficulties. The project consisted primarily of providing 12 week long arts courses in a variety of community centres across south Essex, with a view of reaching out to people with mental health needs in their local communities, offering a stepping stone into mainstream activity. Project evaluation over the years had shown that there were significant benefits to participants in terms of improving wellbeing and social inclusion, with recommendations that the project could be greatly enhanced with additional follow up studio provision.

Following on from these evaluation results, further consultation took place between Essex Arts Officers, Open Arts Steering Group and SEPT service users, throughout 2010 – 2012, which reiterated the need for further development of the existing Open Arts project, through studio space. At this time, the newly refurbished Hadleigh Old Fire Station (HOFS) was emerging as an arts studio hub, with potential spaces for group studios.

In the summer months of 2012, a partnership between Essex County Council Cultural Development Team (ECC Arts), Open Arts, SEPT and Association of Cultural Advancement through Visual Arts (ACAVA) formed with an aim of working together towards a shared goal of strengthening arts and health developments in Essex and London. Seed funding of £10,000 was provided by ECC Arts to fund a new studio space for Open Arts at HOFS, to offer to Open Arts participants as an onwards step following their initial Open Arts course with an aim of supporting individual arts development and independent art practice. The project plan also included creative professional development opportunities for artists through mental health training and supervision from an Arts Therapist. On 22nd October 2012 Open Arts moved in to the Studio at the House at Hadleigh Old Fire Station.

In March 2015 Open Arts gained charitable status. In April 2018 SEPT merged with North Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust to become Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust. Open Arts continues to run as one of the charities managed within the Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Charitable Trust.

We are now in our seventh successful year of studio residency, continuing to build and grow in our relationships with the community and other artists within HOFS, going from strength to strength, challenging the stigma attached to mental health and contributing to the art scene locally.

Running the Studio

Open Arts continues to rent three studios in the Art House at [HOFS](#). The studio upstairs in the house provides a clean environment for framing and mounting artwork, a room to go to if issues arise in the studio, where members can have some time out and talk to the manager or studio manager away from other members and for the manager to be on hand to offer support and guidance if and when needed. This continues to be extremely beneficial to all, with members saying how they appreciate the extra space and for the team to all be under one roof which is good for morale.

The print room provides space for all the print materials and the printing press to be in one room which also frees up more worktop space in the main studio for members to work on.

The studio is open four days a week with three sessions per day. Supported by a regular Studio manager and/or Studio Assistant, with up to five participants –studio members- per session. Two of the volunteer studio assistants also facilitate sessions as volunteer Studio Managers, this currently gives a team of seven in the Studio.

Everyone agrees to the studio guidelines which are on display in the Studio. Weekly news, notices, competitions, events and updates are shared on a notice board, and everyone is encouraged to bring in information about events, groups exhibitions, ideas and networking. All members contribute £3.50 each session towards tea and coffee, which also provides some funds to replenish art materials when stocks were running low. Open Arts provide basic art materials including paints, drawing materials, paper, printing inks and equipment, which members can use for a donation of £1-£2 towards materials. Most members bring their own art materials, some members and the public have donated art materials to the studio.



Open Arts studio

The Studio continues to be a very special place; a real community, with good relations with the other artists at HOFS, and from the HOFS site managers. The Open Arts Studio Members, Assistants and Managers continue to feel a sense of belonging and ownership, and appreciation of having our own space, to work and respect.

At the end of December 2019 after many years' work building up HOFS as an active centre for artists and the local community, Brian Hickey (Site Manager), and Ann Selwyn (Assistant Site Manager) retired. Open Arts and all who've been involved sent a big thank you to them both for their work and supporting Open Arts over the years. ACAVA recruited new staff Tilly and Stefan in December.

Studio Outcomes

38 members exhibited other artworks in the Hadleigh and Rochford Art trails. **9** members sold artwork, four donating the proceeds to Open Arts.

The Open Arts exhibition in Rochford Hospital as part of Rochford art trail had 104 pieces on display

Mall galleries

'Members of the Open Arts studio at Hadleigh went in 2018 on a visit to the Mall Galleries in London near Trafalgar Square to an exhibition of the New English Art Club.

We were shown round by Ellie Koumoussi the education director. Going to the gallery with Open Arts felt different than simply going to the gallery on one's own. It felt as though

an exhibition was not simply the showing of completed work but the beginning and continuation of a kind of creative discussion. I made some notes and was inspired to write some music drawing on what I had seen and imagined at the exhibition. Ellie took an interest in what I was doing. Later I made a CD including this particular suite with a flute player called Rebecca Rimmington.



When Ellie heard it she invited us to go up in 2019 to the same Art Club's 2019 exhibition and give a performance in the gallery. Jo at Open Arts was enthusiastic about the idea and arranged another visit to the gallery on 17 June 2019.

We really enjoyed looking at this year's show and it was a fantastic experience to play in the gallery.

It really would not have been possible without the support of Open Arts and the encouragement of the Mall Galleries' education department.' John Smith, Open Arts studio member, musician and composer

Additional Activity

Social Networking www.facebook.com/openartsessex and twitter /Instagram @openartsessex

The online social networking space continues to a positive outlet for studio members. The spaces are regularly updated with artwork produced in the studio and news.

Open Arts YouTube channel [Open Arts Essex](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...)

Open Arts Essex promo film <https://youtu.be/wO8NHTShPhw>

Views of the Void exhibition May 2019 at The Forum in Southend <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=25Tjc1arCBw>

Supervision The Studio manager and volunteers have regular supervision; issues are addressed as they arise, to prevent any escalations. Email and telephone contact is weekly and registers are updated daily.

Research

The research which has been published in the last 11 years of Open Arts is still in circulation.

Publicity

Open Arts continues to have an online presence and social media following @OpenArtsEssex and www.openartsessex.org receive positive feedback and provide a gallery, course and volunteer information and the referral process for the service.

<https://eput.nhs.uk/our-services/essex/essex-mental-health-services/adults/open-arts/>

Feedback from courses

Feedback sheets are circulated at the end of most sessions and the following are a sample of comments collected.



- I've enjoyed it today. It's been lovely and calming. I haven't done pastels before.
- Loved today. Had a chance to do some detailed drawing.
- I enjoyed using different mediums of art. And going out of my comfort zone. I enjoyed being with new people who are also interested in art.
- I really liked doing something I don't often get a chance to do at home, it was great to have so much available to stick and create with.
- So many ideas going on, hard to choose! Great fun 😊
- Really enjoyed today's session, really looking forward to next week, I feel I'm learning new skills to help me expand my creativity
- Very interesting. Stretched the imagination
- As always a really lovely, creative, friendly atmosphere. Really relaxing and nice to create with clay. Thanks Paul and Fatima!! X
- Interesting session, thanks for making us feel comfortable and well looked after
- Really fun and interesting. Nice to get stuck into a hobby and forget about my worries for a few hours. Thank you for making us welcome and for your help
- Nice to get at and be around friendly environment, always make you feel safe and able to enjoy using different mediums
- Very informative session
- Took me a while to loosen up and cut free, then delightful
- Very enjoyable. Good group of people as well. Excellent
- Informative and inspiring. Very well demonstrated
- Really enjoyed the session. Just being able to draw and express my feelings through art was really nice
- Thank you so much for the wonderful course, really going to miss coming here on a Friday. So nice to feel welcome. I have learnt so much and had a great time
- I've loved this course. It has been the highlight of my week. Thank you very much Paul, and Fatima and Sophie for the tea and biscuits
- Thoroughly enjoyable course
- Very calming and relaxing and Paul is excellent. Many thanks
- The course was wonderful. Discovering the pleasures, and frustrations sometimes, of oils. And reminded of plaster (and Modroc). Inspirational. Thanks
- I have loved the course. It has made me happy doing it, all the different paints

Feedback from public

- Kiki Reynolds' art and drawings are amazing! What a wonderful idea the Rochford Open Arts Trail is. I love everything! Please, let's have more of these types of Arts Trails in Rochford and hopefully elsewhere, like Prittlewell for example. Love and peace!

- Lovely artwork by some talented people. Particularly like the ones by Kathy Thomas. Well done!
- In a world that has forgotten to care and grown so cold, it's so wonderful to see colour and light and beauty. My congratulations to all you artists for your gift to brighten our day.
- I second that
- Really lovely artwork and great contributions to the Arts Festival. Thank you for all the work you did making the bunting for the Festival – it was very nice to meet you all when we visited to “assist”.
- This is really cool and inspiring. Have a nice day
- The Art Trail is a fantastic idea. Did it as a kind of Treasure Hunt with my 8 year old, 5 year old and 8 month old children and they had great fun and really enjoyed looking at all the different types of art. Thanks again.
- Hello. I found all paintings beautiful. Warm. Keep up good work.
- Wonderful as usual! Best wishes.
- The linocuts by Kathy Thomas are really good. Every time I come to view this exhibition I see something else that is amazing. It's all really great and inspiring, not only for the viewer but heart-warming for passers-by.

Studio members

Open Arts has helped me through my darkest times, always there like a best friend. Even now when the country is in lock down, I know I'm not on my own, as our lovely Jo Keay had set up social media groups for us all to stay in touch, and share our projects.....we all know she's still there with help and advice and encouragement if we need it! Chrissie Baylis

Open Arts has been my life saver, it's a safe, kind, helpful learning through creative art group without feeling pressured. I really feel it's slowly helping with my mental health and a step in the right direction, a true saviour for me, thank you. Michele

Open Arts has helped me to learn how to cut Lino and print nice pictures for my family to enjoy makes me happy also keeps me busy quite relaxing really. Tracey

Feedback from Silk Painting and Batik Workshop

- Really enjoyed silk painting
- I was scared at first as my hand's not very good at being steady. Thank you for encouraging me to have a go with the wax and painting – had a great time
- What a fantastic way to learn a new skill and produce a piece of work as a team for Open Arts to display. I loved it – I am hooked!! Thank you so much for a relaxed and informative day
- Lovely to do a piece where everyone joined in and contributed their art work. Great fun, thank you



Feedback from a carer

Since my wife started attending open arts she has changed from an individual full of self-doubt and uncertainty to someone who working to investigate and explore all aspects of arts from asking questions and advice and wanting to try and put all her ideas into real actions.

In short it's like she has come "alive" and has a sparkle back in her eyes. She's an example of a person finding peace and enjoying life again.

Thank you to Jo and all at Open Arts for making us feel welcome and part of a Team.

12 weeks Course; I was well impressed and thoroughly enjoyed the course. I was made to feel welcome and Paul is a great teacher. Thanks to all involved for making this possible.' Hugh

Feedback from volunteers

'Open Arts is a fantastic organisation and every day I feel honoured and privileged to be able to volunteer with them.

Open Arts has supported me through some tough times this year, and I am extremely grateful to Jo and Sue for all their help and assistance. Without their backup and encouragement, I don't think I would have come through these times as I have.

My time with Open Arts has increased my confidence dramatically. My social skills continue to improve, and I am increasingly able to talk with strangers and get on with new groups of people.

Becoming involved with Open Arts is the best thing that has ever happened to me. With their support I hope to continue to grow as a person. I used to say that I wanted to get back to being the person I was before my illness, but not anymore – Open Arts has inspired me to want to become a new and improved version of myself and I hope that I am able to live up to that. Thank you Open Arts! ' Kathy

'Open Arts has helped me enormously. Being able to focus on being creative makes me feel more positive in my life. It gives me confidence, and the camaraderie amongst the participants is very uplifting as we have all been touched by mental health issues in one way or another. It has been a lifesaver.' Lorraine

Feedback from funder

' ...You all do a fab job and we have never doubted what you achieve and have been glad and proud to support where we could.

All the best to the whole Open Arts team'

Valerie Tinker, Culture and Community Engagement Lead, Essex County Council

After many years of dedicated work, the ECC culture team- Lindsey, Andy and Valerie moved on. Jo and all at Open Arts would like to thank them for all their support and wisdom over the years for Open Arts. They will be missed.



Coloured pencils by Nikkii

Future Planned Activity

2020 We will be taking part in the local art trails, open studio events, and continue to provide a safe, supported environment for Open Arts participants to grow and manage their recovery.

The Open Arts managers salary is now secure until March 2021 thanks to SCLT within the Trust. Open Arts needs to secure core funding after March 2021 and to continue to explore funding options.

Open Arts will be continuing to offer studio placements to those that are able to travel to Hadleigh whilst waiting for a course. Participants are able to have a scaled down version of the course whilst attending the studio. Our six month studio placements will continue and follow on options of attending 2Create will still be offered.

Open Arts needs to secure core funding after March 2021 and to continue to explore funding options.

Open Arts have the opportunity to;

- Build on grants funding through new partnership with WEA, Metal, Thurrock and Southend Community Colleges, Essex and Suffolk Rail Partnership.
- Continue to build on the volunteer capacity by investing time and support in the volunteers through training and development.
- Further enable service users with experience of mental illness, to develop peer support networks.
- Expand the project into north Essex

A huge thank you to everyone who worked so hard over the past year – our Open Arts team, in particular the **studio members, volunteers and studio managers, our fellow artists at HOFs**, as well as **ECC, ACAVA, Coop, Hadleigh Rotary Club, Create98, EPUT, Southend Council and The Mall galleries in London** who support us and continue to make a positive difference to our participants lives.

Report by Jo Keay

April 2020



Acrylics by Krissi



Collage by Allie

Open Arts

mental health and wellbeing
through creativity

Open Arts

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Facebook: [@openartsessex](https://www.facebook.com/openartsessex)

Instagram: [#openartsessex](https://www.instagram.com/openartsessex)

Chair: Professor Sheila Salmon

Chief Executive: Sally Morris

Registered Charity number 1053793

Open Arts is one of the charities managed within the Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust

2020 Open Arts shortlisted for national Hearts for the Arts Award, best arts project; arts, health and wellbeing

National Positive Practice in Mental Health Awards

2016 Open Arts 'Highly Commended' in the Partnership Work category **2015 and 2013** Winners of the Arts, Mental Health and Wellbeing Award

Open Arts are supported by





Open Arts

mental health and wellbeing
through creativity

If you would like any information
or to make a referral
please contact:

Open Arts

The Art House
19 High Street
Hadleigh
Essex SS7 2PA

Open Arts is a charitable community arts and mental health project managed by Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust.

What is Open Arts?

Open Arts works across the county of Essex. We help people improve and maintain their own mental health and wellbeing, through creative learning, social inclusion and self expression.

It's a chance to learn and practice all kinds of artistic techniques, and be part of a friendly, supportive and creative group.

Who is it for?

All our participants are people aged 16 or older, who have either experienced mental health problems or are a carer.

Phone: 07580 982 462

Email: epunft.open.arts@nhs.net

Visit: www.openartsessex.org

Twitter/Facebook/Instagram:

@OpenArtsEssex

Registered Charity number 1053793

An independent study by South Essex Service User Research Group (SESURG) at Anglia Ruskin University found:

- **90%** of participants felt **more positive**, and said it **improved their wellbeing**

- **80%** felt that their relationships with **other people had improved** as a result of the studio placement

- People felt **less socially isolated**, and reported improved **self identity, confidence and choice.**



Essex County Council



Essex Partnership University
NHS Foundation Trust



Promoting mental health and wellbeing through creativity

EPUT's Open Arts is pleased to offer, an opportunity for people to attend an Open Arts course for 12 weeks. No previous art experience or art skills are necessary; just an interest in art is all that is needed.

The course offers taster sessions in various techniques, in drawing, painting, printmaking, photography, sculpture and craft work. Sample programme below.

The course is open to anyone who is 16 years old or over who has a mental health illness; carers are also very welcome to attend.

The course will help people improve and maintain their own mental health and wellbeing, through creative learning, social inclusion, in a safe and supportive environment.

People who have attended previous courses have said:

- *"Good fun... Therapeutic! Excellent, loved it, can't wait until next week... Started off tense but really enjoyed it"*
- *"Really enjoyed trying out acrylics on canvas.. Absolutely wonderful group to attend! Surprised myself by actually doing well...Very well presented, learning loads"*
- *A brilliant and relaxing time. Really enjoyed this simple printing technique to achieve fantastic results... Loving it, very friendly and relaxing"*
- *"I felt I was treated as an artist, not a person with mental health problems"*

People who have attended have reported they feel less socially isolated, improvements in self-identity, confidence and choice and reduction in stress and anxiety. Carers will benefit from peer support and improved self-esteem, thereby maintaining or improving their health and wellbeing and thus increasing their own capacity to care.

Open Arts Courses are eligible for recovery budgets, personal budgets or carer's budgets.

For people wishing to attend the course costs are:

Option 1 12 week course, includes art materials, an optional gallery visit and accreditation **£250**

Option 2 12 week course; plus a six months studio place at Hadleigh Old Fire Station for independent art making, with the option of exhibitions, accreditation and volunteering. Art materials to be supplied for studio placement **£350**

For further information or to make a referral please email: epunft.open.arts@nhs.net
or call **07580 982462**

Registered Charity number 1053793



Recognising excellence in mental health and mental health services



Week One – Mark making Introductions, exploring drawing materials through timed drawings. Using different mark making techniques with pencils, pastels and charcoals. Bookbinding practical, to make small individual drawing books.

“Good fun... Therapeutic! Excellent, loved it can't wait until next week... Started off tense but really enjoyed it”

Week Two – Collage Designing and making your paper surfaces using different materials that can then be used to draw onto.

“I enjoyed today and engaging with people as well...loved using all the raw different materials... fantastically relaxing, love collage”

Week Three - Acrylics and mixed media Exploring acrylics and experimenting with different paint techniques on a variety of surfaces.

“Really enjoyed trying out acrylics on canvas.. Absolutely wonderful group to attend! Surprised myself by actually doing well...Very well presented, learning loads”

Week Four – Modroc sculptures Using modroc (plaster bandage) to create functional and sculptural pieces which can be painted during the last week.

“I really enjoyed mod-roc today and it was really therapeutic.... I'm feeling really positive about what I can achieve...Made a sunflower, I did not even think about having a cigarette”

Week Five and Six– Printmaking A chance to develop your ideas through the medium of printmaking - simple printmaking techniques including mono types and simple relief prints *“Enjoyed learning new skill”*

“A brilliant and relaxing time.. Really enjoyed this simple printing technique to achieve fantastic results...Loving it, very friendly and relaxing”

Week Seven - Clay construction Claywork – Construction. Explore a range of construction techniques using air drying clay

“Enjoyed feeling and using clay-very relaxing.... I really loved playing around with clay”

Week Eight – ModRoc and Clay Sculpture decoration. Decorating modroc sculptures using acrylic paints and other materials.

“It was relaxing and I like painting my work.. Very enjoyable...nice and relaxed”

Week Nine - Inks and Watercolours Learning how to paint a simple watercolour and extending drawing explorations with the addition of colour and ink.

“Really relaxing and learn a lot about watercolours and ink mediums.. Wow, I have a confidence I never had before and it has started a process of believing that I am a somebody- just because I did a piece of ink work that I actually liked and felt good about”

Week Ten, Eleven and Twelve - Individual Arts Development An opportunity for everyone to develop their own theme of work using the skills and materials from the previous sessions, with the support of the Artist.

“I would recommend this art course to everyone as a good form of “mindfulness” so therapeutic”





<https://www.cambridgenetwork.co.uk/news/art-boosts-long-term-mental-health-new-study/>

Art boosts long-term mental health – new study

11/07/2017 Taking part in art classes can improve mental health and enhance social inclusion over a prolonged period, according to a new study published in the *International Journal of Mental Health Promotion*.

Anglia Ruskin University conducted an evaluation of an NHS initiative, Open Arts Essex, which consisted of 12-week arts courses in community venues in the county. Participants included mental health service users, carers and self-referred individuals.

The research looked at the participants' experiences of the course and also measured their wellbeing and social inclusion three and six months after it finished.

A questionnaire taken immediately after the course finished showed that all respondents enjoyed the activity and **90% reported increased motivation to do art work. More than 80% reported improved confidence.**

After three months, most were continuing with their art work and some had taken it further, attending other art groups and even enrolling in courses at college. After six months, activities undertaken by participants included joining a choir, running an art group at a substance misuse service and making a documentary film.

Participants also showed significant improvements in measures of mental health and social inclusion, and these improvements continued at both three and six months after the course.

Anglia Ruskin's Dr Ceri Wilson, co-author of the study, said: "The results of this study add further weight to the growing evidence that arts participation is an effective means of promoting mental wellbeing and social inclusion for people experiencing, or at risk of, mental health problems.

"A key aim was to assess whether the benefits were maintained in the long-term and this study shows this was indeed the case. The majority were continuing their art work and for those pursuing related courses or work, social inclusion gains are likely."

For more press information please contact:

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Anglia Ruskin University is the university of choice for students and employers in the East of England and operates principally from campuses in Cambridge and Chelmsford

Why art? Exploring the contribution to mental well-being of the creative aspects and processes of visual art-making in an arts and mental health course

Jenny Secker, Kirsten Heydinrych, Lyn Kent & Jo Keay

Pages 1-13 | Received 26 Sep 2016, Accepted 20 Mar 2017, Published online: 06 Jun 2017
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17533015.2017.1326389>

Abstract

Background: Evaluations of participatory arts and mental health projects have consistently found improvements in mental well-being but the part played by the creative aspects, as distinct from the benefits of social interaction, remains unclear.

Methods: This study explored the specific part played by the creative aspects of introductory arts courses that aim to improve mental well-being. Nine course participants consented to recording of accreditation assessment meetings held with them towards the end of their course.

Results: Thematic analysis identified themes relating to two categories: creative processes and the learning that ensued. The creative processes were playful experimentation and inspiration. Learning processes revolved around learning to learn and artistic development.

Conclusions: Previous studies have found play, inspiration and learning to be associated with well-being. It therefore seems reasonable to conclude that the creative aspects of the courses did play an important part in improving participants' well-being.



Open Arts Research; **Peer reviewed publications**

[Promoting mental wellbeing and social inclusion through art: six month follow-up results from Open Arts Essex](#)

Ceri Wilson, Jenny Secker, Lyn Kent & Jo Keay

International Journal of Mental Health Promotion, Volume 19, 2017 - Issue 5

Published online: 29 Jun 2017

[Why art? Exploring the contribution to mental well-being of the creative aspects and processes of visual art-making in an arts and mental health course](#)

Jenny Secker, Kirsten Heydinrych, Lyn Kent & Jo Keay

Arts & Health, Volume 10, 2018 - Issue 1

Published online: 06 Jun 2017

[Promoting the wellbeing and social inclusion of students through visual art at university: an Open Arts pilot project](#)

K.L. Margrove

Journal of Further and Higher Education, Volume 39, 2015 - Issue 2

Published online: 09 May 2013

[Promoting mental well-being and social inclusion through art: evaluation of an arts and mental health project](#)

Jenny Secker , Mick Loughran , Kirsten Heydinrych & Lyn Kent

Arts & Health, Volume 3, 2011 - Issue 1

Published online: 03 Mar 2011



Feedback from volunteers

How has the studio helped volunteers?

Open Arts is very supportive of its volunteers. Jo Keay and her studio managers always have time for people. Volunteers are encouraged to take an active role in Open Arts, from setting up exhibitions to helping to run workshops, from supporting the studio managers to putting together presentations and slideshows. And every step of the way you feel supported and valued. You feel a part of something. Open Arts has provided me with a safe environment in which to volunteer and to gradually become more comfortable with taking on responsibilities and with helping others. Nothing is ever too much bother for Jo, and this caring, helpful attitude has fostered a similar attitude in all involved with Open Arts. In short Open Arts has helped its volunteers by always being there for them.

The value of Open Arts is...

...immeasurable! Open Arts allows people to grow in a safe, supportive environment. People are always allowed to go at their own pace and everyone is shown the same warmth and compassion. Open Arts is a family. It gives people the time and space they need to heal. Open Arts gives people confidence in themselves and in their abilities. It may sound like an exaggeration, but I genuinely feel that Open Arts has given me my life back.' Kathy Thomas

'The Open Arts studio has not only been there to help the studio members, but to also help the volunteers. Personally, it is helping me develop my experience for future career choices and it is in way therapeutic for myself to take a break from my hectic work schedule for at least one day a week and re-connect with my creative side.

The value of Open Arts is to provide a safe, non-judgemental and creative environment for those suffering with mental health issues to escape to, and I believe it has been successful in doing this.'
Lauren, Open Arts volunteer

Feedback from studio members

'My experience with Open Arts has been very positive. I started the course at the very beginning of my recovery. I found the 'no pressure' approach such a relief and the staff were so kind and understanding. It was ok if I just wanted to sit and watch or take part which I did and thoroughly enjoyed learning new skills. It was a great way for me to begin the process of 'getting back into the real world'.

I would thoroughly recommend Open Arts as a gentle way to begin the process of healing through art, even if you're not an 'arty' type of person, just creating something and getting out of your own head for a while is a good feeling. Thank you Open Arts.' Dawn

'The Open Arts studio has really been extremely beneficial to me. Every week, I look forward to coming to the studio, as the atmosphere is so welcoming and accepting. It is not just a place to draw or paint, but much more than that. It is a place where I feel I belong- I am not stigmatised here, and for once I feel I can be really open with the people around me. Not only with my mental health, but also with my identity, I feel I am welcomed with open arms.

I look forward every week to the session- in fact, by the time I leave my session I'm already wishing I could go again!

Everyone at the studio has always been welcoming and accepting and not only my art but also my confidence is growing by the day, and I have made so much progress since joining.' Maddi

Feedback from courses

- Something I would never have tried myself – no time to dwell on worries while on this course. thanks so much.
- Open Arts is a fantastic course and Jo and the volunteers make it a fun and safe environment. It has helped me relax and focus on something positive. Thanks so much 😊
- Teachers are fantastic. Jo and volunteers are fantastic. I loved it.
- I've enjoyed the class immensely. Lovely people. Fatima keeping us hydrated. I've enjoyed Queen Jo's effervescence. Very relaxing, kept me focussed. I need to remain focussed instead of ruminating which I keep doing.
- The tutor has been fantastic. I think you do a fantastic job.
- I've really enjoyed the course and thank you very much for having me. If there's any more courses I'm up for it!
- I've enjoyed learning and drawing and all of it. I like that I can go to college and say I've been drawing somewhere else as well. I'm glad I got to do the course and go to college.
- I enjoyed session as it made me feel less isolated and found drawing therapeutic the people are nice and didn't feel under pressure. Look forward to next week.
- I too enjoyed the session. I learnt something and everyone was so friendly.
- I really had a good time.
- I enjoyed this first session. I was anxious before we started but feel more relaxed and confident now.
- Good, first session felt unpressurised and relaxed.

Feedback from the public

With all the cuts, especially to third sector care (charities, CIC's etc.), Open Arts is an organisation that has had a very stabling effect on me.

I have been with Open Arts for many years and through the courses and studio time, Open Arts have really helped me to develop as a person. Through the making of art, I have been encouraged to visualise onto canvas my thoughts, beliefs and explore who I am and where I want to be.

The work that Open Arts do is absolutely invaluable and an absolutely crucial resource in the assistance of mental health recovery. And what's more - Open Arts never give up on any service user, because they have that very rare gift of seeking out the potential and possibilities that each client possesses who passes through the door. ' Bridget Myers (Brentwood)

Feedback from Art Trails

- Can you keep the exhibition up all year? It really brightens the place up and lifts the mood of everyone including the staff.
- Brings out confidence.
- Love the flags and various pictures. Done from the heart. Great. Love it all.
- This is the best display. I love the flags and art. Inspiring.

Feedback from Art Trails (continued)

- Everything lovely, especially the bunting. Wonderful effort.
- Really enjoyed looking at all your great pictures.
- Really excellent display (again). Congratulations. Very talented and thoughtful work.
- Love the wonderful diversity – a marvellous exhibition – congratulations!
- Wonderful to see art being appreciated.
- Some inspiring work. Well done, Open Arts and artists!
- Best ever, marvellous, creative, imaginative, wonderful, well done to all the artists.
- Outstanding work set/artwork in all respects.

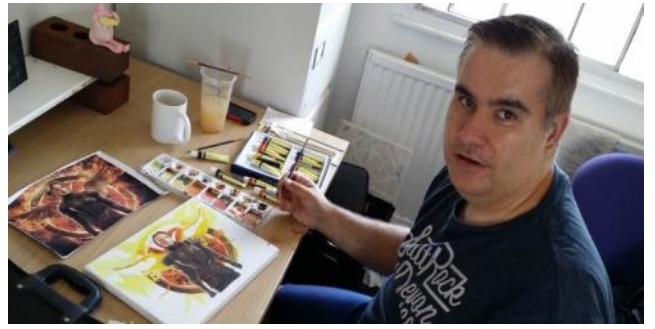
Feedback from parent of participant:

'Hi. Just a message to say thank you so much for accepting **** on the Open Arts course on Friday. I didn't know how she would get on as she's so young. But she's absolutely loved it. One of the weeks she even came absolutely covered in eczema. I had to take her to out of hour's doctors that day as she was in agony. But she refused to miss the class. The class has given her the confidence to go into SEEVIC College and enrol on an art course, which she will do alongside this course as she said she really enjoys it. So thank you. What a great way to help people to see their full potential.'



What is it about Open Arts rather than other services?

Open Arts I think offers the chance for people to explore themselves inwardly and express themselves in ways they have never done before and thus resulting in a very peaceful, creative and sociable therapy.



What is it that Open Arts add?

Open Arts creates a friendly warm atmosphere for people to meet in familiar surroundings i.e. in the area they live close to thus the idea of finding venues elsewhere rather than sticking to one building that people would have the hassle of having to get to that isn't in their area and unfamiliar to them causing unwanted nerves and apprehension.

What have you found useful about Open Arts?

I personally have found my voluntary work has given me the chance to build my self confidence in interacting with people and have learnt to help make people feel more at ease at the beginning of the courses with a friendly smile and the offering of a tea and coffee to start the session off with. I also enjoy working with the other volunteers immensely, working as a team, sharing the load of prepping the art materials and tools at the start of the lesson as well as clearing up at the end.

What does Open Arts mean to you?

To me Open Arts is a chance to get out of the house and actually do something worthwhile and soul cleansing and by that I mean helping people develop their imaginations and skills that they never knew they had until they joined Open Arts and actually gave it a chance. I always enjoy seeing people make friends in the groups and actually find they have a common interest and hobby to share with each other.

If Open Arts didn't exist how and where would you be?

If Open Arts didn't exist I would most probably feel isolated and stuck at home right now not that I don't go out and look for things to do I do and I did find a place that place I found was open arts. I am now actually realizing how much open arts has done for me and how much of an important thing it is in my life now since the closure of the mind services in Basildon and many other mental health services around Essex. In fact I think Open Arts is now most probably the very last mental health service I use that keeps me from being stuck at home and isolated and suffer a major lack of self-worth.

Have you had any reductions in medication/started volunteering/college/ noticed any effects on services you access?

Since I joined Open Arts I have built up my confidence to express myself more as I am generally a very quiet person and find it hard to socialise sometimes. I have also completed a CAD course at Southend college and received a city and guilds certificate at the end of that. I have found Open Arts has helped develop my confidence in teaching people how to draw and paint as I am a budding artist and have been to Art College both before and during my mental illness. I did also help attend and run art groups at Valerie lodge before that closed down for a while and have been a part of TSX for a short period before I had a slight relapse in my mental health but found open arts still there in the background ready and willing to take me on still and give me the opportunity to carry on offering them my services and continue where I left off and also giving me the bonus of using their upstairs studio in Hadleigh Old Fire Station which suits me down to the ground as I find it hard to paint and draw at home, I much prefer the studio environment, I find it gives me more of a sense of purpose and determination. **Tony M**



Open Arts for me in an exploration of thinking and looking by drawing. I am remembering and thinking up ideas and themes. By copying, I am learning to look more closely and to think more deeply.

It is important to me that I am free to choose what to draw myself: expressing my own likes and dislikes. It helps me open up to myself and therefore to others and make friends with my inner child.

I liked the space away from the intense stress of my caring role with it arises, hospitals and different mental issues to deal with. As such it is a supportive, friendly environment.

That respite from the intense worries by making a little voyage into artistic creativity is crucially helpful to me.

I enjoyed my time with Michelle and now I have come back to the 'drop-in' with Paul. I find his relaxed balance, between letting me get on and helping when asked, very nice. I am under so much stress that to just come away and draw or paint is therapeutic in itself.

I like the opportunity to show what we do because it makes it more realistic, artistically.

I have enjoyed looking at art exhibitions for 25 years, and now it is interesting to see what I can do myself.

But I recognise that I do need a little bit of support, which I am getting nicely at Open Arts.

John S



Ten years ago I lost my clever, funny, witty daughter to depression and anxiety. She became a shadow of herself, almost a recluse, with no self-confidence or self-esteem. She was no longer able to teach in spite of how good she was at her job.

After many years when I seldom saw her smile or having any motivation she started to do pottery and from there went on to Open Arts. This has given us something to talk about and has helped her come out of her shell to meet new people, to volunteer with Open Arts, to find inspiration and to smile again. It is a joy to see her animated when she talks about what she is creating at Open Arts and to know that she is able to use her talents and begin to build up her self-esteem.

It is hard to express just how grateful I am that my daughter went to Open Arts that the facilitators have been so helpful and welcoming, and that Kathy is now able to find motivation.

Please do not underestimate the enormous value of art therapy programmes such as Open Arts.

Velma Thomas, parent





My involvement with Open Arts began in 2012 during a time of intense personal turmoil related to mental health issues.

From the outset, I felt that I'd found a place where I was treated as an individual, rather than a patient, and that my mental health was treated with kindness and respect, as opposed to being either an issue or a problem to be solved.

I was free to say as little or as much as I chose about myself and my illness which is a marked difference to traditional 'talking therapies' where a person's mental health condition is THE subject of discussion at every step.

Since completing my course with Open Arts, I've become a volunteer on the project and an active member of their network, as well as the wider community. Most recently, I've instigated and raised funds for a project to create a large-scale mural on the sea wall at the eastern most point of Canvey island to commemorate the crash of a WWII bomber in the Thames estuary in 1944.

From a wider perspective, Open Arts has given me the opportunity to believe that anything is possible through collaboration and enthusiasm for artistic and creative pursuits. The excitement of sharing ideas and putting them into practice towards a shared goal in a supportive and caring environment continues to bring me a great deal of joy.

For me, Open Arts represents an extremely valuable and entirely unique way of helping to treat mental health conditions. The wide variety of people who have benefited from the project, from all manner of social and professional backgrounds, proves that mental health conditions are not selective in their power to profoundly affect anyone, at any time.

Without wishing to sound melodramatic, Open Arts gave me the hope to believe that I could get better, and that life could be improved. Without the encouragement, acceptance and support of everyone I have met through the project, I can honestly say my life would not be as positive as it is today.

Of course, the nature of many mental health conditions means that there is rarely any magic cure: some days are still hard, but Open Arts has brought me so much positivity and happiness that I really can't overstate just how valuable the service is.

Prior to experiencing my own difficulties, I worked my way up to a senior position in mental healthcare, and I'm only too aware of how few opportunities there are for people experiencing the frightening, debilitating effects of mental health conditions to step outside of their immediate situation in order to spend time enjoying the simple pleasures that artistic and creative activities can provide.

I've experienced the beneficial effects therapeutic art can bring: not least in enabling people to have hope that things will get better in the midst of often chaotic and life-changing situations. In helping to empower others, my volunteer work with Open Arts gives me a lot of pleasure, and I love being instrumental in providing a calm, friendly environment for others to enjoy.

Open Arts has allowed me to develop at my own pace, and explore my potential as an individual who is able to offer the same support to others as that which was available to me during a time of great uncertainty and stress.

I really hope Open Arts continues for many years to come because it is a vital and nurturing service, with proven benefits and a truly committed team.

Sue Richardson



Approximately four years ago, our family life totally changed, when my daughter Rachel was diagnosed with various mental health issues. My daughter became very ill and I had to give up work to become her full time carer, meanwhile Rachel had leave school after her first year of A levels. After attending various meetings and courses, I was introduced to the "Open Arts" group.

The Open Arts group opened many doors for me and my daughter. Firstly we were offered a place on an arts course. This meant that Rachel could continue to practice art, in preparation for starting a new college (after her medication was sorted out) and I could gain a qualification whilst enjoying working alongside my daughter, in a subject we both enjoy. This course was followed by a studio placement (which we attended every week) and then a chance to paint a mural in dedication to a WWII American air crew, on Canvey Island sea wall (later we got to meet relatives on one of the survivors). We have had some of our art displayed in various art trails. I also attended a creative writing course with Open Art's and a drama course. I have had a chance to visit an art gallery and go on an overnight art residential.

Open Arts have helped me in several ways. Apart from opening a portal to allow me to continue my art, they have helped by giving me a purpose in life that is focused around my needs and wants, as well as my daughter's. The staff are all very friendly and helpful and provide a very pleasant atmosphere for both the carer and the person being cared for.

Hopefully one day Rachel will have her medication under control and she will be able to be more independent and I might be able to return to employment. Open Arts has given me a possible chance to use art as part of my future career. It has given my daughter an outlet to help her to have somewhere to relax. Being able to have the opportunities that Open Arts has given has brought my daughter and me closer and it has given us the ability to enjoy more together.

Jennifer Watham, 2Create member

One of our participants that had attended a Basildon visual arts course and then went on to attend a placement at our studio in Hadleigh. He was signposted onto college. He suffered post-traumatic stress from being in the Falklands. He has been awarded student of the year at Southend University. He's also gained double distinctions in all his course work on the Access course he's been doing and completed a BA in Fine Art.



Trudi, Open Arts studio member

Coming to Open Arts has helped me so much and really helped with my confidence as an artist.



Jon Oliff, Printmaker

Open Arts has given me the confidence and platform to pursue my art as a business without which I would not have had the time, space and support to do so after leaving work to be a carer.



Pauline, Open Arts studio member

I really enjoy coming to Open Arts. I think it has really helped me to improve my arts and crafts skills. Mixing with other people in the group has helped improve my confidence. I enjoyed having my artwork exhibited in the local art trails last year.



Richard Caruzzi, Open Arts volunteer

Richard has been a carer for his wife, sadly she passed away. 'Open Arts has been a life saver for me. There is no other organisation like Open Arts on this level, which offers respite to carers.

Open Arts Open Arts is there to help pick up the pieces. It has given me something to be part of my world. It's helped me to discover a love of watercolours and be part of a positive creative ambience in the studio.'



Lin, Open Arts studio member

I am a pensioner with Parkinson's disease and Open Arts has enabled me to get out and meet like-minded people and indulge my passion for art. I do mainly water colours, things like wildlife, butterflies, flowers etc. Lately I have been experimenting with abstracts.

I have to take strong medication so it helps to stay alert in a positive and productive environment.

I like all the people I meet at Open Arts and find them all very friendly and helpful. Also there is a lot of opportunity to enter competitions, do projects and visit art galleries etc. Some people also do crafts which is very interesting.

I feel comfortable at the Open Arts studio at the Art House. It is very uplifting



Kathy Thomas, Open Arts studio member and volunteer

Open Arts has given me my life back.

Right from the start the studio felt like a safe place. The studio manager is brilliant. The studio members are welcoming. It is safe to be there. Everyone at Open Arts has been incredibly supportive and encouraging. I suffer from severe Social Anxiety and the concept of being in a room full of people used to terrify me. It still does under most circumstances, but within the confines of Open Arts I

am able to cope with it. Open Arts has been such a positive, rewarding experience. It is an inspiring environment that nurtures you and helps you to grow as a person.

I have done so much in the last eighteen months and I have come such a long way. I have done things I never would have thought possible. And it is all thanks to Open Arts. They have given me a love of printing and an overflowing portfolio, but more importantly than that Open Arts has given me some self-confidence; some belief in myself. Yes, I still have bad days, bad weeks, I still battle Anxiety, Depression and Social Phobia on a daily basis, but because of Open Arts my world is a calmer, happier, more confident place to be.

How can you help?

For the past twelve years **Open Arts** has been a programme within the EPUT service but has **operated completely on external funding**, with little budget.

Open Arts has played a vital part in people's recovery, developing confidence, building self-esteem and developing self-identity to allow participants to be part of their community. Open Arts exists financially year on year. As we are a charitable community arts and health programme which is self-funding, any contribution towards our valuable and worthwhile programme is gratefully received and will enable us to continue our work.

Please make cheques payable to '**EPUT Charity Fund**' and post to Open Arts, The Art House, 19 High Street, Hadleigh, Essex SS7 2PA

You can donate online

via [CAF www.cafonline.org](http://www.cafonline.org) search for **Essex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust Charities** or **1053793**. Please make sure you type **For Open Arts** in the message box.

Gift Aid

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