The Creative Therapies Fund

Phase 2 Projects, December 2014

Mind founded the Creative Therapies Fund in 2012 in partnership with professional artist and Mind Ambassador Stuart Semple. The Fund provides people with a mental health problem access to art therapy, which allows them to work through their feelings and experiences creatively and within a supportive environment.

Mind’s network of over 150 local Minds were able to apply for grants of between £1,000 and £5,000 to fund a broad range of projects across England and Wales. Nine local Mind arts-based projects were funded in the first round of grants in 2013 and, following the second round of successful applications in November 2014, we are delighted to announce a further eight projects will be awarded grants.

This year’s fund has been made possible because of generous donations by a small group of Mind supporters and a match-funding gift from the Mustafa Trust, which generated a total of £41,000.

North East

Darlington Mind, Stop-Motion Information Films

A grant of £5,000 is funding a film-making project involving over 150 participants to illustrate local Mind’s services and tackle stigma surrounding mental illness.

Darlington Mind runs an art and ICT project that supports more than 150 service users with mental health issues each year. A group of service users will work with an expert facilitator to write, design, produce, market and display a series of 5 minute, stop-motion animation films, exploring experiences of mental health and the community’s perceptions.

The films will be showcased across Darlington in conjunction with a planned ICT outreach programme, working in pop-up venues in areas that fall within the 10% of most deprived English wards and home to over 33,500 people. To maximise exposure screenings will also be made available to local venues including the Civic Theatre, Civic Hall, GP surgeries and local hospital. The animation films will also be available on Darlington Mind’s website and through social media.

The introduction of ICT into the creative process encourages participants to learn new skills and share their experiences with others, which can assist with recovery and help progression towards further involvement in the community and open opportunities for employment. Darlington Mind identified the power of using animation both to convey information about their services and also to break down many of the prejudices surrounding mental ill health.
Leeds Mind, Artist Mentoring Programme

A grant of £5,075 has been awarded to a year-long mentoring programme for 18 artists with mental health difficulties, led by four artist mentors.

Leeds Mind received a grant from the previous Creative Therapies Fund to rent space in order to provide a wider range of creative therapies for over 400 people. The centre now includes artist studios, rented by 12 artists and used by 8 others.

The artist mentoring programme will see four professional artist-mentors, with training in mental health and expertise in digital art and fine art, work with 18 artists with mental health problems who use the studios, over one year. The mentoring programme will allow the artists to develop their professionalism, learn how to better market their work and connect to the local community. The artists will work with a web designer who will build websites and then train the artists how to maintain and manage these online galleries. By the end of the year each artist will have their own online gallery to display and sell their artwork.

Leeds Mind takes a 20% commission on art sales, which contributes towards the costs of sustaining the studios. Since acquiring this space, the artists have made the studios a well-managed, safe and creative hub that has helped transform a mental health service into a place of pride, valued in the local community. The artists and Leeds Mind believe the mentoring programme, led by people who have made successful careers as artists, will be invaluable in supporting service users to take the next step into paid work.

North West

Sheffield Mind, Mindfulness Art Therapy

A grant of £3,547 is going towards a series of art therapy courses where participants can use mindfulness techniques to develop coping mechanisms.

Through this project, Sheffield Mind aims to provide an alternative to talking therapy providing participants with a medium for self-expression, techniques for increasing self-confidence and tools to help with moving forward. Three, 10-week-long courses will be offered to people with mental health problems in the local community and will be led by a trained Art Therapist and Volunteer Assistant. Each course will have up to 10 participants who will work with paint, clay and other materials exploring themes such as emotional, physical and mental wellbeing, mindfulness and emotional blocks.

To encourage attendees beyond the existing service users, the course will be advertised on Sheffield Mind’s website, on leaflets and posters at local community centres, at talks to targeted communities and referrals will also be accepted. To ensure a safe environment is cultivated in each group, potential participants will be invited to an initial assessment.

Many people who have suffered traumas often find it difficult to put their experiences into words, this project will equip participants with the tools for communicating through other, sensory methods in a safe and moderated environment.
Midlands

Dudley Mind, Writing and Reading for Wellbeing

A grant of £4,945 is facilitating the delivery of peer-led reading and creative writing groups for the local community in order to raise awareness of mental health problems.

Dudley Mind’s peer-led project will have two strands: a group of 12 service users trained to lead reading groups; and a group of 8 other participants to work as part of a creative writing group. The two groups share a common goal to produce and then deliver creative writing reading workshops to targeted groups in the wider community.

A facilitator will work with the creative writing group to develop their skills and confidence and produce two creative writing pieces based around the theme of mental health. The group will then use the stories to formulate a 6 session ‘Reading for Wellbeing’ course and 12 of Dudley Mind’s service users will be trained to deliver it to the local community. Women from the South Asian community will be specifically targeted to attend, as they are under-represented as users of the services that Dudley Mind provides. A specialist female Asian facilitator will be employed to assist in working with this group.

The ‘Reading for Wellbeing’ workshops aim to initiate conversations about mental health problems and tackle the stigmas surrounding people suffering from ill mental health. In addition to raising awareness and encouraging others to talk about mental health problems, this project will support the participating service users to gain confidence, learn new skills, access opportunities and improve their wellbeing by talking openly and making connections with others living with mental health problems.

Solihull Mind, Art Therapy

A grant of £4,965 allows trained facilitators to work with groups to improve resilience and reduce isolation through creative art activities.

Solihull Mind will offer weekly, two hour Art Therapy workshops for 12-15 participants led by two facilitators with personal experience of mental health problems. The workshops will initially be driven by the facilitators who will create an activity plan for each participant, source materials and research artistic techniques, but as the participants become more proficient and confident they will contribute more to the session outlines.

Facilitators will provide inspiration and motivation in addition to promoting social inclusion among the community by arranging visits to local galleries and art events. To support each participant’s journey, a culture of peer support will be introduced and those experiencing positive mental health will work with others who need more support. With the focus of attention on creative activity in small units, people experiencing social anxiety will be able to take part to the level they feel comfortable, without feeling pressurised, until their confidence grows and are more able to engage fully.

The participants will be assisted to achieve personal targets through being introduced to other social opportunities, new activities and Solihull Mind’s other services. They will be encouraged to learn new skills and set new challenges to widen their engagement, ultimately leading to joining or contributing to other community groups, volunteering and gaining employment.
South East

Croydon Mind, Photography Course

A grant of £3,981.84 is awarded to Croydon Mind to run two accessible photography groups, resulting in end of course group exhibitions in a local venue.

Mind Croydon is offering two, five-month-long photography courses promoted to their service users and in the wider community. The groups will have the authority to decide what they photograph, where, any computer effects used and which photos will make it to the final end of course show. They will learn new skills in photography, be encouraged to manage their own money and time, and work in a group to organise the final group exhibition.

Each group will have access to ten digital cameras, two tripods of different sizes (to assist participants who struggle with mobility in their hands), photo printer, ink and specialist photographic paper. Participants in each group will also be allocated a budget for putting towards any additional equipment, props or travel for day trips outside of London, such as to the coast and historical sites.

The project will counter the socio-economic factors that often prevent people from being able to partake in this type of activity, by providing equipment and building participants’ confidence and skill in composing a photograph and using computer software. It will be the only free course in the area targeting people with mental health problems.

Haringey Mind, Art History and Art Therapy Course

A grant of £4,902.40 is supporting a successful creative art therapy course where participants will also learn about professional artists who have mental health difficulties.

Haringey Mind have run this 20-week course for the previous two years with funding from the local council’s Adult Learning Service, however this strand of funding was recently cut despite course attendees giving positive feedback. Participants benefit from this project as it’s a non-judgmental, safe space to learn and provides an opportunity to create artwork drawing on real life experiences, emotional, and mindful memories.

The participants will be taught about artists who are living or have lived with mental health problems and asked to establish and explore commonalities and the artist’s work through discussion and creative art, generating a safe space to explore personal feelings. The course will improve participants’ social skills, confidence and self-esteem, helping them to build resilience, boost recovery and wellbeing. Participants will be trained to use computer tablets to create an online gallery; introduced to art galleries via trips to the Royal Academy of Art, the National Portrait Gallery and the National Gallery.

In addition to learning about art and artists who have worked and lived with mental health problems, this project allows each participant to explore their own experiences and have a creative outlet. Previous participants’ feedback that they felt they had a greater sense of choice over their treatment and didn’t have to only rely on medication or talking therapies.