

**Project title**

'Joy of Making' Community Exhibition project

**Tell us who your participants were, their age range and how many took part in your project**

Patients at Penn Hospital: A mixture of day patients and in-patients selected for their ability to take part on a week to week basis.  
Ages: early 60s to early 80s.  
Numbers varied on a weekly basis, minimum 2, maximum 6, depending partly on the day of week and also on how the patients were feeling well enough to participate. There were also Occupational Therapists, Technicians and nursing staff involved depending on the patients and their needs.

**When did your project take place and how long did it run for?**

6th October 2011 until 17th Nov 2011. (7 half day sessions over a period of 7 weeks)

**Please tell us where your project took place (including postcode)**

Penn Hospital, Penn Wolverhampton, WV4 5HN  
Wolverhampton Art Gallery Lichfield St Wolverhampton WV1 1DU

**Tell us who your project funders were and your total budget**

An Arts Council grant received by Creative Health CIC, match funded by the Arts and Heritage Service; contributions from Adult Social Care and the PCT, with staff time in kind. Total value approx. £2,800

**Project website or blog address (if applicable)**

[www.artsinmind.org.org](http://www.artsinmind.org.org)  
[www.wolverhamptonart.org.uk](http://www.wolverhamptonart.org.uk)  
[www.allsensesart.blogspot.com](http://www.allsensesart.blogspot.com) Includes artist's blog about project.

**What health issues was your project exploring?**

Dementia and Mental Health

**What was the involvement of the participants in health issues prior to the project starting?**

All had significant health and mental wellbeing issues including varying levels of dementia, stroke recovery, anxiety and depression.

**Please give a brief description of your project (100 words max.)**

Wolverhampton Art Gallery is preparing an exhibition called 'The Joy of Making' exploring the therapeutic effects of craft activity, to include items made during arts and health projects. Participants visited the gallery to meet the exhibition curator and see hand-made items from the collection which will be in the exhibition. They especially liked the baskets, Polish paper-cut cards and wooden toys and an artist, Kirsty E Smith, was commissioned to lead sessions making felt items inspired by some of the objects. (Wooden toys and ceramic tiles were also made by patients working with the hospital's OT team).

**Please tell us about the creative activities that happened during your project, e.g. artists who were involved, artforms used, products made etc (100 words max.)**

The textile sessions involved firstly using wool, water and soap to make felt. The wet felt-making technique was chosen because:

- Kirsty was able to adapt the techniques for people with varying physical and mental capabilities and differing attention spans.
- Working with fluffy wool fibres, soap and water is a very tactile and sensory experience.
- From experience the artist knew that participants tend to relax and become calmer during this craft activity.

The group produced mats with felted fringing, multi-coloured balls, beads and flowers which were arranged together as artworks, as well as applying different techniques to make felt pots.

## Partnership

Evidence of useful partnership working on the project: how this worked, how it influenced the process and product, how it may have been used to address any problems etc.

**Did you work with any partners on the project? Please tell us who these partners were**

Working with Penn Hospital, their Occupational Therapy team were able to identify participants who were likely to benefit from the proposed activities. Members of the team also set up their art and activities room and assisted with the sessions. It was also useful to take evaluations from the team who spend more time with the patients as they were able to assess the longer-term benefits of participation.

**Please tell us how you identified the need to work with this partner and why this partnership was useful / beneficial / made a difference to your project (100 words max.)**

The Arts & Heritage Service has worked with Penn Hospital before and found all staff very accommodating to work with, keen to try out new ideas and get involved in new projects. They appreciate the benefits to their patients of arts activities and are very professional in their approach to collaborating on the planning and design of activities and evaluating and assessing impacts at the end of projects.

**Did this partnership influence the process and final outcome of your project? Please tell us how (100 words max.)**

Yes, the staff were very closely involved in the choice of collection objects to be used as creative inspiration, and in helping to devise what type of art/craft activity would be suitable for their patients. They consulted closely with the artist before and after the sessions to agree how to structure the activities and to discuss how the project was developing.

## **Participation**

Evidence that the beneficiaries were involved in the decision-making and development of the project.

**Tell us how the participants were involved in your project, e.g. creative engagement, final outcome, advocacy etc. (100 words max.)**

Some chose colours and designs, others took a more active role and were able to stay engaged for much longer than normal. Jean enjoyed 'rubbing' the soaped wool, Vinnie only had the use of one hand but was so proud of her progress that was working with very little assistance by the end. She took a small item home to show her grandchildren. Norman's wife was delighted with the flower brooch that he made for her. They were all very keen to see their work in a proper exhibition. Quotes "I crafted it" "pink is my colour"

**Tell us how these participants were involved in getting your project off the ground e.g. decision making and planning etc. (100 words max.)**

The visit to the Gallery was a key component in giving context to the activity as participants saw collections objects and chose which were most interesting to them. They also understood that the items they were going to make would be put on display in the Gallery. They were pleased to use felting for their creative activity as it was a new medium for them and they wanted to try out something different.

**Once your project was up and running how did the participants influence it? e.g. Did you change or adapt the project? If so, why? (100 words max.)**

Throughout the sessions participants could choose which colours they preferred and decide the positioning of fibres, fringes, decorations and buttons. Initial ideas had been to make felted beads to place into patterns but Lilly, who had enjoyed this, was only at one of the sessions. Ann attended every session. Her confidence grew week by week and she introduced plaiting the unfelted wool as a design feature. The patients found making the felt baskets (by shaping around a stone) more difficult so we concentrated on flat felting. They were encouraged by seeing how the flowers looked when applied to the backgrounds.

## 6. Learning and Reflection



Evidence that the people involved in the project have demonstrated a commitment to learning and reflection in their work and sharing what they have learnt through their experiences. 

**What were the outcomes of your project and what difference did your project make? (100 words max.)**

A range of felt mats and pots were produced for the exhibition. The patients could see how their skills and confidence had improved week by week, and some progressed to working more independently. Vinnie made a unique and expressive final felted picture using her own design ideas showing how good a medium felting is for encouraging creativity. Ann rediscovered her ability to plait. All participants who took part in evaluation either 'agreed' or 'agreed strongly' that the project had given them the opportunity to try something new, increased their confidence and given them a sense of achievement.

**How did you know if this project was successful? (100 words max.)**

There was a happy atmosphere in the art room and when other staff popped in the participants were proud to show their creations. There was a feeling of camaraderie between patients and they offered observations on each other's choice of colours or placing of buttons. The artist felt there was good support and communication from the occupational therapists and other staff. We had very positive feedback from staff and patients with good responses to the evaluation questions. Quotes "It makes me more sociable" "It made me laugh" "It was nice with the staff helping me cut to design the felt"

**Was there anything you would have done differently if you could do this project again? (100 words max.)**

The initial plan was to have six sessions but that didn't give the group enough time so an extra session was added. If doing the project again we would think more carefully about how much time might be needed. The evaluation at the end of the project could only be done with the patients who attended on that day so ongoing, informal evaluations throughout the project might have been helpful, to give a bigger sample. We did, however, note down participants comments during all the sessions.

### **Additional comments and information**

**If you have any other comments, quotes or useful information about your project, please tell us here**

Staff feedback:

"Having the opportunity to experience the felt making process with Kirsty was fantastic for all staff involved. It has given us the skills and confidence to implement this creative work with patients. We have learnt how to make felt from scratch and how to create interesting objects and patterns. The patients involved would like to continue to make items from felt which has therefore empowered them and as they have learnt this new skill at the same time as us, we are all equal within the group. Kirsty was so enthusiastic and passionate that the pleasure grew in all involved".

Comments made by patients during sessions:

"It feels great, smashing" "It feels nice" "It made me laugh, I have loved watching you"

"It feels smooth" "The green & yellow look lovely" "It's lovely and soft" "I'm making a nest here"

"The first one I made looked like a dragon inside"

The legacy of the project:

- The patients feel proud of their skill and creativity and enjoyed their shared experience
- The staff have learned a new skill and will continue to make felt with these patients and others who come to the hospital
- The exhibition will showcase the project to a wider audience and we hope that some of the participants will be able to attend a special 'tea party' private view and see their work on display in the gallery.

## Supporting material

**Please provide up to six images from your project with your application form (not to exceed 1MB in total) Please number your images and tell us what they are here.**

### **01panel-with-arranged-felted-beads**

It was exciting to observe Lilly arranging these felted beads on the flower patterned mat. She took great care over the arrangement, singing as she did so. There is some symmetry in her arrangement but she didn't feel constrained to arrange the beads in an obvious flower pattern.

### **02felted-baskets**

The patients seemed very happy while making these felted vessels with woven patterns. But they later confessed to finding the stones heavy and difficult to handle while wrapped in wool. They would look good in an exhibition but the patients are likely to feel more proud of an item that they have good memories of making. The project is about empowering the patients and increasing their sense of wellbeing.

### **03choosing-colours**

Norman took time to admire the Polish papercut art. He chose colours directly from the artist's card (Kirsty had two of her own Polish papercut cards). His wife was delighted with this flower brooch that he made and gave to her.

### **04completed-mats**

An impressive selection of felted mats. The patients in the last session were able to see the full collection and see how they could be presented in the Art Gallery.

### **05Ann's-mat-withplait**

Ann showed lots of individuality and made independent decisions. She says that she isn't creative but the results would say otherwise. Also because of her dementia she doesn't appreciate how much her confidence and independence have moved on during the project.

### **06Vinnie's-creations**

Vinnie has a lot to be proud of. The mat with flowers is her contribution to the group project and the larger free patterned felt mat is her final creation. Seeing her work on display in the Art Gallery will mean a lot to her. She gave me a hug as she left the final session.

Images and words by artist Kirsty E Smith