



## **REACH**

**Name of Organisation: REACH**

**Title of project/programme: REACH Arts Responding to Health Needs**

**Dates of project/programme: 2006-2010**

### **Summary**

**REACH** was a regional partnership project delivered in Bristol, Devon, Dorset and Somerset and winner of a Royal Society for Public Health Award in 2010.

In Bristol the project involved Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust, Willis Newson, NHS Bristol, working with community organisations Bristol and Avon Chinese Women's Group and Dhek Bhal South Asian community organisation in work to strengthen and improve health services to older adults from black and minority ethnic groups. Artists Hannah Cox, Barbara Disney and Karen Hayes led a series of weekly Arts for Emotional Wellbeing Clubs.

In Devon Aune Head Arts and Villages in Action worked with Devon Partnership Trust and NHS Devon to develop intergenerational projects in three rural locations. Using sound, photographs and animation they explored relationships, memories and skills. Artists involved were Sue Palmer, Joff Winterhart, Kate Green and Jennie Hayes.

In Dorset, Bridport Medical Centre and Bridport Arts Centre developed a programme of visual art and creative writing courses for those experiencing depression, anxiety and stress. Participants were referred via the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies team or self referred. Artists Marc Yeats and Rosie Jackson worked collaboratively on delivering the courses.

NHS Somerset commissioned Take Art to work with young people on an action research project to look at the barriers to healthy lifestyles for 13-14 year olds. Artists Richard Tomlinson and Emma Thompson worked with young people using drama, photography and animation.

The project was supported by Arts & Health South West and NHS South West. Willis Newson, the Bristol based arts and health agency managed the overall delivery. Willis Newson received a Royal Society for Public Health Arts and Health Award for REACH in 2010.

## **Overview**

The Reach initiative was set up by Arts Council England South West in 2006 and was managed and co-ordinated by Willis Newson in association with Alex Coulter. It was completed in 2010. It encouraged arts organisations and health providers to work together. Four individual partnerships were established in Bristol, Devon, Dorset and Somerset, each with its own project team.

Aims and Objectives included:

- Tackle health inequalities in local communities by giving people opportunities to be creative.
- Increase self-esteem.
- Improve communication skills, mental wellbeing and confidence.
- Increase participants' confidence, skills and interests and raise awareness of the benefits of nature in tackling depression. (Dorset REACH).
- Strengthen and improve health services to older adults from black and minority ethnic groups. (Bristol REACH).
- Explore participants' peer group's sense of self and identity. (Somerset REACH).
- Challenge attitudes towards ageing and mental illness, improve the quality of life, social inclusion and mental wellbeing for older people and give older people with mental health needs a voice and enable that voice to be heard. (Devon).
- Improve access for new service users, including responding to the particular needs of mothers, children, adolescents, adults and working age and older people. (Bristol and Devon REACH).
- All people with depression and anxiety to have access to psychological therapies.(Bristol and Devon REACH)
- All people diagnosed with dementia to have a care plan. (Bristol and Devon REACH).

The original objectives for REACH set out by Arts Council England, South West were:

- To establish partnerships based on good quality arts practice.
- To establish partnerships interested in arts & health work which imaginatively and effectively tackles the deep rooted causes of health problems.
- To establish partnerships using effective methods of evaluation and achieving measurable outcomes.
- To establish partnership projects that address key regional public health priorities (mental health, healthy eating and physical

activity) and benefit priority public health target groups (young people, elderly people, mental health service users and socially excluded groups).

- To engage Arts and Health South West in the processes of evaluation, documentation and evidence dissemination.
- To set up partnerships across a spread of locations in the region and covering a range of organisations (including Regularly Funded Organisations) and partnerships (including Local Strategic Partnerships).
- To work in partnership with the Arts Council in placing positive stories about the partnerships in the media.
- To create learning sets between the new arts & health partnerships.

Collaborators were: Avon & Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust, NHS Bristol, Bristol and Avon Chinese Women's Group, Dhek Bhal, Aune Head Arts, Villages in Action, Devon Partnership NHS Trust, NHS Devon, Upstream Healthy Living Centre, Bridport Arts Centre, Bridport Medical Centre, NHS Dorset, Dorset Mental Health Forum, Take Art, NHS Somerset, Community Health International.

Artists were: Hannah Cox, Barbara Disney, Kate Green, Jennie Hayes, Karen Hayes, Rosie Jackson, Sue Palmer, Emma Thomson, Richard Tomlinson, Joff Winterhart, Marc Yeats.

The Bristol REACH project built on work to strengthen and improve health services to older adults from black and minority ethnic groups in Bristol. Willis Newson partnered with Avon & Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust and NHS Bristol to deliver this project. Artists Barbara Disney and Karen Hayes worked with the Bristol & Avon Chinese Women's Group and artist Hannah Cox with Dhek Bhal, a community organisation for South Asian people. A series of weekly Arts for Emotional Well-being Clubs was run for older people, invited through these organisations to participate. All participants either spoke English as a second language or not at all, so the artists were assisted by language support workers. Participants illustrated memories from their lives and on themes including food and journeys. A toolkit booklet was created to record workshop techniques. The finished works, some in book format, included batiks, poetry, drawings, prints and photography and were celebrated in a final showcase event. The clubs encouraged social interaction, boosted confidence and improved communication with the community mental health team.

The Devon Reach project, partnered with Aune Head Arts, Villages in Action, Devon Partnership NHS Trust, NHS Devon, Upstream Healthy Living Centre. Artists: Kate Green, Jennie Hayes, Sue Palmer, Joff Winterhart worked with elderly and young people in three rural communities to create photographic works, radio pieces and animations about perceptions and experiences of aging and to explore the theme of mental wellbeing.

In Milton Abbot and Princetown in Devon, artist Sue Palmer and elderly and young people in the villages made sound pieces that would become radio programmes and podcasts. They also created short films with animator Joff Winterhart. A successful inter-generational event was held to close the Milton Abbot project. Artists, Kate Green and Jennie Hayes worked with a residential home, sheltered housing scheme and the youth club in the third community, Chudleigh. This project combined individual and group work and used both sound and photography. As well as benefits to individual mental wellbeing, a service evaluation of this project forecast improved community cohesion and wellbeing as an outcome.

The Somerset REACH project, in partnership with Take Art, NHS Somerset and Community Health International, explored the issues, context, behavioural patterns and choices associated with eating and physical activity in adolescents. The evaluation of this project provided NHS Somerset with evidence to support future work with young people around the subject of healthy living. Artists Richard Tomlinson and Emma Thomson engaged young people (aged 13 – 15) from two Somerset schools through the use of film, photography and drama in an exploration of their and their peer group's sense of self and identity. They produced a series of photographic and film-based artworks which they peer reviewed. They also contributed towards the development of an online interactive tool that Community Health International will be able to use in future work with young people.

The Dorset REACH project widened the options available to the GP services in Bridport, Dorset, in providing for those with minor mental health problems. Participants self referred or were referred by GPs and screened as part of the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies scheme (IAPT). As one of a number of therapy options available, they were offered a series of workshops with artist Marc Yates and writer Rosie Jackson. These explored the theme of nature through walks, photographs, drawings and poetry. The resulting artworks and poetry have been produced in book form. The project aimed to increase participants' confidence, skills and interests and raise awareness of the benefits of nature in tackling depression. An evaluation investigated the use of creative activities within primary care and the contribution they can make to a reduced reliance on the primary care team. Funding was secured to continue Dorset Reach for a further year, with a particular emphasis on giving participants the confidence to stay in or return to employment.

## **Innovation**

The REACH model was a new approach to developing arts and health partnerships. It involved approaching NHS/PCTs at a "grassroots level" to identify interest among middle management and delivery staff for working in partnership on arts and health projects. This approach was devised to tackle two key barriers that had been identified on similar projects.

- Health partners often come into a partnership "second" and can therefore be less fully engaged.

- Arts organisations often initiate a project, generating energy and commitment but find it hard to get “into” health structures.

At the project level, one of the regional stakeholders highlighted the successes that she believed would not have happened without REACH. These primarily focussed on the fact that many partners had not done this type of partnership work before and would not have done so without REACH, despite in some cases them previously wanting to have done so.

Transform Research Consultancy Ltd (2010)

## **Participation**

### **Dorset REACH:**

Participants self referred or were referred by GPs and screened as part of the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies scheme (IAPT). As one of a number of therapy options available, they were offered a series of workshops with artist Marc Yates and writer Rosie Jackson. These explored the theme of nature through walks, photographs, drawings and poetry. The resulting artworks and poetry have been produced in book form.

### **Somerset REACH:**

Artists Richard Tomlinson and Emma Thomson engaged young people (aged 13 – 15) from two Somerset schools through the use of film, photography and drama in an exploration of their and their peer group’s sense of self and identity. They produced a series of photographic and film-based artworks which they peer reviewed. They also contributed towards the development of an online interactive tool that Community Health International will be able to use in future work with young people.

### **Devon REACH:**

Artists: Kate Green, Jennie Hayes, Sue Palmer, Joff Winterhart worked with elderly and young people in three rural communities to create photographic works, radio pieces and animations about perceptions and experiences of aging and to explore the theme of mental wellbeing.

In Milton Abbot and Princetown in Devon, artist Sue Palmer and elderly and young people in the villages made sound pieces that would become radio programmes and podcasts. They also created short films with animator Joff Winterhart. A successful inter-generational event was held to close the Milton Abbot project. Artists, Kate Green and Jennie Hayes worked with a residential home, sheltered housing scheme and the youth club in the third community, Chudleigh. This project combined individual and group work and used both sound and photography.

## **Bristol REACH**

Artists Barbara Disney and Karen Hayes worked with the Bristol & Avon Chinese Women's Group and artist Hannah Cox with Dhek Bhal, a community organisation for South Asian people. A series of weekly Arts for Emotional Well-being Clubs were run for older people, invited through these organisations to participate. All participants either spoke English as a second language or not at all, so the artists were assisted by language support workers. Participants illustrated memories from their lives and on themes including food and journeys. A toolkit booklet was created to record workshop techniques. The finished works, some in book format, included batiks, poetry, drawings, prints and photography and were celebrated in a final showcase event.

## **Outcomes**

The Regional Evaluation was prepared for Willis Newson by Transform Research Consultancy (2010). The methodology used was qualitative in nature, seeking to explore themes and understand links between issues. This involved a mixture of consultations with representatives of the organisations involved, by means of depth interviews and self-completion questionnaires (feedback forms) together with assessment and appraisal of the local project evaluation reports and the Artists evaluation.

The evaluation found many positive outcomes associated with each of the REACH projects. Reflecting the aims of the projects, the main successes that were reported included improvements to the wellbeing and self esteem of the participants alongside the high quality of the art produced.

The specific aims of the Regional Evaluation were:

- To examine the effectiveness of the arts and health partnerships as a means to deliver arts and health projects.
- To examine the successes and challenges of the REACH model for managing arts and health projects.
- To explore the experience of partners with regard to communication and understanding between the arts and health sectors.
- To assess the process and end product in terms of artistic quality within each of the four projects.
- To investigate the potential for sustainability of the partnerships and further arts and health work.
- To consider REACH within the context of the wider funding situation and explore the potential for health funding sources for arts and health work.

Most partners felt that all of the successes achieved by the projects and the lessons learnt through them would not have happened without REACH. This view was shared by the arts and health partners.

For most partners, the main positive outcome aside from the REACH aims and objectives was the fact that their project was either already continuing in one form or another or that they hoped that it would shortly.

The most commonly mentioned success of the projects was in improving or increasing participants' self-confidence and/or emotional wellbeing. Virtually all partners mentioned this in one form or another. The quality of the art produced and the improved self-confidence of participants were also highlighted in the artists' evaluation. In considering artistic quality, the artists noted that in relation to the product, several criteria were taken into account such as production values, something being well made, work that makes new connections, work that can't be explained in words and that "you know it when you see it". In term of process, the artists mentioned professionalism in dealing with the participants, communicating clearly, generating confidence and stimulating creativity. This view was also echoed in each of the local project evaluations.

Transform Research Consultancy Ltd (2010)

## **Learning**

When asked to consider the areas in which impact had not been achieved as much as had been hoped, the partners identified two main issues: understanding of the health outcomes of the projects and reaching the "genuinely" isolated. The health partners raised the first of these issues most often, while the second issue was mentioned equally often by partners from across the arts, health and Voluntary and Community sectors.

It was also shown that more time for engagement and identification of participants was needed.

Both sets of partners agreed that the single key lesson was the importance of both the arts and health partners working to fully "*understanding each other*" in terms of sharing commitment levels, meeting regularly and being prepared to devote sufficient time to developing relationships. This was explained as:

*"(We) Need to be prepared to have long discussions with partners about the project"* (Arts Partner)

*"The key issue is the understanding between two different cultural perspectives: Arts- value determined by individual, while Health is more scientific - evidence based -needing to demonstrate outcome. Need to understand both perspectives and see they are both valid"* (Health Partner)

*"(We) Need to understand each partner's perspective to achieve success"* (Arts Partner)

One Health Partner noted that, instead of considering the REACH initiative as “putting arts into health services”, it should perhaps be look at the other way around:

*“It should be arts organisations delivering arts **and** wellbeing outcomes”*  
(Health Partner)

Transform Research Consultancy Ltd (2010)

### **Critical success factors**

The Regional Evaluation identified a range of successes and challenges associated with the REACH projects. The successes are detailed in each of the local project evaluations although the partners identified two major successes:

- Improved self-confidence and esteem among participants.
- The high quality of the art produced.

The perceived successful nature of the projects in terms of the value of artistic and creative activities to health and wellbeing was reflected in each of the four local evaluations, with comments including:

#### **Somerset**

*“The arts give a time and cost effective way of engaging with people on many different levels, intellectually and emotionally, respecting individual identity and expression while also producing a group feeling that has general relevance and practical application.”*

#### **Devon**

*“It is possible, although complex, to create inspiring, challenging contemporary work within communities, whilst fully engaging participants within a health agenda. We believe we have delivered a highly successful arts and health project ... incorporating a sensitive and open approach by the artists involved.”*

#### **Dorset**

*“The letters provide a moving and impressive testament to the benefits to participants... the artists worked extremely well together... It would seem that the dynamic between them was very positive and they provided for different needs in the participants. The quality of the artwork was very impressive.”*

#### **Bristol**

*“Being engaged in creative activity, absorbed and distracted from other concerns generated feelings of happiness. Artists and host groups reported that participants had described that taking part in the activities and being with the group helped them to feel happier than they did at home.”*

Transform Research Consultancy Ltd (2010)

## **Funding and Resources**

The projects were funded by: Arts Council England, NHS Bristol, Quartet, Avon & Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust, Lankelly Chase, NHS Devon, Devon Partnership NHS Trust, NHS Dorset, Dorset County Council, Bridport Medical Centre, NHS Somerset, Community Health International.

The overall budget for the project was approximately £100000 with Arts Council funding accounting for 70% of that

While most partners reported that their projects ran to budget, they noted that an important lesson was the need to be very prudent and realistic in what they could deliver. Some emphasised that considerably more resources, in terms of time and in-kind input, had had to be put into their projects than had originally been thought necessary.

(Transform Research Consultancy Ltd 2010)

## **Contact details for further information**

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All details have been taken from the Regional Evaluation of REACH prepared for Willis Newson by Transform Research Consultancy Ltd (2010) and the Willis Newson Case Study of REACH, which can be found at <http://www.willisnewson.co.uk>