

The voice of the Voluntary Arts

## Artists in Hospitals

### Guidelines for the voluntary arts

**“That the arts can be therapeutic is not of course a new idea. But it is an idea whose time has come.” – Lord Attenborough**

Study after study has shown the benefits to those who are ill of participating in arts activities. Art has properties that lend themselves to the treatment, healing and well-being of people, specifically within a hospital environment. Amongst benefits like relieving boredom, creating meaning and providing a source of joy, art has been proven to dramatically reduce stress and anxiety in patients, creating shorter hospital stays and reductions in medication.

The benefits however extend beyond patients and visitors. Staff too are shown to be happier in a working environment that has a creative atmosphere, and the artists themselves gain personally through the pleasure they gain from alleviating suffering.\*

The number of people who pass through the hospital system is huge. After all, we have all been there at some point in our lives! This is a wonderful opportunity for voluntary artists to extend their reach and bring the pleasure of their art or craft form to a wide audience, and to work with people who might otherwise not have had the inclination, an awareness of art or the opportunity to engage in such activities.

This briefing looks at what artists need to consider in order to work in a hospital. No matter what stage you are at – interested, just starting a programme or already working within the hospital environment – these topics remain important and ever present. With good practice, preparation and monitoring and evaluation you will be able to realise the full potential of your hospital projects.

\* *Note: Therapeutic but not art therapy:* As an artist working in a hospital you are not a trained art therapist. Your work is therapeutic but not art therapy. It is important to always remember this and not to take on the role of an art therapist at any time.

#### A. Types of placements

There are a variety of ways in which you, as an artist, can work or volunteer in a hospital. These fall into two scenarios: hospitals that already have an arts programme, and hospitals that don't. However, just because a hospital doesn't have an arts programme up and running doesn't mean you can't start one!

**Arts Co-ordinator:** An 'in-hospital' co-ordinator can be very useful for arts projects. Arts Co-ordinators are there to develop the arts in the hospital and deal with a wide range of related issues, including funding and people. The job will require some skills not usually required of artists.

**Artist-in-residence:** This role will vary from hospital to hospital, but usually is for a set term, and requires a time commitment (e.g. 2 days a week) in which the artist will work in the hospital with the patients on art projects.

**Visiting artist:** Artists come in to give a one-off performance or show of their work (e.g. dance troupe or musician visiting hospital patients).

**Commissioned artists:** Projects that are architectural or incorporate the design of the hospital in the work (e.g. installation piece in atrium of hospital).

**Exhibitions:** More and more hospitals have exhibition spaces these days. These provide a wonderful opportunity for artists not only to show their work, but also to develop a longer-term relationship with the hospital.

**Work on loan:** Some hospitals will accept artwork on loan and while on display it might also be for sale. This too can help to develop a longer-term relationship with the hospital, which may lead to another placement (e.g. a residency).



## B. Legal Issues

### Contracts

Whenever you are working in a hospital you should have a formal contract – even if you've worked with them before. Most hospitals will write up their own contracts, but sometimes you might be expected to draft them. The contract will lay out all specifics of the programme in writing and will protect both the artist and the hospital in case of any unforeseen complications. Look at sample contracts from other artists, agencies and Local Authority Arts Officers to get an idea of what you will need included. Artists Information Company (an) and Public Arts South West have some useful examples. Contracts **MUST** be tailored to fit your own programme's specific needs, but a basic contract should include the following –

- A cancellation clause, giving a notice period and arrangements, in case of any cancellations by the hospital or artist.
- Any specific information or arrangements required (i.e. equipment, staffing).
- Date and length of programme.
- Fee agreed and payment stages.
- Contact name, telephone number, email address, fax number and address of contact at the hospital.
- Artists brief.

Contracts should be short and simple. Try to avoid any legal or artistic jargon and keep it to one page A4. Always make sure the contract is signed by you and a representative of the hospital and that you each have a copy.

### Insurance

Insurance is a very complicated subject. Depending on what you will be doing in the hospital, insurance may be necessary. If you are taking out an insurance policy – take advice. Talk to the hospital, other artists and arts councils about what kind of policy you will need for your project. For a useful guide to insurance, see an (Artists Information Company) [www.a-n.co.uk](http://www.a-n.co.uk).

### Employed or self-employed

As an artist, you will be working as either –

- Employed –  
with tax and NIC deducted under PAYE, or
- Self employed –  
paying your own tax and insurances.

If you will be working as self-employed and have not already declared self-employed status, it may be best to take some advice from other artists, hospitals or LA arts officers.

## C. Funding

How to fund an arts project is an ongoing issue. There is a big difference between hospitals with established arts programmes and those with none. Those with arts programmes are likely to have funding for the project in place when the recruitment occurs. If you have to initiate your own project there are a variety of ways to source funding, some of which are outlined below:

- support-in-kind;
- grants for the arts, grants for health;
- raising funds from within the hospital itself;
- arts councils;
- local authorities.

If part of your role entails fundraising for the project, be prepared and be sure that you have the skills necessary to take on the role. Take advice if necessary.

## D. Going into the hospital...

### Induction

An induction to working in hospitals is an important step to take before starting your project, whatever it may be. A successful induction will not only cover Health & Safety procedures for the hospital, but also the difficult emotional aspects that the hospital environment brings. Hospitals that already have an arts programme and arts coordinators in place are already likely to have inductions for artists.

**There's no induction, help!** If you will be working in a hospital where there is no arts programme running, here are a few issues to consider –

- Who do I report to?
- What are the hospital's Health and Safety regulations?
- If I feel upset, who can I talk to?
- Where can I find copies of hospital policies?

### Specific groups

Sometimes your work as a voluntary artist will focus on a specific client group, such as: mental health service users, children, or older people. In situations such as these you may need extra and specialised training to help you cope with the specific needs of the group.

### Healthy and wise

- **Be healthy.** Working in a hospital is not like working in an office. You will be coming into contact with people who are ill or recovering from illness so you will need to be healthy – not just for the patients, but also for yourself.



Not all hospitals will require a health check so use common sense. If you are feeling under the weather, it's best to stay at home.

- **Be careful.** If you will be coming into contact with children or vulnerable adults, you will need a CRB check. See **VAN Briefing no. 82: 'Child Protection: Part I – An Introductory Guide'**
- **Be safe.** The hospital will have a Health & Safety policy and procedures to follow. Make sure that you know and are aware of all that might apply to you.
- **Be practical.** Make a checklist of all the information you will need when visiting/working at the hospital. This could include:
  - where to keep personal belongings;
  - where to store art materials;
  - where to get and return keys;
  - ID badges – are they required? Where do you get them/return them?
  - important contact telephone numbers;
  - **Patient consent forms** (if needed). Consent will be needed if you are taking photos of patients or if you are working to create artwork and you are using a piece of their work in the whole project;
  - visitors guide (if needed)
- **Be informed.** Always know what you are doing and where you are going.
- **Lines of responsibility.** Know about the staffing lines and who you are to report to. Try to keep the project information to hand, should it be needed.

## Support

Being supported and being able to support is absolutely vital for artists working in hospitals. However, it is an area that is often forgotten or neglected. Make sure you know how and where to get this. Additionally, artists working in a hospital may sometimes be called upon to play a role outside their artistic remit e.g. friend, teacher or listener. The induction should cover what to expect, but ongoing support will be needed throughout a project to help you if and when this happens.

- **Talking and Debriefing.** Make sure you have someone to talk to, be it another artist at the hospital or the arts coordinator. If you are part of a group exhibiting, performing or running a workshop together, arrange time for the group to sit and talk after the event. Talking will help to deal with issues and emotions as they arise.
- **Keep a diary.** Keeping a diary serves an excellent two-fold purpose during a project. It will not only help the artist to unburden feelings and emotions, but also keep an accurate record of progress for evaluation.

## E. Monitoring and Evaluating a project

Good monitoring and evaluation (M&E) is crucial to any arts project. Successful M&E practice will be planned well from the start. Gather the information throughout the project and then assess it all at the end. This three-step process will improve future projects, help you to secure funding and write good proposals, and avoid in the future any unnecessary difficulties you may have experienced.

For a useful guide to M&E see Voluntary Arts Wales' **'Why Bother? Monitoring and evaluating your arts event... A book of ideas and encouragement'** (recently adopted by the Arts Council of Wales as its guide to M&E for community and voluntary arts projects).

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## Further information & resources

VAN would like to thank NNAH (see below for details) for their support and participation in writing this briefing. We would also like to thank Jane Willis, consultant, Willis Newson, Arts and Health Development Agency – [www.willisnewson.co.uk](http://www.willisnewson.co.uk) – for her advice.

### The National Network for the Arts in Health (NNAH)

The National Network for Arts in Health is a UK wide organisation that provides information for artists interested in or already working in the Arts and Health field. They offer an advocacy service and are also a networking organisation with many databases available to their members. Members receive the monthly mailing, the NNews, containing topical information on projects, events, vacancies and commissions. Members gain access to the Members section of the NNAH website that holds more specific information including the Projects Database, Funding Guide, Bibliography and Membership Directory. [www.nnah.org.uk](http://www.nnah.org.uk) email: [info@nnah.org.uk](mailto:info@nnah.org.uk)

### 'The art of good health: A practical handbook'

Jane Willis for NHS Estates published by TSO. Copies available for £24.95 from TSO, contact: [www.tso.co.uk/bookshop](http://www.tso.co.uk/bookshop) email: [book.orders@tso.co.uk](mailto:book.orders@tso.co.uk) Text phone 0870 240 3701

### 'Why bother? Monitoring and evaluating your arts event...'

Voluntary Arts Wales, adopted by the Arts Council of Wales as M&E pack. Bilingual, Welsh/English. Copies available for £15, £5 for voluntary organisations. Contact: email: [info@vaw.org.uk](mailto:info@vaw.org.uk) or PO Box 200, Welshpool SY21 7WN [www.vaw.org.uk](http://www.vaw.org.uk)



### Paintings in Hospitals

Paintings in Hospitals is a registered charity that provides works of art on loan to hospitals, hospices and other healthcare facilities to enhance the healing environment for the benefit of patients, staff and visitors across the UK.

[www.paintingsinhospitals.cwc.net/](http://www.paintingsinhospitals.cwc.net/)

email: [mail@paintingsinhospitals.org.uk](mailto:mail@paintingsinhospitals.org.uk)

### W.H.A.T. (Waterford Healing Arts Trust)

The Waterford Healing Arts Trust is Ireland's leading hospital arts programme. Based in Waterford Regional Hospital, Ireland, the Trust explores the role of the arts in the promotion of healing and well being through a multi-disciplinary programme of arts activity.

[www.waterfordhealingarts.com/](http://www.waterfordhealingarts.com/)

### LIME

'Improving healthcare within the arts'

[www.limeart.org](http://www.limeart.org)

### 'Mental Health Depends on the Arts'

See VAN article, Update issue 38, October, 2004

[www.voluntaryarts.org/uploaded/map1536.pdf](http://www.voluntaryarts.org/uploaded/map1536.pdf)

### Music in Hospitals

A registered charity which brings live music to a variety of healthcare settings.

[www.music-in-hospitals.org.uk/](http://www.music-in-hospitals.org.uk/)

### Poems in the Waiting Room

A registered charity which supplies poetry pamphlets for patients while waiting.

[www.pitwr.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk/](http://www.pitwr.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk/)

## CASE STUDY

THRISHA HALDAR

### From Voluntary Artist to Hospital Arts Co-ordinator

As a voluntary artist, I participated in an Arts and Health performance at Chelsea and Westminster Hospital some years ago. Working in the inspiring setting of Chelsea and Westminster convinced me of the powerful role the arts has to play in healing, and in the wider benefit for the artists in reaching new audiences.

That experience never left me, and was a major factor in my decision to take on my current role as Music and Performance Co-ordinator at Gloucestershire NHS Foundation Trust, which involves liaising with hospital patients, staff, management and artists. The aim is to ensure all programmes respond to the fact that hospitals are places that bring together people from all walks of life, of all ages and backgrounds. As well as bringing comfort and reassurance, music can reflect and celebrate this community.

The fact that my role exists, demonstrates that the NHS is taking the Arts and Health sector seriously, and this is reflected on a day-to-day level in my work – I have extremely positive feedback from patients and staff. Crucially, I have had support in navigating the NHS system to ensure that the programme is a success! Even in those hospitals that do not have the same level of infrastructure for arts programmes as at Gloucestershire or Chelsea and Westminster, there are almost always openings and opportunities to develop such activities, if one can access the key management depths and individuals who are passionate about the arts.



**Disclaimer:** We have taken reasonable precautions to ensure that the information contained in this Briefing is accurate. However, the document is not intended to be legally comprehensive. We recommend you take legal advice before taking action on any of the matters covered herein.

**Do you need this publication in a larger or alternative format? Contact Whitney T: 029 20 395 395 E: [whitney@voluntaryarts.org](mailto:whitney@voluntaryarts.org)**



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