



Theatre and Film for Positive Mental Health
Using creative processes of theatre and film to
promote positive mental health and well-being

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Foreword

Theatre and Film for Positive Mental Health was a Europe-wide, transnational project using creative processes of theatre and film to promote positive mental health and well-being.

This Europe wide transnational project builds on the innovative and award-winning **Acting for the Future** arts and health programme which was set up by Smashing Times in 2005 and which the company continues to run on an annual basis on the island of Ireland with support from a range of organisations including the Samaritans, the HSE National Social Inclusion Office and ESB Energy for Generations fund.

Smashing Times are now delighted to be involved in **Theatre and Film for Positive Mental Health**, a programme promoting collaborative exchange and mutual learning between five partner organisations, two from Ireland, and one each from Spain, Italy, and Latvia. **Theatre and Film for Positive Mental Health** brings together artists and educators to explore the use of creative processes to promote positive mental health and well-being and coping strategies for dealing with stress and anxiety. The five partners are Smashing Times Theatre and Film Company, Dublin, Ireland (lead partner); EURORESO, Naples, Italy, www.euroreso.eu; Biedriba Eurofortis, Riga, Latvia, www.eurofortis.lv; Fundacion Intras, Valladolid, Spain, www.intras.es; and Trinity College Dublin, Ireland, www.tcd.ie.

Smashing Times and the partner organisations are very grateful for the support of the Erasmus + Programme particularly in relation to generating access to the arts and for supporting the development of innovative creative arts practice to promote positive mental health and well-being in participatory and health related contexts.

‘The practice of arts and health is not a single professional role but a skills partnership of people who come together in their distinctive roles to engage the public in creative activities that aim to improve health and wellbeing’.¹ As artists and health care professionals working in arts and health, we are aware of the benefits of building a partnership approach to the work and of the need to create ongoing dialogue around the promotion of best practice with a focus on planning, delivery, reflection and evaluation. A key component of the work is to engage in ongoing dialogue and consultation with the participants that we work with and we are extremely grateful for their participation in the work.

It gives us great pleasure to deliver and share the final project outcomes to a wide European audience. Smashing Times are delighted to have been a part of this process and we look forward to continuing this innovative work into the future and to promoting inclusion and positive mental health and well-being for all people both across the island of Ireland and with our European Partners.

Mary Moynihan
Director
Smashing Times International Centre for the Arts and Equality
October 2019

¹ Participatory Arts Practice in Healthcare Contexts - Guidelines for Good Practice, introduction by Mike White and Mary Robson, Centre for Medical Humanities, Durham, October 2009

Project Information

Theatre and Film for Positive Mental Health is a European-wide, transnational project using creative processes of theatre and film to promote positive mental health and well-being.

Theatre and Film for Positive Mental Health brings together artists and educators to explore the use of creative processes to promote positive mental health and how to develop coping strategies for handling stress and anxiety. The project promotes collaborative exchange and mutual learning between five partner organizations, two from Ireland, and one each from Spain, Italy, and Latvia. The five partners are Smashing Times Theatre and Film Company, Dublin, Ireland (lead partner); EURORESO, Naples, Italy, www.euroreso.eu; Biedriba Eurofortis, Riga, Latvia, www.eurofortis.lv; Fundacion Intras, Valladolid, Spain, www.intras.es; and Trinity College Dublin, Ireland, www.tcd.ie.

According to the Europe Mental Health Action Plan, 2013-2020, mental health concerns are one of the greatest public health challenges in the European Region. According to the Europe Mental Health Action Plan, all sectors of society have a responsibility in terms of promoting positive mental health and the best way forward is to develop a multi-sector approach made up of cross-sectoral working partnership involving a range of organizations from governmental level to independent community based organizations. It is in response to the Europe Mental Health Action Plan and the current mental health crisis affecting people of all ages, that the five partners have come together to run **Theatre and Film for Positive Mental Health**.

The five partner organisations all have a solid track record in the implementation of European educational training programmes. Two of the partner organisations, Smashing Times (lead partner), Dublin, Ireland, and INTRAS, Valladolid, Spain, have established successful educational projects that use creative and digital media processes to promote positive mental health and suicide prevention, working with the general public and with those suffering from mental health concerns.

The aim of this project is to promote an exchange of good practice for adult educators in relation to using creative processes to promote positive mental health and coping strategies for stress and anxiety, bringing together the skills and expertise of the partners in order to create high quality outputs that can be implemented on a Europe wide basis. The project builds on the innovative and award-winning Acting for the Future arts and health project implemented by Smashing Times who were delighted to be involved in a new Europe-wide project as lead partner bringing together a range of European organizations to use creative processes to promote positive mental health and well-being.

The project results in five international partner exchanges and the creation of an e-book, a theatre workshop model, video demonstrations, and a short creative art film, *The Big No*, promoting positive mental health and well-being.

The project is of benefit to artists, creative arts practitioners, educators, health care staff, and health service users, and fosters creativity and collaboration between artists, arts organisations, and those working in health care settings and the wider community.

The Big No

By Féilim James

Directed by Mark Quinn, Highwire Productions
Produced by Smashing Times Theatre and Film Company

World Film Premiere at Samuel Beckett Theatre, Friday 20 September 2019 as part of the Dublin Arts and Human Rights Festival hosted by Smashing Times and Front Line Defenders.
www.smashingtimes.ie

A young man tells the story of his psychological unravelling and subsequent mental health crisis. Told in the form of a voiceover monologue accompanied by compelling imagery, this poetic short film takes us on a journey of despair, introspection, and hope. As he battles against panic attacks and suicidal thoughts, he is forced to face the 'why' of his problems head on, learning some essential truths about himself and the world.

Q and A with the film's writer Féilim James

What inspired you to write the script for *The Big No*?

I was approached by Smashing Times to write a piece on anxiety and panic attacks, as it was an area of interest for me, but also an area in which I had significant personal experience. I suffered a crippling mental health crisis in the winter of 2018/19, involving debilitating panic attacks and intense depression. At one point I couldn't even leave the house. It was actually at the tail end of this period in time that I began writing this piece. So of course this provided something of an outlet for what I had faced and was in the process of overcoming. Also, the urge to reach out to others going through similar hardships also motivated me.

What message do you want to go out to young people in relation to anxiety?

Firstly, anxiety is a normal human emotion/physiological response without which we wouldn't be able to survive. Everyone experiences anxiety – the same way everyone struggles occasionally with their mental health. For some people (studies say 1 in 4), at a certain point in our lives our anxiety or mental health difficulties will escalate and impair our day-to-day functioning significantly for a time. In such cases, there is help available.

This is the second point I'd like to emphasise. Help is there for those who are struggling, they need only reach out. The overwhelming majority of people who go through a mental health crisis come out the other side to live happy and fulfilled lives. For young people, experiencing the maelstrom of a mental health crisis for the first time can be hugely overwhelming, especially if they don't know much about mental health, or about the help available. Reaching out is the first step. After that, what worked for me was consistent therapy, antidepressants, exercise, my relationships with those closest to me, writing, having some sort of faith, and succeeding at certain challenges. By that last point I mean disproving the negative voice in your head, for example walking into town and demonstrating to yourself that you can leave home without having a panic attack.

Lastly, take care of yourself. Be kind to your body: eat healthily, exercise, get enough sleep, and stay away from intoxicants. Alcohol and drugs are depressants, so avoiding these as much as possible is pivotal to recovery, as I can vouch for myself. A mental health crisis is one of the toughest things anyone can endure, so you need all the help you can give yourself.

What role do you think the arts, including writing and film, can play to promote positive mental health and support young people to overcome anxiety?

The arts have a way of sending a message more powerfully than most other things. Storytelling is central to this. If young people witness stories that they can relate to, stories of vulnerability and overcoming mental health problems, then this will alleviate their sense of isolation, break down the stigma, and help them realise that it is possible to come out the other side. Young people who choose to create art about their experience can also gain such catharsis and a sense of purpose from the process.

What future do you see for the film, where would you like it to go?

We're just taking it as it comes at the moment, but we'd like to see it reach as broad an audience as possible, from teenagers to young adults, to at-risk groups and people of all ages and backgrounds. We'd be hoping to screen it at a few film festivals. We want it to help as many people as it can, while also enriching their lives through what we hope is a quality arts experience.

Is the film autobiographical?

As mentioned above, the film was inspired by my own experience, so some scenes are directly taken from my own life. Other parts were fictionalised for the benefit of the story, though as a whole it's fair to call this film largely autobiographical.

Supported by Acting for the Future: Theatre for Positive Mental Health and Well-Being with special thanks to Erasmus+, HSE National Office for Social Inclusion, HSE National Lottery, ESB Energy for Generations Funds and the Samaritans.

Research on Positive Mental Health and the Arts - Ireland

Over the last twenty years there has been increasing recognition internationally of the contribution the arts can make to the health, quality of life and social wellbeing of all in society and in particular to those in healthcare settings. Since the 1980s, arts programmes have opened in hundreds of hospitals, clinics and community centres across the world, and there has been an increase in government support for this work. The following is information on a selection of organisations supporting and / or funding arts and health work in Ireland and is informed by *A History of Arts and Health in Ireland* by Nicola Dunne, formerly the Arts and Wellbeing Specialist with Kildare West Wicklow County Addiction Team².

The Arts Council of Ireland

Since the late 1990s the Arts Council of Ireland has sought to advocate the value of the arts within healthcare and to support arts and health practice. In response to a growing number of proposals for arts and health projects, the Arts Council instituted a programme of work including the establishment of a Joint Steering Committee with the Eastern Health Board in 1998. This committee oversaw and evaluated pilot arts projects throughout the Eastern Regional Health Authority, the findings of which were published in *The Practice of Arts in Healthcare* (2003).

In 2001 the Arts Council commissioned a study to map the levels of artistic activity taking place within healthcare settings. *Mapping the Arts in Healthcare Contexts in the Republic of Ireland* by Ruairi Ó Cuív and Leargas Consulting mapped 150 arts and health projects in existence in Ireland at that time. The research demonstrated that the level of activity was much higher than was generally perceived. The report also acknowledged that Local Authority Arts Officers were active in the field and almost one third of all projects were supported by a Local Authority.

Subsequent initiatives included the publication of the *Arts and Health Handbook* (2003) to address the need for best practice and the organisation of a two day international arts and health conference in 2004³. In *Partnership for the Arts (2006–2008)* the Arts Council outlined a number of priority areas including the need to support artists wishing to develop their practice and the need to build the support infrastructure for arts and health practice through the establishment of specialist resource services.

In 2008, the Arts Council appointed for the first time a Specialist Adviser on arts and health to assist with the development of an arts and health policy and strategy. This was followed by a period of consultation and research with the sector including in October 2009, Vital Signs, a series of strategic events including a conference, exhibition and commissioned opinion pieces. In December 2010 the Arts Council's first Arts and Health Policy and Strategy was published outlining the values that underpin its approach to arts and health practice. In its five-year strategy 2010–2014, the Arts Council committed to actions in the following areas:

- The promotion of arts and health at national level
- Resources and supports
- Partnerships

The Arts Council understands arts and health to be a broad term that embraces a range of arts practices occurring primarily in healthcare settings, which bring together the skills and priorities of both arts and health professionals. It recognises good arts and health practice as that which is characterised by a clear

² http://www.artsandhealth.ie/about/a-history-of-arts-and-health-in-ireland/#_ftn3

³ Arts Council International Arts in Health Conference, 24 – 26 June 2004 Dublin Castle. Pre conference consultation and regional meetings managed by Create

artistic vision, goals and outcomes, and aims to promote health and wellbeing by improving quality of life and cultural access in healthcare settings.

The values that underpin the Arts Council's approach to arts and health practice include: long term strategic partnership and planning; integration into the healthcare environment; engagement with professional artists and high quality arts experiences; inclusive, participant centred approaches; monitoring and evaluation; high quality and appropriate documentation and dissemination. The Arts Council promotes practice that has clear artistic vision, goals and outcomes and demonstrates a commitment to these values. The Arts Council Arts and Health policy and strategy is available to download from The Arts Council website at www.artscouncil.ie⁴.

According to the strategy 'at national level the Arts Council and the HSE are the main funders of arts and health practice while national arts resource organizations such as Create and Music Network have developed opportunities and resources for information, training, networking and practice development. Age and Opportunity have developed arts programming with older people in health settings over the years. At regional and local level HSE personnel and local authority arts officers, arts and health coordinators and individuals from arts organizations including Smashing Times have been key advocates for Arts and health. They have worked alongside individual artists, service users, family members and carers to develop programmes across a range of settings including primary care, mental health hospitals and health promotion.⁵

The current strategic context for the Arts Council's support of the arts across all artforms is set out in its latest strategic document *Making Great Art Work: Arts Council Strategy (2016 – 2025)*. While this strategy does not refer specifically to arts and positive mental health and well-being, it outlines a firm commitment to 'value and support artists working in a broad range of contexts'⁶ and a commitment to ensuring that the Arts Council will be 'well-informed on the intersection of our work with key social and economic fields'⁷. The strategy supports arts participation as a core value and is committed to increasing public access, participation and engagement in the arts. Within the Arts Council, arts participation is divided into five key strands; arts and health; arts and disability; cultural diversity and the arts; arts and communities and arts and older people.

At present, the Arts Council and the HSE are working together to explore the potential for a formal framework to support the development of arts and health practice in Ireland. The research is being undertaken within the context of the *Healthy Ireland Framework (2013 – 2025)*, the Arts Council's *Arts and Health Policy (2010)* and its new strategy *Making Great Art Work, Leading the Development of the Arts in Ireland (2016 – 2025)*.

With regard to intercultural diversity, in 2019 the Arts Council of Ireland published a new *Arts Council Equality, Human Rights and Diversity Policy and Strategy* which supports and ensures 'the inclusion of all voices and cultures that make up Ireland today, from all sections of society, from existing and new communities, and from all social backgrounds, ethnicities and traditions'⁸ and that 'We are deeply aware that, within the arts in Ireland, many inequities still exist and that there is a substantial number of people who continue to experience barriers to engaging with and participating in the arts because of their socio-economic background, their ethnicity or religion, their sexual orientation or gender identity, their family status, their age, their membership of the Traveller Community, or through lack of accommodation of a disability. Further, as evidenced by movements such as Waking the Feminists, Sounding the Feminists and

⁴ <http://www.artscouncil.ie/News/Arts-Participation/The-Arts-Council-publishes-new-arts-and-health-policy-and-strategy/>

⁵ The Arts Council Arts and Health Policy and Strategy Page 5.

⁶ Making Great Art Work, Leading the Development of the Arts in Ireland. Arts Council Strategy (2016 – 2025). Pg 45

⁷ Making Great Art Work, Leading the Development of the Arts in Ireland. Arts Council Strategy (2016 – 2025). Pg 42

⁸ Arts Council of Ireland Equality, Human Rights and Diversity Policy and Strategy. Page 1

Fair Plé, women artists across a range of artistic disciplines continue to encounter serious impediments to advancing their careers and repertoire in a way that equates with their male peers'⁹. This new policy is an important step forward and recognises that 'harnessing diversity provides unparalleled opportunity for creative collaboration, innovation and learning . . . (and) that through promoting equality, human rights and diversity in the arts in Ireland, we can benefit from rich artistic outcomes and contemporary practice that is challenging, relevant and more accurately reflective of our society today'.¹⁰

Health Service Executive

The Health Service Executive (HSE) has made a number of pilot studies into the benefit of arts and health practice. The most notable publication is *The Practice of the Arts in Healthcare*, which as previously mentioned, was produced in partnership with the Arts Council in response to the growing worldwide movement of arts and health. The report was then adopted by the board of ERHA in November 2003.

An innovative partnership was one developed between the HSE Southern Area and Cork 2005 during the celebration of Cork as European Capital of Culture. A Culture + Health Strand was developed for the Cork 2005 programme during which thirty two projects were delivered in diverse community and health settings. Subsequently, HSE South established Cork Arts and Health Programme (CAHP) and appointed an Arts and Health Co-ordinator, the first post of its kind to be created within the HSE. CAHP is based in the South Lee Community Work Department and works across all departments in the health service and with other stakeholders to support arts initiatives, promote collaborative working and promote the value of this work within the HSE.

Another established arts and health programme within the HSE is the Arts Initiative in Mental Health. Established by Mental Health Services, HSE West in 2003, this initiative engages artists in various care and community settings to work collaboratively with mental health service users.

At present, as stated above, the HSE and the Arts Council are working together to explore the potential for a formal framework to support the development of arts and health practice in Ireland. The research is being undertaken within the context of the *Healthy Ireland Framework (2013 – 2025)*, the Arts Council's *Arts and Health Policy (2010)* and its new strategy *Making Great Art Work, Leading the Development of the Arts in Ireland (2016 – 2025)*.

Create

Over recent years a small number of national arts resource agencies have also undertaken aspects of the arts and health remit including research, training and networking. Create, the national development agency for collaborative arts in Ireland, managed the national consultation programme which informed the Arts Council's Conference on arts and health in 2004, held in Dublin Castle, and for several years facilitated the network of professionals which became Arts and Health Coordinators Ireland. The agency continues to support the development of arts in health practice. Recent initiatives include the development and delivery of Vital Signs programme of events in partnership with the Arts Council in October 2009. In 2011, Create and Waterford Healing Arts Trust jointly developed a new independent arts and health website providing a national online resource for the sector.

Membership of Create is open to individual artists and arts organisations, across all art forms. Create provides advice, support, training and development opportunities for artists and arts organisations and works closely with communities of place and interest to expand people's access to and participation in the arts.

⁹ Arts Council of Ireland Equality, Human Rights and Diversity Policy and Strategy. Page 2

¹⁰ Arts Council of Ireland Equality, Human Rights and Diversity Policy and Strategy. Page 2

Create manage the Artist in the Community Scheme which is offered on a yearly basis by the Arts Council to enable artists and communities of place and / or interests to work together on projects. The Artist in the Community scheme is open to artists from any of the following artform disciplines: architecture, circus, street art and spectacle, dance, film, literature (Irish and English language), music, opera, theatre, visual arts and traditional arts. Projects can take place in a diverse range of social and community contexts, for example healthcare contexts, prisons, and community development organisations. This is an important scheme for supporting artists on a one-off basis to conduct and arts and health project with diverse communities. For further information see www.create-ireland.ie

With regards to training in arts and health, in 2008, in partnership with Adelaide and Meath National Children's Hospital and IADT, Create delivered a Professional Development Modular Course for artists working or wishing to work in a healthcare setting¹¹.

Waterford Healing Arts Trust

Waterford Healing Arts Trust (WHAT) was established in 1993 following the suggestion by a local GP Dr. Abdul Bulbulia, to introduce the visual arts to enhance the hospital environment in Waterford Regional Hospital. The work of this project was to evolve into a model for arts and health practice in Ireland and WHAT is now recognised as a national arts and health resource organisation. The Trust has developed a multidisciplinary programme of arts activity and research. In 2008 working in partnership with HSE South, WHAT commissioned the development of best practice guidelines for participatory arts projects in healthcare contexts. In 2009 WHAT opened the first arts and health Centre in the Republic of Ireland.

WHAT is Ireland's longest running arts and health programme and currently delivers a range of programmes to health service users, healthcare staff, the community and for the arts and health sector in Ireland. The directors are Mary Grehan and Claire Meany. WHAT also manages the national arts and health website www.artsandhealth.ie under the direction of Claire Meany and Emma Eager with the support of an editorial panel – see further information below. A key event run by the organisation is an annual Well Festival of Arts and Wellbeing taking place in Waterford each year. They also run the *Iontas Arts and Mental Health programme* which is a participatory arts programme engaging a range of artforms for clients of six mental health settings in Waterford. For further information contact <http://www.waterfordhealingarts.com/contact/>

Artsandhealth.ie

A national arts and health website www.artsandhealth.ie was launched in October 2011 and provides a resource and focal point for the dynamic field of arts and health in Ireland. The website includes resource documents, case studies, a directory of contacts, perspectives on a range of issues and current news.

[artsandhealth.ie](http://www.artsandhealth.ie) was developed by the Waterford Healing Arts Trust (WHAT) and Create, the national development agency for collaborative arts in social and community contexts. The development phase of the website was funded by the Arts Council of Ireland as an important element of its Arts and Health policy and the website is currently funded by the Arts Council and the Health Service Executive (HSE). The website is managed by WHAT with the support of an independent editorial panel and provides information, support, advice and news, and generates discussion between artists, arts organisations, health service users, carers, healthcare professionals and others interested in the dynamic area of arts and health.

¹¹ The Professional Development Modular Course in Arts and Health was funded by the Arts Council.

Local Authority Arts Officers

The first Local Authority Arts Officer in Ireland was appointed in 1985 in County Clare and today there are over 31 local authority arts officers supported by the Arts Council. In 1995, the Association of Local Authority Arts Officers was established to be a representative body for the Local Authority Arts Officers and to serve as a forum for discussion on the development and support of its members' work. It is a professional association with a voluntary executive who meet quarterly with an agreed agenda to share information and explore areas of development.

Prior to the publication of Partnership for the Arts in 2006, Local Authority Arts Officers had already started to include aspects of arts and health in their programme of work as a means of addressing greater participation in the arts. In 2007 Kildare County Council Arts Service appointed an Arts in Health Specialist, the first and to date, only appointment of its kind in the Republic of Ireland. In some counties such as Sligo and Mayo, this strategic focus led to long term collaborative initiatives with the HSE and in 2007, Sligo Arts Service was the first Local Authority to publish a participatory arts and health strategy. This collaboration has continued with the development of REFLECT Lab, a co-mentoring initiative bringing together artists and healthcare workers in the North West, delivered in partnership with Sligo Arts Service, HSE West, and Helium, an arts and health company.

49 North Street and The Well-Being Network

A new dedicated space in the centre of Skibbereen in West Cork has been established. 49 North Street aims to create a space, a melting pot whereby learning, therapeutic activities, creative expression and diversity can flourish. It's about taking risks and building upon people's strengths, working together to create a community where recovery and wellbeing thrive. The centre provides a drop-in service and is home to a number of arts-based activities such as Open Door which provides a relaxing and enjoyable way to explore the potential of music for positive well-being and is supported by Cork Education & Training Programme. Open Door takes place on the first Friday of each month at 49 North Street, Skibbereen.

Also operating in the West Cork area is The Wellbeing Network which is a new mobile service based in West Cork aimed at encouraging individuals to improve and protect their health and wellbeing. The Wellbeing Network aims to move away from a medical model of mental health and work more with a preventative model – recognising the need for individuals to access non-clinical / medical resources to enable them to improve their health and wellbeing. Working in conjunction with the HSE's West Cork Mental Health Services and National Learning Network, The Wellbeing Network serves a population of approximately 59,444 (Census 2016) across West Cork Communities. The network promotes the five ways of well-being which are to be active, take notice, keep learning, connect and give. For further information on 49 North Street and other community wellbeing initiatives developed by Cork/Kerry Mental Health Services visit <https://thewellbeingnetwork.ie/>

The new centre in Skibbereen and the Wellbeing Network were supported by Cork Arts and Health Programme (CAHP) which is a HSE initiative based in the South Lee (Cork) Community Work Department. CAHP aims to promote the arts and health agenda within the health and related NGO sectors. It operates in the context of a social model of health and focuses on contextualising the work vis-à-vis issues such as social inclusion, health and wellbeing, community development etc.

Current Best Practice in Arts and Health - Ireland

As part of Theatre and Film for Positive Mental Health and Well-Being five partner organisations carried out research on examples of current best practice for using creative processes to promote positive mental health. The following are examples from Ireland:

- Acting for the Future implemented by Smashing Times
- First Fortnight Creative Arts Festival
- Jigsaw, formally Headstrong
- A Face in the Crowd - Discover Recover Theatre Project - Wexford & Carlow Mental Health Associations in partnership with the HSE Mental Health Services
- Mental Health Ireland
- Illuminate

Current Best Practice, Ireland: Acting for the Future implemented by Smashing Times

As a professional arts organisation, Smashing Times have worked for many years now in the area of participatory arts practice in health and health care settings. As part of the company's ongoing **Acting for the Future programme** Smashing Times have implemented a range of successful projects across Ireland and Northern Ireland using the arts to promote active health lifestyles, positive mental health and well-being and suicide prevention. The company has conducted this work since 2005 in partnership with the Samaritans and currently work with a range of organisations including the Samaritans, ESB Energy for Generations Fund, Arklow Mental Health Week and Sea Change. Smashing Times engage with people from all ages and cultures with a view to promoting access to high quality arts practice and to promoting each person's health and wellbeing within an inclusive, respectful environment.

The award-winning **Acting for the Future** uses participative drama workshops, professional performances and post-show panel discussions with counsellors and clinical psychologists to promote active healthy lifestyles, positive mental health and well-being and suicide prevention. The project is implemented by Smashing Times in partnership with the Samaritans with assistance from a panel of advisors and is delivered in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland with second level schools, universities and with a range of youth and adult groups and the general public. The project reaches over 3,000 young people and adults annually. Participants are senior cycle secondary school students (transition, fifth and sixth class in the Republic of Ireland) and senior cycle in Northern Ireland; students from all years at university level and young people and adults from youth and community groups and the general public.

The aim of the project is to **promote active healthy lifestyles, positive mental health and well-being and suicide prevention** through creative processes and to work with partners and stakeholders to promote the use of creative arts practice to develop learning in relation to the importance of looking after your positive mental health and well-being.

Acting for the Future comprises three main elements: Participative Drama Workshops for adults or young people; a performance of original plays (dramatic monologues on positive mental health and suicide prevention) which are followed by a post-show panel discussion with counsellors, psychologists and invited guest speakers; and, in keeping with best practice, the third element is a full support structure put in place for all events.

The professional theatre performance is the highly acclaimed *Testimonies* by Mary Moynihan and Paul Kennedy and the workshops were designed by Mary Moynihan and Paul Kennedy, with advice from Senator Joan Freeman, founder of Pieta House, and Karen Ward, Clinical Psychotherapist.

The project was developed and continues to be supported by a **panel of advisors** consisting of qualified personnel in the area of suicide prevention and counselling. The **Advisory Panel Members for Acting for the Future** are: Dr John Connolly, Irish Association of Suicidology; Dr Ella Arensman, Researcher, National Suicide Research Foundation; Representative of the Dublin Samaritans; Karen Ward, Holistic Psychotherapist; and Eimear Burke, Counselling Psychotherapist. For Smashing Times: Mary Moynihan, Freda Manweiler and Jenny Macdonald.

Original Pilot Project in 2005

Acting for the Future was originally set up in 2005 by Smashing Times Theatre and Film Company in association with the Samaritans and Irish Association of Suicidology with support from Joan Freeman, founder of Pieta House. The initial project used participative drama workshops and a professional theatre performance to raise awareness of issues surrounding suicide and suicide prevention.

The project consisted of ten participative drama workshops conducted with a range of organisations in which participants were facilitated to explore, through the medium of drama, issues surrounding suicide and suicide prevention. Ten interviews were conducted with people who had lost loved ones to suicide or who had been through a suicidal crisis themselves and survived. The ten interviews were used to create an original script *Testimonies*, addressing issues surrounding suicide and bereavement by suicide, *Testimonies* was presented as a professional theatre performance for five performances from 15-19 November, 2005, at The Helix, DCU, Collins Avenue, Glasnevin, Dublin 9. Performances at The Helix were followed by post-show discussions during which audience members were invited to discuss the issues raised with invited guest speakers.

A drama workshop model was designed by Mary Moynihan with support from Joan Freeman, founder of Pieta House, Paul Kennedy, arts facilitator and Karen Ward, counsellor. Ten participative drama workshops were implemented with second level schools and communities and an Information Pack was delivered at the workshops. A Documentation Brochure detailing a Model of Best Practice was created and made available as a tool for using creative processes to promote positive mental health and suicide prevention.

Over 1,000 people benefited directly from this project in its first year. Overall project outputs were ten participative drama workshops with the distribution of an information pack at each workshop, the presentation of five professional performances at The Helix theatre, Dublin and five outreach performances on tour with all performances followed by post-show discussions with invited guest speakers, the making of a video on the performance of *Testimonies* and the presentation of a documentation brochure and model of best practice.

Following the run in the Helix Theatre, Smashing Times were invited by the Samaritans to present *Testimonies* at the launch of their Suicide Awareness Month at the Bank of Ireland Arts Centre, Dublin on 28 January 2006 attended by the Lord Mayor of Dublin at the time, Councillor Catherine Byrne. Following the excellent media coverage of the play and public attendance at the shows, Smashing Times received many requests to deliver workshops and performances at various venues and schools around the country. Smashing Times went on to present the performances and project at a range of conferences and events and has toured on an annual basis. There has been a great response to the project from schools, support organisations and individuals. The project is now implemented on a yearly basis with support from the Samaritans and a range of organisations and continues to this day in Ireland, Northern Ireland and across Europe.

Successful Developments

Acting for the Future was independently evaluated as part of Arklow Mental Health Week and the evaluation stated that the project was 'an example of "Best Practice" in how it was organized and delivered'. Feedback from formal and informal evaluations indicate that the work was of a high quality and that people had access to a quality arts experience while developing a stronger awareness of the issues raised.

The evaluations identified that there was a quality, empowering experience within each drama workshop and from the performances and post-show discussions. Most importantly, feedback and evaluations strongly indicate that awareness of the issues surrounding suicide and suicide prevention has increased as a result of attending the drama workshops, performances and post-show discussions. Drama and theatre have proved to be a powerful and accessible medium for dealing with such a sensitive subject.

In 2018 in partnership with Trinity College Dublin, Smashing Times were delighted to expand **Acting for the Future** on a European wide basis with the implementation of **Theatre and Film for Positive Mental Health**, a two-year project involving five partner organisations from across Europe, supported by Erasmus+. The five partners are Smashing Times Theatre Company, Dublin, Ireland (lead partner); EURORESO, Naples, Italy, www.euroreso.eu; Biedriba Eurofortis, Riga, Latvia, www.eurofortis.lv; Fundacion Intrass, Valladolid, Spain; www.intrass.es and Trinity College Dublin, Ireland, www.tcd.ie.

The European partnership project promotes an exchange of good practice for adult educators and artists in relation to using creative processes to promote positive mental health and coping strategies for stress and anxiety, and brings together the skills and expertise of five partner organisations in order to create high quality outputs that can be implemented on a Europe wide basis. The project results in the creation of an innovative e-book, video demonstration and short film, using creative processes of theatre and film to promote positive mental health and well-being and to develop coping skills for handling stress and anxiety. A key output is the creation film *The Big No*, a film about a young person's experiences of social anxiety in today's modern society released in 2019.

In 2019, Smashing Times and the Samaritans with support from the HSE National Office for Social Inclusion were delighted to develop Acting for the Future to incorporate working with refugees from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds, using creative processes to promote intercultural health with a focus on positive mental health and social inclusion. The work is conducted as part of **Acting for the Future: Theatre for Positive Mental Health** and promotes an intercultural approach to delivery of health care support services in an equal, accessible and effective way, acknowledging and valuing the diversity of all service users.

The work uses creative processes in an innovative and accessible way to promote social inclusion and the health and well-being of all people equally. Participants have access to a quality arts experience creating a safe and welcoming space and a fun and engaging way to explore positive mental health and active healthy lifestyles.

In 2019 Smashing Times expanded **Acting for the Future** using the arts to promote positive mental health and Suicide Prevention with members of the Traveller and Roma communities in Ireland. This work is supported by the Dormant Accounts Fund and HSE National Office for Social Inclusion and implemented by Smashing Times in partnership with Tallaght Travellers Community Development Project, Travact, Kildare Traveller Action, and Musicantia.

Performance of *Testimonies*

The professional theatre performance for **Acting for the Future** is the highly acclaimed *Testimonies* by Mary Moynihan and Paul Kennedy that consists of dramatic monologues adapted from the experiences of those who have lost loved ones to suicide, and from the experiences of those who have been through a suicidal crisis and survived. Each performance is followed by a post-show panel discussion with a counselling psychologist and invited guest speakers from the Samaritans and other organisations. Audience members are invited to discuss the issues raised by the performances. *Testimonies* consists of five monologues as follows:

A Day Out by Paul Kennedy tells the story of two friends in their twenties and their last day together. It is directed by Bairbre Ní Chaoimh and performed by Adam Traynor.

In One Breath, written and directed by Mary Moynihan, is a portrait of a woman in the eye of the storm, battling mental illness and how she finds ways to cope. It is performed by Evelyn Shaw.

Is There Anything We Can Do? by Paul Kennedy is a dramatic performance where a mother fights the spectre of suicide hanging over her family. It is directed by Ena May and performed by Margaret Toomey. The mother visits a counsellor as she tries to find answers to her son's death by suicide.

Do Not Go Gentle by Paul Kennedy (premiered at Project Arts Centre, Dublin, November 2014) is performed by Gillian Hackett and directed by Bairbre Ní Chaoimh. The frailty and resilience of a woman's response to marital meltdown is portrayed as she confronts the absurdity of her life in the context of the economic downturn.

If You Could Read My Mind by Paul Kennedy, the story of a young woman experiencing self-harm and what she can do as part of her recovery. Directed by Bairbre Ni Chaoimh and performed by Róisín McAtamney.

Successes and Endorsements

'The actors have the gift of immediacy and authenticity and pull the audience in... credible and compelling... outstanding performances... crafted, nuanced, searing... the monologues (are) compelling... moving... this play should find an engaged and passionate audience for its sensitive storytelling.' – Village Magazine

'Smashing Times Theatre Company has a deserved reputation for exploring social issues with sensitivity and in depth... the plays are true theatre, reaching out and embracing their listeners.' – The Irish Times

'An example of "Best Practice" in how it was organised and delivered, if every activity on mental health was hitting the same level as Acting for the Future then you would have a great week.' – Independent Evaluation, Arklow Mental Health Week

'I always knew promotion of mental health was important but now I believe that it should be promoted even more and more workshops and performances like this should be available for everyone.' – Student

'The performance was excellent and the young men could really relate to the content of the monologues. We want to say that we really appreciate the involvement of Smashing Times Theatre in our school and in particular with our transition years, and we hope this work continues.' – Secondary School Teacher

'This work is excellent...we don't do enough emotional training (in schools) and that is why drama is so important, particularly for young people in schools.' – Secondary School Principal

‘The Department of Education, they should fund this show to go into every school in the country, it is excellent and extremely important.’ – Audience Member

‘Smashing Times approaches a difficult subject with honesty, integrity and sensitivity. “Testimonies” pulls no punches about the devastating effect of suicide and offers a non-judgmental insight into what brings people to consider it an option. The engaging monologues, though sad, are not depressing, but in a way life-affirming. This production and the discussion afterwards should be compulsory for all young people. It is Theatre-in-Education at its Best.’ – Maeve Ingoldsby, writer and playwright, endorsing the work of Smashing Times

“The overall feedback was that Smashing Times was the most positively evaluated of all events, deeming it as the example of Very Good Practice!” Barbara Duffy, psychologist, Arklow Mental Health Week

The following are quotes from performances and workshops:

‘I am still in shock at how quiet and attentive they (young men) were to the performance. Some members of the audience came today to play pool and I told them about the performance of Testimonies and they agreed to take a look. They were told they could leave after the first monologue but they stayed and also asked questions in the post show discussion. I have never seen this group so attentive and quiet. They usually heckle people giving presentations. It was great to have the show here because suicide is such a prevalent issue in Ballyfermot, every young person in that audience has been affected by a death by suicide in the community, and to have the discussion afterwards with the panel members, I know it has helped them a lot. I was so surprised, but so glad, that they got so involved in asking questions and I know they have gotten a lot out of it. Presenting the show also brought young people in to the centre who would normally not come here, and as a result of the post show discussion I now know they want to be involved on a volunteer basis. It’s great. Please include us in future work plans. It is very impressive work!’
– Shane O’ Connor, Youth Worker, The Base, Ballyfermot, Dublin.

‘Having been involved with Smashing Times on their highly successful “Acting for the Future” I am still many years later in awe of Testimonies – the 3 mini plays they wrote and perform again and again for Irish communities throughout our island. 12 real life stories are woven together to allow the viewer to not only see but also understand what goes in the mind of those contemplating suicide and those left in the aftermath. The actors depict these harrowing yet also hopeful plays that are a true testimony to those whose lives have been cut short and those who mourn still. I applaud the wisdom of amalgamating the research material into 3 distinct and interwoven pieces. A young man tells of the last day of his best friend, a professional woman explains why she attempted suicide and an older mother comes to terms with her son’s death by his own hand. It is fascinating to watch the heartfelt reaction of the audience to each powerful piece. Yet again Smashing Times hit the target and create, educate and inspire so many. . . After each performance of Testimonies a panel of local experts are on hand to answer any questions that have arisen from the audience. In many ways this is the key point of the theatre pieces – an opportunity for people to speak out not just about what they have seen but often what they have witnessed in their families, among their friendships and in their communities. As one of a panel of Counselling Psychotherapists I have been privileged to have sat on many of these panels and am amazed by the insight and wisdom gained from their stories and the advice given by fellow panel members of local Samaritans and Counsellors and the actors themselves. In my 18-year career as a Counselling Psychotherapist the ability to respond to the audience’s questions, to ease their minds and give helpful tips on how to maintain a healthy mental state is humbling. Smashing Times and their magnificent work are to be applauded and funded generously. This is life saving work and needs to continue for the health of our people especially our youth.’ – Karen Ward, Clinical Psychotherapist

'We believe that drama is an extremely effective way of giving teenagers permission to ask some very real questions on the ever expanding issues that surround suicide and self-harm. Using dramatic personalisations means that people can focus their questions and thoughts on the actor's character rather than on their own personal experience, thus allowing for more open and wide-ranging questions. The monologues are extremely effective in expressing the multitude of feelings experienced by those bereaved by suicide and of those with suicidal thoughts. It is very important that they continue to run in schools, youth clubs and theatres around the country.' – The Samaritans

In March 2010 Smashing Times were delighted to be asked by the Abbey Theatre to present an Acting for the Future workshop in conjunction with the Abbey Theatre's production of Thomas Kilroy's *Christ Deliver Us*. The workshop was attended by the director Wayne Jordan and the writer Thomas Kilroy who stated that "Smashing Times is a wonderful endeavour" and that he wishes the company every success with future work.

'It was the best workshop I have ever been to in my life. Thanks to you all there and the great work you do.'
– Workshop Participant, Abbey Theatre, Dublin.

'I thought Smashing Times did a very good job. . . . the day left everyone with a lot of food for thought, and pushed everyone in ways that were very good. I'd definitely work with them again, and would encourage others to do so.' – Patrick Lonergan, for Abbey Theatre, Dublin.

'Smashing Times is a wonderful endeavour and I wish you well with all your future work.' – Thomas Kilroy, Playwright.

Feedback from Young People and Adults on performances and workshops:

'It was deeply moving and so touched me in a deeper way that helps connect with humanity and feelings of love.'

'I always knew promotion of mental health was important but now I believe that it should be promoted even more and more workshops and performances like this should be available for everyone.'

'It showed a more realistic situation and offered information on what to do.'

'I thought that having the counsellors there explaining their work and experience really helped our understanding.'

'Really made me think.'

'Serious things young people have to deal with.'

'The actor was great – very emotional performance made it real.'

'We'd love more stuff like this!'

'I felt as if he was really speaking to me.'

'Very important to think and talk about it.'

'The performer was deadly!'

'This is the first time we've had something like this here. It was great.'

'I really enjoyed it and felt that it was very helpful to me...thanks for coming along and giving us this opportunity.'

'I had a lot of fun. Thank you and come back to visit us.'

'I really enjoyed it.'

'It was brilliant, I love it.'

'Loved it – excellent.'

'It was very fun and interesting. I enjoyed it and would take part again.'

'I had a brill (sic) time and programmes like these should be brought into every school.'

'I thought it was great, it was a brilliant experience and will stay with me for life.'

'I think using drama to discuss important issues is a good idea because it has a greater impact when you see things happen than when you hear of something.'

'Well Done, it was excellent, very, very, moving.'

'I felt that this workshop was excellent as it dealt with a serious issue in a positive and light way.'

'Thank you, I really enjoyed it.'

'I thought the workshop was a great help to me.'

'Thanks for the information about mental health and suicide prevention.'

'I like the idea of looking at serious issues in a creative way. Somehow that approach seems less intrusive.'

'I thought it was brilliant because we all had to work as a group and help each other.'

'I enjoyed it very much and I think it was really fun. There were so many activities that we have learned, how to concentrate and how to trust each other.'

'The techniques that were taught made me feel more confident about myself and made it easier for me to talk in front of a large crowd.'

'I thought the drama workshop was very good, I really enjoyed the trust exercises and I felt really relaxed and was really able to put all my trust in the other person.'

'I thought it was a great experience and I was glad to be part of it.'

The issues surrounding suicide are sensitive and sometimes difficult to talk about. However, difficult or sensitive issues can be raised, explored, and highlighted in a creative way through the medium of drama and theatre. This project is innovative in that it uses drama and theatre as artistic and creative processes in their own right and makes use of those processes to raise awareness of specific issues. Drama and theatre are powerful and accessible mediums for dealing with such a sensitive subject and evaluations indicate the ongoing success of this project. Smashing Times Theatre and Film Company continues to receive a great response to this project and a high demand from schools and organisations for the workshops and performances.

For further information please see

<http://www.smashingtimes.ie/acting-for-the-future/>

Current Best Practice, Ireland: Jigsaw, formally Headstrong

Headstrong was founded in 2006 with one mission – to change how Ireland thinks about the mental health of young people. The organisation supports and strengthens services for young people aged 12 – 25. In 2016 the organisation was renamed Jigsaw. The work of Jigsaw is to intervene early to support young people’s mental health. The early intervention model provides tangible supports for young people before they reach the point of acquiring a formal mental health diagnosis. Jigsaw operates 13 Jigsaw Services in communities across Ireland providing mental health support to young people. Jigsaw Services provide young people aged 12-25 with a place they can visit for free and confidential support from trained mental health professionals. In an effort to change the way Ireland thinks about and responds to young people’s mental health, Jigsaw, has an established a Youth Advisory Panel. The following are examples of Jigsaw programmes:

It’s Time to Start Talking for young people aged 13-17 (ITTST)

It’s Time to Start Talking is a 40 minute mental health promotion workshop for young people aged 13-17 years. It forms part of the Jigsaw objective of engaging with communities to promote mental health, with the overall aim of changing how Ireland thinks about youth mental health. The interactive workshop has been designed to encourage young people to talk with someone they trust when they feel, anxious, stressed, worried or down. Learning Outcomes are to ensure that young people will:

- Have a deeper understanding of mental health
- Have an awareness of what helps and what hurts young people’s mental health
- Be more aware of the importance of help-seeking.

In 2016, 30 Understanding Youth Mental Health and 12 Minding Youth Mental Health workshops were carried out nationally, with audiences of 426 and 145 respectively. There were 60 Supporting Young People’s Mental Health workshops with 1,901 in attendance and 420 It’s Time To Start Talking workshops with 16,346 in attendance, a marked increase on previous years.

Following the development and testing of the Peer Education Training Programme in 2014, a further 237 Peer Educators across 35 schools, aged 15 to 17 years, were selected from across five Jigsaw Service areas in 2016 – Clondalkin, Tallaght, Dublin 15, Offaly and North Fingal. Peer Educators were trained to deliver the It’s Time to Start Talking workshop, with the objectives of promoting positive attitudes to mental health and encouraging young people to talk to someone they trust when feeling worried or down. The evaluation of the programme for 2016 continued to find significant positive changes in participants’ mental health knowledge and beliefs about help-seeking, with overall findings suggesting that participation in the programme is enjoyable and beneficial for young people.

Jigsaw Offaly - Write Your Mind – A play about Youth Mental Health

Jigsaw’s early intervention model provides tangible supports for young people before they reach the point of acquiring a formal mental health diagnosis. Jigsaw operates 13 Services in communities across Ireland providing mental health support to young people. The services provide young people aged 12-25 with a place they can visit for free and confidential support from trained mental health professionals. Each of the 13 services has a Youth Advisory Panel (YAP), some of which have explored mental health and well-being through the arts. The most noticeable is Write Your Mind in Jigsaw Offaly, created in collaboration with local arts group Offaly Youth Theatre. The aim of the programme was to bring to life a number of issues facing young people today and to present the issues on stage in the form of monologues. It was later preformed as part of First Fortnight.

Jigsaw Offaly, in association with Offaly Youth Theatre, presented Write Your Mind, a play about Youth Mental Health, at the Birr Theatre and Arts Centre, county Offaly on Thursday December 10, 2015. The blurb about the play says:

*Ciara finds something heavy behind the front door one day. What is it?
Amy gets freaked out by balloons, bullies, best friends. All can induce a panic attack, anywhere, anytime.
Jamie is not depressed. He just gets a bit down after a session, he says.
Just three of the characters you will meet in this powerful collection of monologues, often as hilarious as they are stark. Six writers, under the mentorship of playwright, Eugene O' Brien, have interpreted what it's like to grow up as a teenager in a not so perfect world.*

How the play came about

At the beginning of 2015, Jigsaw Offaly and the Offaly Youth Theatre embarked on a collaboration to shine a light on youth mental health through the medium of theatre. Angela Ryan White from Jigsaw Offaly commented, 'It's a wonderful opportunity to raise awareness of youth mental health and open people's eyes to the reality of living with a mental health issue. There is something about the visceral nature of theatre that allows people to relate to issues in a way that is intrinsically different to how we react in a more academic or clinical environment.' Funding for the project came from a number of sources, including Offaly County Council, Tullamore Credit Union, HSE Lottery Grant and the Arts Council.

The project was also made possible by the support of the venues Birr Theatre and Arts Centre and Dunamais Arts Centre. 'The level of investment and support from the community has been incredibly inspiring,' says Angela. 'The icing on the cake was the involvement of Eugene O' Brien.'

Eugene, a native of Edenderry, County Offaly, has had national success as a playwright and screenwriter behind hits such as Pure Mule, Eden, and Red Rock. He came on board as a mentor to guide the writing and editing process. 'Youth mental health is such a vital area, it seems a more difficult time to grow up in with young people being bombarded on all sides,' says Eugene. 'The work Jigsaw Offaly do is brilliant, and I was delighted to play a part in the Write Your Mind project.'

The performance was inspired by young people for young people. Jigsaw Offaly's Youth Advisory Panel are a group of young people from the local community who provide advice and support on developing better mental health services. They've been involved throughout the play's development. They helped come up with the initial plan looking at funding opportunities, marketing, potential partners, timing, and outcomes. Then, working closely with Eugene, script submissions were invited and shortlisted. 'The response was overwhelming with entries coming from every corner of Ireland and beyond. The reach of the project even extended to the UK and America,' says Angela.

After reviewing the shortlisted scripts with mental health professionals in Headstrong and Jigsaw, a final six scripts were selected covering a variety of themes including anxiety, bullying, self-harm, domestic violence, sexual identity and depression. 'One of the most exciting parts of the project was the workshops, where we brought together the Youth Advisory Panel, the writers, Offaly Youth Theatre actors and scriptwriters to further develop the scripts over two intense days,' says Angela. The actors performed the scripts, with the young people advising the writers on how to include references that were more in keeping with how they would speak or react in a given situation. 'Involving young people in the process gave the writers such clear insight and everyone commented on the cathartic quality of working in an open environment. For writers used to working in confinement, it was quite an experience to be taking notes from teenagers who were succinct, precise and without filter when it came to giving critique,' says Angela.

The six monologues the performance contains are:

- The Mystery Of The Missing Mars Bar by Caroline Bracken
- Man Up by Andrew Joseph Brown
- Make Up Your Mind by Rory Duffy
- School Tour by Lorna Kelly Dalton
- Leap by Alison Martin
- The Help by Niall Cleary

The feedback from all the pieces of work is that the young people (16-25 years old) really enjoyed it and want more opportunities to create pieces of work.

Jigsaw Offaly is a Youth Mental Health service for 12-25 year olds living in Co. Offaly, where young people can avail of one-to-one support with a Clinical Support Worker. Jigsaw Offaly is a FREE service which has helped more than 855 young people since its inception in 2012. Headstrong – The National Centre for Youth Mental Health established Jigsaw Offaly as part of a network of thirteen programmes across Ireland, which aims to ensure that every young person in Ireland has someone to talk to and someone to turn to. As well as providing one-to-one support, Jigsaw Offaly is also working within the community to educate young people and adults about Youth Mental Health and to break down the associated stigma.

Current Best Practice, Ireland: A Face in the Crowd - Discover Recover Theatre Project - Wexford & Carlow Mental Health Associations in partnership with the HSE Mental Health Services

A Face in the Crowd is a performance inspired by true life stories of mental health difficulties. *‘The real human experience of mental health difficulties are all around us, but we often don’t see it. It is rarely spoken about and the details of the impact on individuals and families are rarely shared. This project through the sharing of sincere true life stories offers not only a rare glimpse into a hidden world, but also offers enlightenment and hope.’*

The origins of this project stemmed from experimental drama workshops hosted by the Wexford Arts Centre as part of the HSE Occupational Therapy Programme for Mental Health. As part of the project, the participants or story tellers involved were individuals with lived experience of mental health difficulties, and they contributed their stories to the production. The model of the project was to invite participants to engage with the topic of mental health and suicide through the mediums of:

- Live drama performance
- Post-performance workshop facilitated by mental health professionals
- Project booklet

Initial performances took place in the Wexford Arts Centre between December 2015 and January 2016. In November 2016, a schools version toured secondary schools in Wexford County. In 2017 public performances also took place in Carlow and in 2018, as part of First Fortnight Festival. The project story tellers participated in the original public performances in roles both on and off stage and remain on the steering committee, ensuring the project stays loyal to their original motivations for sharing their stories.

The project is led by Paula Lowney and Mairead Connaughton – occupational therapists from the Wexford/Waterford Mental Health Services and Niall O’Muirí, a retired community psychiatric nurse, with the support of actor and director Jim Roche. The schools production is supported by a follow up mental health education workshop in schools, and printed materials based on the drama content delivered by mental health professionals (approximately 45 mins duration).

The key aims of the play and its workshop is to:

- Facilitate learning in relation to mental health difficulties.
- Raise awareness in relation to mental health difficulties and recovery in a safe and meaningful way.
- Promote the concept and role of seeking relevant supports to recover from crisis.

Current Best Practice, Ireland: Saolta Arts – Formerly Galway University Hospitals Arts Trust

Saolta Arts, which was formally launched in August 2019 is the new name for the arts programme originally set up at University Hospital Galway and Merlin Park Hospital in 2003 and which has now been extended to include the other hospitals in the Saolta Group - Roscommon, Portlincula, Mayo, Sligo and Letterkenny University Hospitals. The Arts and Health programme provides a multi-disciplinary programme of events and activities, including exhibitions, participative workshops, music, theatre and poetry making across the hospitals.

Saolta Arts is a part of the Saolta University Health Care Group that provides acute and specialist hospital services to the West and North West of Ireland – in counties Galway, Mayo, Roscommon, Sligo, Leitrim, Donegal and adjoining counties. Saolta University Health Care Group comprises of 6 hospitals across 7 sites including Letterkenny University Hospital, Mayo University Hospital, Merlin Park University Hospital, Portlincula University Hospital, Roscommon University Hospital, Sligo University Hospital and University Hospital Galway. The Group's Academic Partner is NUI Galway. The vision of the centre is to be a leading academic Hospital Group providing excellent integrated patient-centred care delivered by skilled caring staff. The Saolta guiding principles are care, compassion, trust and learning.

According to Margaret Flannery Saolta Arts Director “Our participative arts programme is facilitated by professional artists who tailor workshops to the individual needs and interests of patients while drawing from their own arts practices. In Care for the Elderly and Rehabilitation contexts, this fosters what can still flourish when other things seem to be fading. The creative process promotes independence otherwise limited by ill health and the creative achievements of participants can help them to re-evaluate their abilities in the face of change. In Paediatrics, our workshops nurture the imagination of young patients and their siblings to allay fears and make positive memories of their time in hospital.”¹²

Saolta Arts was originally Galway University Hospitals Arts Trust which was first set up as an Arts Committee in 2003 with a long-term loan from the Hunt Collection, which comprised over 100 works of Modern Irish Art. Artworks from the loan included the lithograph and brush prints of *An Táin*. by Louis le Brocquy, works by Alice Maher, Samuel Walsh, Michael Cullen, Michael Mulcahy, Geraldine O'Reilly and many other prominent Irish artists. The original aim was to explore the role of the arts in the promotion of healing and wellbeing through a multi-disciplinary arts programme in order to promote greater links between the hospital and the community. The trust promoted high quality, creative programming with artists and the arts community as a means of empowering the hospital community to express themselves creatively, improve their quality of life and bring about positive changes in the hospital environment and the wellbeing of the hospital community. Key aims were to increase levels of access and participation in high quality participative arts programmes that are suited to individual or group needs, paying attention to the inclusion of the most vulnerable, i.e. patients; and to establish effective structures, supports and services that will promote the value of arts and health, enhance best practice, inform planning and policy within the hospital structure.

Since then the arts programme has expanded to include twelve temporary exhibitions each year. Staff in the hospitals create artworks for permanent display in public areas and the University Hospital Galway arts corridor has become a site for a yearly rolling programme of exhibitions. According to Chris Kane, General Manager Galway University Hospitals ‘the arts can create healthcare environments that are welcoming, reassuring, stimulating. Feedback from our patients and staff confirms the importance of the arts which humanises the clinical setting for everyone.’¹³

¹² <https://www.saolta.ie/news/mrs-sabina-higgins-officially-launched-saolta-arts-and-offset-intergenerational-printmaking>

¹³ <http://www.artsandhealth.ie/directory/galway-university-hospitals-arts-trust/>

Programmes to date have include **Poems for Patience** – displayed throughout the waiting areas, **Art Angel** – a programme of participatory art workshops in the Paediatric and Geriatric Departments and activities including musical recitals, drama workshops and publications of the memories of patients in the Geriatric unit.

The Offset project from 2019 was an ‘intergenerational print project orientated around experiments with printmaking practices of sharing and creating a sense of belonging and place. It was inspired by the principal of mutual benefit and exchange of tacit knowledge between generations and explores how we share experiences from a distance’.¹⁴ The project involved printmaker Aoife Barrett and renowned Aosdána artist, Margaret Irwin West who worked together to share skills and experiences. A programme of workshops were then developed and implemented in Paediatric outpatient waiting areas and attended by siblings of young patients attending the hospital. ‘Children made editions of postcards as they waited for appointments and, in turn, doctors reported on the proud, smiling faces that entered their consultation rooms. Others received postcards thanking them for their excellent care’.¹⁵

¹⁴ <http://www.artsandhealth.ie/directory/galway-university-hospitals-arts-trust/>

¹⁵ <https://www.saolta.ie/news/mrs-sabina-higgins-officially-launched-saolta-arts-and-offset-intergenerational-printmaking>

Current Best Practice, Ireland: First Fortnight Festival

First Fortnight is a charity-based organisation that challenges mental health prejudice through arts and cultural action. Since 2012, First Fortnight has held a creative arts festival in the first two weeks of January. The aims and objectives of the festival include:

- To make the First Fortnight of each year synonymous with mental health awareness, challenging prejudice and ending stigma
- To create a consistent space in the cultural calendar where citizens can be inspired through arts events and experiences to talk about mental health issues in a non-scripted manner
- To utilise unscripted conversation to change people's perceptions about the ordinary experience of a mental health problem and the less ordinary experience of mental ill health
- To develop research findings from Festival Events to aid policy makers in the development of a greater understanding of the complex maintaining factors affecting mental health prejudice and discrimination.

In January 2018 more than 100 events across 17 counties took place as part of the festival. These events challenged mental health prejudice through arts and cultural action, and the programme included visual art, literature, spoken word, theatre, music, film, comedy, workshops and discussion. The festival included music, spoken word, theatre, visual art and a range of discussion and debating sessions. Examples of the latter include Mental Health Reform joining forces with A Lust For Life, the movement seeking to change the way we talk about mental health in Ireland, and they held discussion events to explore questions such as #InOurHourOfNeed: What is the state of Ireland's mental health services? How can you help? Conversation Salons were also held at various locations around the country to bring together different kinds of people for uplifting conversation on a range of topics. The conversations took place in a relaxed café style setting over tea and coffee where participants can choose from a conversation menu of thought-provoking questions. The conversations were hosted by Life Coach Heather Bourke.

As part of the First Fortnight festival in 2019, Smashing Times, in partnership with Trinity College Dublin, presented an evening of entertainment and discussion using the arts to promote Positive Mental Health and Well-Being. The event, which sold out, featured performances, music, a film screening, and panel discussion on the arts and positive mental health and well-being.

Comperer for the Evening was Dil Wickremasinghe, journalist, broadcaster and co-founder of Insight Matters. The event took place at The Long Room Hub, Trinity College, Dublin on Saturday 12 January 2019 at 7pm and featured a stunning and moving range of performances by Smashing Times. The performances were *A Day Out* by Paul Kennedy performed by Killian Filan and *Still I Rise* by Maya Angelou performed by Mary Duffin. Actor and singer Carla Ryan took to the stage to perform, followed by a very special guest appearance by Rónán Ó Snodaigh, musician, poet and lead vocalist with Kíla and Colm Ó Snodaigh, musician with Kíla.

The evening featured 'Setting the Stage: A Panel Discussion on the Arts and Positive Mental Health and Well-Being' followed by questions and answers with the audience. Panel members were Senator Joan Freeman, Independent Senator and founder of Pieta House, Professor Paul Fearon, Consultant Psychiatrist, St Patrick's University Hospital, Ger Ryan, actor, Mary Moynihan, writer, theatre and filmmaker, Artistic Director, Smashing Times and Lecturer, Conservatory of Music and Drama, TU Dublin and Rónán Ó Snodaigh, musician, poet and lead vocalist with Kíla.

Current Best Practice, Ireland: Mental Health Ireland

Mental Health Ireland (MHI) is a national voluntary organisation which was established in 1966 as the Mental Health Association of Ireland. MHI's aim is to promote positive mental health and wellbeing to all individuals and communities in Ireland. Operating as network of 92 Mental Health Associations throughout the country, all led by volunteers, Mental Health Associations fundraise to organise outings and events for those struggling with mental health in their communities. Below are two good practice examples.

Getting Creative with Mental Health

Over 1,500 Irish students drew and photographed what mental health means to them following a call for entries into Mental Health Ireland's Art and Photography Competition. Issues including anxiety, stress and depression can be difficult for teenagers to talk about. Feedback from teachers and students was this competition opened up a space for the students to think about their own mental health and those around them. Martin Rogan, CEO Mental Health Ireland said 'Young people in Ireland have taken a great interest in mental health and this is very obvious from the entries we have received this year. They are not just interested in their own mental health but show interest in supporting others. This competition creates a platform for discussion that provokes and evokes a deeper conversation'.

Expressions

Expressions is a competition for 4th, 5th and 6th year school classes run with second level schools across the country. In teams of four, students deliver a four minute performance depicting what mental health means to them. The performance takes place at a central location in front of their peers, teachers and parents. The Expression can be dance, music, short play, spoken work, presentation or song. anything Expressions encourages teenagers to explore and express mental health in a way that matters to them.

Current Best Practice, Ireland: Illuminate

Illuminate is a film and mental health programme that takes place as part of Cork Film Festival and is filmic, discursive, and educational. Illuminate brings together filmmakers; mental health service users, family members and friends; mental health service providers and the general festival-going public to discuss universal themes of mental health through the vehicle of film.

In addition to screening high-profile feature films, the Illuminate programme screens short films made by arts and mental health groups. For example, Arts + Minds (HSE Cork) and Headway have previously screened work. Illuminate events also involve panel discussions with invited speakers and audience members. Invited speakers have included:

- Professor Ivor Browne, former Chief Psychiatrist of the Eastern Health Board, and Professor Emeritus of Psychiatry at University College Dublin
- Dr. Pat Bracken, Consultant Psychiatrist, West Cork Mental Health Services
- Dr. Terry Lynch, author, mental health activist, physician and psychotherapist
- John Kastner, Emmy Award-winning documentary maker
- Terry McMahan, filmmaker
- Moe Dunford, actor
- Professor Harry Kennedy, Consultant Forensic Psychiatrist and Executive Clinical Director, National Forensic Mental Health Service, Central Mental Hospital, Dundrum
- Aine Hynes, Irish Mental Health Lawyers Association
- Sonja Heiss, filmmaker

- Richard Warden, Film Curator, Scottish Mental Health Art and Film Festival
- Dr Peter Byrne, Lecturer in Psychiatry at University College London, and Associate Registrar for Public Mental Health, Royal College of Psychiatrists

Many others, including mental health service users and service user representatives, also take part in the discussion events. The Illuminate programme aims to:

- use the medium of film to ignite meaningful public engagement - exploration, discussion and learning around mental health issues in Ireland and internationally;
- introduce Irish audiences to a range of high quality Irish and international films exploring issues of mental health that they may not otherwise have the opportunity to see;
- challenge the stereotyping and stigma connected with mental ill health;
- involve and highlight the voices and views of mental health service users and their family and friends, as well as health professionals, arts professionals, and the wider festival-going public.

The Illuminate programme is developed each year in partnership with Arts + Minds (HSE Cork) and other local partners. Cork Film Festival (CFF) selects films for screening and works with partners to select panellists and themes for discussion. When curating the Illuminate project, CFF aims to present a diverse range of cinematic work that explores varying issues of mental health and stigma. Through the mediums of feature, documentary and short form cinema, Illuminate explores and discusses these stories in a meaningful and engaging way. Films are considered not only on their cinematic value, but on how they treat these universal, human issues.

For example, *Hedi Schneider is Stuck*, directed by Sonja Heiss, which was screened as part of Illuminate 2015, explored how acute anxiety can strike any of us at any time. This film is unique in its 'lighthearted' tone and humanises issues surrounding anxiety and medicalisation in a way that many films that deal with mental health do not. The subsequent discussion included the Director, who shared that she had herself experienced mental ill health. This led to a particularly open discussion and exchange with panellists and audience about the realities and challenges of mental ill health in terms of stigma, productivity, relationships, creativity and the importance of contrast and humour in life and filmmaking.

The short film *One of Those Days* (directed by Arts + Minds with Colm Walsh) was also screened at the same event. *One of Those Days* was conceived, scripted, acted, shot and edited by HSE mental health service users and staff, working in collaboration with filmmakers Colm Walsh and Ed Cashman, with support from Cork Film Festival and Cork City Council. For this film, the group chose to reference mental health in an oblique way, but they also used humour to tell the story of a day in the life of a young man living in Cork.

One of the main approaches of the Illuminate programme is to use the universal and democratic nature of cinema as an artform to explore issues that are too often stigmatized and academicized. By framing these issues in the artistic context, Illuminate engenders a new type of inclusive discourse around these issues.

Illuminate involves three to four events each year, taking place as part of the Cork Film Festival. All events take place in the Triskel Arts Centre, Cork. Each event involves the screening of a feature film and may involve a short or series of short films, followed by a panel and audience discussion. Over 450 people attend each year. The programme is evaluated internally. Audience and panellists' views are captured following the event. Each year the Illuminate team reviews events and feedback in order to inform future planning.

Gaps in Services in Ireland and Ways Forward

While much work has been done and successes achieved in relation to the promotion of positive mental health and well-being in Ireland much more needs to be done. Amongst the general population, suicide and mental health problems are pressing issues in our society today, affecting many young people and adults. Both National and International studies suggest that 25% of most populations will experience a mental health difficulty at some point in their lives and that 44% of people in Ireland have had a direct experience of mental health problems (either their own, or within family/friends). It is stated in *Connecting for Life: Ireland's National Strategy to Reduce Suicide 2015-2020* that Ireland has the 4th highest suicide rate in the 15-19 age group across 31 European countries. Mental Health Reform further outlines that there is a need for more work on mental health promotion and early intervention programmes that can reduce the incidence of mental health difficulties.

Irish youth have higher rates of mental health problems than their peers in Europe and the US. According to research from the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI), one in five young Irish adults age 19-24 and one in six young people age 11-3 have experienced mental health problems. There is a pressing need for mental health work to be conducted in Ireland due to the high levels of suicide and self-harm. In 2015 the rate of suicide among the 15-24 age group was 12.8/100,000. It was more than six times higher among Males than among Females. In 2014, Ireland rank fourth of 31 European countries for suicide rates of young people aged 15-19. The National Self Harm Registry Ireland highlighted that in 2014 alone, 8,708 people were treated for self-harm episodes.

In 2015, 212,555 people in Ireland had depressive disorders (4.8% of population). According to *Social Anxiety Ireland* an estimated 16.8% of Irish people have social anxiety disorder. Mental health problems cost the Irish economy over 8.2 million euro annually - OECD Report More than one in six people in European countries have a mental health problem - OECD 2018

According to an OECD Report, 'Ireland has one of the highest rates of mental health illness in Europe, ranking joint third out of the 36 countries surveyed in the annual *Health at a Glance* report. Some 18.5 per cent of the Irish population was recorded as having a mental health disorder, such as anxiety, bipolar, schizophrenia, depression, or alcohol or drug use, in 2016. Rates of depression were also well above the European average for both men and women in Ireland. However, the suicide rate here was below average. . . The report makes the case for giving greater priority to mental health across Europe, where one in six people – 84 million – had a mental health issue in 2016. More than 84,000 deaths in EU countries were attributed to mental illness or suicide in 2015¹⁶.

While progress has been made in creative processes to promote positive mental health and coping strategies for stress and anxiety in recent years, there are nonetheless significant gaps throughout Ireland. Young people need a safe, supportive community environment in order to promote their wellbeing and to fulfil their potential. The provision of 'safe spaces' helps to ensure that individuals can access support locally in places not normally associated with mental health provision has been recognised as an aspirational government goal. Safe Spaces include community spaces, sporting and cultural facilities and facilities for mental health services. Excellent work has been carried out in some areas and models of good practice can be shared nationally. However currently there are considerable gaps in services, and there here is no uniform provision of such spaces for youth across the country. The ability to access supports in non-mental health centres also limits the stigma associated with accessing mental health services.

¹⁶ <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/health/ireland-has-one-of-the-highest-rates-of-mental-health-illness-in-europe-report-finds-1.3707073>

There is a need for a clear joined-up approach for the provision of mental health care for young people when and where it is needed. There should be improved access to the appropriate level of mental health care in timely manner and clear referral pathways across and between services for the 0-25 years age range. The importance of inter-agency coordination cannot be over-emphasised. There remains a challenge to provide high quality services and equity of access on a national basis.

The Government has taken some steps to address the gaps in services. The National Youth Mental Health Task Force was established to provide national leadership in the field of youth mental health and to enhance how the public, private, voluntary and community sectors work together to improve the mental health and wellbeing of young people. The main areas of focus comprised: emotional literacy and reduction of stigma; awareness of services and supports; accessibility to services and supports across different settings; alignment of services and supports across different providers; and building capacity in local communities. However, the absence of any budget commitment for implementation means that currently there is no advancement on the aspirational goals contained in the TaskForce Report.

Mental Health Reform (Ireland) conducted a review of Ireland's National Mental Health Policy – A Vision for Change- in 2017 and have recommended that creative arts therapies should be made available to all individuals engaged in mental health services through the integration of arts therapists on mental health multi-disciplinary teams throughout the country.

Arts, Mental Health and Human Rights

Smashing Times have set up the Smashing Times International Centre for the Arts and Equality, using creative processes and arts-based practices to promote human rights and equality for all. The organisation believes that mental health is a human right. Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) states that: 'Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being' of themselves and their families. The UN acknowledges that a lack of access to proper and adequate mental health services can impact on a person's human rights. The UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) is 'an inter-governmental body within the UN's system that is made up of 47 countries elected from the full membership'¹⁷ and this body is responsible for promoting and advancing human rights around the world. 'It views physical and mental health as a central tenet of its work'¹⁸.

'The relationship between mental health and human rights is an integral and interdependent one. For instance, human rights violations such as torture and displacement negatively affect mental health. Second, mental health practices, programs, and laws, such as coercive treatment practices, can hinder human rights. Finally, the advancement of human rights benefits mental health. These benefits extend beyond mental health to the close connection between physical and mental health. There are thus clinical and economic reasons, as well as moral and legal obligations, to advance mental health care as fundamental to human rights.'¹⁹

According to the World Health Organisation two-thirds of people with a known mental health disorder 'never seek help from a health professional. Stigma, discrimination and neglect prevent care and treatment from reaching people'.²⁰ In a new WHO report entitled "New Understanding, New Hope" the United Nations' health agency seeks to break this vicious cycle and urges governments to seek solutions for mental health that are already available and affordable. Governments should move away from large mental institutions and towards community health care, and integrate mental health care into primary health care and the general health care system, says WHO. The report states that Mental illness is not a personal failure. In fact, if there is failure, it is to

¹⁷ www.ochr.org

¹⁸ www.ochr.org

¹⁹ www.ochr.org

²⁰ https://www.who.int/whr/2001/media_centre/press_release/en/

be found in the way we have responded to people'. Supporting positive mental health and well-being is essential and the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals include a commitment to the health and well-being of all people and to the promotion of positive mental health and well-being

Great work continues to be implemented in relation to positive mental health and well-being in Ireland however, there continues to be difficulties accessing services in a timely manner particularly tailor-made services that suit the individual needs of each unique service user.

Smashing Times are calling for:

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- Full access to high quality, accessible and affordable mental health care services to promote and support positive mental health and well-being as a human right, including access to services tailored to meet the individual needs of each service user
 - Government policy to fully support a human rights based approach to ensure equal access to high quality, accessible and affordable mental health care service delivery with sufficient investment of both financial and human resources
 - Increase in budgets for positive mental health and well-being care including increased support for creative arts-based practices to promote active healthy lifestyles, positive mental health and well-being
 - Support to continue to address stigma and discrimination including increased support for arts and health
 - Full participation for mental health service users and a 'whole person' approach in the development of policy and practice related to mental health care and continued involvement of civil society organisations
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Research on Positive Mental Health and the Arts - Latvia

In Latvia, there are several types of functioning theatres: state-founded, non-state or independent, project and amateur theatres. State-funded theatres are funded by the state; however, independent theatres can also be funded by contributing to competitions organized by the State Culture Capital Foundation (SCCF) and the Ministry of Culture (CM).

There are also so-called project theatres, in which, for a certain period of time, professional actors are involved in one or more projects. Independent theatres and project theatres participate in competitions of the SCCF alongside state and local theatres. Latvian amateur theatres are under the control of local governments and are financed from the local government budget including transportation costs, director's remuneration, technical equipment, rent of premises, other materials necessary for productions. There are cases where municipalities give extra funding to the amateur theatre groups for participation in international competitions or events, and this can be seen as an approval of the artistic level of the amateur theatre group. In addition to state grants, revenue generated by the theatre itself and support from the SCCF, professional theatres and amateur theatres can also be funded by sponsors²¹.

Even though theatre, as well as cinema, is one of the most popular forms of expression in Latvia in relation to communicating on political, economic and socially relevant issues and problems, the artistic content of the performance, is what tends to be highlighted or foregrounded, rather than the issue itself. The artistic content can refer to the director's interpretation and vision of a particular topic, the performance of the actors or the visual presentation of the performance in terms of scenography etc. While the topic or theme including details of a specific problem can play a key role in heightening the significance of a particular performance, ensuring that the audience attendance is high and the production is recognised by theatre critics and viewers, very often the performance focuses on individual experiences with the show seen primarily as an artistic product and a form of entertainment, rather than as an instrument capable of solving social problems, such as the promotion of positive mental health, or as a means of proposing specific strategies for mental health concerns such as depression or anxiety.

Although the use of theatre practice to promote positive mental health is known in Latvia, it is not common practice. However, there are some theatrical platforms taking place that seek solutions to problems and processes of importance to society such as violence, unemployment, social exclusion and mobbing. This kind of practice is called forum theatre and serves as a method for analysing complex situations and promoting empathy. In addition, this type of theatre also involves spectators directly in the creative process, allowing them to express their own ideas and opinions. Mostly, forum theatre operates within the confines of non-governmental organizations as part of a specific programme of activities or as a separate activity in its own right, however there is no organization, institution or, for example, a united platform in Latvia, whose main activity is forum theatre or theatre that actively addresses and deals with social problems. Only one news article²² dated 2011 can be found in relation to an interactive theatre studio called 'Latvia' (in English: The Boat), which was directly involved in the production of forum theatre. However, for reasons unknown, the Boat has ceased to exist and there has been no further examples of a similar type theatre studio or production company since.

There are several certified drama therapists in Latvia. The process of drama therapy is carried out according to the needs of the individual or participant involved and the problem or difficulty itself determines the goals of the drama therapy process. This type of process consists of conversations and activities that involve the use of drama and theatre elements, supporting creative expression of thoughts, feelings, and emotions.

²¹ Latvijas vēstneša portāls, 2012, "Kas nodrošina Latvijas teātru darbību?". Available: <http://www.lvportals.lv/visi/skaidrojumi/251840-kas-nodrosina-latvijas-teatru-darbibu/>

²² Available here (in Latvian): <http://www.tvnet.lv/izklaide/skatuve/363817-jaunums-teatra-zanra-foruma-teatris>

The process also makes use of accessories and various objects which may be needed during the session. At the end of the session, there is a discussion during which the participant can express his or her experience within the performance/session. Drama therapy is designed for people of all ages - children, adolescents, young people, adults and seniors. Depending on the need, drama therapy can take place individually, in a group, with parents, with a family, or a couple.

To sum up, various events, activities, programs and projects are being organized in Latvia that focus in particular on forum theatre practice as an instrument that is capable of solving or exploring current problems in society. However, while such activities are occurring they are rare as evidenced by the availability of information in the public sphere.

Current Best Practice in Arts and Health - Latvia

As part of Theatre and Film for Positive Mental Health and Well-Being five partner organisations carried out research on examples of current best practice for using creative processes to promote positive mental health. The following are examples from Latvia:

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- Drosme draudzeties/ Courage to Be Friends
 - Nordplus Adult Project Theatre
 - Homo Novus
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Current Best Practice, Latvia: Drosme draudzeties (Courage to Be Friends)

Courage to be Friends is a prevention programme carried out by the organization known as Centre Dardedze. The project advocates for a positive, friendly, tolerant and respectful environment for schools in Latvia so that they can be free from peer violence and mob violence. This program actively uses forum theatre methods and is one of only a small number of projects that currently operates in Latvia. Centre Dardedze places a strong emphasis on the development of educational programs, such as the Courage to Be Friends program. The Dardedze team includes psychologists, social workers, educators and project managers. The launch of this program was based on research conducted in 2008 by the State Inspectorate for Protection of Children's Rights which focused on the relationship between children, parents and teachers.

Using data from research and the company's own previous experiences of working with children who have suffered violence, the company have developed a deeper, more focused approach to addressing this specific problem. The company have developed a series of lesson plans that use forum theatre methods to provide students with information on different types of mob violence or experiences of interpersonal violence that can happen. The lesson plans are also used to develop an understanding of core values with the students in relation to areas such as tolerance, respect, honesty, support, cooperation and friendship. As part of the forum theatre process, a situation of a classroom environment where the issue is taking place is displayed to the students in theatrical format. Young people watch the performance and then have the opportunity to interact and change the situation they are watching with the aim of improving or finding solutions to the examples of violence that they are witnessing. The different parties that may be involved in a 'mobbing' situation are analysed as well as the different ways in which students can engage in this type of anti-social behaviour, finding ways to end it.

Current Best Practice, Latvia: Nordplus Adult Project Theatre - Rehearsal for Successful Integration into the Job Market

A common objective of all partners in this project was to apply the worldwide methods of Theatre of the Oppressed created by the Brazilian theatre director Augusto Boal in order to work with groups of unemployed people and to assist them to successfully integrate into the labour market²³. The project was developed by four countries - Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Iceland- and involved specialists from the following fields: artists, recruitment agents, psychologists, and social workers.

The project was aimed at people experiencing social vulnerability including people who are long-term unemployed, people with special needs and with limited qualification, or those who lack social skills. In addition, the project was also aimed at people who were previously in employment but have lost their job recently as well as young people who have completed their education and are seeking employment or individuals looking for new employment opportunities. The main objective of the programme was to provide opportunities and assistance for participants to help them to identify the type of job that was most suited to them and would provide fulfilment as well as the opportunity for them to realise their potential.

During the workshops, the main focus is on the development of personal and social skills, and on motivation and initiative, promoting participation in professional life. The project was “aimed at helping everyone to have a deeper insight into one’s needs and opportunities, in order to be self-insured against the resulting loss of a job, when the available competences or needs do not conform to what is required or what is offered by a special workplace²⁴”. A key focus of the project was on the development of long-term goals for each participant and building skills necessary for a successful integration into the professional workforce.

At least 10 workshops were organized in each country participating in the project with the overall goal of developing the personal and social skills necessary for successful integration into the labour market, using techniques from Theatre of the Oppressed including Forum Theatre, the Rainbow of Desire, Game playing, and Image Theatre. The age of the target group participants were from 18 to 70.

Current Best Practice, Latvia: Homo Novus - International Festival of Contemporary Theatre

Festival Homo Novus is the leading contemporary performing arts festival in Latvia and one of the largest in the Baltic region. The festival takes place in Riga and introduces new and established artists, whose work presents uncompromising interest and views on the contemporary world and society. In addition to a diverse program of performances, the festival offers opportunities for creative experiments, theoretical and educational presentations, and other activities. Homo Novus offers both local and international theatrical shows and performances and can best be described as a programme featuring theatrical events and experiences. Performances at the festival rarely take place on stage where actors are only actors, and viewers remain as passive watchers. In most cases, viewers are expected, sometimes even required, to participate, therefore the viewers become an integral part of the show, in a similar way to the involvement of audience members or ‘spect-actors’ in forum theatre practice. Unlike forum theatre, however, the performances shown at the Homo Novus Festival are theatrical performances and in many cases they do not directly offer solutions to a specific societal problem,

²³ Final Teaching material “A Rehearsal for Job Seekers” from the project ‘Rehearsal of Successful Integration into Job Market’. Available here: http://www.forumoteatras.lt/images/files/files/EN_Repeticija%20ieskantiems%20darbo.pdf

²⁴ Budrienė & Vaičekonytė, 2016, page 7

Nevertheless, in Latvia and in the Baltic states, festival Homo Novus plays a very important role in the context of creating a dialogue with audiences within different cultural spaces. Artistic performance are used in a creative and artistic way to communicate with a range of audiences in relation to different social problems and while the shows are theatrical, they remain, in many cases, rooted in fact.

Gaps in Services in Latvia and Ways Forward

In Latvia, a range of gaps can be identified in relation to the promotion of positive mental health via art and various cultural activities. There is an absence of arts-based activities, as well as institutions and/or organizations who deal with the promotion of positive mental health and well-being through creative practices, particularly in relation to using creative processes to directly involve participants, viewers and the direct target group in project activities so they can discuss the problems arising, expressing opinions and exploring solutions together.

As stated earlier, state theatres, independent theatres and even amateur theatres are creating a range of performances which are timely, and in many instances are of value to society because of the themes explored, however these performances all have one thing in common – they are developed solely as artistic acts, and are presented by professional or amateur actors with the stories based on scripts that follow a specific, pre-defined path. Even in cases where a performance may raise awareness of and speak out against a particular societal-based problem and in doing so, creates a discussion amongst the wider society in relation to that particular issue, the main focus remains on the artistic value of the performance and on the artistic work of the key players such as the actors, director, stage designers etc. The aim of the performance remains solely artistic and does not have a key objective of solving a particular problem or exploring an issue in society.

As mentioned above, socially engaged theatre practice such as forum theatre where the main aim is to create awareness of a particular problem and to explore or offer up solutions and generate discussion through the artistic process, these types of theatrical practices in Latvia mainly operate only within other programmes (such as Courage to Be Friends), and are activated through temporary or one-off projects. Once the project is completed the practice does not continue (such as Nordplus Adult Project Theatre - Rehearsal of Successful Integration into Job Market) or in the Homo Novus case where there is an annual, international festival of contemporary theatre.

Activating such arts-based practices is important for people living in the city as well as for those who live in rural areas particularly where people may have limited access to educational and professional resources, and limited access to transportation. There are numerous benefits to be gained for people living in both rural and city areas in relation to having access to theatre based activities and to artistic practice where there is the potential to bring people together, to involve them in social activities and to create a sense of community. Arts-based activities are accessible to people of all ages, gender and qualifications and in addition to promoting social engagement the work can also serve as a form of social rehabilitation in relation to promoting positive mental health and well-being. Providing a safe, creative space to discuss problems and issues, and creating a forum where advice can be offered and a listening service provided for people to express their experiences, these types of services enable individuals to feel a sense of connection and develops the ability to deal with personal problems and to express those problems on a wider scale.

It is worth mentioning a new project called MĒS (In English: WE) which is at an early stage of development. This program will focus on the relationships between Latvian and Russian-speaking people. The project aims to unite creative people with a background in theatre art who want to develop further their interest in inclusive art practices and to create artworks in cooperation with others.

Research on Positive Mental Health and the Arts – Spain

Currently, art therapy is not officially recognized as a profession in Spain, although there are many centres that include it in their treatment programs. In 2010, the Spanish Federation of Professional Associations of Art Therapy (FEAPA) was constituted in order to foster the professional development of Spanish professionals working in the area of art therapy. Nowadays, there are six associations (ANDART, ATE, ATH, AFIA, GREEFART and MURARTT) that organize conferences, awareness campaigns and workshops. In addition, they are engaged in research studies that frequently lead to the publication of articles, books, handbooks and other useful materials.

In addition to the above federation, there are several other associations or centres that offer art therapy programs to their users, especially in Andalusia, Catalonia, Castile, Leon and Madrid. There are several different forms of art therapy available, depending on user needs. Many different art activities orient individuals towards their internal and private world while dramatic activities, in which we can include filmmaking as well, encourage interaction with others, allowing the development of several meaningful skills that can help people engage in social integration and increase self-esteem. As well as workshops that directly address the needs of people with mild or serious mental health concerns, it is important to underline the existence of several awareness raising campaigns aimed at fighting stigma and promoting positive mental health as well as raising awareness of the positive effects of art related activities that aim to promote positive mental health and well-being.

Apart from the national services cited as examples of good practice below, there are many other services operating in the field of work across Spain. Most of them use theater (filmmaking seems to be still quite uncommon) to foster social integration and improve people's self-esteem. For instance, ASCATEC, a Canarian NGO, uses drama therapy to provide opportunities for people with mental health concerns to express themselves and to dramatize their emotional concerns. The organization was established in 2008 and to date has conducted fourteen theatrical performances as well as several conferences related to art and mental health, aimed at exploring the potentialities of a creative-based therapy process for working with people experiencing mental health issues. The workshops implemented by ASCATEC are specifically aimed at people experiencing mental health concerns, similar to other initiatives using the arts to promote positive mental health. However, there are also a range of organizations that provide services to people experiencing mental health concerns as well as to members of the public not currently experiencing mental health concerns and the aim is to facilitate social integration.

In addition, some drama schools offer workshops to promote mental health through self-knowledge and personal growth, such as those of the IMPRO Theater School of Valladolid and the Spanish School of Gestalt Drama Therapy of Madrid. The services offered by these organisations are open to the general public and not confined to any specific target group. Gestalt therapy helps clients focus on the present and raise self-awareness, in order to “begin to develop more self-confidence, to start living a fuller life and to more effectively deal with problems”, and in this sense, it aims to support people's mental health.

To sum up, there are many initiatives related to theater and mental health currently operating across Spain. Most of them consist of workshops involving theatrical practices such as Theatre of the Oppressed, Social Theater and Inclusive Theater. There are also numerous conferences and festivals organized to raise awareness of the positive effects of using theatre to promote positive mental health and well-being and to fight stigma. There are also several high quality art therapy initiatives in operation in Spain however art-based therapy based on recovery is relatively new, compared to countries such as the US and New Zealand for instance. With regard to drama therapy, there is a need to conduct further research on the positive impact that these programmes can have on recovery from mental health illness and to develop national strategies to explore how to make the work more widely available to different target groups.

Current Best Practice in Arts and Health - Spain

As part of Theatre and Film for Positive Mental Health and Well-Being five partner organisations carried out research on examples of current best practice for using creative processes to promote positive mental health. The following are examples from Spain:

- Workshop on Film Creation and Audiovisual Aids for Mental Health Recovery
 - A Therapeutic Experience using Theatre in Mental Health
 - Museum of Human Diversity
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Current Best Practice, Spain: Workshops on Film Creation and Audiovisual Aids for Mental Health Recovery

This filmmaking workshop, which is based on a mental health recovery model, has been designed to encourage people with serious mental illness (SMI) to develop new skills such as: communication and social skills, concentration, creativity and attention. The overall aim of the workshop is to improve the participant's quality of life, to promote self-esteem (by exploring ways in which participants perceive themselves) and to fight stigma. In 2013, the workshop was designed for people with serious mental illness (SMI) only. In 2014, thanks to the incorporation of the Foundation Arrabal into the project, it was decided to move the workshop outside of a healthcare context, in order to involve a wider range of people and to create a more heterogeneous group. Therefore, students, professionals, relatives and other collaborators started to participate in the workshop programme, fostering social inclusion as an essential factor for the recovery process of people experiencing mental health illness.

This initiative was undertaken under the belief that art therapy represents a promising conceptual framework for modern rehabilitation. Despite the lack of bibliography, professionals speculated on the efficacy of the work to support participants to “acquire knowledge, make collective decisions, express ideas and feelings and create awareness messages” as well as “to develop creativity, objectivity, lateral thinking, communication and problem-solving skills”. Furthermore, the project was also aimed at obtaining, in a non-invasive way, sensitive information about the patients in order to offer them a more individualized support structure. Defining a clear model on how to implement the workshop took some time. During the first phase of implementation, the creators proposed the creation of a script on a collective basis but this process ended up proving too difficult (and too boring) for the participants. The creators then developed a workshop programme that is divided into the following phases:

Firstly, participants are invited to share thoughts and to take part in a brainstorming session aimed at collecting material to work with. Based on the ideas generated, every participant creates a short improvised sketch (that is filmed) to represent a previously agreed idea or situation. Then, the participants watch the videos and express their opinions with the aim of brainstorming in order to generate new ideas. After the discussion, a second session of improvisations are held with everybody creating new representations of the same situation (that is also filmed). This session is followed by another discussion session. Finally, sketches will be selected and edited in order to create a short film. The practice just described can be defined as a mixture of filmmaking and theater, in which the improvisational sessions foster free expression and the observation/discussion sessions facilitate constructive self-criticism.

In the framework of these workshops, two short films have been produced: *The Invisibles* (*Invisibles* - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jBHqGZDDITU>) and *Without a place* (*Sin Lugar*). Regardless of the outputs, what really matters is the creation process itself, in which personal growth is guaranteed and recovery is fostered.

To sum up, although further work needs to be undertaken in relation to evidence based assessments on the efficacy of these kind of workshops, it is still possible to identify the positive impact this work has on the recovery and social integration of people with mental illness. The results of the completed workshops cannot be standardized because the impact of the work is different for each patient. However, there are a range of common positive effects that have been observed amongst the entire group. The common benefits experienced by the full group are the development of verbal and non-verbal communication skills (improving fluency and self-expression); building skills in attention and concentration (developing the ability to stay focused in order to carry out a particular demanding task such as improvisation work); and building social skills and positive self-perception (tackles isolation, builds self-awareness and develops a sense of community).

Current Best Practice, Spain: A Therapeutic Experience using Theatre in Mental Health

In 2008, as part of its recreation based programme the Romareda Day Centre in Zaragoza created a new workshop designed for people with serious mental illness (SMI) who showed some difficulties in interpersonal interaction and who had experienced isolation and loneliness. The workshop uses creative processes of theatre and was developed as a tool to support people experiencing mental health illness 'to manage feelings and emotions and to solve situations that seem to be challenging in real life'. In addition, the theatre process itself provided a range of therapeutic benefits for participants with a focus on the development of social skills, communication, self-esteem and memory.

In 2008 fifteen service users at the Romareda Day Center in Zaragoza began to rehearse once a week with the goal of creating a piece of theatre to perform at the annual party of the centre. The work has continued since 2008 on an annual basis with each year dedicated to the creation of a new piece of theatre. The final show is performed at the centre and in a range of non-health care settings such as in a secondary school in order to campaign against mental health stigma and to promote positive awareness raising in relation to mental health with different target groups. Theatre is an ideal methodology for developing basic skills in social interaction. From the beginning the workshop process has focused on the importance of interaction and teamwork and has facilitated social interaction for group participants. Furthermore, being involved with the group and participating in the creative process provides group members with the opportunity to be supported and listened to. Group members share experiences and advice and learn from and support each other, enabling participants to follow treatment programmes more effectively and to build skills in self-motivation and positive change. Participants encourage each other to take responsibility in relation to their own self-care as well as working for the benefit of the full group.

In addition to taking part in workshops and rehearsals, participants also have the opportunity to take part in a range of other non-performance based tasks with some participants taking charge of set-design, stage costumes, make-up, and music. As public recognition is considered an important motivator in the recovery process, the work of all the participants involved in creating the show is fully acknowledged with all participants coming on stage at the end of each performance.

Finally, the centre recognizes the important role that audiences play in the success of the programme. Not only do audiences watch and celebrate the performances, they also provide a valuable form of validation for the participants. The audiences applaud the work that has taken place and this provides a valuable form of recognition for the participants. They perceive themselves as competent actors and production team members and this recognition fosters self-esteem and a stronger sense of social integration which in turn plays a key part in the recovery process.

The process is evaluated and questionnaires are distributed to all those who take part in the workshops and performances. The participants or service users who complete the questionnaires have all experienced mental health difficulties and their answers indicate that they have experienced a sense of personal growth and increased self-esteem by belonging to a theatre group and by having the opportunity to participate in workshops and performances. They have the opportunity to interact with an audience which promotes social integration and helps to overcome stigma or rejection. There is a change in self-perception as a result of the support garnered from the audiences.

Current Best Practice, Spain: Museum of Human Diversity

The Museum of Human Diversity initiative was supported by the Development Cooperation Fund of the University of Valladolid. After an initial investigation into the relationship between diversity and human rights, the community decided to set up a theater company to convey meaningful awareness-raising messages in relation to key themes. The company decided to use 'theatre of the oppressed', a theatrical form first developed during the 1970s in Latin America by Brazilian theatre practitioner Augusto Boal. Theatre of the Oppressed was developed by Boal to use theatre as a means of promoting social and political change. He created a type of theatre where the audience are not just passive viewers but instead, become 'spect-actors', where they have the opportunity to take part directly in the creative process in order to explore and transform the reality in which they are living.

The participants taking part in the project are people from different backgrounds and have a range of personal stories to tell. They include students, volunteers, people experiencing mental health difficulties, mental health care professionals, and people from the general public. Furthermore, the audiences take an active part in the performances through direct intervention and they become key stakeholders in the creative process also. The workshop and performance process use a creative methodology to explore key themes in relation to promoting and respecting human rights, raising awareness about the benefits and richness of diversity in society and about the need to respect human rights and the dignity of all people equally. In addition to awareness-raising and promoting diversity and human rights, the work also has a therapeutic benefit for the participants who are directly involved in the creation and presentation of the performances as they, the participants, have the opportunity for self-expression and confidence building as well as giving voice to social concerns.

The group usually start the creative process by finding stories of social exclusion and marginalization taken from press reports, documentaries and from the participants' own personal experiences and lives. The material for the performance is selected by the participants themselves is a mixture of fact and fiction. A range of performances have been created that focus on gender, cultural diversity, human rights and social integration exploring different scenarios where people's rights are denied. The process is dynamic and can change in response to the needs of the participants however outlined below is a model of practice used to date to demonstrate how the group works. This model is composed by the following points:

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- Warm-up activity conducted in which everyone expresses how he/she feels in a symbolic way
 - Activities conducted based on non-verbal communication
 - Activities conducted which involve creating a 'love machine' and a 'diversity machine', two exercises in which every participant is involved and has a key role (each participant is involved in making specific movements and sounds that are linked to the other group members)
 - Activity in which the participants form two circles, an inner circle dedicated to creating a tune and the outer circle dedicated to creating a dance
 - Finally all the participants take part in activities dedicated to the poetic creation of a story, with each participant telling his or her story supported by trained facilitators. All the participants are involved in the creation of a piece of work that comes alive as part of the Museum of Human Diversity and is

shown to an audience. Each participant tells his or her story and interacts with the audience, creating a space of debate and awareness raising.

All performances presented to date have been a success and were very well received by audience members who all participated actively. This type of work provides the participants (actors) with the opportunity to be heard by the wider society as they tell their stories and to freely express themselves and connect with a wider community.

Gaps in Services in Spain and Ways Forward

While there are a wide range of services in Spain promoting theater and filmmaking as tools to foster positive mental health, it is possible to point out gaps that currently exist in the services provided.

Firstly, two major problems affecting society today are stress and anxiety and the majority of services provide do not directly address a reduction in these key issues. The projects analyzed above in relation to best practice in Spain all aim to improve self-esteem and facilitate social integration. These are very important aims and while they can play a role in assisting people to face stressful situations in their lives, they do not directly address key issues of stress and anxiety. It is difficult to find workshops or theatre projects that are solely aimed at addressing a reduction in stress and anxiety and that are focused on providing tools to identify causes of stress and resources for learning how to positively manage stressful situations.

Many of the services examined are also aimed at a specific target group of people who suffer from mental health illness or a combination of people with mental health illnesses working with people in health care contexts only. While this way of working is essential and provides necessary benefits in relation to social integration and promoting personal growth for people experiencing mental health concerns, there is also a need to provide a range of programmes that focus on prevention for example through creative methodologies and are conducted with all a wide range of groups in society such as students, workers, unemployed etc. There is a need to provide continued support for current services and additional support to promote theatre and film-making as key tools in a range of prevention and recovery-based programmes with all sectors of society.

Research on Positive Mental Health and the Arts – Italy

On 13 May 1978, the Italian Parliament approved Law 180, universally known as ‘Basaglia Law’ after the name of the leader of the anti-institutional movement which promoted this radical community mental health care reform. Forty years later, Italian psychiatry still runs a community care system, albeit with varying degrees of solidity and quality. Mental health care is still an integral part of the National Health System, with liberal regulations on coercion and the lowest number of general hospital and residential bed facilities.

Recently, Italy closed the special forensic psychiatric institutions and brought the care of the mentally ill offenders under the responsibility of local Mental Health Departments. Over time, psychiatric deinstitutionalization-inspired policies were created in other sectors of Italian society, such as those regarding physical and intellectual disabilities, education of children with special needs, drug addictions and management of minors engaging in anti-social behaviour. Furthermore, the debate about Law 180 has reached and maintained an international dimension, becoming a term of reference for international agencies such as the World Health Organization and the European Commission, for good and for bad.

The overall balance sheet of the Reform process would seem mostly positive, though the last decade has seen many threats challenging the system. Mental health care services have been asked to do much more, in terms of providing care to a larger population with very diversified needs, but with much less resources, due to the financial consequences of the economic crisis. Although there is no evidence of a trend towards re-institutionalization, intensity and quality of care may have fallen below acceptable standards in some parts of Italy.

Italy was one of the first countries to enact a law about mental ‘illness’ that introduced the concept that this condition is not an illness but the product of several variables, the most important ones being social conditioning and human relations. The law was designed by Franco Basaglia, a psychiatric medical doctor who conducted revolutionary experiences in mental hospitals. The most important innovation of this law was the ending of medical hospitals, as closed and isolated institutions. In the 1970’s these hospitals in Italy were actually prisons where persons with personality disturbances were convicted and confined including numerous cases involving people with depression or autism.

The law put a stop to the practice of incarceration and erased mental hospitals in Italy. Basaglia - and the law that’s called by his name - instead promotes a therapeutic relationship with society supported by local ‘centres for mental hygiene’ and ‘family houses’. In this context, operators and organisations often use the arts including theatre and cinema to promote mental health and to assist persons to reach a personal equilibrium and a positive approach to managing their own lives.

Current Best Practice in Arts and Health – Italy

As part of Theatre and Film for Positive Mental Health and Well-Being five partner organisations carried out research on examples of current best practice for using creative processes to promote positive mental health. The following are examples from Italy:

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- Marco Cavallo, a blue horse
 - Mind the Gap – between patients and society
 - Web portal “Teatralmente.it”
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Current Best Practice, Italy: Marco Cavallo, a blue horse

In 1971 Italian psychiatrist Franco Basaglia became director of the San Giovanni Asylum in Trieste in Italy. At that time it was common practice in Italy to lock up patients with mental illnesses and to isolate them from society at large. However Basaglia supported the closure of the institutions and believed that understanding mental illness required both staff and patients to be free from the asylum culture. Within his own hospital in Trieste he got rid of patient isolation and whenever possible he brought together the health care professionals and patients into mutually beneficial interactions. He opened up the grounds of the hospital to display public artworks, theatre performances and open-air debates.

In June 1972, during one of the first experiences of self-determination and assembly within mental health care institutions within Italy, the patients of the mental hospital in Trieste wrote a letter to the President of the province of Trieste, asking that the old horse who towed the laundry barrow in the institution, called Marco, would not be sent to the slaughterhouse but could spend his time at the hospital as a ‘retired worker’. The letter was written first hand and signed by Marco Cavallo (Marc, the horse). It was sent by the patients in relation to the real horse called Marco that had performed hauling duties around the asylum since 1959. The President was touched by this act and accepted the request. This resolution, unbelievable for the patients, promoted such great enthusiasm that the doctors and artists within the hospital used it as a catalyst to campaign for freedom and respect for people experiencing mental health issues.

The artist Vittorio Basaglia (a cousin of Franco Basaglia) created the concept of the Trojan horse to describe the end of isolation that had been experienced by patients who were locked away in mental institutions. Vittorio had been invited in by Franco to devise a collective project with the patients. Vittorio brought in four other artists and they worked with the patients creating theatre performances. Using wood and papier-mache, the artists, doctors and patients in the Trieste institution worked together to build a giant blue horse. The patients designed the features and details including dimensions, colour (blue, for freedom) and content. The horse was seen as representing freedom and humanity for people with mental illness and was filled by desires, dreams and ideas. The horse was created as an art installation and would go on to become the image of the anti-asylum movement, a movement set up to reform mental health care throughout Italy. By the end of 1973, the horse was built but it could not be taken out of the institution because of its dimensions, it was over thirteen feet tall. The horse had originally been built inside the institution in a large space converted into an art gallery but the horse was now too large to go through the institution doors. Patients were frustrated by this so when the horse was completed it was forcibly pushed through a large door, causing damage to the building as it left the hospital. This was seen as a metaphor calling for the end of mental institutions or hospitals in Italy, and for them to be closed down. The campaign to close down mental institutions was successful and the mental health care system in Italy became de-institutionalised in the 1970s. The blue horse continues to be a symbol of freedom for mental health patients and it was shown again for EXPO 2015.

Current Best Practice, Italy: Mind the Gap – between patients and society

There is a long relationship between cinema and mental health; cinema is often used to tell stories related to mental health but only in the last number of years do we find movies that want to overcome stereotypes in relation to the representation of issues about mental health and in relation to promoting integration and social acceptance. Cinema has an important role to play within mainstream culture in relation to challenging social representations on mental health issues.

The web-blog 'MIND THE GAP - between patients and society, managed by two young psychiatric therapists, contains information and analysis of the role of cinema in relation to psychiatric practise. In relation to the use of cinema as a training tool it highlights the following ways in which cinema can be used:

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- To analyse the symptoms, behaviours and diagnostic criteria of psychiatric disorders by using short scenes in order to show specific situations
 - To acquire new information through the telling of stories of people experiencing psychiatric illness, through full screen plays and scenes showing the individual stories and experiences
 - To expand knowledge in relation to places of care, treatments and organizational structure as shown through the films dealing with themes of institutional care, using the films to animate professional discussion during scientific congresses
 - To fight social stigma by showing films that promote cultural and attitude change
 - To promote a reflection on the health care profession and to expand the experiences of health care workers and patients. For example using films to highlight 'burnout' and the difficulties that may be involved in managing emotions within stressful work environments. The material may be used to activate in the participant sensations useful for interpreting a reality and / or making use of their own experiences for diagnostic or cognitive purposes. The movies can be used to immerse the viewer in a suggestive atmosphere rather than simply describing real clinical pictures.
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Why movies?

The vision of a movie changes the state of consciousness of a person: the viewer is projected into a space-time dimension in which there is only the story represented on the screen, which annuls, at least temporarily, the surrounding reality (Gabbard Glen O., Gabbard Krin, *Psychiatry and the Cinema*, 1999). This new dimension enables an engagement of emotions, induces reflection in relation to oneself and others, generates ideas for further dialogue that will produce change in those who are involved. Using cinema for educational purposes is fruitful (Pancheri, Brugnoli & Tarsitani, *Cinematic clinical psychiatric cases in graduate medical education*, 2004). The use of cinema in the training of medical students and within post-graduate specializations in psychiatry is increasing and gaining credibility. There are several examples related to the use of movies in training and moreover there are events (festival) dedicated to themes of cinema and mental health such as the mental health film festival in Rome,

An example of a film is *Check mad* (Scacco pazzo). This movie was not initially written to be used as a training tool in psychiatric care however the film was recognised as being useful in relation to the representation of mental health illness because of its capacity to represent accurately certain conditions. Scacco pazzo was originally a theatre play created in 1990, and was later created as a movie in 2016. Because of the themes and content, the movie is considered a training-resource in relation to mental health concerns and it was the main event presented for World Mental Health Day (10th October), in Italy in 2016. This movie is a good example of the role and added-value of cinema in representing mental health illnesses and is regularly used on training courses related to schizophrenia and psychotic disorders.

Current Best Practice, Italy: Web portal Teatralmente.it

This web portal is an opportunity to disseminate knowledge and information on theatre projects implemented in the Mental Health Departments of Emilia Romagna in Italy. It was endorsed by institutions, mental healthcare operators, individual artists and groups, art critics and citizens. The objective was to create a constantly evolving space devoted to theatre, in order to promote and manage theatre activities and to describe theatre art projects, providing relevant literature, training and education plans. In addition, the portal encourages an exchange of experiences and knowledge concerning theatre and mental health; supporting encounters between culture and mental health, through the promotion of 'mixed' theatre companies, which already act as 'bridges' between the production of health and the production of culture.

The portal carries out prevention work by developing high-quality artistic activities and by supporting training and artistic activities started in the Departments of Mental Health in Italy. It also improves the exchange of experiences and communication in the field of mental health and promotes a positive perception of mental health care. The portal was created as a meeting point for all those who are interested in or make theatre and who have a vision of 'taking care of'. The portal promotes the effective habilitation/rehabilitation processes able to fight phenomena such as immobility and regression of mental health patients and starts a process aimed at strengthening and networking the positive relations built across the territory, paying special attention to establish relationships between the local working groups that are part of the health and social Plan and the local educational and cultural/training agencies, as well as the cultural and voluntary associations.

In order to survey how users, professionals and families perceive the quality of the theatrical activities and facilities made available through the programme, a section of the portal is aimed at collecting and disseminating information on theatre projects implemented by each Mental Health Department (further DSM-Dipartimento Salute Mentale) in the Emilia Romagna region. The aim is to acquaint the general public with the diverse range of theatre activity networks available and to promote the theatre experience. Each page has an introduction where the functions and forms of theatre activities in a specific context are briefly described. On the same page, users can find contact information for Department contacts and for the relevant theatre contacts. The projects described in the section are divided into the following categories: Theatre Companies, Workshops, Training Activities. These are the three main forms of available theatre activities.

The regional project *Theatre and Mental Health* is promoted and financed by the Emilia-Romagna Region, and it involves the Departments of Mental Health of Bologna, Reggio Emilia, Ferrara, Piacenza, Forlì, Cesena, Modena, Parma, Rimini and Imola. This region-wide working group operates at a local and regional level carrying on a commitment made many years ago as part of an original shared project involving interplay and mutual enrichment and a commitment to bringing together positive mental health related issues with the arts. The primary focus is on the interplay between arts and health. This commitment to linking arts and health is flourishing in the Emilia-Romagna region as witnessed by the numerous theatre productions presented by the Department of Mental Health. In addition, the Departments of Health have recognized the benefits of social networking that take place through interplay and mutual exchanges and have supported and played a key role in expanding these activities. The growth of the use of art in mental health care and the increased cooperation between various health departments and between those departments and artistic organisations, all gave life to the Theatre and Mental Health project involving not only artistic creations but also the creation of a communication platform. The theatrical activities and shows provide a powerful platform for transformation, bringing personal, social and cultural benefits for patients as well as all those working or involved with the projects.

The artistic work brings many personal benefits. The work involves physical and vocal training, memorizing lines and moves, taking part in rehearsals, working on stage design and set-up, scriptwriting, creating the shows, and managing emotions. All these can be used as important tools for the prevention of mental health concerns. The theatrical process can activate a range of different personal skills in each person at different levels. For example, participants may experience an improvement in relation to memory retention, and may build skills in self-esteem and self-confidence and in a strengthening of one's own identity as well as skills in group interaction and in role-play.

The work can create change within individuals in relation to how they perceive themselves and their surroundings and theatre can also have a significant influence on the perception of mental distress, as well as on the strengthening of the support networks and on the involvement of the community and of the families. In other words, culture, combined with the creation of shows that can be presented to an audience other than mental health professionals, can help improve social welfare. At a cultural level, thanks to the Theatre and Mental Health project, theatres and theatre companies started to collaborate, involving new audiences and creating new ways for creation and culture. The exchange between art and psychiatry is therefore prolific for both; in fact, it once again demonstrates how mental health finds its realization in the welfare of the community. The involvement of artists is thus essential in the process of exchange of the theatrical experiences that took place in the mental health care services. The challenge we are now facing is to make this exchange dialectic, and to give new life to the theatre world – that is too often described as too distant from the ethical and social function that was historically attributed to it.

Gaps in Services in Italy and Ways Forward

Law 180 or Basaglia law is the Italian Mental Health Act of 1978 which signified a large reform of the psychiatric system in Italy, and contained directives for the closing down of all psychiatric hospitals to be replaced by community-based care services. Law 180 was a milestone for the affirmation of equality for people with mental health concerns as citizens, and included areas such as the right to health, the right to receive adequate care, and the right to voluntary treatment. This law promoted an enjoyment of citizenship rights (Article 32 of the Italian Constitution) and the centrality of the person (Article 2 of the Italian Constitution).

Law 180 was based on the promotion of rights as a key tool in mental health care and provided for a complete transformation of the asylum system into a network of community services, and the reduction of the conditions in which compulsory treatments are used. Law 180 is a model of best practice for different countries, and was part of a wider social movement calling for social and civil rights including changes in health care policy and practice. The law brought about a complete system transformation and a 'promise of a true paradigm shift not only in psychiatry, but also in the way of providing an adequate welfare community for all citizens'²⁵, ensuring a form of care that respects the rights of the individuals involved.

Law 180 and various mental health policies have played a role in how people with mental health issues are treated. However, the power of a social movement that pushed for a reform of laws to ensure proper treatment and respect for people experiencing mental health difficulties was invaluable and is still necessary today. Efforts today for positive change place a strong emphasis on the voices of people "with lived experience", which is a further move away from the strident social inequalities that existed in the past. In recent years, the role of the 'protagonist' has become even more important and this means that the person receiving the care is at the centre of his or her own recovery pathway ensuring empowerment and participation in decision making processes and access to equal citizenship. An affirmation and realization of

²⁵ Forty years of the Law 180: the aspirations of a great reform, its successes and continuing need. R. Mezzina. Dipartimento di Salute Mentale, ASUI Trieste, WHO Collaborating Centre for Research and Training, Trieste, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Italy

a person's rights is key to the transformation of the provision of services within the field of psychiatry ensuring proper services for and within communities. This is confirmed by the recent document of the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to health (Article 25 of the CPRD) declaring an open critique of biomedical psychiatric reductionism, and by the dissemination in many countries of the WHO Mental Health Action Plan 2013-2020.

These documents combined with the implementation of policies and practices that continue to promote a move away from institutionalized care and the transformation of the health care system towards community-based and person-centred health care services, are to be welcomed. Unfortunately, the actual application of Law 180 was at times under-resourced in terms of appropriate funding. It is necessary for further steps to be taken, after the ending of an era of institutional care in Italy, to ensure that any issues that still remain are addressed. It is important to continue to ask what are the needs today of people undergoing psychiatric care and to ask what rights exist today for people experiencing mental health issues including the right to have a place to live, the right to an occupation and a social role, as well as the right to affective and meaningful social relationship. It is still necessary to dismantle a state of fear, for example in relation to the possibility of losing one's rights, a fear arising from a risk of exclusion and to work to overcome a stigmatized or stereotyped image of mental health illness. The aim is to create new practices that inspire principles of dialogue, dignity and respect, and support all sections of society including young people who may be experiencing mental health issues. A key topic is that of democracy and a re-balancing of power towards ordinary citizens – both individual and collective communities – and to support peer facilitators and communities and to build new forms of participation and practices that support all people equally. Direct participation is essential for the development of new practices and new ideas.

In the past financial support was limited due to the Italian financial crisis, and today there is ongoing work needed to continue to promote a right-based approach to mental health care as defined by Law 180. A focus is needed on new ways to protect people against all forms of oppression that may still exist within psychiatric services particularly in relation to restraint and coercion. Psychiatric rehabilitation should not only develop in health care facilities, but it should also be necessary to find alternative methods for rehabilitation for all people regardless of the particular diseases and pathologies they are experiencing – and all forms of care need to take into account not only the difficulties and limitations encountered by the patients, but above all to support their potential, abilities and talent. Bringing together artists and educators to explore the use of creative processes to promote positive mental health and coping strategies for dealing with stress and anxiety is an innovative way forward. This is particularly important in view of the current global crisis affecting countries including Italy and for all of us to continue to work together to promote the arts as a key method for promoting reform and care in mental health care policy and practice.

Guidelines for Facilitators/Educators when planning and implementing an arts-based Workshop to promote positive mental health and well-being

As part of the project **Theatre and Film for Positive Mental Health**, a new workshop model was designed and is available from the project partners. This is a first step model to raise awareness of a particular issue. A range of themes are introduced in order to begin a journey of questioning and exploration. Additional workshops are required to develop these themes further. Participants do not need to have previous drama and theatre experience. Participation in the workshop should always be voluntary. The recommended maximum number in attendance is 18 (minimum eight).

The following are guidelines designed to assist a facilitator in terms of planning and implementing a workshop to promote positive mental health and well-being and in terms of engaging participants on an ongoing basis throughout the workshop process. The following suggestions and guidelines are recommended and not all the points will apply across the board and flexibility is key.

The guidelines below are application to a facilitator working in any context. However, the workshop model referred to is a theatre based workshop model and as such, is carried out by a theatre trained facilitator or a suitably qualified experienced facilitator looking to incorporate creative practice into their work, working in partnership with a trained psychotherapist. It is essential that the model is carried out by a trained arts or other suitably qualified facilitator working in partnership with a trained and accredited counselling psychotherapist. The presence of an accredited psychotherapist is essential as a key part of the support structure when exploring the theme of positive mental health and well-being.

If you want to develop your skills further in order to carry out the attached model please contact Smashing Times to enquire about theatre facilitation skills training. The ability to facilitate a group workshop requires training, skills development, practice and continuous review and evaluation. Smashing Times can carry out a five day 'Train the Trainer' programme that provides an introduction to facilitation skills and training in how to implement a creative-based training programme with groups using creative processes to promote positive mental health and well-being.

1. Theatre Facilitation Practice

What is Facilitation?

Traditionally, facilitation is the process of working with a group of people and can happen through a variety of methods such as a group meeting, a planning session, training or 'a practical 'on-your-feet' workshop session such as a theatre workshop model where the learning is experiential, people are learning through doing.

For this book, we are referring to a group workshop session where a facilitator is guiding a group of people through a creative theatre-based workshop process with the aim of assisting or facilitating the group to achieve a specific goal or goals. The facilitator is responsible for planning, guiding and managing the group to ensure that the objectives are met effectively through a successful, positive workshop process that has full participation and full 'buy-in' from everyone involved.

What is a Theatre Workshop

A theatre workshop is a collaborative event or experience that involves a group of people working together to achieve a specific outcome. The methodology used is drama and there is usually not an audience, everybody takes part in the workshop. The workshop is a collaborative event guided by a professional theatre or suitably qualified facilitator and the workshop can have a range of aims such as recreation, learning, experimentation, debate, confidence building or exploration. A theatre based workshop model is usually a combination of theatre-based games and exercises, exercises in positive mental health and well-being, image work and improvisations and dialogue and group discussion.

Role of the Facilitator

The main aim of a facilitator is to enable the group to achieve their goals in relation to obtaining information on how to look after and maintain positive mental health and well-being.

The traditional role of the Facilitator is to provide the structure and methodology to enable the group to progress in terms of achieving key outcomes. The facilitator effectively manages the implementation of tasks to be carried out by the group (the form of the workshop) and oversees the management of the information generated as part of the workshop processes (the content). The facilitator ensures balance between the group members so that each member feels confident and supported to participate.

In terms of a Drama or theatre Facilitator, he or she guides the drama workshop process and “facilitates, that is, ‘makes easy’ the task of seizing the theatre language” (House of Games page xiii). The drama facilitator develops the work according to the expressed needs of the participant group and is also involved in passing on skills and information. The facilitator is a workshop leader whose main aim is to enable or empower the group, they are involved in passing on skills and information however a key aim so to *‘orientate the work around the perceived agenda of the participating group’*. (House of Games page xiii)

The facilitator ensures that all participants are involved in the workshop. The facilitator supports and guides the group towards their desired goal which is to have a better understanding of what positive mental health and well-being is and how to manage and maintain it. A core element of the work is that the facilitator is ‘guiding’ the group so that they all work together to explore the main issues and that the group themselves play a central role in the process of learning. The facilitator is primarily responsible for form. Form refers to the structure or processes used in the delivery of the workshop and choosing the appropriate games and exercises to ensure the interactions are effective. There is a strong emphasis placed on the participants themselves generating the content. Each member of the group has the opportunity to participate on an equal basis and to contribute with a clear understanding that each person respects and is open to the contributions of all members of the group.

Skills

The art of successful facilitation is a necessary and evolving skill required for working with groups in a range of contexts. The role of the facilitator is to guide or facilitate the group to explore a particular topic and to achieve one or more goals and to ensure the group functions effectively, that the group builds a positive dynamic in terms of relating and communicating with each other and are able to work together to explore the topic, make decisions and handle diversity. The aim is for the group to work together effectively, building an environment of trust, support and synergy, creating new ideas and promoting agreement as well as respecting diversity and difference. A key aim of a workshop session that involves theatre based exercises is to ensure that the group themselves are working towards solutions as opposed to those being imposed by the facilitator.

2. Elements of a Theatre Game or Exercise

When facilitating a theatre workshop, it is essential to be aware of the different elements of a game or exercise in relation to **aims or functions**, the **focus** of the game or exercise, the **energy** and the **placement or positioning**, where you would place it for example at the beginning, middle or end of your workshop and why. Key Questions are:

- What is the aim or function of the game or exercise?
- How would you rate the *focus* of this game or exercise?
- How would you rate the *energy* of this game or exercise?
- Where would you place this game or exercise - at the *beginning or middle or end* of your workshop and why?

1. What are the *aims or functions* of a game or exercise?

The function of each game or exercise refers to the aim or purpose, why you are doing the exercise in relation to what skill you want to develop? The sustained instructions that the facilitator does are directly linked to the actual function of the game or exercise.

It is worth noting that leaders should always make participants aware of the purpose(s) for which they are engaging in a game or exercise. In the occasional circumstance for which it is best left until after the activity to apprise the participants of its purpose(s), be sure to include in the discussion the reason for waiting (e.g., the participant might have felt unduly guided toward a certain outcome).

2. How would you rate the *focus* of this game or exercise?

LOW FOCUS: No person is singled out for direct attention. The group works collectively and the input of individuals is not pointed out.

MEDIUM FOCUS: Although no person is singled out for sustained attention, there is more attention on the individual than in low focus exercises. Some tasks may be done by individuals but these are of short duration.

HIGH FOCUS: The whole group observes one or a small number of persons perform a specific task. These are of longer duration than medium focus.

3. How would you rate the *energy* of this game or exercise?

LOW ENERGY: An exercise that does not involve a high degree of physical effort or speed, rhythm and co-ordination. This exercise may be verbal in nature or may be based on mental concentration.

MEDIUM ENERGY: Involves physical movement, speed, co-ordination and greater exertion than 'low energy' exercises.

HIGH ENERGY: An exercise that involves sustained physical movements. It usually involves participants moving as fast as they can.

4. In relation to positioning, where do you *place* this game or exercise, at the *beginning, middle or end* of your workshop?

BEGINNING: Usually the exercises for the beginning of a workshop would be: **low focus** and **high energy**. The exercises should be easy to follow and easy to understand. This enables the facilitator to create a safe but dynamic and energetic environment. Vocal and physical warm-ups are covered here.

MIDDLE: Usually exercises at the middle part of the workshop would be: *medium focus* and *medium energy*. The facilitator is now asking participants to take some risks. The games at this point in the workshop are usually more complex than those at the beginning. Theatre games are covered here.

END: Usually exercises at the end part of the workshop will be *high focus*.

The energy may vary according to each exercise. Basically, you are giving the participants a chance to do performance related work that will be observed by the rest of the group, who will effectively function as an audience. Improvisation/acting is covered in this part of the workshop.

References:

Smashing Times Theatre Company Literature
Playing the Game by Chrissie Poulter

For Drama Workshop purposes:

A **game** is a studio activity for which ground rules, parameters and objectives are established, engaged in by participants in a spirit of pure play. A game is seen as an enjoyable end in itself, even though it has benefits for practice, creativity and group dynamics. Most games used in Drama Workshops decline a model based on 'winning' and 'losing', but are designed essentially to foster playful engagement in an imaginative world for purposes of energising, establishing camaraderie and contributing to positive affect. They also support the cultivation of unselfconscious spontaneity within the individual and group, while exercising capacities for invention and imagination, and drawing upon a sort of 'pleasure of the playground'. A game usually 'runs by itself', even though complications or more sophisticated variations can be introduced gradually by the leader.

An **exercise** is a studio activity that comes with rules, parameters and objectives, but has a clear practice-related or exploratory purpose beyond a game's overriding spirit of play. It may take the form of the group being led through sequenced embodied structures or it may take the form of a focused improvisation, with its defining feature residing in careful guidance by the leader. The course taken by an exercise is subject to the leader's moment-to-moment appraisal of its unfolding in the here and now.

N.B. This is not to say that an exercise cannot be fun and that a game cannot have serious purpose, nor that any attempt to draw formal distinctions between them is sometimes not worth the trouble. They are both anchored in the behavioural mode of human play, and as such seek to gain a multiply beneficial freedom through full-bodied immersion in alternative realities under the watchful eye of workshop leaders.

3. Planning the Workshops

A facilitator may use a pre-written workshop model such as the workshop model designed for the Theatre for Positive Mental Health project. A workshop model provides a structured approach however you may need to adjust the model you are using. For example the group needs more time for open discussion, or more time to go through actual games and exercises depending on the group's ability and language skills or more time to generate ideas and solutions from the group themselves. The workshop model has been designed to provide a fully-structure workshop session or it can be adapted so that the facilitator can pick the exercises she or he needs to meet the needs of the group and the time allocated for any particular session. All exercises will depend on the needs of the group and may have to be adjusted to fit in with the language and literacy levels of the group. Ideally the workshop handout has been translated into the different languages of the participant members and language may have to be simplified to explain key terms and concepts. The following are key considerations:

1. Always be well prepared. Planning is essential both before and during the process to anticipate any obstacles and to plan for them before they happen. Preparation and planning are key aspects to the implementation of a creative based theatre workshop programme. Ensure you know the group's desired objectives and determine a clear goal or outcome for each individual workshop and for the overall series of workshops, that are realistic and achievable.
2. It is always advisable to hold a pre-workshop needs assessment or to conduct a needs assessment at the end of the first workshop and on an ongoing basis after that.
3. The workshop is planned based on the aims and objectives of the programme, the needs assessment of the participants, the time available and the context in which the workshops are taking place.
4. Know the group's background - how many members, their knowledge of the given topic, how well they know the subject and each other. Use this information to plan each workshop. Always try and find out as much as you can about where you will be working and who you will be working with and try and be aware of customs, values, religions, ethnicity, politics, socio-economic circumstances and gender issues. Where applicable, aim to have a diversity of participation with representation from a broad range of traditions and geographical areas present and that all voices are equally heard.
5. Advise participants in advance to wear comfortable clothing and practical shoes and, where necessary, ensure they have contact details for the venue.
6. In terms of numbers, aim for a minimum of eight and a maximum of 18 participants.
7. Plan well in advance to ensure any equipment you may need is available and to ensure handouts are ready. What materials will be required for the first and subsequent workshops. These include paper, pens, flip chart and flip chart paper, props, chairs etc. Plan the information that is required, what do participants need to know and how will this be imparted, when and by whom.
8. Planning is required in relation to the space where the workshops take place with access to break out rooms if needed. Ensure the room is private, comfortable, tidy and bright and large enough to accommodate the group moving in the space. Have chairs arranged in a circle to begin if you need to take names and ensure the chairs can be easily moved back.
9. If you are unfamiliar with the venue, it is advisable to make arrangements to see it in advance of the workshop to ensure, for example, that chairs are available, the space is big enough and pieces of furniture can be moved out of the way. Ensure the room is not in public use and is private. Always check accessibility for people with disabilities and ensure the room has disability access. Always give yourself plenty of time to get to the venue with plenty of time to set-up beforehand.
10. Are childcare facilities available, if required?
11. Have relevant health and safety statements or codes of practice been identified and is there appropriate insurance in place to cover all relevant personnel?
12. Think about how to create an atmosphere of trust, cooperation and mutual respect within the group. This is absolutely essential to ensure a successful workshop process and is a continuous focus of the facilitator. This is about creating the right environment.
13. Think about ways to keep the work flowing. A theatre workshop is ideal as it keeps the work flowing in a spontaneous way through regular opportunities for active participation. Check that your choice of exercises suit the group and promote active participation followed by dialogue.
14. If participants come from different backgrounds or are newly arrived in the country language may be a key consideration. Where necessary ensure there is a qualified interpreter attending all workshops. In some cases there may be several different languages in a group which means the work takes place at a slower level as time is needed for translation. When language is a consideration, it is recommended to repeat the same games each week as it can take time to explain the structure of new games that are introduced. One or two new games can be added in however repeating games, particularly ones that the group like, is recommended as it builds solidarity, confidence and skills development. In particular choose games that can be 'demonstrated' so the facilitator can walk through the game to demonstrate it.

4. Support Structure and Guidelines for Planning a Drama Workshop to promote positive mental health

Ensure you put a strong support structure in place around each drama workshop and activity. It is the responsibility of the drama facilitator and host organisations to ensure emotional safety and best practice would be to have a support structure in place within and around each workshop to include:

- Each drama workshop facilitated by an experienced drama facilitator, accompanied by a qualified counsellor.
- Counsellor available to talk to people during and after each workshop.
- Counsellor available on call for a minimum period of twenty-four hours after each workshop.
- Distribute information pack to participants with contact references and support information
- Detailed pre-planning is essential. This includes meetings, ongoing correspondence and discussion prior to and after each workshop. Areas you need to clarify include contact personnel, aims and objectives, outcomes, a profile of the host organization and/or participants, length and number of workshops, numbers attending, support structures, evaluation procedures etc.
- A main contact identified within each organization hosting a workshop and this person is available to participants as a contact after the workshop (particularly important for schools).
- Each workshop presented as part of a series of workshops/events.
- If possible, the information pack is given to an identified contact in advance of the workshop taking place and a structure put in place for participants to work on the information pack before and after the workshop
- Full documentation and evaluation procedures implemented for each workshop and a workshop evaluation form to be completed and returned at the end of each workshop.
- Always ensure a List of support services is available

Role of the Counsellor or Mental Health Care Professional

The counsellor or mental health care professional is present at the drama workshop in a three-fold capacity:

- To deliver pre-designated sections of each workshop that involves 'Input from the Counsellor'. The counsellor can also discuss the content of a workshop handout related to information on positive mental health. The counsellor speaks about key themes. For example, in the Smashing Times Acting for the Future workshop model the counsellor speaks about key themes in relation to how to look after your position mental health and well-being and suicide prevention and highlights assertive behavior and coping skills for the workshops in schools and highlights misplaced guidelines and prevention and intervention skills for the workshops with adults.
- To 'tune into' the group and present and 'steer' the supportive information on key themes in a manner and language that will be heard by the group whether it is adults or students.
- To be present in case any part of the workshop brings up 'personal processes' that may lead someone to require the need of a counsellor on site. And also, to present the 'face' of counselling as an empathic, 'normal' person. If counselling is required this takes place privately outside of the drama workshop space. The counsellor needs to be fully experienced in the area of positive mental health and wellbeing and in suicide prevention and suicide awareness. As a good working relationship develops between the counsellor and the drama facilitator, the counsellor may take on a more active role, for example he/she can assist the drama facilitator when giving guidance to the groups as they prepare their improvisations. However, especially at the beginning, it is important for roles to be clearly demarcated. The drama facilitator is the person leading the workshop and the counsellor helps within clearly defined areas. The counsellor must be present for the full duration of every workshop and takes an active part in the games and exercises.

5. Implementing the Workshops

In the first workshop it is important to use fun-based games and exercises to put the group at their ease and to build support and trust and to continue this as the workshops progress. In a theatre workshop model the first part of each workshop focuses on warm-up games and exercises to bond and synchronise the group, to build trust and group connections and to reduce inhibitions. Using games and exercises to build trust and to make the group feel comfortable is essential as it builds group connections and enables the group to open up to each other and to be more willing to explore sensitive issues in a safe and trusting environment. In the first workshop the facilitator:

1. Introduces his or her self and takes part in a number of the games so that you are seen as a part of the group rather than an outsider.
2. Introduce the objectives in a clear, simple and concise manner and how the workshops will run. Ensure that everyone understands their role in the process and what the group are aiming to achieve. This can be referred to during each workshop session.
3. Ensures that everybody knows the space, where the toilets are and the location of the emergency exits.
4. Determines when is the appropriate time to develop the group contract. This may be the first workshop or it may be the second, depending on the group and the facilitator can determine this on the day. See further information on Group Contract.
5. Emphasis that this is a theatre based workshop and the aim is to encourage everybody to take part in the actual games and exercises. Ensure that everybody is present on a voluntary basis and there is informed consent. The theatre workshop is never compulsory. Once participants are present, full and effective participation is encourage and the aim is to achieve trust, respect and mutual understanding with a safe and supportive atmosphere.
6. Ensure that there are suitable games and exercises used to encourage the group members to get to know each other in a positive and supportive way.
7. Identify the processes you are using to monitor, document and evaluate each workshop and the overall project.
 - a. Documentation processes can include (where applicable) recording aims and objectives, schedules, contracts and agreements, minutes of meetings, keeping correspondence, documenting codes of practice and evaluation procedures and organizing photographs, audio or video recordings. At the end of each workshop do a reflection and summary of what was achieved and what will happen next. Do a summary as often as you feel the group needs it.
 - b. It is important to evaluate your work so as to work towards and maintain best practice. For example, do a head-count at the start of each drama workshop, take down people's names and contact details, give time at the end for verbal feedback, distribute an evaluation form at the end of each workshop, carry out self-evaluations and ensure there is ongoing communication with the host organization. Incorporate feedback from previous workshops so as to develop and ensure best practice. Do an evaluation at the end of each workshop to ascertain what is working and adjustments need to be made for the next workshop. Aim to identify what is working well and what areas can be improved on. If funding permits, employ an independent evaluator, particularly if you are doing a series of workshops or a larger project and this should be planned well in advance. Always prepare well in advance and ensure your workshop plan is of a high quality and has the ethos of empowerment, partnership, equality and inclusiveness. In relation to a full project always document and evaluate the work and share learning and key findings with relevant personnel.

6. Key Ethos and Values for the Role of Artist Facilitator and Counsellor when working with diverse communities.

Respect: The facilitator is there to generate a supportive and positive environment and ensure all are treated equal. Everyone is valued and empowered. Promote transparency and ensure project aims and processes are clearly explained to those in attendance. Always approach everyone as an individual and spend time getting to know people.

Partnership: Always endeavour to have a partnership approach between the artists, health care personnel and the groups you are working with so the project is co-designed by all partners including key stakeholders. Being open, honest and willing to work in partnership and collaboration with others is key to the work of arts and health. A recommended approach is to begin with clear guidelines on roles and responsibilities, on project and workshop planning and de-briefing and to clearly identify the content and structures for partnership arrangements and to have a partnership agreement in place particularly for large scale projects. In relation to planning projects also aim to ensure that the needs of health care users and key stakeholders are central.

For a facilitator working within the workshop in partnership with a health care or other key individual it is important to initially determine who does what while being aware that flexibility is important. Define roles, responsibilities, expectations, design etc. Over time you get to know the person you are working with and it is important to give time for relationships to develop. When conducting a theatre-based workshop using the arts to promote positive mental health, the workshop is normally led by the theatre facilitator with roles and times confirmed with the health care professional within the workshop process. As time goes on and professional working relationships develop, there is change and flexibility as part of the partnership approach in how the workshop is run. While there are many overlaps, there are also different cultural and professional demands expected by the world of the arts and the world of healthcare so time is needed to listen and take on board ways to ensure all needs and expectation are met. Developing a common language and clarification of needs is important. Ensure on-going consultation, collaboration, listening and dialogue.

When working in a healthcare setting there is a need to adapt to your surroundings and to take on board any instructions related to health and safety, ethics, security and infection control. It is important to establish boundaries. For example the artist is responsible for the creative and artistic content and does not carry out any health care work. The artist is not an arts therapist and this needs to be clearly communicated to all personnel and participants. The healthcare worker does not conduct the artistic content.

Process Versus End Product: In relation to a partnership approach the theatre facilitator provides the form or structure for the work while the participants are responsible for the content. The work itself in terms of an ongoing process of engagement is central even when the process has an end product such as a performance or exhibition. There is a balance between process and end product to ensure that all participants can collaborate and be involved in ways suited to their needs. Again ongoing consultation, collaboration, listening and dialogue is key.

Commitment to Participation: Ensure participation by all members. The facilitator encourages all the participants to be actively engaged in the workshop process and to actively contribute. The facilitator is responsible for creating an atmosphere that encourages the sharing of thoughts, ideas, opinions, feelings and emotions and that the sharing is done in a way that is open and accepting manner, with everybody respecting everybody's contribution. In the workshop there may be people who are more comfortable with talking and participating than others are. However some people may be reluctant to participate in

discussions for example at the beginning through shyness or because of cultural or gender issues and the facilitator can use the theatre games and exercises to encourage and build participation in a safe and fun way. The games have a high success rate in relation to encouraging full and active engagement. The games are used to create a trusting and relaxed atmosphere where respect and support is engendered. It is important to point out that while active participant is actively encouraged, it may not suit participants at certain times due to illness or other concerns and flexibility is essential. Participation in the workshop is always on a voluntary basis and participants always have the option to opt out at any time .

Supportive Group Dynamics: Choose exercises to ensure the group are working well together, that they are cooperating and supporting each other to explore and make choices, ensuring all voices within the group are heard and that any conflict is supported and resolved in a successful way. A key aim is to generate empathy, so that the facilitator and the participants are all able to 'stand in each other's shoes' and to understand not only their own feelings but the feelings of others. Place an emphasis on openness, experimentation, risk taking, and creativity. Commit to collaboration and empowerment and to promoting social justice. Ensure confidentiality including in health care settings where patient confidentiality is a major consideration within the culture of healthcare.

Language and Sharing Information: If participants do not speak English it is essential to always adjust the use of language to meet the needs of the group so everybody benefits equally. A key aim is to pass on information and to not only impart or hand over information but to look at ways to ensure the participants retain the information. First of all identify the information you want to hand over and ensure you have this information ready in the form of a hard-copy leaflet or online leaflet. Then develop group exercises to assist in the sharing of the information in an experiential way. This is followed by discussions in relation to the content of the leaflet enabling group members to explore and share knowledge they have as well as discussing key issues with the facilitator and psychotherapist. In relation to key information to be passed on, summarise the information on a frequent basis to keep people connected and explore how to demonstrate the same information in different ways particularly through a range of different creative methods followed by questions and answers to encourage the participants to contribute. Use open-ended questions such as what? Why? How When? Who? Use simple language that everyone can understand.

Ensure that the participants know that the information they have to contribute is valued and respected and a key part of the information sharing process. In order to create an environment of shared learning it is essential to always start 'where people are at'. Use the current knowledge and experiences in the group, subject to confidentiality and sensitivity, as a starting point as there will always be a diverse range of experiences. If participants are willing to share experiences and information then this should be used to inform the development of the work and to create an environment of shared learning.

Diversity: In a workshop where members of the group may have different cultures or be of different nationalities, gender and educational levels, the role of the facilitator is to balance all of these differences but also to highlight the commonalities, experience and knowledge that exist amongst the group.

Listen: The theatre facilitator needs to be able to read a group well and to have attentive and emphatic listening skills. A key role of the facilitator is to listen attentively to what the group are saying, to be aware what each individual participant is saying, and to watch attentively what is happening in the space so you can pick up on any signals that may be hidden just beneath the surface. Stay alert and always be actively engaged. By showing that you are always open, available, interested and engaged, you are encouraging the group to also promote this behaviour. Keep watching the group to ensure that they remain focused and interested.

Objectivity: A key role of the facilitator is to facilitate the workshop process while demonstrating objectivity. The facilitator encourages the group members to develop the work themselves so they are creating new

thoughts, actions and interactions and the facilitator supports everyone in the group on an equal basis and does not create a hierarchy. The facilitator's aim is to raise awareness of how to look after your positive mental health, alongside a key primary responsibility to ensure the group process works and that you are supporting the participants to flourish, grow and contribute and that the workshop concludes successfully. The facilitator is distributing information and promoting awareness raising but always in a way that is supportive of the group and their direct needs and in a way that is cognisant of the experience already existing within the group.

Questioning: A facilitator should be skilled in asking questions. Good questions are open ended and stimulate discussion.

Problem solving: The facilitator should be skilled at applying group problem-solving techniques, including:

- defining the problem
- determining the cause
- considering a range of solutions
- weighing advantages and disadvantages of solutions
- selecting the best solution
- implementing the solution
- evaluating the results.

Leadership: The facilitator is the leader of the group in relation to determining the form for the workshops and works with the psychotherapist who introduces pre-agreed content in relation to positive mental health and well-being. Alongside this the facilitator is encouraging the group to create content. The facilitator also has to recognise when it is time to let the group lead. A key skill of a facilitator is to recognise when you need to lead and when you need to step back and let the group lead and to achieve a successful balance as well as keeping the participants focused and engaged.

Resolving conflict: The facilitator should recognize that conflict among group members is natural and, as long as it's expressed politely, should not suppress it. Indeed, it should be expected and dealt with constructively.

A key aim of the workshops is to encourage debate on difficult issues. Controversy raises excitement and interest and can be an opportunity for dialogue and learning and can focus the group in terms of clarity of thinking and working towards an understanding of different perspectives. Remind the group about working together, everyone having an equal say, genuine listening and a respect for difference. Identify points for conflict management and ensure that all views are heard and explored. Identify with the group areas where there is agreement and disagreement, where compromise may be possible or unlikely. Ensure that the discussion focuses on ideas and not people and that it is okay for people to have different views and opinions. Try to conclude by summing up all arguments presented.

Group Contract: The facilitator encourages the creation of an environment within the workshop where everyone feels safe and key principles of human rights are encouraged including fairness, respect for human dignity, respect for difference, tolerance and equality. Every time you work with a new group, explain that you wish to identify guidelines for working together within the workshop in order to create a creative and safe space. This can be referred to as a 'Group Contract'. These are the group 'rules' or key principles that the group will commit to. The best way is to ask the group members themselves to develop the group contract and the facilitator can add in any necessary rules not referred to by the participants. The group contract refers to how the group will participate and interact with each other. For example practical rules such as everybody aiming to come on time, switching off mobile phones during the workshop session, nobody under the influence of drugs or alcohol and rules on confidentiality to ensure that everybody respects each other's contributions and that any information shared by participants is confidential. Ensure

that everybody in the group agrees to the group contract as they have ownership over the contract and will be more likely to respect the rules that have been agreed. Ask the group to suggest guidelines/rules for working together and the facilitator writes these on the flipchart. Explain that everyone in the group needs to agree to the guidelines before it is written on the flipchart. The Drama Facilitator can make recommendations such as:

- Punctuality and respect for Timekeeping – start and end on time
- Talking one at a time and speaking without interruption
- Genuinely listening to each other. A sense of genuine listening and reflection involves a desire to understand and move on
- Having Respect for each other and for the drama facilitator including valuing different opinions and difference. Everyone valued and genuinely heard
- Do not judge others
- Encouraging everyone to actively participate
- To work positively and support each other
- Confidentiality is important and information shared in the workshop stays within the group and is not repeated outside. Stories from the workshops can only be used afterwards with informed consent

Project Partners

Smashing Times – Who We Are

Led by Director, Mary Moynihan, the award-winning Smashing Times promotes social change through performance, training and participation. The work is underpinned by a rights-based approach and a commitment to artistic excellence and social engagement.

Set up in 1991, Smashing Times is a not-for-profit organisation with a defined arts and cultural focus. The company plays a leading role in the development of the arts to promote human rights, gender equality, peace building, active citizenship, social inclusion and positive mental health and well-being through high quality artistic processes. The company is lead partner and associate partner on a range of transnational European projects and is highly experienced in the management of large scale funding and in using the arts to promote a range of issues at local, national and European levels.

Building on its global reputation for excellence, the company set up the **Smashing Times International Centre for the Arts and Equality** dedicated to the promotion, protection, study and practice of the arts, equality and human rights. The **Smashing Times International Centre for the Arts and Equality** is a key resource service and networking forum providing information, training and a platform for discussion on using the arts to promote equality, inclusion and human rights with a strong focus on positive mental health and well-being. The arts, particularly collaborative arts practice, play a vital role in promoting gender equality, inclusion intercultural diversity and peace. Following this, the centre advocates for tactical and strategic approaches to social justice through the lens of artistic and cultural practice.

A key aim is to use creative high quality participatory artistic processes to promote active, healthy lifestyles, positive mental health and suicide prevention and to promote direct access and social inclusion for local communities and communities of interest with a focus on areas experiencing exclusion or marginalisation. The company reaches an average of 20,000 people annually who take part directly in project activities and a further 100,000 who are reached through communication and dissemination activities. The company has experience working with a broad range of community groups and individuals and has an extensive network of contacts at a grass roots level across Ireland, Northern Ireland and Europe. The company specialises in working with hard to reach groups.

The company were delighted to be awarded the daa Arts Award at the Allianz Business to Arts Award Ceremony at Bord Gáis Energy Theatre, Dublin presented by Pascal Donohoe TD, Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform and to have been awarded a GSK Ireland Impact Award and a Dublin Bus Community Spirit Award.

EURORESO – Who We Are

Euroreso is a network that has been in existence for several decades, firstly as a Brussels-based registered organisation, with partners in all European member states. Currently, the EURORESO network involves 46 partners from 28 different European countries. EURORESO has participated in virtually all types of European transnational programmes and its members have extensive experience as single and collective entities. The association consists of acting members, associate members and honorary members. Its membership now includes partners from all over Europe with wide experience and proven expertise in education and training in various sectors, including social inclusion, migrant integration, women rights and equality. EURORESO has participated as a partner in numerous projects and its members have carried out several successful network projects under the Leonardo da Vinci, Grundtvig, KA2 Languages and Erasmus+ programmes.

INTRAS – Who We Are

INTRAS is a non-profit organisation founded in 1994 dedicated to high quality research and intervention in the mental health field. The organisation nowadays consists of 10 centres in 6 different provinces in Spain with more than 120 interdisciplinary professionals (psychiatrists, psychologists, educators, art-therapists and professionals from social and economic fields) carrying out research, training, clinical practice as well as cultural and sport activities. The main target group of INTRAS consists of people suffering from mental disorders, whereby the organisation also performs activities and offers services to people with disabilities, the elderly and people at risk of social exclusion in general.

The development of our services and programmes is based on the “Recovery approach”, thus empowering the users to live a self-determined and self-confident life through reflecting their potential wishes and providing them with vocational training and employability programmes accordingly. We develop activities and offer different services for our target groups such as psychosocial and labour rehabilitation programmes, occupational and vocational training, pre-labour workshops, counselling and professional guidance/coaching, social employment, etc. The main aim of our work is to achieve an own life project with an appropriate level of quality of life, despite that some symptoms of the mental illness may persist. For that, we pay special attention and listen to the voice of our target groups demanding new programs and activities, in order to provide services taking into account the possibilities of each person and providing people with resources to empower them to be protagonist of their recovery process and thus of their own life. The last step of the Recovery process is employment, either through getting a job in a social firm or in a standard enterprise. Because of applying a Recovery approach, some of our users are now leading a musical band, others have launched a catering social firm, some others have a job selling and maintaining e-bikes, others work in the field of gardening and horticulture, etc.

Aiming to promote labour inclusion for our target groups, in 1999 INTRAS created a social enterprise that is currently managed by people with mental health problems. From its inception until now, it has developed different business lines: handcraft, cleaning services, catering, gardening, bakery, social tourism among others. Furthermore, we are coordinating the national network ADECEM, which gathers 24 social enterprises in the country together supporting people suffering from mental health concerns.

INTRAS also manages vocational training programmes specially addressed to young people with mental health problems, learning difficulties and/or behavioural disorders. These programmes are funded by the Ministry of Education and thus follow the official educational curriculum but include some adaptations depending on the level of the students learning difficulties. Moreover, we offer professional guidance and counselling to our youth, and we cooperate with a number of enterprises that provide practical training to our students in order to complete the theoretical part of the curriculum. Besides vocational training we develop non-formal educational activities such as artistic workshops (painting, graffiti, handcrafts), ICT

workshops (computer design, digital photography, blogging, radio online, podcasts), youth exchanges, and programmes based on sport and outdoor activities aiming to promote healthy life styles. A substantial and diverse team of pedagogues, psycho-pedagogues, teachers and educators, social and youth workers, with vast experience in special needs education, is involved in formal and non-formal educational programmes, helping youth with disabilities to participate in their everyday realities as equal members.

Years of professional work have brought INTRAS solid experience and excellent referential background both in the field of European projects and in the development of innovative actions for psychosocial and labour rehabilitation of people with mental illness. INTRAS has a broad experience in cooperating at international levels, not only by participating in EU projects (more than 25 developed in the last 5 years), but is also an active member of relevant networks in the field of disability such as European Platform for Rehabilitation (EPR) and Mental Health Europe (MHE). INTRAS represented the Spanish Focal Point for the network Mental Health Europe during the years 2010-2011.

INTRAS is the only organisation in the region working in the field of mental health that has received the EFQM certificate (European Foundation for Quality Management) for business excellence (bronze seal 400+). Since 2011, INTRAS holds a European Excellency Seal +400.

EUROFORTIS – Who We Are

Established in 2007, Eurofortis is a dynamic Czech-Latvian centre based in Riga, Latvia which was transformed in 2011 into Biedrība Eurofortis – a not-for-profit organisation working in the field of training and the provision of personal and professional competence development.

Biedrība Eurofortis takes an active part in European educational projects realized within the framework of the Erasmus+ Programme and ensures availability of educational and up-to-date learning materials, tools and methods, as well as seminars and different training methods within projects mostly aimed at identification, development and improvement of various competences and knowledge. Through that we aim to facilitate continuous training and development of local schools, enterprises and society in general.

Within the project life cycle, we have experience with all different types of activities such as research, product content development for training materials, serious games or assessment tools, organization and coordination of pilot testing, dissemination activities within the various sectors and target audiences including large conferences for 140 people, development of project related IT products and websites and quality management and assurance. Our latest projects took place within several main areas of education and training and involved the development of specific types of personal and professional competences for adult trainees working with specific target audiences including SME's, educational organisations, adult groups etc.

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