



# ART ON THE WARD PROJECT

“Creative Art Sessions as a Therapeutic Approach to Encourage Mental Health and Wellbeing on Two Stroke Rehabilitation Wards in Leicestershire.”

PROJECT FUNDED BY  
A charity donation to Arts in Mental Health

Leicestershire Partnership   
NHS Trust

DELIVERED BY  
ARTISTS CLARE MILES AND ROWENA WILLIAMS  
WITH



A LEICESTER BASED CHARITY WHICH PROVIDES LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR OLDER PEOPLE IN CARE SETTINGS AND IN THEIR OWN HOMES.

15 Art Sessions for Patients, Visitors and Staff on Ward 1 at St Luke's Hospital, Market Harborough and The Stroke Unit at Coalville Community Hospital.

REPORT BY CLARE MILES



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## **Final Report**

The 'Art on the Ward' Project has been made possible by a charity grant through the Arts in Mental Health NHS service for Leicester Partnership Trust. The project has been delivered by Learning for The Fourth Age, a Leicester based charity that provides learning for older people in care settings and in their own homes. The Art project has been managed and delivered by Clare Miles, a freelance Art for Health Practitioner, and Rowena Williams, artist and art group Learning Mentor.



Together we have provided 15 art sessions each in 2 community hospitals in Leicestershire (St Luke's Market Harborough and Coalville Community Hospital) for the stroke rehab wards. We aimed to work with up to 10 inpatients and any visitors who are with them on each session, as well as engaging the staff on the ward. A focus of the project has been to try to plan art activities that are able to work together with,

and compliment, the work that the OT and PT teams are engaged with in their work to rehabilitate those patients who have suffered a stroke. With this in mind, the project was planned in collaboration with the Matrons, ward managers, activity coordinators, OT and Physio leads in both hospital wards.

We also planned that during the sessions, we would encourage discussion with relatives/visitors and this was helpful as we planned to produce a 'What to do when you Visit' resource which would be useful for them when they are visiting. This may also be something L4A could use in care home settings too.

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The original aims of the project were to:

- Provide meaningful and stimulating creative activity
- Work alongside the multidisciplinary care team to encourage rehabilitation following stroke
- relieve boredom
- encourage confidence
- boost mood and wellbeing
- Provide topics for conversation
- Distract from illness and problems associated with long term hospital admission
- Create a lasting piece which can be displayed (or taken home.)
- Inform a basic resource which can encourage visitors and family when they are thinking about what to do when visiting their loved one in hospital.
- Lead to a longer lasting use of art as a therapeutic activity on the ward.
  - By planning and producing easy to replicate art session resources developed as part of the project.
  - By providing copies of the session plans for activity co-ordinators to use following the project.

***“What fun! I hadn’t thought I could  
Produce something like this!”***

Patient on Ward 1, St Luke’s Hospital, Collage Art  
Session





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## Planning and Delivery of the Sessions

All the art sessions were planned, in advance, materials and examples were prepared and session guides written so that all participants were able to take part in the session with the help of the volunteers and facilitator. These guides will form a lasting resource for the activity coordinators on the wards and for staff and volunteer learning mentors to access at L4A.

Step by step instructions and examples are important in order for those who are not confident artists, who might find themselves helping with the sessions, to be able to easily encourage others to carry out the activity. It will also mean that the right materials are available to be used. The art activities are all planned with the limitations people might suffer as a result of their stroke in mind. They are also designed so that they are simple but results are impactful. This will then encourage the confidence and enjoyment of the participants.



The use of art and creativity as a therapeutic approach following a stroke is becoming more high profile. Journalist Andrew Marr feels his stroke has made him a better artist! He writes "I was lying in bed and just drawing pictures of the covers and the end of the bed: in a sense, nothing. But it starts you thinking, 'Oh yes, my mind's still there, I'm still engaging in the same way that I was.' I might not have the same skill because I can't move my arm properly, but the desire to do it is still there. "I think that, since the stroke, I've loosened up a bit because, to be honest, putting one line on a bit of paper takes me a little bit more effort than it did, so you don't want to waste the effort. And my big problem as a drawer has always been to be finicky, too dabbity-dabbity, as they

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used to say.” he believes drawing is much too important to be left to artists. Everyone should do it! (The Guardian 2013)

Lorraine Dunn also suffered a stroke in 2012 that affected her ability to speak and walk. She then spent several weeks in hospital recovering. During that time she learnt to paint with her left hand after losing movement down the right side of her body. Lorraine had “never painted before in her life” but was encouraged to do so in hospital after being given a piece of paper to draw on and she now paints every day. She has also had exhibitions of her work and is an inspiration to many people, she even has her own website. (<http://www.lorrainedunn.co.uk>)

Throughout the project we have seen any reticence in patients to start the art activity is short lived and often they become engrossed in what they are doing. The results may not always be what they hoped for but the evaluation and feedback we received from nearly every participant was that it had been, *“fun, a challenge, a change”*, and that they would *“like to come back to the group again.”*

Because many of the patients on the wards are dependent on staff and visitors to bring them to the sessions, this has meant that numbers have fluctuated from week to week. During the first half of the project we noted that patients and visitors at Coalville were ready and anticipating the sessions in advance – this was due to the more established routine of regular activity sessions and enthusiasm for the project by the activity co-ordinators, the “Pink ladies”. The “Pink Ladies” have also been amazed by the quality of the art and recognise the benefit of the project. Linda Mellor (Pink Lady – Activity coordinator on the Stroke Ward at Coalville Community Hospital) told us how the patients thought about the art sessions through the week and proudly showed their visitors their work on display. Visitors also had been amazed by the art work and certainly surprised to find out about hidden artistic ability.



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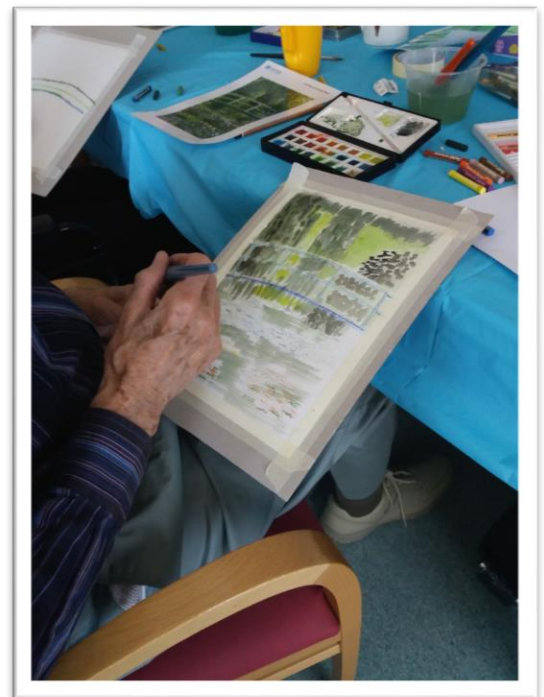


An objective of the project was to encourage visitors to be involved, to be given ideas to use with their relatives and friends as they visit and to find something they could share together whilst they visit. Often visiting times are hard to fill, visitors are themselves coming to terms with the effect of the stroke on the person they love. It has been moving to see how art has enabled expression, sharing and reminiscence as well as some profoundly special moments.

The gentleman who painted this picture had not painted for 50 years. At one time he thought of pursuing art as a career but made a different choice on leaving school and became an academic. He was very unwell and on end of life care, however his enthusiasm for taking part in the art project was tangible. He attended 4

sessions and brought his family and other visitors along too. His daughter wrote, *"I was a visitor and came with my Dad, who is in hospital. Dad has really enjoyed coming to the sessions and it is lovely to see him find his passion for art again. I also enjoyed the painting and was better than I thought!"* (C. Bonnie, St Luke's)

This gentleman went home and requested one-to-one follow-up art sessions at home through L4A's Domiciliary Project.





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Some visitors looked forward to the session as much as the patients and enjoyed the chance to try out the art and spend time together. A daughter wrote. *"It is lovely for me to see Mum and Dad enjoying the sessions together"*. This reflection was echoed regularly and the benefit of being able to *"forget being ill"* was remarked on often. Visitors often worked with the person they were with to create the art work. Sometimes this required them carefully helping the patient to use their affected hand, or patiently listening and trying to understand what choices the patient wanted to make. It was moving to see the care and time that they spent together and the joy of achieving something at the end which they could keep and enjoy.



Stroke affects everyone in different ways; it might affect sight, or the person may have some or significant paralysis. Stroke can also affect perception, concentration and the ability to communicate. Stroke can have a devastating and lasting impact on the life of the sufferer. (NICE, 2010)

All these things can impact on how you can make art - but with some help we found that all the people who came to the sessions were able to participate in the activities, whether it be drawing, painting or one of the many other art activities.

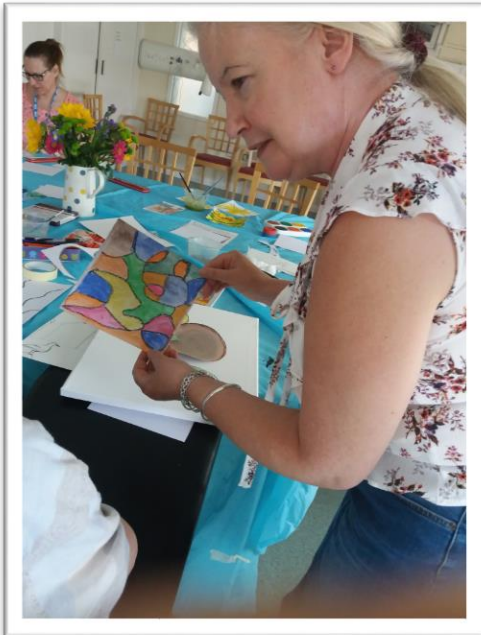
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The volunteers who assisted both Rowena and myself were able to work specifically with the needs of the individual. This was an important factor in the success of the sessions. The volunteers themselves found that they learned new skills and were able to understand better the impact of a stroke on a person – as well as how to problem solve and encourage art activities for the patient whatever their ability. For one volunteer, Karen, (pictured below), this was especially significant as she had herself suffered a stroke a number of years ago. By volunteering on the art project, not only did she exhibit her first ever art work, but she also found that the art activities were helping her and enabling her to participate, do more than she thought she could and build her confidence. This has led to her application to continue volunteering at the end of the project on the ward.



L4A volunteer Jessica, assisting a patient  
St Luke's hospital



At St Luke's Hospital, the Therapy team had seen the impact the art was having on patients and by the middle of the project were really keen to work with us to help patients by using the art activities as part of the rehabilitation therapy they were doing with the patients. Paula Otter (OT) at St Luke's Market Harborough comments that, *"The impact of this project has been great – our patients and visitors have benefitted so much"*. Paula is confident that the art project has potential to improve patient wellbeing and would be keen to explore the impact of art on mental health and rehabilitation, following a stroke, longer term. Working with

the Therapy team was particularly helpful where a patient had significant one-sided paralysis and was unable to acknowledge that side. Using the art activity, placing the art work, setting the table with the materials outside the line of vision was all thought through.



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During the project at both hospitals there have been some lovely examples of art work and achievement, as well as many comments about the project and its benefits from both staff, visitors and patients. Some of these include:

***“helpful”, “therapeutic”, “I looked forward to coming”, “something different”, “great fun”, “I’ll try it again!” “satisfying”, “social”, “enjoyable”, “I feel calmer now”, “I wasn’t keen on coming – but it was very therapeutic!” “A change of scenery.”***



We found sessions which led to a product which can be kept or shared, such as a greetings card, were really appreciated and were a wonderful outlet for expression, particularly for the dysphasic patients and those who are not able to speak at all, but can still write – or who make art with or for a family

member. Rowena reflected that for one gentleman this was the first time he had been given the chance to express to his wife that he loved her since his stroke – as his ability to speak was severely affected.

There have been many expressions of surprise, and examples of people exceeding their own expectations – or just getting ‘lost’ in the activity and finding themselves distracted from their illness. Visitors have also been surprised by being invited to participate; this has given them a new perspective on visiting time. One visitor commented how she would never have done anything like it with her father but how much they had enjoyed it, and that they would do more creative activity

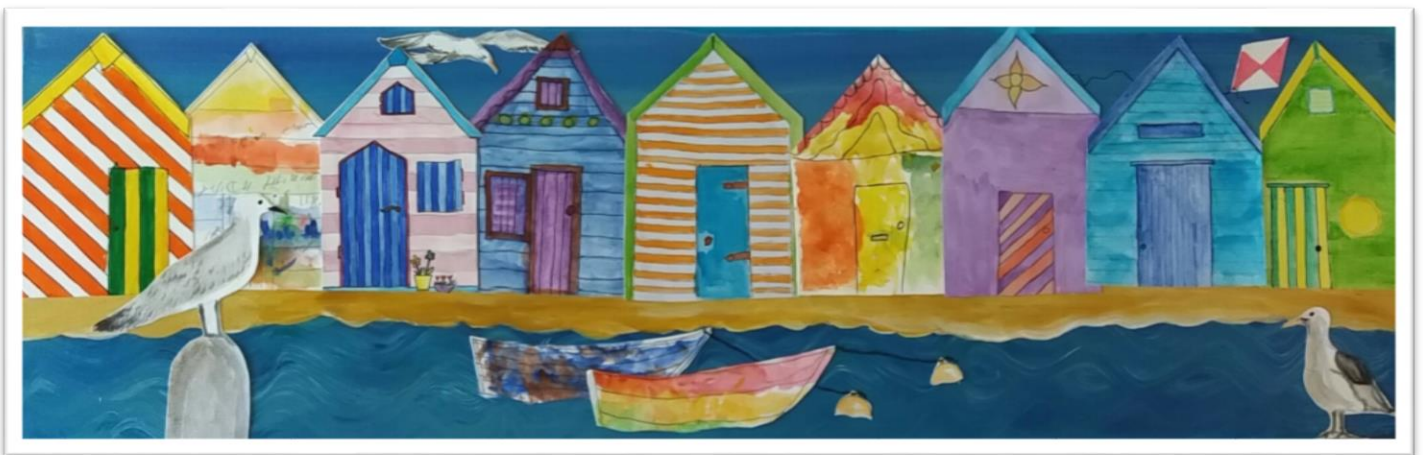
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together. This has helped in the development of a leaflet to give visitors and patients to get them to think about the impact creative activity can have following a stroke.

Joanne Tinsley said, *“What an amazing project with such a positive impact for the patients and others on the ward.”* She feels confident that art will continue as a therapeutic activity on the ward and is keen to look for funding for further input from an artist to facilitate the continued quality of the results. (Pink Lady – Activity coordinator on the Stroke Ward, Coalville Community Hospital)

The work that has been produced has brightened up the ward and some has become a permanent fixture, such as this collaborative sea side scene on Ward 1 at St Luke’s.



## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

On completion of the project we had worked with more than 200 participants - patients, visitors and staff across the 15 sessions. At St Luke’s Hospital, we also had 3 L4A volunteers, one of whom has had a stroke herself and is now applying to work as an NHS volunteer on the ward. At Coalville Community Hospital, we had the support of the 3 “Pink Ladies” and 2 regular hospital volunteers which has been fantastic. There was also interest expressed in the L4A Domiciliary Project, which provides one-to-one learning activities for those with care needs living at home.

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Both Rowena and myself have had experience of working with stroke patients in the past, Rowena as a Speech and Language Therapist, and myself as a Nurse and Project Manager for L4A. I believe this was also important as we planned and delivered the project in a sympathetic and sensitive way, enabling us to cope with having

fluctuating numbers and different abilities within the groups. This was also important when working with the multidisciplinary team on the ward. It also meant that we had an understanding of the ward environment and knowing what might affect the delivery and success of the art sessions we were planning, which was very helpful. We are confident that the art sessions planned are replicable and transferrable – whether to the ward or to other care settings.

Ensuring that we had the plans and quality materials prepared in advance made the sessions run smoothly. The resource book of templates for the 15 sessions should provide those hoping to replicate them in the future with a good guide to ensure they can do this. However, we would recommend that, ideally, these sessions should be facilitated by someone who is a confident artist: this would ensure that there was someone at the session confident to quickly change and adapt techniques to individuals.



We would certainly recommend that the wards were able to receive regular (maybe monthly or quarterly) “update” visits from an artist to problem solve, suggest new ideas and help with adapting sessions to work better in the setting. This would also give the opportunity for some support and



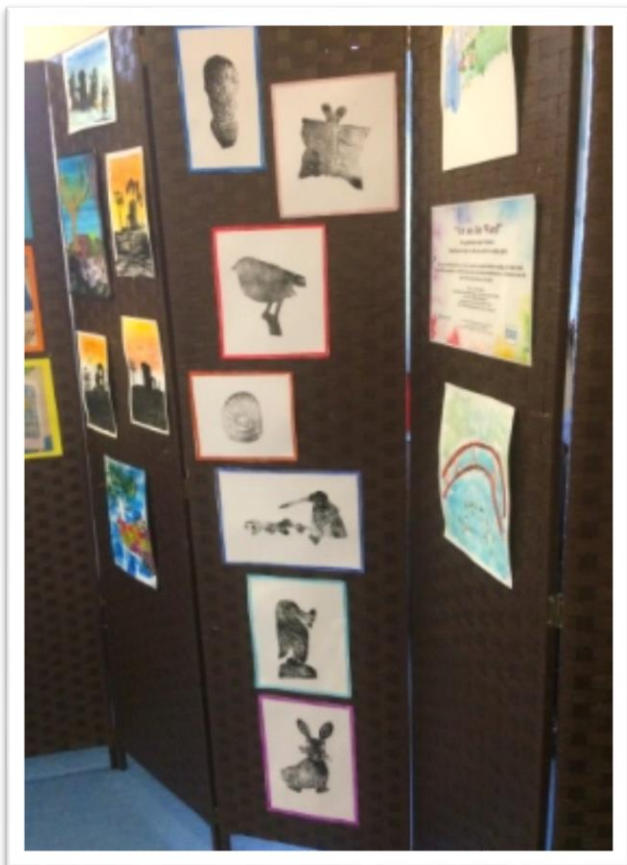
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encouragement to be given to activity co-ordinators and volunteers. The activity co-ordinators who are already in place at Coalville Community Hospital are already facilitating the continuation of this project there.

At St Luke's Hospital, where they do not have activity co-ordinators, Staff have commented that they would benefit from a **repeat** of the project, to continue to demonstrate its impact and because it took longer for the ward as a whole to "get behind the project" and understand that it was more than just an art project, but could have a real impact on the wellbeing and rehabilitation of the patients.

A leaflet and resource book, containing the art session templates, has been created with collaboration from both staff, visitors and patients on the wards. This will suggest simple reasons and ideas why being creative, and encouraging mentally stimulating activity, can be useful in enhancing wellbeing and rehabilitation following a stroke. Printed copies, as well as a pdf version will be provided for the wards to use, and for use by L4A to use in other care settings where they work.



We have also had the opportunity to display art work from the project in the exhibition space at St Luke's Hospital on Ward 1 as well as in the Day Room at Coalville.

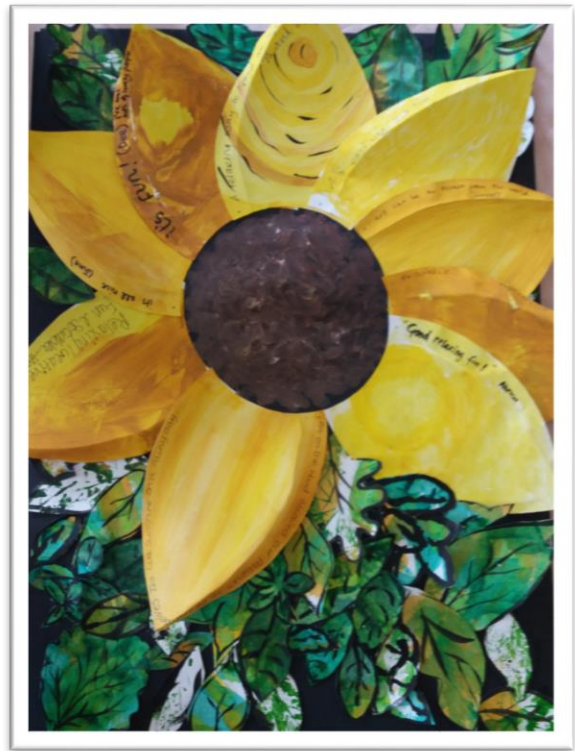
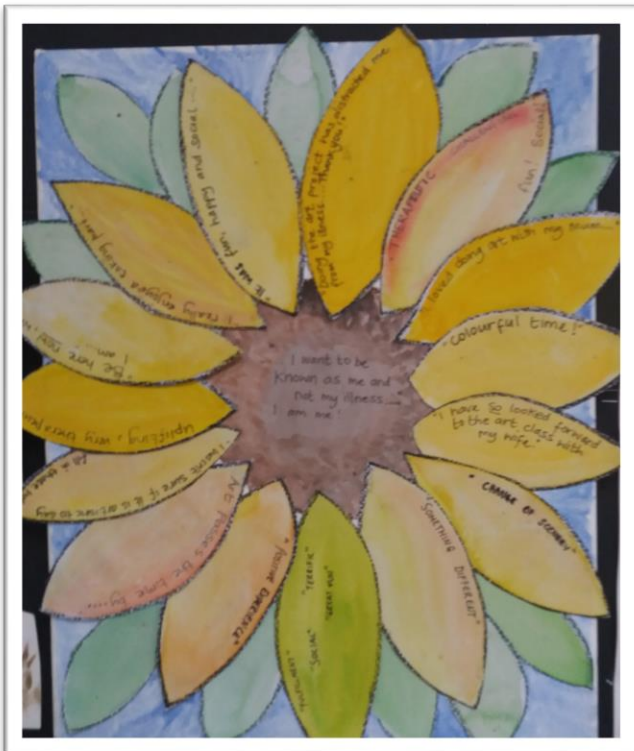
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Displaying the work has led to ongoing interest in and awareness about the project, throughout its duration. It has also given people pride in their achievements and a place to display work if it is not taken away with the patient. (signed permission has been gained for the display of work and the use of photographs.



In conclusion, we have run a successful and impactful project. It has shown some positive and encouraging results in the use of art as a therapeutic tool for using with stroke patients undergoing rehabilitation. This art project would also benefit other people who are in hospital or care settings. It would be possible to adapt it to various settings and client groups. Rehabilitation does not stop once a person goes home and it would be very interesting to pilot a project which provides art sessions in groups or one a one to one basis where there is a specific client group or focus on a health and wellbeing need.



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June 2017

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