



Working for Health

Evaluating the projects

Presenter

These three projects are only a small selection of the huge number of arts projects running at any one time, but hopefully they have given you some ideas about the link between creativity and health. Let's just hear a few final comments from the people involved in the featured projects. Firstly, Francois Matarasso.

Francois

The idea that that it's being involved in the arts is just a kind of therapy or a kind of cultural elastoplast that you can put on people in in trouble or distress seems to me to be very naive. The issue for me is that, certainly in terms of our society, the bulk of public support for the arts, goes to art forms and art activities in places which, largely attract people who are among the wealthier members of society. So actually it's already the middle classes and the wealthier social groups, who have access to the arts, and have their arts supported for them by the state. So, I think that, there is an issue of equity.

Presenter

Jane Meyrick from the Health Education Authority.

Jane

Projects have to reclaim information about evaluation because it's a basic question is, were they successful in what they wanted to do and how do they know they were successful, that's all they need to answer. But if they can collect the information about their own work in a way that they understand, and they feel is appropriate then they can re-package bits of that for funders, but ones that they feel are appropriate, rather than having a criteria imposed upon them, you do need a framework to work within, and there are some frameworks that are just beginning to acknowledge that traditional evaluation doesn't work for a lot of projects, and art work in particular. I've spoken to some projects that that you know they'll get their evaluation form in and they'll stick photographs of their work on it, and send it back like that because they cannot crowbar what they feel they're doing into little tick box categories or percentages of changes in health behaviour. So things like social inclusion, social isolation, self esteem, sense of community, family network friendship network, those wider determinants have just been recognised, and basing your evaluation in tackling some of those things which we know lead to better health in the long term.

Francois

I think one of the most important things is to relax about evaluation. One of the problems for the arts world in getting to grips with evaluation, is that they think everybody else is doing it so much better than they do, and they particularly think that the medical world, the health sector does it incredibly well. Actually the medical sector doesn't do it that well. So I think, arts workers could take some encouragement from the idea that, if it's okay for doctors to say I know that this works, it may not be so bad for artists to say, I know this works.

Jane

If I came and asked you, how do you know what you do is any good you'd be able to tell me very eloquently oh it's because Judith who comes every Tuesday says it's fantastic it's the best thing since sliced bread it's changed it's changed her life completely. And what you need to do therefore is collect her story, and if you collect everybody's story in the same way what you have is a very hard piece of qualitative research which can be analysed, and is not very complicated, it is still true to what you were trying to do.

Richard

It's broadened my horizons. And it's given me new hope.

Child

It makes you feel like you're part of a group and you all work together as a team.

Jenny

I know that I don't have to be put down any more, I can stick up for myself.

Child

It's fairly calming as well, it helps you to calm down.

Ruben

I'm a real person, I'm not just an illness.

Child

You know that you're doing something from another culture

Richard

It's about living. It's about the life that I've got. It's about the way that I want to live.

Elvis

Sometimes I can sit here and smile and think yeah, that made me feel good today.