

ARTS

FOR HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Four in Four



The Arts for Health and Wellbeing team collaborates with many artists, Paul and Tamsin of Four in Four have worked with the Arts team on many occasions and have formed a strong relationship with the team and the Arts for Health and Wellbeing programme as a whole

Four in Four

"We first met the Arts team through the Hearth Gallery in 2016 as part of Disability Arts Cymru's pop up exhibition Walls: Murau exhibition. We quickly realised that the gallery is a unique arts space as it is situated in the heart of the hospital.

It is a focal point for staff, patients and visitors from across the site. This means that the visitors to the gallery are not made up of people who go in search of art. They often use the space for reflection, deflection, distraction and to eat their lunch.

It is also a shared space where patients, staff, carers and family members intermingle with no hierarchy or agenda, and can find themselves engaging in open conversations generated by the work. This is the reason we believe that the Hearth Gallery is such an exciting space to work in.

Due to the unique location of the Gallery, our 'Is It Science or Art?' exhibition was seen by both patients and staff so its potential reach was the entire UHL site. As part of the exhibition we had an interactive feedback wall titled 'My antidepressant is...' where visitors wrote / drew their responses, leaving a personal imprint within the exhibition. We received 196 responses and were able to share that data with the Arts Team for wider dissemination. We hosted a gallery talk with staff & service users around the question, Is Psychiatry a Science or an Art?

As both artists & Mental Health service users we passionately believe in the importance of portraying authentic voices through all of our work, to challenge perceptions and evoke open conversations about the human condition in all its forms."

"Within minutes of first meeting with a new group, we are always struck by everyone's energy, openness and generosity towards us and to each other. It is fascinating to be invited into their lives. We are inspired by the individual stories from every single person in the group. Resilience in abundance is what springs to mind. They are true survivors and we are truly privileged to have a peek into their lives and help them share their wonderfully unique experiences".

"You cannot do this work without being changed for the better by the people you meet. It is always a rewarding experience full of surprises and personal development, which we will never take for granted. It's a true privilege being able to do what we do and we have received so much positive feedback"

Paul and Tamsin



The Arts Team...

The Hearth Gallery first worked with Paul in 2016 as part of Disability Arts Cymru's Walls: Murau exhibition, part of the first Welsh Mental Health Arts Festival. Paul Whittaker's work, Institutional Blue, featured a repurposed clinic door with an eye observation hole behind which was a digital film projection, Bi Polar 45 Years and Counting.

Paul's piece, designed specifically for the gallery location, succinctly presented the often intimidating, alienating, lonely event of attending outpatient mental healthcare sessions in poorly provisioned clinics. The working relationship between Paul and Tamsin, both gifted artists and communicators, enabled the health board to create ground-breaking interpretations and ideas within the creative arts framework.

Both were able to provide sound, practical, creative and innovative solutions in working with vulnerable adults within the framework set by the health board. Paul's work brought a new and intriguing dimension to the gallery; we were excited by his approach, with his understanding of the gallery space, his perception and ability to communicate a multi-layered understanding of mental health.

We were keen therefore to offer Paul the gallery space for an R and D project around mental health and in 2017 we began a long-standing collaboration with both Paul Whittaker and his project partner, Tamsin Griffiths, now Four in Four.

Paul and Tamsin used their skills as multidisciplinary artists to create work that provides authentic portrayals of people who live their lives with a chronic illness because we consider this to be vital if we are going to alter how we talk about it and to enact social change.

Authentic voices portrayed through the arts can generate philosophical and meaningful conversations based on interpretations, which can open our minds to different perspectives based on our lived experiences. This is the reason they created their Arts & Health Company 'Four in Four'.

They see their continuously evolving relationship with the Arts Team as a partnership with shared values and goals. Our role is not simply to be service providers but to be co-producers. This is an approach to public services that is based on equal and reciprocal relationships between professionals, people using services, their families and their communities

Initially, the key to the continued success of Four in Four's co-productions with the Arts team was to develop trust and a common language between the Art & Health sectors through a process of open and honest conversation. As a collaboration there is support for each other professionally & emotionally, and the ability to adapt to the needs of the participants and engage in constant co-reflection & development.

The feedback received around Paul and Tamsin's work is overwhelmingly positive from both service users and staff.

Staff

“Your work is amazing. I could have read about depression or heart disease or physical ailments or Mental Illness a thousand times in a text book but it does not have the effect that this has had on me and I’ve been in Psychiatry since 2009 so that’s eleven years so that is the profound potential of your Art”

Service User

“This exhibition is going to inspire people because these days participatory art is something we all need. You can write and respond and add your feedback and this is the type of thing we all need in this sort of environment because you learn to evaluate and learn how to progress in the world.”

Arts Team

“I think there is so much potential in terms of everything we are doing as a Health Board even just looking at the responses and thinking about Art on prescription in terms of Primary Care. All this information can feed into our capturing and feed into this idea.”

During the exhibition The All Wales Adult Cystic Fibrosis Centre approached Paul and Tamsin and asked if they would consider curating a patient led exhibition whilst mentoring their patients through artistic practice. This resulted in the Control Fate exhibition staged in 2020 during the pandemic and a larger scale project in 2021, embedding the arts within the CF service as they move towards a National shared decision service between CF patients & staff. The success of this project was highlighted by the feedback received from staff and patients.

“When I met Tamsin & Paul I was having a really bad day and felt really low. By the time they left I felt so much better. I have never laughed so much in my life. Most people stigmatise people with CF as lazy and it feels embarrassing because we aren’t, we are just exhausted. When Paul and Tamsin came to do the project it was so nice to have people to talk to and listen to what I had to say and express.

Because they were so open and non-judgmental I was able to communicate who I am and my circumstances and I felt they truly understood CF and my Bipolar. I felt I was able to express, offload, let our imaginations go into all sorts of places, laugh and talk about the things I have been through. I would engage with any Arts & Health project that Tamsin and Paul do in the future in and out of a hospital environment.”

Patient living with CF & Bipolar

“I found the conversation to be deeply thought provoking and powerful. The raw honesty with which they approach their work encourages participants to be equally open and engaged; everyone there was able to contribute whilst considering the impact it had on their lives. I look forward to seeing more of their work in the future.”

Natalie Prosser, Professional & Practice Development Nurse Mental Health Clinical Board - Hafan Y Coed

Since 2017, Paul and Tamsin have worked within the Hearth Gallery at UHL reaching a huge number staff, visitors and patients through 3 exhibitions and associated discussion events, within the Adult Mental Health Unit Hafan y Coed, The All Wales Adult Cystic Fibrosis Unit, Nephrology and various departments including Nuclear Medicine whose staff were keen to be involved in creating exhibition material.

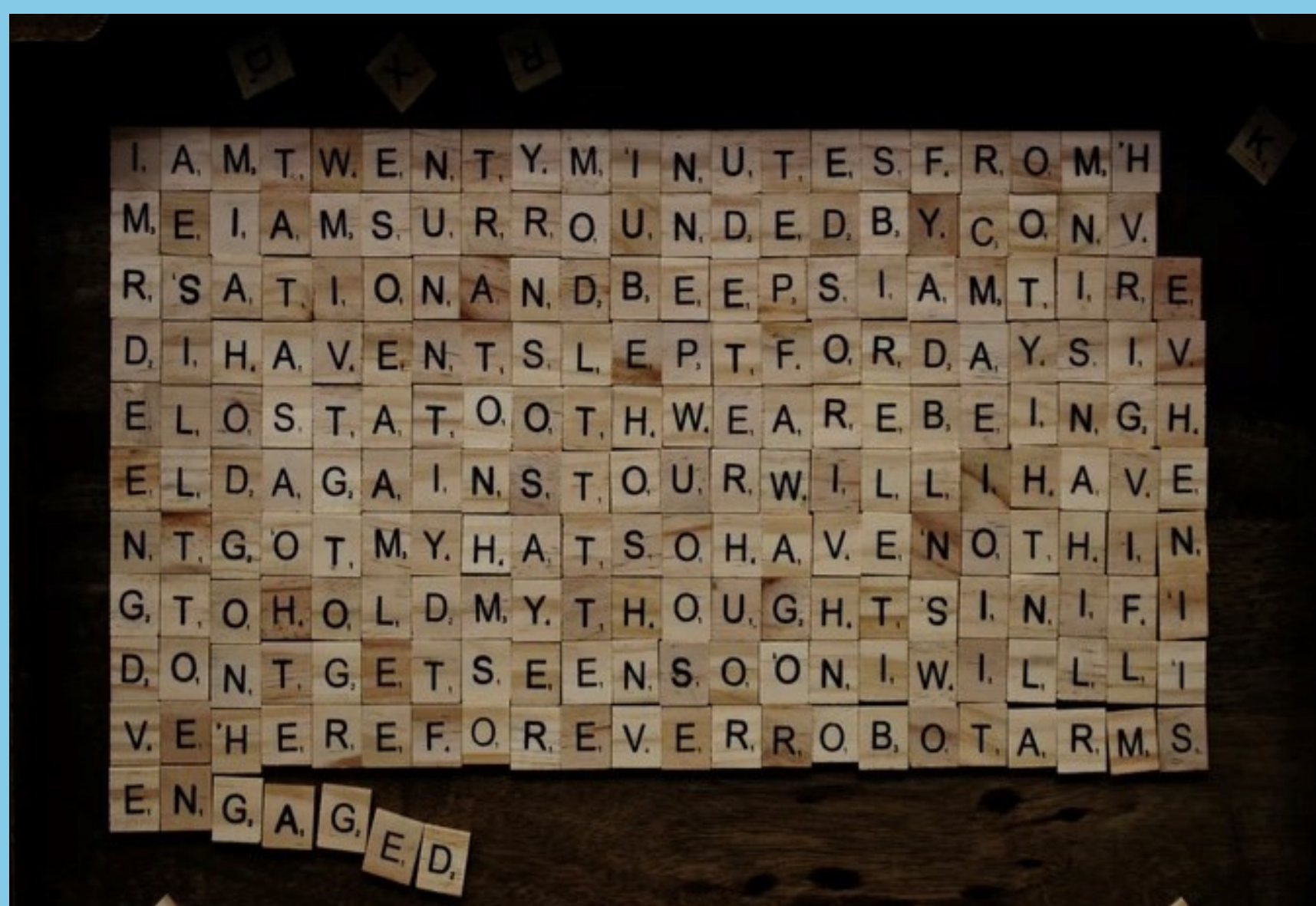
During the Pandemic lockdowns, they delivered art sessions online to people living with Cystic Fibrosis, which evolved into a Plaza exhibition, online exhibition and discussion event. As a result of the Research and Development project the Arts Team were awarded HARP Nourish funding to further develop and embed the creative arts within the Cystic Fibrosis Centre. Paul and Tamsin have also been commissioned by Cardiff & Vale Health Charity to coproduce courses at the Recovery College, the first Recovery College in Wales, and are also currently involved in peer training and the development of further courses at the college.

"Paul and Tamsin have brought a great insight into processes and 'norms' which are part of hospital life, and how the creative arts could be embedded to improve communication, personal expression, recovery and outcomes.

A common goal of discovery as to the potential impact of arts in health, in pushing the sector forward, and of realising the value that the creative arts can have on an organisation like Cardiff and Vale University Health Board has been ground-breaking.

Paul and Tamsin are able to develop intriguing and successful arts interventions which encourage participation and interaction, and has provided learning for future arts projects, I feel that they have gained enormous confidence in the realisation that their approach works, that they are able to have an impact on a wide range of people, and that their approach is in tune with the core values of the healthboard. We have also provided Inductions and Honorary Contracts so that they can work more closely with our staff and patients, and this builds on their unique ability to communicate and form strong working partnerships"

Melanie Wotton - Arts in Health Project Manager - Community



With each project a new opportunity arises.

Four in Four, supported by the Arts for Health and Wellbeing Team are currently working with the All Wales Cystic Fibrosis team, Nephrology and the Recovery & Wellbeing College on multiple multimedia arts & health projects and in embedding the arts further within Cystic Fibrosis, and other departments. The learning and new arts in health practices developed from existing projects can be widely disseminated to other Cystic Fibrosis Centres, other Health Boards and across the arts in health sector.



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