

CASE STUDY

St George's Park

[Morpeth, Northumberland] 2006

In 2006 the Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Trust opened a new mental health facility adjacent to the St George's Park Hospital in Morpeth. The new facility includes 'village' style accommodation for working age adults with long-term mental health problems and associated challenging behaviour and represents a new concept in mental health provision that enables independent living within a community that is supported by specialist services.

To assist the service users to cope with the change, the Trust and Helix Arts designed a creative participatory arts programme that resulted in the production and installation of new artworks for living and community areas.

A six-month artist's residency enabled visual artist Cath Walshaw to work with the service users to create paintings on silk. Cath then digitally manipulated the images which were professionally printed in large, 1 metre square, format. These artworks are now installed in the residential and community areas. During her residency Cath also produced a series of images, all contained within small filing cabinet drawers, designed to provoke debate around some of the widely held perceptions and outdated attitudes towards mental health problems and which also explored the relationship between the history of the old building and the brand new facility.

All of the images created by the services users, together with the images produced by Cath, were unveiled at an exhibition at the Hospital in November 2006. The quality and creativity of the service users' work was widely remarked upon and Cath was praised for the strength of the rapport that she had built with the programme participants.

Funded by Arts Council England North East, Northumberland Tyne & Wear NHS Trust, The Lloyds TSB Foundation, The Community Foundation and the G.S. May Family Trust.

"The skills base of an external arts organisation, in this case Helix Arts, strengthened the Trust's ability to grow and deliver this project successfully. Continuation of such partnerships may be key to developing programmes further."

Gayle Sutherland
Programme Evaluator



Image: The service users and Cath Walshaw



Image: Cath Walshaw Photo: Stan Gamester

PIONEERING COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS THROUGH THE ARTS