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**Path**

**"Art makes me feel I have resources,  
otherwise untapped"**

**Pathways™** Project Evaluation Final Report

Judith Sixsmith and Carolyn Kagan



Manchester  
Metropolitan  
University

**“Art makes me feel I have resources,  
otherwise untapped.”**

Pathways Project Evaluation  
Final report

October 2005

Judith Sixsmith and Carolyn Kagan  
RIHSC Research Institute for Health and Social Change  
Manchester Metropolitan University

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# Executive Summary

## Pathways: Health and Well-Being through the Arts

The Pathways project aims to deliver participatory arts practice within communities in Manchester addressing issues of mental health and social inclusion. From September 2004 - 2005, a research team from the Research Institute for Health and Social Change at Manchester Metropolitan University was commissioned to undertake an evaluation of Pathways, using a participatory and inclusive approach.

### The Pathways Evaluation aimed:

- To articulate the processes that artists were engaged in from the perspectives of both artists and participants;
- To examine some of the mechanisms and outputs of the artistic processes in terms of the extent to which they can be gauges of change over the duration of the project (for example ‘tree people’ diagrams; ‘social atoms’, life stories);
- To understand the mechanisms through which the artists relate with and work with the participants and the impact of these ways of working on both participants and artists (including, for example issues of playfulness, fun, trust);
- To identify changes in mental health and/or social support and/or participation and inclusion of participants as a result of participating in the project;
- To indicate how Pathways contributes to PSA target: *improving outcomes for adults and children with mental health problems*; and PSA target: *improving quality of life*;
- To identify the process and impact of the Pathways Exhibition on participants and artists in terms of well-being and social inclusion;
- To identify the relative strengths of different forms of data for evaluation of arts and mental health work.

Taking an holistic perspective, information was gathered from artists, participants, LIME staff and project venue managers. Experiences and assessments of the workshops were collected through interviews, graffiti boards, diaries, questionnaires and research participant observations as well as emotional and social documenting via participatory group methods including the ‘tree people’ and ‘social atom’ techniques.



From left to right: Composite large scale round painting. Studio One, lead artist Adela Jones. Light and Shadow Installation and Shadow Imagery. FAB Group, Nathan's Road Lone Parents Project, Tree of Life. Lead artists Rene Lumley, Jessica Bockley and Hitesh Lad.

## Key Findings

Key findings of the evaluation are reported below in relation to five main headings: Attendance; Linking art and mental health; The value of the Pathways workshops and exhibition; Organisational issues; and The evaluation.

### Attendance

During the course of the evaluation, 189 people attended the various Pathways workshops. Analysis of attendance registers shows that more females than males attended. Many people of ethnic minority background also took part in workshops. The general trend was for attendance to fall over the course of the workshops, and this was most evident when projects were not hosted regularly every week, when natural breaks occurred such as Christmas or when venues or artists were unavailable. Drop-in sessions were the least well attended with few people regularly returning for workshop input, although this could be explained by the more youthful nature of drop-ins catering for highly vulnerable young people.

It is important to point out that attendance is not the main indicator of the effectiveness of Pathways, since several reports were given of people who attended only once or twice having benefited from their contact with Pathways. Moreover, for those who did attend the advantages far outweighed the disadvantages, as detailed below.

### Linking art and mental health

#### Well-being and Quality of Life

Most participants reported feeling relaxed, calm, and happy as a result of partaking in the art and in the workshops, although the challenges and frustrations of creative work were appreciated. Doing art helped them to express themselves to themselves in a process of self examination. It also enabled them to tell others about themselves and their feelings. Furthermore, they experienced a sense of normality, firstly, in pursuing artistic activities on the same basis as anyone else and secondly, that through art they could articulate their problems which were recognised and sometimes shared by others. Participants also described how they would actively regulate their moods and emotions, using art in order to concentrate, to forget their problems or to shift from depressive to lighter moods. Feeling better about themselves helped them, they felt, to achieve a better quality of life in terms of their own sense of satisfaction with life as well as in their everyday relationships.

#### Skills and achievement

Participants reported that they had learned through instruction and advice, through the artists' care and guidance, a range of different art techniques. This enabled them to distinguish between different art forms and decide what it is that they enjoyed about art. Some had taken art into their everyday lives, working on their creations in their own spare time. This, they said, provided a focus and routine to structure their free time, something they struggled to achieve before the advent of art into their lives.

#### Self esteem

Participants spoke of how good they felt about themselves within the workshops and how this feeling stayed with them throughout the day and into various domains of their lives. Observations of the Zion exhibition and workshops highlighted their sense of pride and achievement in the artistic products. Evidence from interviews and 'social atoms' data suggest some newly saw themselves as 'artists', a self descriptor they highly prized. Through art, they could show the world what they could do.

### Being me

Perhaps one of the most important aspects of the art itself, was the way in which participants could work through their own personal journeys, using their chosen artistic medium to reveal often highly emotive and sometimes hugely upsetting situations, and still feel accepted for who they were. Their knowledge that the focus of the workshops was art and not therapy helped in such revelations. Participants felt that they were important within workshops for who they were, not because of their mental health problems. They were a person not a problem to be dealt with.

## The value of the Pathways workshops and exhibition

### Empowerment

Emphasis on participant choice generated within participants feelings of empowerment. Issues of choice extended to attending the workshops or not, choice of workshop activities, choice of exploring or revealing aspects of themselves or remaining quiet. Empowerment was also highlighted by venue managers as a key benefit of Pathways workshops and rested, they felt, on the relaxed and respectful ethos embraced by artists in the workshops.

### Trust

Artists generated an atmosphere of mutual trust. By engaging personally with the work (rather than standing separate from it), by revealing aspects of themselves during workshops, by listening but not judging participants, by being sensitive and responsive to emerging emotional situations and by accepting participants for who they were. Additionally, participant art work was accepted as unique and personal creations, and never derided. The trusting relationships between all involved were appreciated by participants who reported this as very different from all their other contacts with mental health workers and health service providers.



*Journey's End. Newall Green High School, lead artist Adela Jones*

### Employability

Evidence of arts pathways into employment were not always clearly indicated although some participants had progressed from attendance at Pathways workshops to media work. Others felt they had grown in confidence through the workshops, enabling them to attend other workshops (eg. Childcare) or indeed had progressed into employment. This, they felt, constituted a huge improvement in their quality of life. The workshops encouraged participants to develop for themselves a timetable of their activities and to keep to this, constituting organisational and timekeeping skills relevant for work situations.

### Education

Some workshop participants had found a passion for art and had chosen to follow art as a path into education. Others had attended Pathways projects because of their interest in art and had taken this further into college based art foundation courses. In such cases, the development of a passionate interest, and one which helped participants to feel socially included, resulted in them feeling that Pathways had improved their quality of life by improving their interest base and opportunities for the future.

## **Social capital**

There was much evidence to suggest that the friendly and relaxed atmosphere of the workshops and the respectful relationships developed between artists and participants encouraged a sense of mutual co-operation, of caring, concern and reciprocity. Interestingly, this did not extend outside of the workshop settings (except for those living in closed community houses) where people chose to designate themselves more in line with family and close friendships than with their art group comrades. The dark side of social capital was also in evidence, as regular groups spurned the admission of new members, in case they changed the group dynamics. There was also the problem of revealing themselves in situations where gossip could arise and hurtful comments be made.

## **Communication**

In the wider social domain, participants told of the ways in which art and the workshops helped them connect more directly and sensitively with their family members, especially their children. They felt they had something interesting to offer (in terms of art) in conversations as well as practicing the art of conversation in workshops.

## **The Exhibition**

This provided an opportunity for participants to see their work as socially valued and placed in the context of 'art'. Participants were delighted with the exhibition. All visitors responded positively to the exhibition; however some were disappointed to find very little information about how the exhibits had been produced. There was also some concern about who had produced some of the art: artists or participants.

## **Organisational and Support Issues**

### **Advertising and referrals**

In general, there was little apparent evidence for a consistent and strategic approach to advertising workshops. Each artist was responsible for developing this themselves which resulted in much of the artists' energies being devoted to recruitment issues rather than focusing on art and mental health. Sometimes this resulted in a critical lack of participants and one project was closed down. Moreover, some workshops were poorly attended as a result of a lack of referrals from health services. Initially, there was no designated mechanism for the identification and contact with potential referral services, although during the latter stages of the evaluation a referral worker was appointed.

### **Communication**

Lines of communication between management and artists were not always clearly delineated which meant that critical gaps in information could result in the failure of a Pathways project to provide the most effective environment for arts in mental health. This generated a team of artists who were largely self determining, yet with art extensive organisational support when problems occurred (such as providing cover for workshop sessions). Latterly, a Pathways project manager was appointed to deal with organisational and management issues, but at the time of this report, regular updating sessions for information sharing were not in place.

### **Counselling**

It was clear that working with vulnerable people experiencing mental health problems could impact on the emotional wellbeing of the artists themselves. At the outset of the Pathways programme, LIME offered some counselling support, but this was not always easy to access. This left some artists to deal with distressing situations and emotions either alone, or via their own friendship and family networks. As the need increasingly arose, artists had developed some 'buddying' strategies amongst

themselves. The creation of a counselling role with a qualified art psychotherapist within the LIME organisation in May 2005 has proved to be a step forward in establishing LIME as a healthier workplace, however, evaluation of the difference this has made has not been possible in the short time available.

## The Evaluation

The evaluation of such a complex phenomenon as the Pathways project within the context of LIME has proved to be a highly challenging exercise. The intended participatory approach in which artists acted as evaluators, and evaluators took part in arts workshops, were difficult to achieve given the very different working practices of both groups. Nevertheless, the evaluation has generated some extremely interesting data and the process of learning from working together has progressed in both directions. The key problem lay in identifying data collection techniques which would tap into changes in mental health and social inclusion without affecting the workshops themselves. Several meetings were held where artists and researchers worked together to produce mutual understandings about the integral link between art and research. These have proved useful in generating genuine co-operation, which has enabled many more Pathways workshops to be evaluated and hence allowing workshop participants to add their voices to the evaluation. Perhaps the key message here is that evaluation cannot be fully planned at the outset, but is emergent in relation to the dynamics of the workshops and the participants in them. The array of methodological tools developed for this evaluation is now available within the repertoire of the LIME artists who can plan their future work with an evaluative frame in order to further improve pathways from arts into healthy communities.

## Recommendations

### Advertising and Referrals

- Ensure the overall Pathways administrator has all the information and the contact details of collaborating agencies (actual and potential), artists' plans and availability in order to promote the project to potential referring agencies and to the general public so that individual projects reach those who will most benefit;
- Produce a consistent and strongly branded advertising campaign;
- Ensure advertising is prominently placed in participating venues;
- Talk through advertising with venue staff to promote their active involvement in recruitment and to ensure that advertising is timed to cohere with venue timescales;
- Building strong links with referring agencies needs to be prioritised and this takes a huge amount of time and effort.

### Planning

- Conduct key organisational business through the Pathways manager to ensure that the manager has an up-to-date overview of activity and development of the various projects. A regular well-attended management meeting between key project staff is essential;
- Provide for continuity within localities so that Pathways gets known and appropriate links can be made with other projects and referring agencies, and so that those who might benefit most from involvement are introduced to the project;
- Make explicit the reasons for either recruiting the same or different artists to work within particular localities, taking into account the advantages and disadvantages in terms of mental health gain for those involved.

## Delivery

- Via overall administration ensure that appropriate cover is available for artists unable to conduct a particular session;
- Plan long term continuity within a locality or in partnership with particular collaborating agencies to avoid short term planning and delivery cycles;
- Within the Pathways project build in sessions for artists to come together to discuss their involvement, as well as participant engagement, and to identify their needs for peer and psychological support;
- Reconsider the role of drop-in projects and their purpose within the overall Pathways project.

## Evaluation

- Agree amongst artists and project administrators, in partnership with participants if possible, key indicators through which project infrastructure, delivery processes and outcomes can be monitored in the future for project accountability and improvement;
- Tailor evaluation methods to the particular circumstances of each project, reflecting on the usefulness and appropriateness of the methods throughout the life of the project. (The range of different methods used in this evaluation can be seen as a tool box from which to begin forward evaluation planning, but always with an openness to the development of new ways of capturing the workings of the projects);
- Ensure that information is gathered that links project aims, art forms, and actual outcomes in ways that are congruent with the art forms adopted within individual projects, and with the mental health and social inclusion needs of participants;
- Within each project, build in a specific process whereby projects are monitored in terms of participants, costs, attendance, delivery processes and expected outcomes, along with explicit statements about proposed changes in the light of feedback and learning. Collate these project reports into an overall Pathways report for presentation to the Pathways Board, so that a culture of continuous learning and project improvement develops.

## Exhibition

- Target more publicity at the general public in order to attempt to bring more of those people unfamiliar with Pathways into contact with the project and its achievements;
- Within the exhibition, place more focus on the process through which artists and participants worked together to produce outputs - this would represent the unique features of the Pathways project more fully.



*Picture of Life. Poem from the creative writing project reproduced on window. Lead artists ALKIMU.*

## Why Link Art and Mental Health?

Many people will be affected by mental health difficulties, directly or indirectly, at some point in their lives:

At any one time one adult in six suffers from one or other form of mental illness. In other words mental illnesses are as common as asthma. They range from more common conditions such as deep depression to schizophrenia, which affects fewer than one person in a hundred. Mental illness is not well understood, it frightens people and all too often it carries a stigma.

(Dobson, 1999: i)

NIMHE (2005) distinguishes mental health problems from the vicissitudes of life:

Feelings of depression, anxiety or confusion are normal responses to the ups and downs of modern life. A person is described as experiencing mental health problems when such feelings are so extreme s/he has difficulty carrying on everyday life. (NIMHE, 2005: 4).

Mental health problems may be long term and enduring or may be relatively short term but, none the less, disabling. They affect not just the person, but the person's relationships with others, their quality of life and well-being and often lead to isolation, a lack of connectedness, poor social cohesion and social exclusion (SEU, 2004; Long et al., 2002b). Mental health is closely linked to health, and poor mental health can affect quality of life, well-being, and physical health (DoH, 2004; Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2004; Power, Bullinger, Harper, & Group, 1999; White, 2004). Some indicators of improved health and well-being (HEA, 1999) might include: enhanced motivation; greater connectedness to others; a more positive outlook on life; reduced sense of fear, isolation and anxiety; and increased confidence, sociability and self esteem.

The potential for arts projects to contribute to better health and social inclusion for people with both enduring and common mental health problems is recognised in policy statements and contributing reviews from a number of Government departments, including the ODPM, DCMS, DoH (Huxley & Thornicroft, 2003; Long et al., 2002b; SEU, 2004; White, 2003, 2004). At the same time, within the health service there is a strong emphasis on evidence-based practice. Thus, if the health service is to fund arts for mental health projects, evidence as to their impact and efficacy will be required. This presents a number of challenges, not least due to the range of arts activities that are employed in the context of mental health, each of which would be expected to have a different effect. For example, different art forms might have a different impact on outcomes for people with different kinds of mental health difficulties. Activity based projects (performance, dance and so on) may be expected, amongst other things, to influence psycho-physiological systems and impact on depression and social anxiety. More solitary art forms such as ceramics or painting leading to work of exhibition standard, might be expected primarily to impact on self esteem and aspirations which might indirectly influence low self worth or provide employment possibilities for some people with enduring and chronic diagnosed conditions. Interactive arts forms such as quilting and collective creative writing might be expected to influence social interaction and connections, leading to perceived social support and improved well-being. Depending on duration of projects and their focus they may or may not be expected to lead to employability skill development or further participation in education or training.

Some research has addressed the relationship between art and specific mental health outcomes (see CAHHM, 2003 for a review). Staricoff (2004) gives some specific examples: creative writing helps people express emotions, organise their thoughts and gain some control over their lives; music, on the other hand, has a relaxing effect, with a positive impact on some of the behavioural problems associated with mental illness, such as eating and sleeping. Huxley and Thornicroft (2003) demonstrated that an 'arts on prescription' project had a positive impact on general (mental) health and wellbeing; and, in terms of stigma, Geddes (2004) argued that engagement with arts may be less stigmatising than taking medication, thus increasing compliance and reducing side effects. In addition, Staricoff (2004) points to projects that suggest that arts projects help break down barriers between professionals and those with mental health problems, both through the training of professionals and in terms of reducing stigma through a jointly prepared exhibition (Coia, 1996).

Some overviews of evaluation of arts for health, including arts for mental health, have been conducted (Angus, 2002; Staricoff, 2004; White, 2003). These reveal a number of shortcomings:

- The failure of many projects to identify aims and objectives, specific to either mental health or social inclusion outcomes (Angus, 2002) or clarity from practitioners and funders in terms of intentions, assumptions, or requirements (White, 2004);
- Lack of progress in developing comparative methodologies, longitudinal studies of outcomes or in moving beyond descriptive case studies (Geddes, 2004; White, 2004);
- Little use of methods that capture the individual and social transformative potential of arts and mental health projects (Hewitt, 2004), whilst recognising the complex nature of the interventions (Campbell et al., 2000);
- An emphasis on description rather than explanation<sup>1</sup>, and no development of theories of change;
- Little mention of diversity in terms of class, age, ethnicity or gender. One notable exception is the review by Freidli, Griffiths and Tidyman (2002) who look at the impact of creative activity on African-Caribbean men. The consideration of diversity is particularly important given the greater incidence of mental ill health amongst poor, black and ethnic minority groups (Sashindharan, 2003; Walls & Sashindharan, 2003), and what we know about the intersections of diversity with social capital and social inclusion (Campbell & McLean, 2002; Sixsmith & Boneham, 2002).

Although there are relatively few rigorous evaluations of arts and mental health projects, there are some relevant evaluation frameworks from which to draw, including those for complex interventions in health promotion and intervention (Campbell et al., 2000; Meyrick & Sinkler, 1999; Simpson & House, 2002); social inclusion and mental health (Cameron, Edmans, Greatley, & Morris, 2003; Long et al., 2002b); arts in health (Angus, 2002); and arts programmes more generally (Matarasso, 1996; Reeves, 2002).

Thus, while there is recognition of the importance of developing an evidence base, there is little research informing best practice in arts for mental health. Arts for mental health projects are complex interventions, taking different forms, implemented in different settings by artists with different degrees of experience in working with people with mental health problems. There is widespread agreement that the most effective evaluations will involve combining different types and sources of information, and that evidence acceptable to both the health service and the arts world should not be restricted to randomised controlled trials (Roth and Fonagy, 2004). In the light of the issues identified above, an evaluation of the Pathways project was undertaken.

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<sup>1</sup> Staricoff (2004) has offered some medical explanations of the effects of different art forms, mostly in terms of physiological impact.

# LIME Pathways

Pathways is a programme of artistic activity centred on mental health and well-being in community settings<sup>2</sup>. It focuses on areas with high incidences of ill health and artists work with local people to find creative ways of overcoming emotional difficulties and the daily stresses associated with ill-health.

The first phase, based in the Benchill and Woodhouse areas of Wythenshawe has been completed and an evaluation report is available from LIME<sup>3</sup>. In this, researchers, artists and participants worked together to:

- Assess the effects of the arts projects on the quality of life of the participants;
- Show how the outcomes of this assessment relate to the Public Service Agreement and Health Improvement Partnership Targets;
- Evaluate effectiveness of the referral pathways and signposting.

The evaluation was positive and recommendations arising from it were incorporated into the next phases of the project.

In September 2004, the second phase of the project began with the project being rolled out to Longsight, Hulme and Moss Side. June 2005 saw the third phase of the project take off in North Manchester. This emphasised both consolidation of existing programme provision and outreach into new working partnerships within Manchester.

## Pathways' Mission

The Pathways mission is:

- To explore avenues of creativity within the community and show how arts through creative activity can play an important role in mitigating against mental ill health;
- To improve the life outcomes for people with mental health problems;
- To engage people in creative activity that should enhance:
  - Skills and achievement
  - Self esteem
  - Employability
  - Social capital
  - Communication options;
- To empower Pathways participants using art to identify and address concerns about their mental health.

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<sup>2</sup> Pathways to health and well being through the arts. Manchester: LIME. 2004

<sup>3</sup> Story, R. and Brown, L. (2004) Pathways: Evaluation of a pilot project. Manchester: LIME

## Pathways Aims and Objectives

The aim of Pathways is to deliver participatory arts practice within communities in Manchester addressing issues of mental health and social inclusion. Here, artists work together with local people to find ways, through art, of overcoming emotional difficulties and daily stresses, enabling participants to express their individuality and share their personal journeys. The following three questions are central themes through which the aims of Pathways could be delivered:

- Who am I?
- What do I feel?
- Who are you?

When the current evaluation commenced in January 2005, some of the Pathways projects had begun, others had finished and others were due to start. All were oriented towards an exhibition in April 2005. The evaluation ended in September 2005, following another four months of workshops in participating venues.



*Light and Shadow Installation. FAB Group, lead artists Rene Lumley and Jessica Bockley.*

# The Evaluation

## The Research Objectives

For this evaluation, the research objectives are:

- To articulate the processes that artists were engaged in from the perspectives of both artists and participants;
- To examine some of the mechanisms and outputs of the artistic processes in terms of the extent to which they can be gauges of change over the duration of the project (for example ‘tree people’ diagrams; ‘social atoms’, life stories);
- To understand the mechanisms through which the artists relate with and work with the participants and the impact of these ways of working on both participants and artists (including, for example issues of playfulness, fun, trust);
- To identify changes in mental health and/or social support and/or participation and inclusion of participants as a result of participating in the project;
- To indicate how Pathways contributes to PSA target: *improving outcomes for adults and children with mental health problems*; and PSA target: *improving quality of life*;
- To identify the process and impact of the Pathways Exhibition on participants and artists in terms of well-being and social inclusion;
- To identify the relative strengths of different forms of data for evaluation of arts and mental health work.

## The Evaluation Approach

It was agreed from the outset that the evaluation should focus on the Pathways project as a whole, within which individual projects were embedded, rather than on separate evaluations of the individual projects. Some key features underpinned the evaluation (see Paton, 1981 for more detail on creative evaluation). These include:

- Viewing evaluation as a process of refining theoretical ideas about the links between the different aspects of a change project with empirical data enabling us to describe not only what changes for whom and in what ways, but also how and why change has occurred;
- Using evaluation as a tool for project improvement, learning and change, that is at its most powerful when owned by project participants or stakeholders, and thus contributes to capacity building and both individual and organisational learning;
- Adopting a plural approach to methodology, drawing on and combining both quantitative and qualitative data as appropriate;
- Combining ‘stakeholder’ and ‘organisational’ perspectives in the evaluation. This puts the perspectives of, and impact on, the participants and other stakeholders at the core whilst also enabling exploration of projects’ efficacy and impact on both the mental health and arts systems;
- Exploring the relationship between resources, outcomes, and the processes through which these outcomes were achieved, whilst also taking account of the different project contexts;
- Seeking to involve both artists and participants with mental health difficulties in the evaluation work of the project.

## Preliminary stage: Development of a model

Prior to the research commencing, one of the researchers participated in a Pathways project, and the team held informal discussions with artists, some participants and staff from LIME. From these activities, along with the knowledge of relevant previous studies and reviews, we produced a draft model (Figure 1) connecting the different features of arts in mental health projects. Participants with different mental health problems, artists, and the social context in which they are embedded, are combined with various arts activities. These lead to aesthetic products, and to intermediate outcomes for health, social inclusion, and community and service development. These, in turn, lead to individual, interpersonal, group or community levels of enhanced mental health and well-being and enhanced social inclusion. In addition, enhanced capacity of communities and services might be attained. Throughout, organised reflection by the artists and gathering of information through an action research process by researchers enables continual, learning and project improvement. This model informed our starting point for a systemic evaluation (Midgley et al., 2002) which included inputs, processes, intermediate and final outcomes, and was characterised by reflection and feedback.

### Venues and Projects

Pathways provides a wide variety of art forms in a range of community based venues targeting populations with very different emotional, personal and social needs. Typically, one or two artists work together in these community settings. A brief overview of the venues and projects that comprise The Pathways Project is given below.

#### Family Action Benchhill (FAB)

A regular weekly group of young and middle aged adults had been meeting for two years in a local community centre. These people experience a range of mental health problems including anxiety and depression, lack of confidence and low self-esteem, chronic shyness and difficulties in establishing meaningful social interaction. The art input to this group is highly varied ranging from visual arts to psychodrama and creative writing.

#### Tree of Life (ToL)

Tree of Life is a community centre facility based in a local church. The project developed with a small group of five people including adult referrals from mental health service providers and living in difficult social circumstances. This was the first of the Pathways projects to take place. The workshops involved painting, photography, drama, creative writing, visualization exercises, meditations and sculpture.

#### Women's Refuge (WR)

The Women's Refuge is a supported housing project for women in difficulty, providing a place to live for the women and their children, advice, advocacy and counselling. Pathways provided artistic input in a fortnightly workshop to the Women's Refuge project, working with highly vulnerable women aged between 19 and 32 years old. These women variously experienced unstable family lives, emotional problems, undertook self-harming behaviours and engaged in drug and alcohol addiction.

#### African Women's Art Development (AWAD)

This group of African women (aged between 23 and 50 years old) comprised a diverse social group of professional as well as unemployed participants who were making new lives for themselves, post divorce and family breakup. The Pathways Project provided writing workshops for this group.

### **The Powerhouse (P)**

This drop in facility for young people provided the basis for The Pathways Project to run visual arts workshops. A series of three targeted workshops were held following some taster sessions. The young people attending these sessions were aged between 16 and 25 years old and many were experiencing social and personal problems at school and within their family context. The art work within this project involved primarily visual arts and culminated in the production of several polystyrene chess pieces for the large communal Powerhouse chess board.

### **Claremont Resource Centre (C)**

The Afro-Caribbean Care group (ACCG) arts workshops in creative writing were held every two weeks with elderly people aged over 55 years old. For these older men and (predominantly) women, the Claremont resource centre provided day care and entertainment. Attendees tended to have mobility and health problems and some suffered from loneliness and isolation, living mostly alone at home in their local communities.

### **Youth Advocacy and Support project (YASP)**

Clients of YASP tended to have low levels of literacy, problems with confidence and self-esteem, as well as issues around self-harm and alcohol and drug addictions. Initially, a regular writing workshop was held in the YASP building each week for any young person using the centre (aged between 16 and 25 years old). After the first set of writing workshops, a series of photography workshops were scheduled for YASP. Poor attendance at these meant that they were cancelled after four weeks.

### **Newall Green High School (School)**

Young people in school years 7 and 8 with emotional and behavioural problems (disruptive in class, withdrawn children, children who found it difficult to make friends) were selected by their staff learning mentor to attend visual arts workshops held in school time and on school grounds. The group worked together with the artist in puppet making and produced the concept and materials for a 'Pathways Journey' game.

### **The Manchester Foyer (MF)**

The Foyer is a supported housing facility for young people who can no longer live at home. Young people living in the facility may have alcohol or drug problems, may have previously been living in care or had experienced family problems. On application they are able to live in the facility for a period of two years, although many leave before then. Initially, in phase 2, a set of visual arts workshops were delivered in the Foyer and operated on a drop-in basis exclusively for Foyer residents. In Pathways phase 3, a second set of creative writing workshops were subsequently held in the Foyer with this young, transitory population.

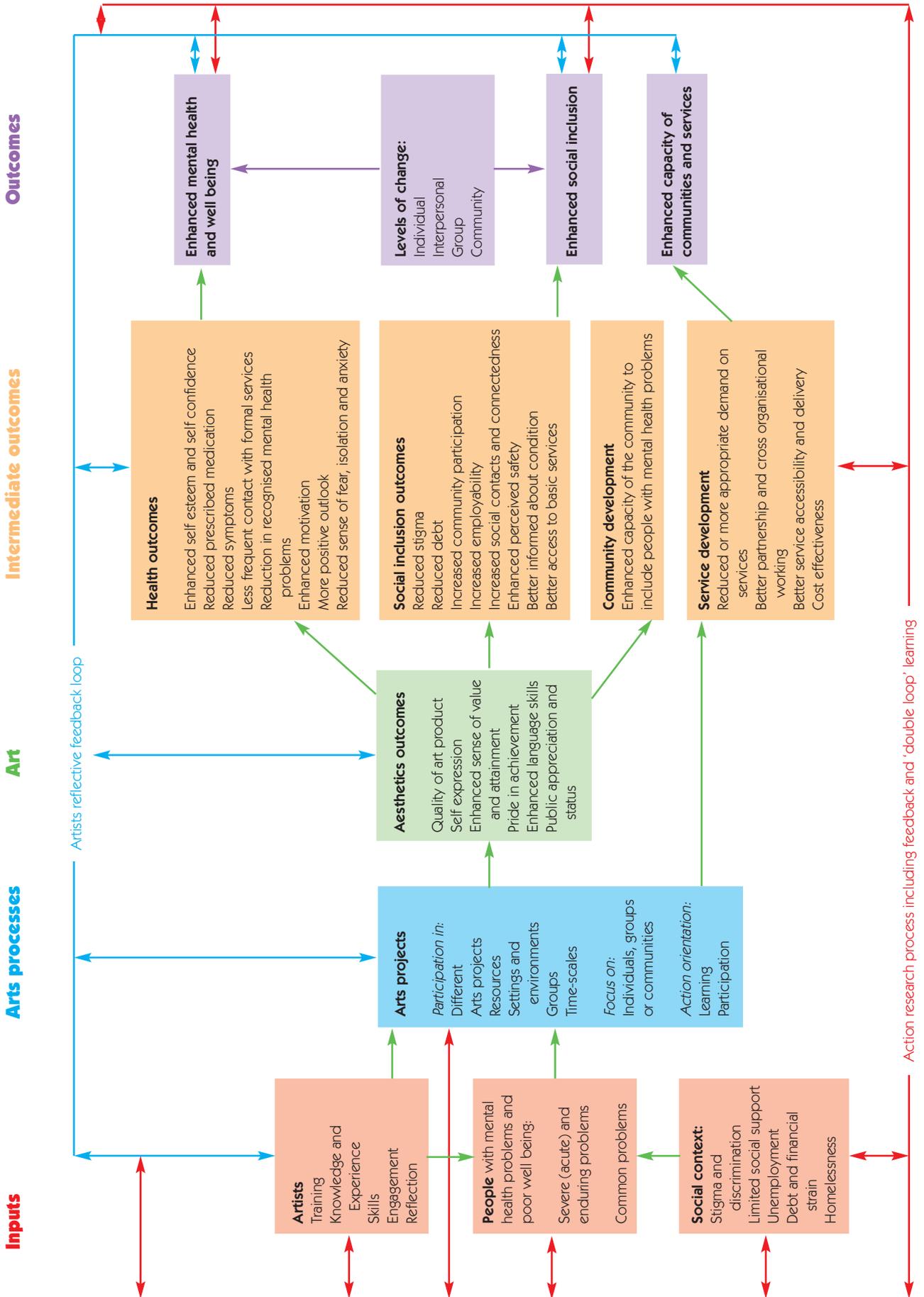
### **ZAP**

This is a design and arts project working on a drop-in basis with people who have mental health issues, some having been referred through local mental health services. The Pathways project interlinks with the other art work going on at ZAP. Participants have usually completed an hour of painting before the Pathways creative writing input.

### **ZEST**

An informal group conducted in the Cheetham Hill area and based in a local church. The workshops are open to the local community and involve a range of different forms, primarily but not exclusively, the visual arts. Participants are mixed in age as well as mental health issues and social/family circumstances.

Figure 1. A model linking mental health, social inclusion/exclusion and participatory arts



### **Studio One (SO)**

The Studio One workshop took place with a small number of participants, some of whom were mental health referrals, others were friends of participants who attended other workshops located within the Studio One venue. In terms of mental health issues, Studio One participants often had a history of mental health problems such as schizophrenia and depression and saw themselves as such. The workshops were organised around visual arts and music including, painting, drawing and modelling.

### **Hall Lane (HL)**

The project at the Hall Lane Resource Centre in Benchill, Wythenshawe involved elderly people who attended the day hospital on Fridays. All had mental health problems: some had lived with their difficulties over a number of years and others were recently discharged from hospital. The project focused on the production of a CD consisting of favourite songs and poems, 'wise sayings' and memories of earlier times. This project contributed to the pilot stage of the evaluation.

### **The Artists**

Four core artists worked on the Pathways project during phases 2 and 3 and all had a wealth of experience in community and mental health arts projects, some being internationally renowned. These artists had worked with Pathways for between two and half years and six months. They described themselves as writers of poetry, prose and stories, photographers, story tellers and painters. These core artists were supported by five further artists who acted either as a secondary support worker, led workshops, or filled in when needed. In general, the support artists were brought into the project by the core artists or the project manager to broaden the scope of art forms available within the workshops. They worked with a range of visual media including film and video, performance art, installation, animation and etching, painting and drawing. Many of these Pathways artists had experience of directing and managing art projects and some had gained postgraduate degrees. Of these artists, 8 were female and only one was male.

### **Evaluation Methods and Activities**

Through initial discussion within the artists and project workers, a number of different methods for collecting information that would be useful to them and at the same time inform the evaluation were identified. Where possible, we used creative and innovative data collection methods, reflecting the nature of the projects being evaluated (Paton, 1981; Boyd et al., 2002). Because of practical issues and professional concerns, not all methods, identified in advance were used. Wherever possible, we used creative and innovative ways to collect data, and following Everitt and Hamilton (2002), we separated data collection from interpretation and making judgements about their meaning. Interpretation was made by groups of researchers and researchers and artists via meetings and a workshop.

The following are the main means of gaining information for the evaluation.

**Interviews:** Face to face interviews (Smith, 1995) as well as e-mail-interviews (Murray and Sixsmith, 1998) were undertaken. These were largely semi-structured, organised loosely around the key topics of art, mental health and social inclusion, the workshop sessions and the place of art in mental health service provision. Interviews were held with LIME artists and project participants, project managers, LIME staff and local artists interested in art for mental health. The interviews were transcribed and available for analysis in text. Interview schedules can be found in appendix 1. In total 37 interviews were conducted.

**Reflexive Diaries:** Artists were invited to keep reflexive diaries during their projects and over the time of the evaluation. Researchers also kept detailed field notes, containing observations, thoughts and feelings as well as insights gained from data collection and analysis. Instructions for reflexive diaries can be found in appendix 2. In total 5 artists' and 4 researchers' diaries were collected.

**Focus Groups:** Focus group discussions (Tonkiss, 2004) were used to generate shared and social understandings of the aims of Pathways, art's relation to mental health and social inclusion and working practices. In addition, the successes and problems encountered when working with vulnerable groups and the progress of the Pathways projects were discussed. Three focus groups were held: artists and researchers; participants; as well as between artists and project managers. The discussions were audio recorded and transcribed. The schedule for the artist-researcher focus group can be found in appendix 3.

**Questionnaires:** Feedback data was obtained via questionnaires from visitors to the exhibition. Although the use of standardised questionnaires to capture changes over time in participant mental health and issues of social exclusion/inclusion was discussed, these were felt to be inappropriate to the nature of the transient population and the drop-in context of many of the Pathways projects. However, ad-hoc questionnaire data was collected in evaluation of particular projects and these questionnaires can be found in appendix 4.

**Participant observations:** Perhaps the most useful form of data was participant observations made by the researchers and artists whilst participating in the sessions. This activity helped develop good channels of communication as well as mutual understanding, trust and openness. Data obtained from participation gave researchers first hand experience of the atmosphere of the sessions and how trust and rapport, as well as growth was achieved within the sessions. In total 25 two hour observations were conducted.

**Private written accounts:** Participants in workshops were given the opportunity to privately write about how they were feeling, pre and post sessions, and what they felt about art and how being engaged in the creative process impacted on the way they felt. Private written accounts were placed in an envelope and collected at the end of sessions. The stimulus statements for these private accounts are detailed in appendix 5.

**Graffiti boards:** Graffiti boards, with trigger questions to provoke comment were available for free expression of thoughts and feelings to be voiced by visitors to the exhibition. The graffiti boards were posted on the wall outside the exhibition room for exhibition visitors to comment on. In some workshops, graffiti boards were also used to elicit participants' feelings about the sessions and the link between feelings and the art process. The stimulus statements for the graffiti boards are detailed in appendix 5.

**Snippets:** As participants were working within the sessions, tape recordings were made, where possible and appropriate, of their thoughts and feelings about themselves and the work they were doing. Five tape recordings of workshops were made and snippets of conversation of value to the evaluation were extracted.

**Creative techniques:** Where appropriate, through discussion with the artists, parts of the creative techniques and outputs of individual sessions were also used as data, bearing in mind the particular ethical issues that are raised in using material produced for one purpose for a different, evaluative one (see for example, Hammond and Gantt, 1998). Techniques used in this capacity included:



## Ethical Issues

The project protocol was submitted to the Ethics Panel of the department of Psychology and Speech Pathology at MMU and approval obtained. The research was designed and conducted in accordance with British Psychological Society's ethical guidelines (2000). In particular, anonymity and privacy of participants were fully considered (pseudonyms or initials are used in the text, or people are referred to by their job title or affiliation to the project (such as, artist, manager and so on); written informed consent (see appendix 7) was gained where possible; in cases where this was not possible, verbal consent was agreed; participants could withdraw from the research process up to the point of report writing; and data has been stored securely. Ethical issues in data analysis and in publishing research have been and will be continuously addressed (Kelly and Ali, 2004).

## The Evaluation Team

The evaluation team from the University was made up of (i) three researchers with experience of arts for health work, and of evaluating complex community and health - including mental health- projects in collaboration with those delivering and benefiting from the projects, and using a wide range of information collection and analysis methods; and (ii) three researchers with more limited experience of project evaluation, but with detailed experience of some of the methods of information collection and analysis. No-one on the research team describes themselves as an artist.



Artists and researchers in Appreciative Inquiry workshop.

## Participatory Data Analysis

Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected during the evaluation and a participatory data analysis format brought artists', participants' and researchers' perspectives to the interpretation of the evaluation data. Firstly, researchers and artists got together in a visioning workshop based on the principles of Appreciative Inquiry<sup>4</sup> (Cooperrider, 1995). This helped to develop mutual understandings of the research-art collaborative process and focused on the issue of researching the relationship between art and mental

health. Secondly, a data analysis workshop was held to explore the data and identify the emergent messages. This proved to be an extremely interesting exercise bringing very different ways of thinking about the data together and coming to some negotiated conclusions. Finally, preliminary analytical ideas were discussed with four Pathways participants, during interview sessions. They each considered some preliminary findings and, in relation to this, were asked to comment on, expand and explore the relationship between art and mental health.

<sup>4</sup> This workshop was planned and facilitated by Amanda Kilroy and Charlotte Garner

## Sample

The evaluation elicited the views of the main stakeholders in the LIME Pathways project. These were: workshop participants; the Pathways artists; evaluation researchers; project managers; LIME staff; a steering committee member; and other artists with an interest in the area of arts for health. Table 2 outlines the sample structure, giving the number of people interviewed for the evaluation and, in brackets, how they can be identified in the findings text. In addition, data was collected from many workshop participants using the questionnaires, graffiti boards, written accounts, observations, tree people, social atoms, snippets and so on.

Workshop participants from the ACCG, Powerhouse, Foyer, YASP and FAB took part in interviews on a voluntary basis. Interviews were conducted with current participants of a variety of ages (16-66 years old) and with different severity of mental health problems (including anxiety, depression, schizophrenia and stress). Some interviewees were casual (drop in) users of the workshops while others were established long term attendees. This created a diverse sample from which a range of different issues could emerge in exploration of the relationship between art and mental health.

In terms of the Pathways artists, those who were regularly employed on Pathways projects as well as those working more intermittently were included, alongside some of the artists that supported them. Several members of the LIME staff linked to the Pathways project were also interviewed, including the newly in post Pathways project manager for phase 3, the newly appointed counsellor and the referrals manager.

**Table 2: Sample Structure**

<b>Stakeholders</b>	<b>No. Interviews</b>
Workshop participants	12 (P)
The Pathways artists	7 (A)
Evaluation researchers	6 (R)
Project managers	4 (M)
LIME staff	3 (S)
Steering committee member	2 (C)
Other artists	3 (O)
Total	37

Venue project managers were included in the interview framework in order to examine the role of Pathways within outside organisations. Four managers were asked to participate and none refused, although contact with others was difficult to establish due to the busy nature of their work and they therefore could not be included in the study. In addition, interviews were held with two members of the steering group and three artists not associated directly with LIME.

## Findings

The findings reported below constitute a detailed synthesis of all forms of data collected. Findings are organised into the following key domains; attendance, participant perspectives; artist perspectives, outsider perspectives and organisational issues. Finally, analysis of the Pathways Exhibition in the Zion Art Centre is presented. The different sessions of each project are referred to as workshops.

### Attendance

Workshop attendance registers were analysed in order to ascertain information on the characteristics of attendees, how many were attending, as well as issues of retention of participants. This analysis was conducted separately for each workshop since combining data would mask the very real differences in the nature of the workshops, some being drop in (such as the Powerhouse), others were regular group attendees (such as Family Action Benchill) or those in a closed community setting (such as the Manchester Foyer). Table 3 shows the dates and numbers attending each workshop, their gender and mean age alongside percentages of those who returned at least twice and those who returned at least four times.

Attendance data for FAB and ZEST were not available for analysis. In total, the workshops reported above reached 189 participants between the dates 14.9.04 and 31.8.05 More females than males took part. Attendance declined across all groups over the period of the workshop sessions. Workshops drawing on a referral system (such as Tree of Life) or located in a closed community setting (such as Foyer, Claremont) reported greater retention of participants. There were no gender differences in terms of those who returned several times to workshops. Attendance tended to decline quickly within drop in facilities with transient populations and where provision of workshops was interrupted due to holidays, staff illness or venue non availability:

The long break for Christmas broke the continuity and made the January sessions more difficult to follow on... (Artist)

In addition, attendance was highly variable where artists and venue managers did not communicate regularly and effectively with each other. Artists felt that this was the case where venue managers were not supportive (because of time demands, lack of interest or understanding about the potential value of art for mental health).

The ethnicity of participants varied greatly across projects, ranging from all white British (Tree of Life), predominantly white attendees (YASP, Women's Refuge), mixed ethnic (Foyer, Powerhouse, ZAP), to all black attendees (AWAD, Claremont, Bloom youth day - a one off taster session). There were no differences in the ethnic origins of repeat attendees across the workshops.

Table 3: Workshop Attendance

Workshop	Dates	No Participants	Mean age	Return 2X's	Return 4X's
Women's Refuge	14-9-04	5 (5f)	21	No data	No data
Tree of life	16-9-04 —>10-3-05	5 (1m: 4f)	33	100%	100%
YASP	4-10-04 —> 20-12-04	10 (5m: 5f)	27	30%	20%
Foyer (1)	15-12-04 —> 15-3-05	17 (3m: 13f)	19	71%	24%
AWAD	2-12-04 —>10-2-05	12 (1m:11f)	36	58%	25%
Claremont (1)	10-12-04 —>10-3-05	21 (2m: 19f)	74	52%	10%
Powerhouse	14-1-05 —>10-3-05	20 (11m: 9f)	14	16%	0%
Bloom youth day	29-1-05	10 (4m: 6f)	12	n/a	n/a
Manchester E2E	9-2-05	7 (7m)	18	n/a	n/a
Foyer (2)	23-6-05 —>18-8-05	12 (8m: 4f)	19	42%	33%
ZAP	1-6-05 —>31-8-05	21 (11m:10f)	43	71%	14%
Claremont (2)	9-6-05 —>18-8-05	18 (1m: 17f)	74	56%	17%
Studio One	04-7-05—> 5-9-05	11 (4m:7f)	44	55%	9%
Newal Green High School		20 (10m:10f)	12	No data	No data
		M = 68			
		F = 121			
		Total 189			

## Participant Perspectives

### The workshops

In general, when participants were asked how they felt about the workshops , they answered in very positive ways and no comments were negatively framed.

Typical responses were:

- It was interesting, I enjoyed it!
- Therapeutic
- I liked it, it was good
- I thought the workshop really helps me to relieve my emotion when writing
- I thought it was very interesting
- I think the workshop benefits me. It's creative and fun
- I enjoy art

For some, the workshops had simply been a way of filling time and they were more ambiguous about the benefits:

- It was something to do
- It got me out
- I thought it was OK, just OK. Not good, not that bad. Yeh, it was OK.

Analysis of the interview, task based and participant observation data showed the ways in which workshops had been experienced and the value of workshops in participants' everyday lives.

**Stress reduction and mood enhancement:** Attendance at workshops was evaluated by participants in terms of stress reduction and relaxation. They felt happier, more relaxed, less stressed and in a better mood during the workshops. Perhaps more importantly, the positive impact of the sessions had a more enduring effect:

I felt less stressed and made me be more relaxed throughout the day. (P, WR)

When asked to describe how they felt before the Foyer, Tree of life and ZAP workshop and then again afterwards, the positive impact of workshop attendance on relaxation and mood (see table 4) was clear. The 'Tree People' written data also supports these conclusions, although where written feelings were not supplied, Tree people data was not possible to evaluate (see appendices 6). Taken together, 23 out of 26 (90%) before and after comments indicated that the workshops had had a positive impact on the well-being of participants.

Although some were happy and 'up-beat' at the beginning of workshops, many were in a rather depressed mood, or feeling rushed or hassled. At the end of the workshops, many more felt more relaxed and happy and energized. Indeed, throughout data collection, participants continually described the mood enhancing impact of the workshops:

Better in mood-not as low (WR)  
 Felt more positive after sessions (WR)  
 Felt happier afterwards (Foyer)

Stress reduction was brought about, in the views of the participants, by meeting other 'friendly' people, chatting and socializing, social activities they found difficult to orchestrate in their everyday lives. Several accounts of the workshops alluded to difficulties in meeting people through lack of confidence, personal and financial resources. This often resulted in a high degree of isolation and some of the participants described lonely hours, days and weeks in which they barely met with other people.

In this context, the workshops provided a local opportunity for getting out and about, as these participants testify:

Got me out of the flat so not sat in it all day (WR)  
 Mixing with others, got out and about, stress free (WR)

Table 4: How I feel before and after workshops

Workshop	How I feel before	How I feel after	Impact
ZAP	Sad, I'm not with my dad but at the same time I feel happy he's having a great time and a great holiday abroad in Canada	So much more relaxed and at ease and closer to new friends since leaving my group in Salford. I feel happier inside myself	Relaxation
Tree of Life (ToL)	Tired, weary	Relaxed and chilled	Relaxation
ToL	Rushed	Not as rushed but still hectic	Relaxation
ToL	Rushed	Calm now	Relaxation
ToL	Frustrated	More relaxed	Relaxation
ToL	Rushed	Relaxed	Relaxation
ToL	I am happy today but it is really dull outside with no sunshine	Relaxed and happy	Mood enhancement
ToL	Insecure, alone	Happy	Mood enhancement
ToL	2 minds like Jekyll and Hyde	Enjoyed making elephants	Mood enhancement
ToL	Not very happy	I feel a bit better	Mood enhancement
Foyer	I felt really good today	Really great	Mood enhancement
ToL	Excited	Like phantom of the opera	Mood enhancement
Foyer	I felt organised and happy.	HAPPY!	Mood enhancement
ZAP	I feel good a lot of the time	I'm having a laugh inside	Mood enhancement
ZAP	I feel vulnerable and lost without my parents to guide me in life	I feel that I have grasped all emotions, happy and together. It was important	Mood enhancement
ZAP	I feel a little restless since yesterday	I feel no different, restless	Agitation
FAB	Sick and tired	Happier after a hug!	Mood enhancement

/continued

ToL	A little apprehensive	I feel a bit down today	Mood depression
ToL	In pain	In pain	Pain
ToL	On top of the world	Energized	Energetic
FAB	Tired	More get up and go	Energetic
ZAP	I feel unfocussed	I will keep writing in a scrapbook	Motivation
ZAP	I feel unpredictable, open weary, motherly, anxious for others	It helps if you can't talk to people properly cos sometimes I say things wrong but this writing helps me to say things properly	Achievement
FAB	Stressed	Sense of achievement	Achievement
FAB	Looking forward	Proud	Achievement
FAB	Under pressure	Phew, thought provoking	Challenging

It was more difficult to establish the extent to which mood enhancement and relaxation were simply short term benefits; however, available data from the Foyer indicates that as the workshops progressed, participants tended to report themselves as happier than in the initial meetings. Retrospective evidence gained from participant interviews supports this conclusion where 'being in a generally better frame of mind' was specifically attributed to participation in the Pathways workshops:

I feel so much better about myself now. And that's what Pathways has done for me. And for my family, because we're all happier if I'm happier! (FAB)

This was particularly the case for participants in the longer running, more regular workshops.

**Relationship building and social capital:** The focus on activity during the workshops helped those lacking in confidence to establish relationships at their own pace and through the joint interest in art. In this sense, the workshops:

Helped (me) get to know people. (WR)

More importantly, one participant felt that the guided social integration of the workshops was the crucial element in his well-being:

I've had some behavioural problems. Psychologists don't think you should say everything on stage but being creative let's you say what you want. I've had therapy before, it doesn't do anything. Getting on with people is what you need. Right now I don't have too many friends but I might make some here. (YASP).

Through socialising and making friends, feelings of self esteem develop along with more confidence in social situations:

It gives you the confidence, with people not talking down to you, on an equal level. And the facilitator's not teaching you, but helping you to see things differently, in art and in your life. So they are valuing you and the group, they are valuing you. So after a lot of help like this, I can talk to people like I'm talking to you now. I couldn't have done this (interview) a year ago. (FAB)

Some felt that concentrating on the art activities was highly absorbing and functioned to distract them from the depressing cycle of continual worry over problems, leaving them feeling more able to connect with the people around them:

Enjoyed getting to know people and it took my mind off all my problems. (WR)

None of the participants felt that attendance was socially awkward or so difficult that they worried about this. For some, just being in the workshop with other people was seen as a social occasion, despite barely communicating with them:

In daytime, sometimes, some people keep me company. Not that they notice me, no they're too busy chattering, painting and drinking tea. Myself, however, I watch them and their artwork. I have a still life, a human life. (ZAP)

The social value of the workshops in a life which is otherwise 'still' and lonely cannot fully be measured. As the quotation above indicates, human company is priceless in an otherwise isolated world. However, since all participants who took part in the evaluation had self-selected to continue with the workshops, a different story might have emerged if the evaluation had reached those participants who had attended only once and then not returned.

Perhaps one of the key potential benefits of Pathways participation lay in the friendly and relaxed atmosphere of the workshops and the respectful relationships which developed between artists and participants, encouraging a sense of mutual co-operation, of caring, concern and reciprocity. Rarely did any participant deride the efforts of their workshop colleagues. More often, people encouraged each other, not so much out of kindness, but because they felt the quality of work produced was very good:

I did like the stuff some people wrote, it was really good. People have all sorts going on in their heads, you'd not think it. (Foyer)

The giving and taking of praise was important in helping participants value themselves and relate in a positive way to those around them. This provided the context within which participants could share their stories, their worries and concerns and provide advice, comfort and support to each other. The importance of such creation of social capital within the groups cannot be underestimated. Vulnerable people often lack the capacity to rely on others in times of need and so become isolated with their problems, with few personal, social and financial resources to address them. Sometimes, people have suffered severe social rejection and the social atmosphere in the groups helped them to feel wanted, appreciated as one participant wrote:

Rejected by you. I thought I always had you as a partner and friend. Upset and rejected by you. I thought we would be together always, for life. It will mean I live without you by myself, and within. (ZAP)

For this woman, ZAP was a mainstay in her social life. A place she was accepted. The Pathways workshops set the context for the creation of such social capital, something many of the interviewed participants mentioned.

Interestingly, the benefits of social capital did not always extend outside of the workshop settings (except for those living in closed community houses) where participants chose to socialise more with family and close friendships than with art group comrades. The dark side of social capital was also in evidence, as regular groups spurned the admission of new members, in case they changed the group dynamics. They felt that a problem may arise of revealing themselves in the group inhabited by 'strangers' where gossip and hurtful comments could be made.

In these instances (especially in longer term workshops and those drawing from a close community) the development of a comfortable social atmosphere with known others cohered into sets of social 'cliques' where friendships and shared norms operated to exclude newcomers:

Researcher: What about other people, if they joined the group, would that be different for you?

FAB Participant: It would be difficult because we've (FAB) been going for so long. It would be difficult for other people to join in, we know each others habits and stuff. It would be difficult.

Furthermore, in such close groups, disruptions to friendships outside of the group could cause considerable social difficulties within the group, as was the case with one participant in the Foyer who had problems with the other people living around him. He brought these friendship problems into the workshop and discussed with the artists his feelings of being unfairly talked about. They discussed the issue of friendship in the workshop and suggested he write his thoughts down:

When did I become a martyr in this life/people  
deceiving, telling lies, twisting things around me?  
And saying things that are supposed to be  
coming out of my mouth. I feel like  
coshing out because they say lies.  
Breaking walls down, stomping  
the ground shouting. Why are  
people deceiving me,  
breaking me down, making  
me angry and detesting  
life itself? What's the point  
being nice?  
No-one really wants me  
as a friend... I was  
supposed to be lonely,  
no-one really liking me.  
(Manchester Foyer)

As a result, he felt better after the workshop and felt able to confront the gossip in a non-aggressive way. The following week, friendships were not an issue for him.

Art work conducted in the workshops contributed to new understandings of relationships as well as the value of relationships, as indicated in extract 1, a poem written by a participant in the YASP workshop:

### Extract 1

#### **Where I Live**

The place where I live is rubbish  
The people there are shit  
I don't feel safe  
Nowhere to go

It makes me feel like  
My world's gonna end  
The only thing that keeps me going  
Is the baby  
And my girlfriend

I'm looking forward to a better future.

#### **The Place of Pathways as a Mental Health 'Service'**

Participants in more established, longer term workshops such as FAB were keen to point out the similarities and differences between medically oriented services for people with mental health problems and Pathways. In these accounts, Pathways was reported as extremely effective in alleviating less severe mental health and acute social problems, such as extreme introversion, mild depression, anxiety, lack of confidence and self-esteem, parenting and family problems. For participants in this situation, Pathways was reported to be far more effective than psychiatric services because the focus was on art, yet mental health issues were discussed and different ways of thinking around problems were aired. Occasionally, advice was sought and given among workshop members:

I have found it far more successful than going to psychiatrists and psychologists. It's a nice easy way of doing it, in terms of you don't feel as though you're being preached to, you're part of a group and it's fun. It hurts sometimes, it's painful and it's not easy. (FAB)

This meant that participants did not feel under pressure to discuss emotive issues, but because of the level of trust in the workshop, they could deepen their understandings of their problems if they chose to:

I pushed it (feelings related to a problematic issue) as far as I could, but I got to the point where I just couldn't push it anymore, it was starting to get very difficult and unsettling for myself... but, it was accepted in the group. Fine, if you can't push it further, not a problem. We're not here to make you a gibbering wreck. If you're comfortable with what you've done but you're now going way beyond the comfort factor. Nonetheless it helped me realise that that was a problem. (FAB)

The relaxed nature and openness of such sessions contrasted with the unspoken pressures of mental health service and counselling sessions previously experienced:

Everybody has got the (mental health) knowledge there to use, you actually think that's quite good that. We don't know we've got the knowledge there till it has been guided to us. Nothing is actually ever said, our sessions are, we have the arts don't we. You know a group therapy session in a hospital, you're all sat round in your little chairs and you have your psychiatrists there. You'd all go in, we would speak more in the reception area before and after than we did in the group. You'd go in and the psychiatrist would be sat there and he'd just be like that. Then somebody would be brave enough to say the first word, then another couple of people would say something but most of the session was silence. (FAB)

This is not to say that medical, counselling and psychiatric services were seen as unhelpful. On the contrary, participants felt in need of such services at points in their lives. Pathways, they felt was a complementary 'service' and a very necessary one. So much so, that one participant recommended that psychiatrists, GP's and counsellors should visit the Pathways project to learn about it and from it.

### Linking Art and Mental Health

Aside from the benefits of social contact within a safe and secure group workshop setting, the evaluation established that participation in art itself was of fundamental importance in helping participants through difficult times and situations.

#### Enjoyment and Well-Being

In particular, participants found that engaging in art was a highly enjoyable experience, commenting that 'I love writing', writing was 'fantastic', or painting was, 'great, it really lifts you'. In particular, they liked the variety of different activities or topics addressed in the sessions:

Enjoyed all the different activities- not the same every week, always something different. (WR)

The role of art in elevating depressed mood was highlighted and suggested that art activities actually contributed to an improvement in their experienced quality of life on an everyday level:

When I feel down I do something creative and after I feel better. You have to find something that helps if you're down. (ZAP)

I feel less worried and it's a change from the usual routine where I forget about bills etc. Felt more like life. (WR)

The active choice to use art to lift mood is of importance here, and this was something participants had come to understand during their Pathways experience. Critically, they explained that doing art had given them something to look forward to, improving their quality of life and providing a highlight in their week:

I'm really looking forward to doing some more of that short story. (ZAP)

The one thing I can say is that my life is so much better now, because I have art in it. It's fuller, it's better because I feel more alive. (FAB)

For some, the reality of their lives was such that:

I can't wait for Thursdays. Thursday's my afternoon and everything stops for that. That's my time for FAB. Nobody can interfere with that cos I'm like, 'Don't'. (FAB)

For three participants, the link between their happier childhood and art was a main consideration:

Powerhouse: I think it's cool (painting). Used to do it in primary school a lot. And now it's just like 'whoah', 'yeah' and stuff. It takes the stress out.

Researcher: Why?

Powerhouse: I don't know. Cos it reminds you of how you used to feel when you were dead young, like when you were painting. Brings back the old memories.

Holding on to happy memories can help to ground the person in more positive frames of mind and remind them that life can be a happy experience.

### **Art and Reality**

Interestingly, while many people felt that doing art helped them to escape from the problems of reality, their lives, their families and so on, others felt that art could also provide them with a tie to reality:

Recently, I've gone through a bit of a personality change. I don't know about myself so much. I'm 25, I'm changing and I want to get more in reality. Focus on getting a job. I want to photograph things, make something but I just think of rude ideas and that's me. I need to work one-to-one with someone, with (Artist) to show me a way, to work with me.

Whether a tie to reality or an escape, both perspectives were seen as a positive benefit of art in their everyday lives.

### **Creativity and Coping**

One participant explained that being able to enjoy the intense experience of creativity outside of the workshop sessions enabled her to cope with the traumas in her life and her family problems:

If it all gets too much, I can close the door on it. Not a real door. The one in my mind. I can close it and shut all what's going on out and just get into my own stuff, just get some paper out and away I go. (FAB)

Other participants felt that the creative activity gave them the space to think, either to distance themselves from their problems, or to address them directly and plan ahead:

I felt better about myself because I sat and thought about what I am going to do. (WR)

One FAB participant was able to articulate exactly how he saw the link between creativity and coping; something he had learned through photography workshops:

It's the fact that it does a lot for my self-confidence. Self-confidence is the thing that it's dealt with more than anything, in that, yeah, I took photos, snaps the same as everyone else. But with a bit of coaching, a bit of training, a bit of encouragement, you then find that you can go out and you can produce reasonably good photographs. And then you think with a little bit of thought and a little bit of confidence you can go out and do that with a photograph. What if you applied the same

confidence to resolving a disagreement you might have with your son. Why not approach it in the same way, because you can do it. You can figure things out, you can sort through things, just go ahead and do it. (FAB)

This taking of different perspectives is an important issue which can apply to many of the different art media used through all the workshops.

### **Self-exploration**

One aim of the Pathways project is to provide space, encouragement and skills for vulnerable people to explore their inner selves. However, exploration of self is a highly emotive and uncertain enterprise and a range of different understandings can emerge. In this section, the art work of participants has been analysed with reference to the theme of self exploration and self understanding, using the written work produced within the Foyer, YASP, and Claremont workshops. Focusing on these projects allows a contrast between such work by young people (Foyer, YASP) and by older people (Claremont) and so enables an evaluation of the role of writing amongst three very different population groups.

The written work in the Foyer was constituted by poems, short stories, descriptive pieces and lifelines. The major themes running through this work varied enormously from love, enjoyment of life and thoughts of the future through to very dark pieces about aggression, fighting loss and hate. Nevertheless, as one participant put it:

It might be a story but it's also me. I'm in there and I can look at myself and see me there, even just a little bit, but me. I see me and I can write me and that's what helps to make things a bit clearer, more clear on who I really am. (F)

Looking at the written work produced shows how writing can place the focus of intense attention on the self and can enable a working through of deeply held emotions, such as those buried perhaps in childhood memories. Extract 2 illustrates this through an account of deep seated fear of returning home and the experiences awaiting there.

### **Extract 2**

#### **Foyer**

Walking home from school, I absorbed as much heat as I could before entering my house. I didn't know why, I just knew I had to. My mate walked by, waving at me, "See you at school tomorrow" she shouted, "Of course you will", I shouted back at her, wishing it was tomorrow already.

Suddenly, the happiness and heat had drained from my body leaving only sorrow and sadness. I wondered why.

As I walked towards the door I wanted to run away but something told me to open the door. I forced myself to twist the door handle. Fear itself circled round me like a tiny tornado circling the ground.

"Tess, is that you?". A man's voice came from inside, my heart started beating like a massive drum that could go on forever.

"Well, is it?" I wanted to run away but I knew something was wrong

"Yes, it's me". They were the words I didn't want to say. When I finally walked in the door, I knew deep down I was going to regret being alive.

Stories of friendship, love and affection were told with equal emotional power, as seen in Foyer extract 3.

### Extract 3

#### **Foyer**

Can you see it in my eyes?  
I tremble when I am next to you  
The heat travels up in my body  
I dare to reach out and touch you  
I am just terrified as a child  
Nowhere to run  
I need you with an urgency  
Can you see it in my eyes?

Similarly, in the YASP creative writing work, poems of the problems of everyday life, of tortured lives were told (extract 4), but also indicated a level of inner analysis.

### Extract 4: YASP

#### **Trapped**

When I feel like killing myself  
I feel trapped because the people  
I love the most  
Will hate me if I succeed

But I feel trapped with depression  
All the pills can help in the short term  
But cannot help in the long run

I feel like alcohol is more of a getaway  
And not a social drug  
People say why do you cut yourself?  
Because it helps me feel better  
It's pleasure pain  
It sounds weird  
But it's mine

For many, the theme of their writing cohered around issues of sharing and normality. Their problems, thoughts and feelings were shared by others in the group and as such became normal aspects of everyday experience rather than the abnormalities of 'mental illness'. Issues of sharing and normality were evident in the work of both younger and older participants.

In the Claremont sessions, writing focused more specifically on biographically oriented tales of the past, on entrance to the UK of Afro-Caribbean women and men, of the Manchester community they encountered there and of their families left at home in the Caribbean. Interestingly, the workshop sessions and the writing tasks involved encouraged the older people to discuss important issues they had faced in their lives, understand what was important to them (see extract 5) and draw strength from having coped with them.

### Extract 5

#### Friends

Friends are someone you interact with, someone you tell your problems, someone who can give you advice of something, someone you rely on. In my country I had a friend. She got married and went to America, since then I have not seen her. I missed her so much, I always tell my husband about her wishing to see her, talk to her, discuss about our past. When I came to ACCG (Pathways) I was told that friendship is a very good investment. I found it interesting when I look back through my life I found that, really, if one can find a friend, you have something you can remember.

For example racism was introduced as a topic for discussion at the Claremont workshops, the shared experience was recognised by many participants:

Participant 1: ...And when I got to Manchester I was working in the factory, making pillow cases and they said, 'Hey look, a tree monkey'. (laughs)

Participant 2: (laughs) Oh, yes, oh yes, I remember all that.

Participant 1: And they looked at my hand, you know and they'd say, 'Here, come here, look at this' You know 'cos they were light on the inside. They just didn't know.

Participant 3: No, that was it, they didn't know, not nasty, just curious, like that.

As a result, poems on the topic were brought into the next session to deepen the discussion of self within the context of racism in the 1960's UK and participants were able to create a platform for moral or socio-political comment in a safe environment. In this sense, art was empowering.

### Revealing the Self and Being Me

The practice of art also helped participants to realise that they were capable of producing interesting and beautiful creations, and more than that, provided that stimuli for deep thought and self expression:

Art makes me feel I have resources otherwise untapped. (Z)

I felt really cool about writing because I know I can express my feelings and emotions into what I am writing. (F)

It's all in my mind. I need to write it down. It (creative writing) gives me ideas and starts me off. Although I like art, creative writing really gets me going. It turns me on. (ZAP)

For some, art constituted an important way of revealing the self to others and in doing so, to validate the self, as one participant said:

I just want a way to make a project of me and my life cos at the moment I'm just shit, way down. I want to photograph things that mean something to me, to show my way of looking at the world. I think taking photographs, doing something, making something, it can validate you. I'd like to have a project to do, to show how I'm thinking to me, to other people as well. I'm different. I've been through therapists and they tell me you can't do this and you shouldn't think that, and I think that's wrong. You've got to find your own way. (YASP)

Although examination of the self was a major part of the Pathways mission, such examinations were not always productive of positive self evaluations as comparisons were made with more problematic selves were made:

I'm not just a crappy nagger/housework person- have a creative side. I felt like I was worthwhile. (WR)

However, most participants did report that the activity of art linked strongly to self identity and self exploration, and that this in itself was a good thing:

It (writing) makes me feel good in my self and it also makes me think about what's going on in my life. I can sometime maybe write a book about my life. (ZAP)

Here, it is clear that for this person, and for others, a forward thinking, broad aim in life had arisen from the confidence gained with their developing writing skill. Indeed, some participants found it hard to recognise themselves as artists, given their difficult backgrounds:

I've got this book  
And I'm gonna fill it  
With all my life  
Been in care 12 years, aren't I  
But I'm writing lyrics! (ZAP)

The sense of achievement expressed above and by other participants is palpable. Moreover, participants linked artistic endeavour with finding new aspects of themselves and developing valued ways of being:

- I find I can do more stuff (ZAP)
- I am thoughtful and fulfilled (ZAP)
- I feel spiritually fulfilled (ZAP)

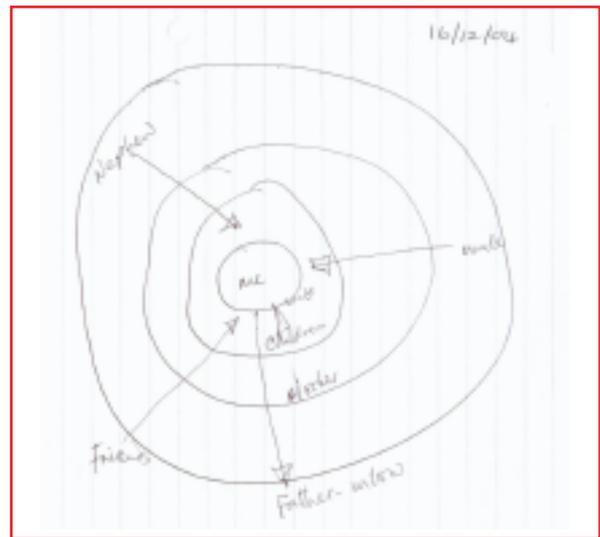
Evidence from interviews and 'social atoms' data suggest some may have extended the richness with which they saw themselves. Social and role atoms can be used to gain a baseline of the richness and density of people's perceived and reported social networks and different ways they see themselves participating in the social world. They can also be used to chart changes in how these networks and role patterns are perceived to change over time. On their own they are difficult to interpret, as the instructions given to participants will change how they are drawn. Also, the ways in which they are integrated into discussion and art activities will determine what they mean as an evaluation tool.

Nevertheless, these two role atoms, drawn at an interval of 3 weeks seem to indicate that the young man had extended how he thought about himself later in the project. Without knowing how the artists worked on roles and relationships and social networks during their sessions, it is difficult to know if this is just a product of how he drew the pictures, or was tied into some developed self awareness, that had been explored in the project.

**Figure 2a: Time point 1**



**Figure 2b: Time point 2**



What is clear is that for some, the social atoms showed how their evaluations of themselves as artists, a self descriptor they highly prized, developed over time. For example, two participants in ZAP drew several role atoms, but only in the final atom did 'artist' and 'arts and crafts' appear as descriptors (see appendix 8) indicating, perhaps, their acceptance of themselves in the role of artists. Similarly, the place of the Claremont care group (through which Pathways operated) emerged as important in everyday life, highlighted in the Claremont social atoms (see appendix 8).

Perhaps the most powerful role atom was one in which the roles related to mental ill health dominated the work (see figure 2c). This participant described the most important roles in her life as:

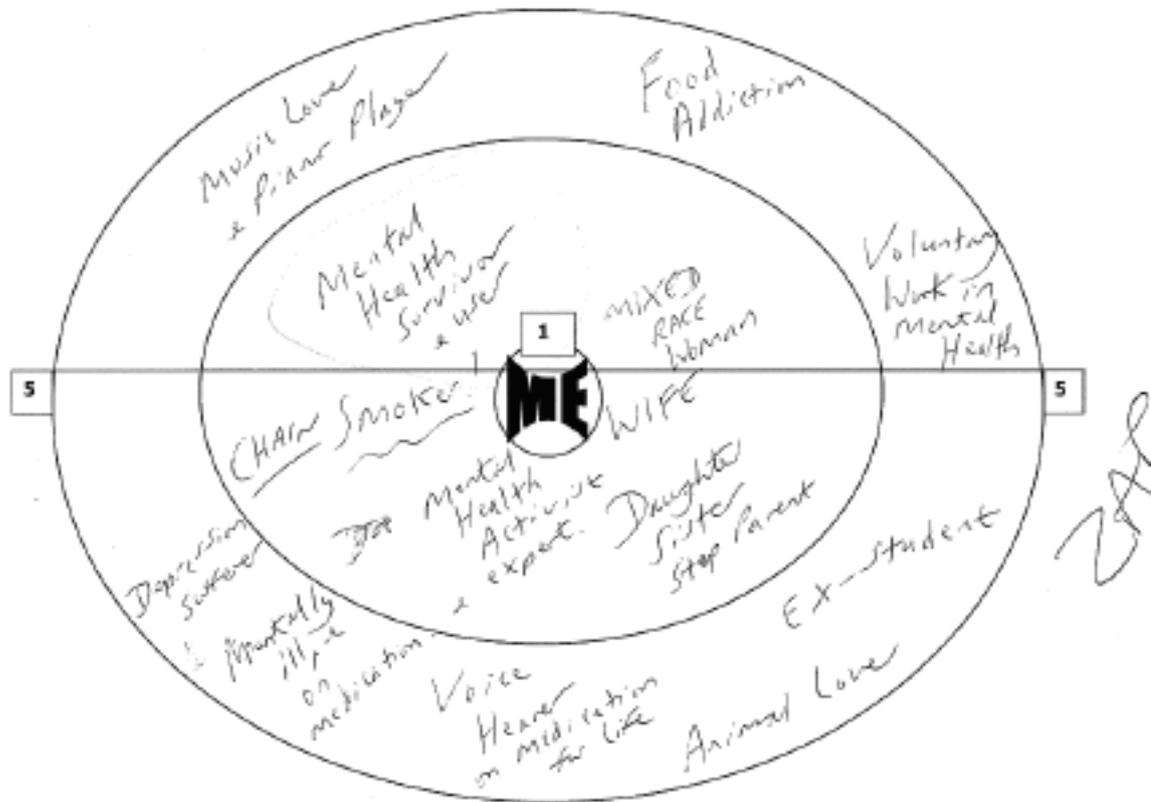
- Mixed race woman;
- Wife, daughter sister, step-parent;
- *Mental health survivor and user;*
- *Mental health activist;*
- *Mental health expert;*
- Chain smoker!

Those roles held as less important, but nevertheless expressed as part of her life were:

- Music lover and piano player (artist);
- Food addiction;
- Ex student;
- Volunteer worker in mental health;
- Animal lover;
- *Voice hearer on medication for life;*
- *Mentally ill and on medication;*
- *Depression sufferer.*

Through art, they could show the world 'who' they were as well as place their mental health problems into the context of their life and relationships.

Figure 2c: ZAP Role Atom



### Challenging the Self

While many participants related to the workshops as places of relaxation, others were highly active and purposeful about their engagement with Pathways. They wanted to develop themselves and their artistic talents:

I love to do writing as I want to keep my mind active. And I have come to do art (painting) as I would like to prove to myself that this can also be achieved by me myself. (ZAP)

They willingly encountered, on a weekly basis, the frustrations of creativity in order to develop as artists (see extract 6) and as people:

### Extract 6

#### Feeling My Art

It feels good hearted  
 Fulfilling inside  
 Thinking about art  
 And when  
 My stomach floats  
 Nervously  
 Or simply  
 And more often  
 I am pushed  
 With enthusiasm.  
 But a lot  
 Of the time  
 There is the  
 Frustration,  
 The struggle to create  
 And develop.  
 But if several ideas  
 Generate  
 And one  
 Unexpectedly important  
 That may be something  
 To consider (ZAP)

For some, the creative process was deemed a 'need' and the struggle to produce was simply part of their being:

When I write I feel that I am transformed into another world. Writing to me is an art form where I use colour, smell taste and so much more. It is an adventure. I have to write since words accumulate in my mind. I have to write them down on paper as a means of release. It helped in my bereavement. (ZAP)

#### Skills and Achievement

On a more practical level, participants realized that doing art helped them to develop new skills which could be useful in their everyday lives and relationships. As these participants wrote when asked what she felt about the workshop art:

I value learning how to make things that don't cost a lot of money (WR)  
 Have been given ideas for activities to do with daughter (WR)  
 I think it's (writing) useful mostly for me who is trying to improve on my writing skills (F)

The challenges of the activities were much appreciated, despite the effort involved. One participant when asked how he felt when writing said:

I felt OK but I have to think really hard so I could write what I was thinking. (F)

The level of concentration required was seen as surprising, but ultimately worthwhile. He went on to explain how concentration was a problem for him and so this had been an achievement.

Participants reported that they had learned through instruction and advice, as well as through the artists' care and guidance, a range of different art techniques. This enabled them to distinguish between different art forms and decide what it is that they enjoyed about art. Some had taken art into their everyday lives, working on their creations in their own spare time. This, they said, provided a focus and routine to structure their free time, something they struggled to achieve before the advent of art into their lives. Such routines had, they felt, improved their overall quality of life by providing distinct elements of the day and week which were highly prized as 'my time' as well as producing artistic outputs to be proud of.

When participants brought work in to artists, they were highly sensitive to the ways in which such work was received by the artists. A general positive comment was not sufficient, as one participant explained:

When people actually appreciate it and actually DO think its good, cos people can just look at it and go 'Yeah that's ok, that's ok'. But when you have actually got someone saying 'Yeah that's good, I like this bit and I like that bit' (the artists do this) it makes you have a sense of achievement then because they're actually telling you what parts are good and what parts can be better. (F)

Constructive suggestions made all the difference to a sense of achievement.

The vast majority of comments on the art activities were extremely positive. However, for a minority of participants, the art itself was not the focus of their attention, and they treated workshop activities almost as a necessity to get through while they enjoyed the workshop atmosphere, or simply enjoyed time away from home. Indeed, art could make people feel frustrated, disappointed and uncomfortable:

With the writing I felt uncomfortable. (F)

Or simply they had little opinion about it:

I don't know, it's OK. No real feelings one way or the other. (F)

For these people, achievement within the workshops and pride in work was not a key factor in the value of Pathways to them.

## Personal Journeys and Quality of Life

The participant, project manager and LIME artists' interview data all suggest there is ample evidence that involvement in art and participation in the Pathways workshops have opened up new opportunities for people with mental health issues.

I can see people achieving and going on and getting jobs and going to college and all of that.  
(Artist)

Perhaps the most compelling data are derived from the participants themselves. In 9 of the 12 interviews undertaken with workshop participants, accounts were given of the ways in which Pathways had strongly and positively improved the quality of their lives.

### Family Life

In the wider social domain, participants told of the ways in which art and the workshops helped them connect more directly and sensitively with their family members, especially their children. Here, they described ways in which their relationships with their children were more constructive and playful as they shared artistic endeavours in workshops. They felt they had something interesting to offer (in terms of art) in conversations as well as practising the art of conversation in workshops.

Soph' gets used to meeting people and the baby got used to being picked up and held by other people so will get less clingy. (WR)

Mothers also appreciated the freedom within workshops for their children to play or get involved, enabling the adults to enjoy time together. The Women's Refuge young mothers certainly felt this to be the case:

Opportunity to be with other children (WR)  
Gave (child) confidence (WR)

### Employability

Evidence of arts pathways into employment were not always clearly indicated although some participants had gone on from attendance at Pathways workshops to media work. Others felt they had grown in confidence through the workshops, enabling them to attend other workshops and short courses (for example, Childcare) or indeed had progressed into employment. The workshops encouraged participants to develop for themselves a timetable of their activities and to keep to this, constituting organisational and timekeeping skills relevant for work situations. Employability was encouraged in the sessions, particularly around artistic careers which some of the group were pursuing. For example, when asked about careers in art, artists gave advice on voluntary work, building and writing CV's. They also offered practical help in this respect. One participant said that she came to the sessions to become a better writer and that this would enhance her future career prospects:

To be a better writer I suppose init? (F)

Furthermore, she thought the workshops would be of benefit, in pursuing a career in the arts, and as experience for the CV alongside developing their artistic skills base. As such, Pathways offered a pathway back for those previously and currently excluded from the educational system:

They're (the Pathways sessions) good for people who like writing but who can't get into colleges because it's too dear, or they can't get back into education because they don't have the right grades. A writing course, you have something to help you to get along the way. You could do it as a foundation level in the different communities around Manchester, or around this area. (F)

Voluntary work was also an encouraging step for participants to take, becoming active within the world of work, even if not paid. Several participants told of their raised confidence through Pathways: their ability to be more assertive had culminated in their doing voluntary work and hence contributing to their local communities:

FAB participant: ...and then I find myself back at the radio station which I never thought I'd do

Researcher: When you say back at...

FAB participant: I did a short stint about three years ago, it got very political and I just lost it, I couldn't handle it. Now I've gone in and I'm a lot more confident. This morning was a prime example it was shocking, but I can now bounce back from that, I'm more resilient now. I'm more confident in my own abilities to bounce back. Now I can say next week will be better. It might not be, but I'm prepared to give it a chance and there's a lot of stuff like that, I do a lot of community work now, musically, PA system and everything. I sometimes wonder now if I've gone too far. (FAB)

For some, the first steps towards voluntary work lay in helping with other Pathways sessions, or with the Pathways exhibition:

I know stuff to do with working with children now because I actually helped the artistic things with (Artist name) at Newell Green (High School), with the kids. We helped them with sewing and with the board game. (FAB)

In this way, participants were learning transferable skills of relevance in many different employment situations.

## **Education**

Some workshop participants had found a passion for art and had chosen to follow art as a path into education. Reports of such successes of the Pathways project were given in interviews by both artists and participants:

I never would have had the confidence to go and get on a course, never, not without Pathways. I got so much confidence from that, I thought I could do anything! (FAB)

...Another person who was a very first member of Pathways to join, who had some major severe communication and learning difficulties; major, has gone on to college getting childcare qualifications, has been abroad on holiday and shadowed me at work experience with young people with special needs and it's just the belief from two years ago. (Artist)

Others drew on the confidence they had gained in Pathways to go for the course they wanted, outside of the field of art:

I was an admin person, an admin volunteer, at you know, YASP, but I felt I didn't have a direction in my life. So when I started this (workshop) I thought I might be in the wrong career. That all happened inside, I knew I wanted to write, just straight away. And it built up my confidence, just telling me what I did was good. So I thought I can do something that I like. So I looked around and I found this course (in care) and...well I'm definitely a lot more confident and assertive so I thought I'd go for it. And I have. (YASP)

Researcher: How do you think Pathways has helped?

FAB: I think I've come out of my shell more and I've got confidence to go to college and try to get a job. I've just finished a health and social care course. Now I'm thinking of doing a care assistant job. (FAB)

While these participants had benefited hugely by realising their interests and being empowered to follow them, others needed only the encouragement to pursue existing interests, where Pathways had helped to remove emotional blocks to their progress:

- W had just finished an art course at college and after the experience of Pathways had decided to start another art qualification at Birmingham University in September;
- R had previously been involved in an internet TV station scheme called Lets Go Global where he had presented a TV show. He had also been an extra for TV programmes and was interested in acting; he was starting acting course at college in September. Also as a result of the workshops, he had kept a sketch pad that he and his friends drew in, and also mentioned recording a couple of rap songs with his friends;
- T had completed a film making course while she was attending the workshop, and often mentioned books she had read and films she enjoyed. She said how she liked watching poor films because she analysed and criticised them. T also designed clothes and drew pictures of film characters;
- A was a music student; she sings, plays the piano and guitar along with composing her own songs. She is planning to study art at university when she finishes her college course. She has developed in confidence and is looking to sing and play the piano at some venues in Manchester.

*Motherhood, sculpture. Artist participant Margaret Hodgson.*



Evidence of participant educational progress was also reported by artists:

Artist 1: C, you met, was in that group (YASP) and she's looking at going to college to do some English, isn't she?

Artist 2: She's really good

Artist 1: It's really encourage her in that way, she would like it to continue.

## Leisure inclusivity

When considering issues of social inclusion, it is important to consider the accessibility of leisure pursuits and cultural activities. Examples of participants developing from Pathways and into leisure and cultural activities were prominent in both participants and artists accounts:

...there's just one example that's popped into my head and it's sort of the beginning of the Pathways that I can see was one of the young women at Women's Refuge, who was very interested in drama, and we did a little bit, a few drama exercises with her, always kind of thinking of the other people who weren't so sure about drama. But always, I continued talking to her over the months, and more and more she, you know, she was saying that she wanted to do more in that area and then one of the founder members told me a few months down the line that she'd been asking about a drama class and that she wanted to find out what's happening in the area in drama and I think she was looking for an amateur dramatics group. (Artist)

For one extremely withdrawn participant, simply feeling able to join in with other community group activities had transformed her life. She held a conviction that such groups would be fun, which came from her enjoyment of Pathways and the social skills she had learned there.

## Pathways Out

For some participants, pathways were realised not by looking forward but by looking back over their lives. In this sense, pathways out of depression, out of schizophrenia, out of alcohol and drug abuse and out of crime were recounted. One ZAP participant wrote in extract 7:

### Extract 7

#### 123

123 say 321 when am on the mic  
 Am a lyrical don  
 Lyrical don with a lyrical talent  
 When am on the mic there is no balance  
 I got this talent from my younger days  
 All I ever smoked was purple haze  
 I used to cause trouble  
 Call it crime  
 Got caught one day and had to do me time  
 A got out the pen  
 I started to rhyme  
 A move to rhyme had it beat in time (ZAP)

Pathways were also identified as participants sought to escape the expectations their family and friends had carved for them:

When I was younger, people said I'd never amount to nothing...but now I believe in positivity, even when I'm vexed, thrown down the drain. So I keep it real, me, my art. (F)

## Artist Perspectives

In the following analysis, the artists' perspectives on working practices, the workshops and on the Pathways project are explored. It must be noted that all artists were female (with the exception of one who acted for a short time in a support role). Explanations for this gender specificity revolved around the caring aspects of the work, the need to be empathetic and perhaps the part time, limited term nature of the contracts.

### A Commitment to Arts for Mental Health

All the artists were fully committed to the notion that art can be hugely beneficial in promoting better mental health and social inclusion. This, they felt they had personal experience of within their own lives and past experiences. They suggested that art:

- increases confidence and self insight;
- brings people together;
- enhances people's ability to express themselves;
- has a positive cathartic effect upon their mood;
- removes people from everyday stresses and strains;
- allows people to try something new;
- facilitates the meeting of new people with common experiences;
- enables exploration of decision making in a situation without pressure.

For one artist:

Arts practice creates a sacred space and time in which trust and expression and unconditional regard are fostered and continually confirmed. (Artist)

There was a sense that art could reach into unconscious experiences:

Another factor I think is the shift from the verbal realm to the more symbolic realm, which reaches beyond words... and this also applies to drama. Being able to express without words can be immensely empowering, poignant, cathartic. I think art helps us to connect to and to explore and to integrate the more preconscious and unconscious domains of our being – where a lot of suffering might have its roots in the first place? (Artist)

However, there was a realisation, that self-examination and self-expression can be a painful experience for some, but one that is necessary for emotional progress to be made.

Overall, in terms of the workshops, artists felt that participants achieved:

In practical terms:

- A quality art product of their own making (Many projects)
- Arts and crafts resources and skills (All projects)
- Being part of the final exhibition – and one of their pieces sold! (All projects)
- Improved life expectations (All projects)
- Opportunity to explore a variety of artistic media and techniques (Many projects)

In psychological terms:

- Enjoyment (All projects);
- Positive changes in mood (All projects);
- Inspiration (All projects);
- Expression and release of negative emotions (FAB, ToL);
- Increased confidence (All projects);
- Increased inner calm (All projects);
- Mental and emotional support (FAB);
- Rise in self esteem (All projects);
- Freedom to inhabit oneself (Many projects);
- Exploration of their own lives (All projects).

In social terms:

- A chance to engage creatively with the other people living in the house (WR);
- Improved communication skills (All projects);
- Improved interpersonal relationships (All projects).

However, artists were aware that art may not work to relieve mental health problems for all people because of the severity of their problems, their experiences with past psychiatric and mental health services, their disinterest in art, or difficulty in abstract thinking:

One person who attended only once just wanted to draw and found thinking in an abstract way difficult. (Artist)



*Shadow Canvas. Nathans Road and Tree of Life, lead artists Rene Lumley, Jessica Bockley and Hitesh Lad.*

### **Artist skills: Art, mental health and community settings**

As might be expected, the artists prioritised issues of art over issues of mental health in the sense that the workshops operated as the basis for the development of art within a group of vulnerable people. As one artist said:

All art can have an impact on mental health but only if the focus is on the art itself and not on the mental well being. (Artist)

As such, the wealth of experience the artists had of working in different mediums and in different community contexts was considerable. During interviews, in observations, focus groups and reflexive diaries, the artists all expressed a high degree of confidence in their own artistic abilities and the abilities of their colleagues, seeing their identity as artists as part of their whole being:

For me, being an artist means being a whole person. I don't see my practice as a job. I see it as a reflection of who I am. (Artist)

This confidence, alongside their ability to work together with participants to pass on their skills, to encourage and develop talent created a 'can-do' atmosphere during the workshops. This meant that the fears of participants that they would 'fail' in some way, or that their work would be 'rubbish' quickly diminished:

Sometimes the activity was too daunting or exposing – this could create blocks (eg make the women feel self-conscious & embarrassed – and they weren't ready to push through that kind of state. (WR)

One (person) expressed how the project had encouraged him to believe in himself and his artwork - a particularly nervous but very able participant. (Studio One)

This was evident in the ways in which participants began workshops in a rather quiet and watchful way but progressed to joining in after only one or two attendances. Even the most reluctant were eventually participating, most noticeably in the Claremont sessions. Here, one older lady had regularly attended over 6 sessions but would not write, until a topic enthused her and she wrote down her story. As a result, she felt proud of her achievement and inspired to continue. As she said, the fact that she had not been pressured to write was instrumental to this success and, in her own time, she conquered her fear and reluctance and claimed her progress for herself. Such development of confidence in response to the skills of the artists emerged in the Foyer, FAB and Studio One workshops. People progressed at their own pace from watching to actively contributing; from hiding their work, to allowing it to be seen (for visual images) or read out (for written work).

Artists were attentive to participant descriptions of the value of the workshops, and appreciated this feedback in terms of good practice:

A comment fed back to me was that he (participant) had been thinking about the class before he went to sleep at night and it felt good because he had something else to focus on. He also talked about his family during the sessions and the pride he felt in his son. (Artist)

Perhaps one of the key encouragements artists employed was that of accepting the person's feelings about their work, yet framing them in positive ways. Time and again, artists found ways to focus participants' attention away from a reliance on difficult to achieve (and therefore high risk of failure) techniques, and onto the notion of self expression:

The first sessions involved making drawings that took the emphasis off individual technical ability. Each participant sprinkled white talc powder randomly on to black card. Together we looked and talked about emerging patterns, shapes objects; by joining the dots in the mind, images began to emerge. These were translated into drawings. Pins were used to transfer these images with pinprick holes into A3 sheets of card (which were) then placed onto a light source. (Information sheet, Studio One, Zion Exhibition)

Usually, the sessions were geared around issues of self, emotions and social context. For instance, depicting in images or words participant feelings of anger, surprise or happiness, or imagining a secret garden to use as a private retreat, making emotional masks or exploring social roles using puppetry and drama. In general, artists constructed workshops within a relatively loose framework so that any problems (emotional, social etc) that were arising during such emotionally and value laden sessions could be encompassed:

On occasion the material I had prepared for a session would not be used and instead we would explore a particular issue that had arisen through the bean drawing, by discussion and then guided writing of poetry or prose. (Artist)

Sometimes, this meant abandoning the original plan, and working closely with the group, listening, encouraging and sharing experiences. When two artists were working together, then one-to-one sessions were possible and both artistic and emotional progress could be made within a session as well as across sessions. This capacity to respond to the needs of the participants was often expressed as a key to the success of the Pathways project.

The session (was) feeling like it has started to nurture individual needs. (Artist)

Within this, emotional, social and artistic needs were considered and the artists worked towards:

Continuously tailoring my work to their (participant) needs. (Artist)

However, the capacity to respond to immediate needs within the workshops was compromised by the competing need to produce a tangible output for the purposes of the Pathways Exhibition. This created a real tension for artists and placed them under a good deal of stress, especially towards the end sessions when the exhibition loomed large.

Working within community settings required a way of working which enabled artists to deal with inappropriate physical spaces as well as a variety of interruptions.

The room really affects behaviour - things run much more smoothly in the art room. (Artist)

Artists could arrive at a session to find that the venue manager had cancelled it, or no-one had been told about it (no participants) or that no room had been designated, or the room was being used for some other workshop or activity without prior notification. On the other hand, some settings, such as the YASP café, were informal, and the offer of free lunch before sessions was seen as particularly inviting.

### **Empowerment or Dependency?**

For many vulnerable people, exercising choice and feeling empowered plays little part in their everyday lives. In contrast, emphasis on participant choice generated participants' feelings of empowerment. Within the Pathways workshops, issues of choice extended to attending the workshops or not, choice of workshop activities, choice of exploring or revealing aspects of themselves or remaining quiet:

Well, to put it down, on paper, so that, well no-one can see it. It's a bit private and then choose if you want to show it or not, keep it. Even if you just keep it, it's still out there in a way, cos it's out your head and onto the page. (Foyer)

...Being able to express without words can be immensely empowering, poignant (Artist)

It's about participants taking responsibility. (Artist)

They're (participants) capable of being advocates, definitely so capable. The progress that they've made is phenomenal; it really is I've never seen anything like it. (Artist)

Choice, listening, discussion and action based on participant suggestions were key processes in fostering empowerment, and most artists were keen not to turn support into instruction:

Ideas development. Group on the whole more focused and generated good series of ideas for characters... J needs to make her own creative decisions – need to push this in future.  
(Artist diary)

Assistance from staff at times make individuals reluctant to do things for themselves. (Artist)

In addition, the atmosphere of workshops engendered an increased feeling of autonomy, as one artist saw it:

It was the way in which the participants could discuss and write about issues that were in their lives in a non-threatening, non judgmental, non therapeutic environment. Some participants had been through some type of psychiatric/psychological therapy and found the artistic process enabled them to access emotions and inner depths that talking did not allow for. (Artist)

A sense of empowerment could also derive from the way in which artists set aside space and time for participants so that they felt special, worthy of the high quality attention and skills offered by the artists. This was reinforced by seeing that expensive artistic materials were used, and that they were worthy of such spending.

Individual empowerment was evident in the data when participants took on roles and responsibilities within the workshops, although this only happened with the longer term more established workshops such as FAB and Claremont:

G just kind of became our assistant, didn't she? So we showed to the group right we're going to do this and she'd say right come on then she'd be like telling everybody what to do and said you're doing that wrong and kind of did that which was very funny and she made us laugh. It worked well didn't it because everybody responded and obviously she's very bossy and they're used to her bossiness. (Artist)

A sense of group empowerment was also observed where artists recognised the power of the group to determine the sessions, as friendships were formed and group members supported and spurred each other on to greater achievement.

On the other hand, the close bonding between artist and group (observed in several workshops and expressed by some participants) could create a climate of dependency, in which participants felt that the workshops worked only because of the particular artist and her personal qualities. The view that this was undesirable influenced the planning of projects and the movement of artists between them.

I think it's also good for people not to get too attached to any, any one individual. (Project manager)

A balance between empowerment and dependency must be achieved.

## Trust

Artists generated an atmosphere of mutual trust, initially by setting the ground rules for the workshops. This, the artists felt, generated a 'safe space' for self disclose and intense personal experiences:

Researcher: How do you build trust?

Artist: Like I said before setting new ground rules from the beginning of what the projects about what you're going to be looking at, what you, you know can do what you don't want to do is absolutely fine and I think it's a consistency of that as well isn't it?

Issues of confidentiality and respect for each other and for the work were emphasised, although the need to re-state ground rules, (especially in drop-in contexts) was often forgotten. This meant that drop in participants may not have been aware of the rules.

Trust was also encouraged by engaging personally with the work (rather than standing separate from it), by revealing aspects of themselves during workshops, by listening but not judging participants, by being sensitive and responsive to emerging emotional situations and by accepting participants for who they were:

Trust, trust within the group being in that environment to be able to say whatever she wanted to say without being judged or without it being told to somebody else or whatever, you know, that sort of thing really. It wouldn't have happened if we hadn't of got that relationship in the first place, you know, it takes time to build that sort of relationship obviously. But I think, you know, in that particular group with that situation, it's very easy for people to be open. (Artist)

Artists thought carefully about ways in which to build rapport and were fearful that evaluation methods of data collection would disrupt the building of trust:

If we give out questionnaires then they'll think, 'Oh, this is just like the psychiatrist', so they'll stop coming because they think it's that and not the art. (Artist)

Additionally, participant art work was accepted as unique and personal creations, and never derided. During several observations, participants brought work they had done privately to the artists, and these were always discussed and ideas developed around them for further progress. The trusting relationships between all involved were appreciated by participants who reported this as very different to all their other contacts with mental health workers and health service providers. The artists recognised the need to develop skills of engendering trust, equity in the workshops, listening, knowing when to intervene and when to give space. This, they felt, came from experience as well as being the sort of person suited to arts work in mental health:

Manager: But I would love you, your skills and your skills to be transferred into other areas, just because you've got such strong skills; and where are we going to find other artists with your calibre to do that? Do you know what I mean?

Artist: Well, that ,you know, but I'd sort them out, I'd sort (an artist) out. You can seek artists, you know, your peers, through experience with working in this (area) in nine years.

Manger: She's not as experienced as you.

Artist: She's not, no, but she has worked in very, very tricky situations and with cancer and death and all of those things. But I wouldn't just bring in any artist to work in that. (Focus Group).

Finally, trust, in a very immediate sense was generated as participants, even in drop-in sessions, were given artistic equipment to take home and continue their creativity. In one instance, a participant was given a disposable camera, she said:

Really? Really, I can have this, I can take it home? Really, can I have it? (YASP)

Her disbelief in the level of trust extended through the artists was clear. Subsequently her social worker had mentioned to the artist how this person had been ecstatic over the camera (and the trust) and had felt 'so much better about herself' as a consequence.

### **Helping one or reaching many?**

Helping one person is better, artists thought, than reaching many but helping no-one. Discussions around this topic were held within Pathways meetings:

Project manager: Okay I'm just questioning where there's four people that are benefiting hugely? You know it seems really worth it for them, for those people doesn't it?

Artist: Yeah.

Project manager: But in the greater scheme of things it's very expensive and if it's not doing something else strategically that will draw in other mainstream support or something.

I think that the criteria, not just the numbers, because if it's going deep and it's going somewhere positive that's great, that's great and that's a really, it's a qualitative outcome. (Steering group)

Artists felt that calculating the costs of such programmes as Pathways should not reside solely on numbers of attendees, but on qualitative evidence of the beneficial effects of attendance.

Constructively helping one person to resurrect their productive lives could be highly cost effective, although this is problematic to work out:

The money you talked about, we talked about...what we can't work out is you know if you have for example a participant who has come off medication and therefore has the children back and is working, well in terms of the cost, you know the cost of saving and you know, er, and doctors, nurses, psychiatrists. (Artist)

Artists told of concrete examples of such successes:

Artist: They've (participants) gone on and got jobs, they've got work experience, they've come off medication, they've stopped self-harming, they've stopped smoking, stopped drinking, they've gone into training, they've gone and been radio presenters in Wythenshawe, they've gone into leading youth groups, work experience with me. It's, I've never seen anything like it ever.

Researcher: So, it's life transforming?

Artist: It's completely.

Project manager: You can see the confidence in them from last year.

Artist: It is amazing.

Artist: It seems like there are four or five of them I know to say hello to now and just the difference from when they walked in this year from last year, it's not cocky, just confident.

Researcher: And it's down to this project, it's really down to this project?

Artist: What you've got to think of is that's an art work, that's a living art work. It is amazing.

What mattered to the artists was really making a difference in a person's life:

It's all the people who are now working, living, having relationships and doing, being productive people, being creative. (Artist)

R suffers from depression, self harms and uses drugs and alcohol, so it was really good to see him fired up. He told us that he thought today's session did him more good than seeing his psychiatrist, which made (artist) and I'm really happy. (Artist)

This attitude towards the quality of service and provision rather than quantity was echoed by one of the venue managers:

Venue manager: One particular person, who's no longer here, had always written, had a very traumatic life, but from time to time wherever she had been in her life... had written and been heavily criticised for it. People saying, 'Oh it's a load of rubbish that'... and we knew that she had a lot of interest in that (writing) and it just happened to coincide that (Artist name) came, this girl was moving in and we kinda knew that she had all these issues, so specifically wrote a program around attending these classes but we based her contract with us around her work with (Artist name).

Int: Yeah.

Manager: And she managed to get a piece of work in the book, she probably only attended three, I know that doesn't sound much, but that was really good and attended all the sessions all the way through. I know it doesn't sound like much, but if you knew the person I'm talking about, that's massive.

### **Continuing care**

In much of the artists' data, there was a sense of commitment to the whole person, seen in their social and community context. This commitment to the person extended not just during the course of a set of workshops. For example, an artist made many attempts to encourage the regular attendance of a young person with multiple addictions and personal and family problems, who had dropped out. Telephone calls and visits outside of Pathways project working hours were repeatedly made. Despite this, the young person stopped attending. When the level of despair was so great and this young person took their own life, the artists and staff at Pathways were devastated. They seriously considered the possibility that this might have been prevented if attendance at the workshops had continued and they had been in a position to help more.

Care and concern extended after workshops sessions had ended. The following quotation gives just one example of many in which outreach to participants was demonstrated. This participant had been sent to prison, yet the artists managed to deliver the published LIME anthology of poems to her:

Her (social) worker has found out which prison she's in and she's sending her the book because she's got a couple of pieces in there and that's something that will help her, we hope. (Artist)

There was a high level of personal engagement of artists with participants:

I'm so proud of them. (Artist)

## Emotional Load

The artists described the emotional load of working closely with vulnerable people and issues of mental health. In the first instance, lack of participants despite strenuous advertising was disheartening, as one artist wrote in her diary after the failure of any participants to arrive:

I felt a bit disheartened as I was really excited about the workshop and realised it would be more of a challenge than I had envisaged. (Artist)

Equally difficult were the times when certain enthusiastic participants stopped attending because of their chaotic lives or a deepening of their problems.

Secondly, the disappointments of workshops experienced as flat (with little creative energy) or uncontrolled were described. This translated also into the perceived need to produce quality end products which were appreciated:

The art should be good. I don't want this to fail... Some of the pieces got damaged as young people had punched into them. I felt very upset. (Artist)

Perhaps more stressful were those sessions when participants were upset or brought up distressing accounts such as narratives of abuse, divorce, pets been killed and child death. Without counselling skills, artists were unable to help other than providing (an important) listening ear:

I would say feeling out of depth on occasions with things that arose during sessions could be a problem. (Artist)

This could be especially difficult when several participants had simultaneous yet conflicting needs. At the close of workshops, observations indicate that such emotive issues were rarely addressed, possibly leaving participants with heavy loads to bear and no-one to share them with. Necessary sensitive closure of sessions at these times was not always achieved.

Perhaps the most difficult sessions in terms of concentration on art were those conducted with young people. When asked what sorts of problems were encountered with workshops, the artist responsible noted:

Classroom discipline – disjointed access to rooms- Bickering between participants. Difficulties with listening and distractions. Support from learning mentor was fantastic however did not feel fully backed by school. (Artist)

The pressure of running a workshop focused on art occasionally resulted in issues of mental health being subsumed under the pressure of as expressed by one artist in her diary:

Some young lads came in and were very disruptive and I had to ask them to leave... I could have done with the support from having an apprentice in the room which would have freed me up to try to engage more with the young people in the process. (Artist, diary)

The problems of dealing with setting up workshops as well as the continued negotiation of the status of workshops with venue managers contributed to the stresses felt by the artists.

(There were) Communication problems with staff at the unit (names venue)- I think they did not quite appreciate us at times, this also resulted in fluctuating numbers. (Artist)

The general lack of in situ support meant that sessions could be very draining for artists:

I felt very tired and really wanted more hands on support. (Artist)

However, in most cases, the support of venue staff was very much welcomed as essential to the success of Pathways.

The support received from M and L during the sessions was really positive and I felt it helped break the ice with new participants and existing ones. (Artist)

It was in such supportive environments that basic information about participants could be extremely helpful, as in the case of one lady who would hallucinate when hearing music. Once the venue manager had alerted the artist to this, her plan to play 'spooky' music was altered.



*Life of Moo. Pathways project link with Cow Parade, Family Action Benchill Group, lead artist Rene Lumley.*

### **Outsider Perspectives**

The evaluation sought the thoughts and opinions of both managers, whose venues were used for Pathways workshops, and other interested artists in the area of arts for mental health. In total, four project managers and three artists were interviewed. It was sometimes difficult for outsiders to conceptualise the Pathways projects as a whole:

I'm desperately trying to piece together for myself the bits that make up the Pathways, so I can get a clearer idea of it. 'Cause I know, I mean I suppose I don't know, but I feel its valuable from everything people have told me - and that's from different sources, from doctors, and participants, and from artists. So I feel it's really important, and just talking to you, makes me feel, and I must talk to B about it, because I think one of the things that they must do is to try and tell the story as a whole. I mean they've published some lovely bits, fabulous things - the booklets lovely, the CD great, the poetry is great. I think it's important... But I'm really concerned as we talk, that all these fragments they weave together, I think they should weave together strongly to make a really strong project and a strong network, and all those bits need to be perhaps more clearly identified or illustrated. Perhaps they should just make a lovely big jigsaw; a very visual thing for people to put together, that would be nice. 'Cause I mean, I did notice somebody taking some video at the event. I mean I just get this impression that there are so many bits involved, who has the overview of it? (Interested Artist)

The notion here is of Pathways as a whole being more than the sum of its constituent parts. This artist felt the power of Pathways could be enhanced by communication of a more coherent and integrated approach.

Interestingly, the venue managers did not seek to fully understand the Pathways concept and approach, rather they dealt purely with the particular workshops they had been offered. They all thought that Pathways, and the Pathways philosophy of emphasis on 'art and the person' was one which fitted well with the ethos of their organisations. One manager put it this way:

(Pathways) fits into our ethos, our 'Life skills' work we do with our young people. But the main thing is the way it's taught, it gives them choice in what they want to do, it's all relaxed, no-one's made uncomfortable cos they can't do anything. That sort of thing, it fits right in with what we're trying to do. (Venue manager)

In general, they felt that the Pathways project was a very worthwhile enterprise which offered a valuable and professional service for vulnerable people facing mental health problems and attendant issues of social exclusion:

I'm so absolutely 100% in admiration of the Pathways project... it's got so much to offer people with mental health problems and the work is generally of a very high standard. There's a huge need for work like this with vulnerable people. (Art Director)

It's a really strong concept, working with people and for people. (Project manager)

They felt that Pathways was an innovative project with huge potential for alleviating mental suffering. There was a conviction that involvement in the art process can give vulnerable people a sense of participating in the wider world, taking them outside of their inner world of anxiety and suffering. Managers felt that the value of the end product was as important as the process to participants:

Initially (Pathways was) part of our 'Life skills' that we run. They came and did some creative work with some of our residents and also allowed them to get involved with a book of poetry. A couple of our residents had works published in that book, as well as displays on at the local centre. Excellent for them. (Venue Manager)

Importantly, the way Pathways workshops were constructed around participant choice offered such people the opportunity to take control of a small part of their lives and to feel empowered in this respect:

Pathways has been really good for us, we can't provide these things, so that Pathways offering their services, its massive, it's really important to us, it's highly skilled as well... it's, for the participants, it's all about them being in control, having choices, it's about empowerment. That's what Pathways brings. (Project manager)

Moreover, the feedback they had received from Pathways attendees was usually highly positive with participants expressing great enjoyment in the art activities, as well as seeing that such activities fitted with participant needs:

It's because you can provide arts and music and stuff it's been something that's been identified by our users that they want. They wanted arts based groups, regular activities, counselling. (Project Manager)

Perhaps one of the key elements here revolved around the perception that the workshops were focused on art and not on mental health. As managers said, many participants were involved with different forms of mental health services, such as counsellors, psychologists and psychiatrists, and felt a distance between their needs and the requirements and ways of working of service providers. The managers felt that the Pathways workshops differed hugely from such services provision in the ways they approached working with people with mental health problems, creating a supportive atmosphere where participants could choose to discuss pressing issues or simply to work on their artistic projects:

It's a brand new experience for a lot of them (participants) and from the feedback they really enjoy it, it's somewhere comfortable and where they can feel safe. (Project Manager)

In Pathways, the emphasis was on the person and their life, rather than exclusively on their problems.

The benefits of Pathways were viewed in terms of raising confidence, self esteem, providing a space where people can get together and build relationships and combat feelings of loneliness and isolation. Indeed, social inclusion was seen as an outcome of major importance for participants in the workshops:

Pathways promotes inclusion, without doubt, it works. It does for us. People with problems with their debts and money - but really it's getting out of their environment, somewhere they can make friends and build meaningful relationships and that's where Pathways comes in. (Project Manager)

As one project manager said:

It presses all those buttons that people with mental health problems need. (Project Manager)

The positive opinions of these managers and artists alike far outweighed the perceived negative aspects of the project, that is, that it was under funded, short term with an uncertain future. What worried some managers was the potential for workshops to unsettle people:

...stir up a whole mess of problems for someone and then not be able to deal with it in the workshop so that people can be kind of left with these big emotional feelings and no-one to really help them through it. (Project manager)

This concern was dealt with, they felt, by the presence of project managers on site when Pathways was being conducted so that the managers could offer immediate advice and support to anyone in this situation.

In conclusion, managers and artists were keen that Pathways continue in the future to provide its services for vulnerable people:

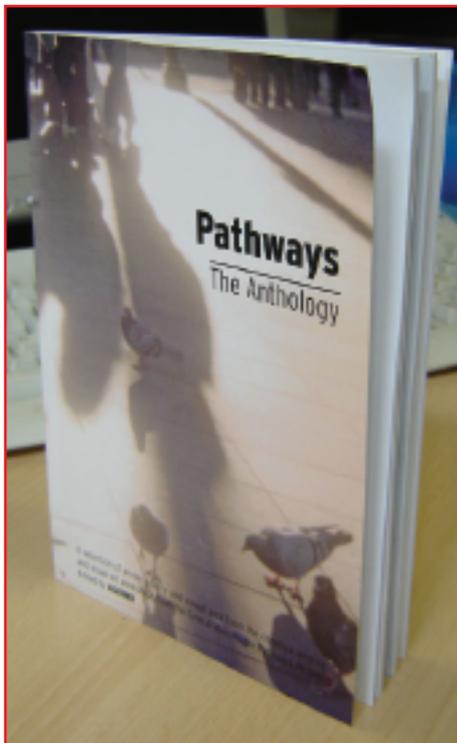
It's wonderful and it needs to carry on for as long as possible. (Project Manager)

## Organisational and Support Issues

Throughout the evaluation, LIME staff, as well as contacted members of the steering committee, were committed not just to the Pathways project but also to the value of arts in mitigating poor mental health and improving social inclusivity. Positive attitudes and a willingness to work towards the achievement of Pathways goals were evident, coupled with a conviction of the value of the work:

I think it's so important to provide a service like this, offering the art process as a way of helping people become more confident, improve their self esteem, give them a purpose, somewhere to come to, make friends. That's why Pathways is so important. (Steering group)

Within the Pathways project, there was a high degree of trust in all working together for the good of the project.



*Pathways Anthology of poems and writing - A book of participants' writing. Compiled by ALKIMU*

### Advertising, Recruitment and Setting Up

In general, there was little apparent evidence for a consistent and strategic approach to advertising workshops. Each artist was responsible for developing these themselves which resulted in much of the artists' energies being devoted to recruitment issues rather than focusing on art and mental health. Often this meant fitting around the host organisations' agendas rather than beginning workshops with an explicit Pathways agenda. The effort of setting up the project was highly demanding of artists' time, and was not necessarily part of their skills sets:

We found it really hard getting stuff set up. In the six month period that we had, we really struggled to see the venues. But even from the venues that were suggested to us in that first initial meeting, it was really, really hard, you know and (one workshop) failed entirely. Didn't matter what time of day - we changed the time, we changed the days and nobody turned up. (Focus group, Artist)

Many strategies were used to attract venues and participants including cold visits to projects and a stall on Hulme market. Advertising was placed in various local community settings and spaces such as launderettes, bookies, bus shelters and Off Licenses were all part of the plan. However, each artist was in effect reproducing what the others were also doing, yet failing to produce a coherent Pathways framework for the publicity:

Quite a bit of repetition as well going on - of the same, 'this is what you're talking about now'... obviously you need the same back up, but you are both doing the same work ostensibly, because you're producing different publicity, and it wasn't, you know, it needs to have some overall theme. (Artist)

This meant that Pathways did not have a recognised presence across the different city locations. Advertising and setting up venues also required networking with local agencies, which was a huge task:

Steering group: Okay what was the problem? Well, there wasn't enough of you and there wasn't enough time, so if you doubled the numbers and, and doubled the time and the input, you know, what would this equal? I mean that's, you know, you can start to play with that as a sort of core way of working.

Artist1: I'm just trying to get the publicity out, just trying to get the (publicity organised), you know, we spent the whole month where we literally just phoned people, didn't we?

Artist 2: Went to meetings.

Artist1: And went to meetings just trying.

Artist2: And put posters up.

Often, attempts at networking were not successful in placing participants in workshops yet had demanded a great deal of time:

Even when we were talking to agencies, when we talked to the community mental health units and everything, nobody. (Artist)

The (named) Health Agency never got back to us despite repeated phone calls. (Artist)

Consequently, the artists felt severely over-stretched:

We physically couldn't do everything. (Artist)

We found that we just didn't have the time to do the workshops more or less. (Artist)

The problem resided in artists having to perform many different roles, some they were ill prepared to meet, often experiencing role conflict (where the demands of one role impinge on another role) and role ambiguity (not being sure about what the tasks of the role actually are). Consequently, the focus on the art and the workshop planning was compromised in the early stages of Pathways. The lack of time for the immense administration of the project was also problematic, with key jobs left undone, especially those requiring tight co-ordination between the artists. Sometimes this resulted in a critical lack of participants and one project was closed down.

### **Referrals**

Some workshops were poorly attended as a result of a lack of referrals from mental health and community services. Initially, there was no specifically designated mechanism for identification and contact with potential referral services, and this problem was identified by the Pathways team:

I don't think it's worked in terms of referrals, I don't think it's worked in terms of really networking the agencies that we're working with and in the next phase er, really need to focus down on how we do that. (Focus group, Pathways Manager)

Accordingly, during the latter stages of the evaluation period, a referral manager post was created. This involved a thirteen day contract for the referrals manager to improve referrals and the referrals system. This manager and other Pathways project staff talked about the difficulties of gaining referrals and developing the referral system. The main difficulties discussed related to the independence of

Pathways and its positioning outside of the health services, issues of communication and information transfer, mental health service assessment practice and procedures, and sustainability.

**a) The independence of Pathways and its positioning outside of the health services:** It was felt that a successful referral system would depend on the integration of Pathways within the usual channels of communication for local referring services such as the Community Mental Health Teams, the Manchester Carers Forum, GP surgeries and community groups working with vulnerable people. As the referrals manager pointed out:

...For sustainability, it would be good to be able to embed things within services, it's not always possible to do given the practicalities that an organisation is working to. (Referral Manager)

However such integration can be very difficult because:

- different agencies and teams work in different ways;
- people with mental health problems have different needs so a standardised approach to all will not be sensitive enough.

**b) Issues of communication:** Another issue relates to the provision of information within the Pathways project itself and subsequent information available to give to potential referring agencies. It was generally felt that Pathways information was not always kept up-to-date, especially regarding the times and venues for workshops, and the nature of the individual workshops. Without such precision regarding the workshops, referral organisations may not feel that Pathways can deliver its promise to improve mental health and social inclusion. An up-to-date information pack and website could solve this problem. In addition, as the manager said, such a website could be invaluable in gaining interest in referral:

Just some ideas to make it easier. With a website, if you do have a client and you have access to the internet, you could go through it together. I think that would be possible with some teams, with others with the way they work it would be difficult. Or if they don't do it together with a person, they can give them the address. (Referrals Manager)

In a situation where referrals are sought from very busy service providers, succinct and eye-catching information in a strongly branded advertising campaign would be required, otherwise Pathways brochures would simply disappear amongst the deluge of pamphlets and mail shots coming from varied external sources. Certainly, the need to place Pathways firmly on the local agency referral agenda would require that service providers know what it has to offer. The referrals manager suggests open workshops or a conference for mental health providers could improve this situation:

Referrals Manager: I think a conference type thing would be a good idea, if it could be made as practical and as meaningful as possible, so people can go away. If participants were there...

Researcher: And you could also video a session and show what it actually is

Referrals Manager: Yeah that would be good. I think there is a huge amount that could be good I think it's just a case of resources.

Finally, in terms of communication, problems arose after the end of the second phase regarding the ways in which funds would be allocated. Not all artists were sure that their contracts would be renewed and their feelings of uncertainty affected their ability to forward plan for phase three of the project.

**c) Mental health service assessment practice and procedures:** Embedding Pathways within mental health agency practice and procedures would, it was felt, improve the referral rate onto Pathways projects since currently Pathways is not a major consideration:

...they (mental health agencies) do like a 20 min assessment with someone. They have certain questions that they go through and also when there is a huge amount on offer, as well as Pathways, they're not likely to make Pathways a preference to anyone else. (Referrals Manager)

A strategic question included within such assessment procedures and a strong positioning of Pathways within organisational decision making procedures would be beneficial. Even a listing of Pathways on general referrals listings within organisational settings would improve the chances that mental health service workers would be conscious of the Pathways project and what it has to offer. This will only be possible if Pathways projects are confirmed well in advance of their starting.

**d) Sustainability:** Keeping a functioning referrals system going requires a commitment to sustainability. This could be achieved either through a dedicated person whose job description includes the development and continuity of a referrals system and/or through skills transfer. One key issue here is that of how people who have been referred can contact the Pathways project. Without a staffed telephone line and quick response, people are likely to be easily discouraged:

I think that is, if you (a potential participant) phone up and it's an answer phone, that's maybe off putting. It's just looking to make sure that someone gets - that somebody is there to talk to. For some people that initial phone call will take a lot of confidence, to do that. If they are with a support worker they might be able to do it but it's quite good to have as quick a response as possible. (Referrals Manager)

The current work of the referrals manager is limited in scope, but the learning gained in this post needs to be passed on to permanent staff within LIME, otherwise referrals success will be at risk through lack of in-depth understanding of the requirements and problems of the referral system.

### **Teamwork and Communication**

Perhaps one of the greatest strengths of the Pathways project was the sense of teamwork, encapsulated in a spirit of artists helping each other and learning from each other by sharing experiences. Throughout the evaluation, the mutual respect with which the artists held each other was tangible:

We help each other out, call each other up, whatever needs doing. If I feel I need some support, I call (particular Artist) and we'll work something out. You need to be able to rely on each other and we know we can. (Artist)

Teamwork was made possible within the time constraints (indicated above) by the strong commitment of the artists to the Pathways mission:

Pathways works, and we know it, very well. But then we have to prove it. There's the thing, because we do know that art is so powerful and can change a person round. We've seen it so many times since we started all this. (Artist)

Unfortunately, not enough time was made available for regular Pathways project meetings dedicated to sharing skills and experiences. This meant that learning from others and artists' reflections on their own experiences was limited.

Two main problems with communication were identified in the evaluation. Firstly, gaining access to participants through external agencies required that agencies themselves were well ordered and integrated with each other. This was often not the case:

(The problem is that) different region areas of Manchester are not talking to each other. They don't talk to each other in the same area. (Artist)

Secondly, lines of communication between Pathways management and artists were not always clearly delineated which meant that critical gaps in information could result in the failure of a Pathways project to provide the most effective environment for arts in mental health. This generated a team of artists who felt that they were largely self-determining in many ways (such as providing cover for workshop sessions):

There's nobody there, you know, if something goes wrong it's down to us. (Artist)

These perceptions persisted, despite the offered availability of the busy project manager's support, and the availability of this support being written into artist contracts.

However, the benefits of such self-determination reside in the level of control artists felt:

...So we can go and say (to each other) 'What went wrong? Why did that go wrong? What can we now do about it? yeah lets try that instead', without us having to go back and say to somebody else. (Artist)

Feelings of control were tempered with the problems of time constraint and conflicting roles which were discussed at a project meeting at the end of the second phase of the project. At this point, the decision to take on a manager was made:

Project Manger: Yeah, yeah so that is also saying lets have a role, someone in a post that does all that support work.

Artists: Yeah.

Project Manger: Does all that networking and does all the referral building that we've not done.

Artists: Yeah.

Artist: It needed a dedicated post almost just for that really actually because you know... the times... have got dedicated coordinators.

Project Manger: You've got publicity, PR on top of that... And you've got communication and you've got monitoring... To deal with and you've got report writing and feeding back City Council you've got all the stuff I was trying to do on not nowhere near a full time job which I found absolutely impossible... which is why some of it didn't get done... and we need someone to look after the funding potential.

Artist... somebody has to take all that admin away.

Latterly, a Pathways project manager was appointed to deal with organisational and management issues, but at the time of this report, regular updating sessions for information sharing were not in place.

## Counselling

It was clear that setting up the project as well as working with vulnerable people experiencing mental health problems could impact on the emotional wellbeing of the artists themselves:

It's emotionally intensive. (Artist)

At the outset of the Pathways programme, LIME offered some counselling support. This was a shared resource across Pathways amounting to 115 hours over the year. Artists were required to attend 4 group counselling meetings, however counselling support was not always easy to access. This left some artists to deal with distressing situations and emotions either alone, or via their own friendship and family networks.

They share things which you sometimes, I think 'Gosh I don't know how to handle it', because you know it's, it's very, very deep. And very - it's such a responsibility you're in at times. You know, people trust you with things that you think, 'Gosh where do I take this?' but then if you have support - that's why support is so important in your project - and other people to work with, I always like to work with someone else. If you work alone as an artist with a group that can be very difficult. It's much better if you work with another person. (Artist)

As the need increasingly arose, artists had developed some 'buddying' strategies amongst themselves. In addition, a budget had been set aside to buy in counselling or supervision services:

...at the beginning there is a budget for supervision if you want it and you use it if you want to, so there isn't a dedicated person but if you feel you wanna go (you can). (Artist)

However, this counselling had not been well used, perhaps because of the proactive nature of any decision to use this (ie. that artists needed to make contact with the counsellor when in need), and the lack of immediate responsiveness of a bought in service. In addition, counsellors may not have understood the working practices of the Pathways project:

The creation of a counselling role within the LIME organisation has proved to be a step forward in establishing LIME as a healthier workplace:

Artist: I really thought that Pathways should have a dedicated person who the artist can use who may be the participants could access like a counsellor type therapy person.

Steering group: Right.

Project manager: Overall for the project? Because at the moment individual artists have been offered supervision but it's up to them whether they take it and a lot of them don't.

At the planning level, all Pathways staff agreed that the counsellor should also be an artist and would be immediately responsive:

Researcher: But what would you, what would be the best for you?

Artist: Just pick up the phone and say this happened today can I come and see you, that sort of thing. (Project manager)

A counsellor who was experienced in art as therapy would ensure that they understood the demands and pressures of creative work with people with mental health problems. At the beginning of the 3rd phase, a counsellor (who was an art therapist) was appointed. However, evaluation of the difference this has made to artists in terms of their perceived emotional support has not been possible given the short time available.

### **The Future of Pathways**

**a) Funding:** The fact that Pathways has operated so successfully on short term funding is a testament to the staff who have worked tirelessly to make Pathways work. However, short term funding should only be seen as a start-up option, and long term funding is required for any degree of sustainability. Strategies for funding were discussed at Pathways meetings and various ideas were floated:

Actually I think it's getting the funding for it as well in the long term. I was talking to B last week I suggested having you know changing one of the run down properties particularly in Wythenshawe where there's lots of properties that are boarded up into a Pathways house, so we had a base so that users and the needs of the community... it could without having to you know to go around room constraints and staff time and all of that, so if we had a base, particularly, and turned it into something positive like an art house. I was involved in a project in Bolton about six or seven years ago where I led a project in (a locality) based on an art house yeah, and it was fantastic for community it was absolutely brilliant. It worked so well and that was just the council giving us a run-down property. (Focus group, artist)

...We could lobby the city councils for something like that in both the areas. (Focus group, artist)

In this context, the value of personal networks and how to approach funding options effectively is of paramount importance:

Steering group: ...In terms of branching it out, if you say saw a few areas, you thought 'this might be good' like, you've got contacts Wigan, Bolton or Oldham and Rochdale then obviously you know it might be worth trying to get some sort of AGMA support but

Manager: Well we've got AGMA...

Steering group: I'm quite happy to help out then with AGMA because I work with them quite a lot, But also it strikes me that we had RH here... yesterday - its coming into its third financial year - ...there were two people here from the Arts Council. (It) may be now is the time to actually use the fact that NRF [Neighbourhood Renewal Fund] one is clear, to put in a serious GFA [Grants for the Arts] bid to the Arts Council. Because it strikes me that ,in a sense with Wythenshawe, you really need to keep that going on. But you can have the same budget as last year and so you're - artists - are going to be slightly hands tied. Whereas Wythenshawe is a fantastic place to pilot new ideas because its so well set up, because they're used to Pathways, because they already have people who've been through the Pathways system, because you all have links to it. And in a sense, you know, if you're stretching to North Manchester with stuff, you can start trying out new stuff and being a little more helpful with Wythenshawe with the help of GFA.

One option is fitting with current funding bodies' agendas. However, this may mean changing the Pathways mission to sit more comfortably within them:

I think what you need is a... focused response to what grants for the arts is. And now that you actually have your proper social inclusion officers at the Arts Council... clearly prioritises this is the embodiment, this is what the Arts Council are currently looking for. (Steering group)

Perhaps the biggest impediment to gaining long term funding is the time needed to develop contacts and to place bids, where time at Pathways is at a premium.

**b) Mission:** The future of Pathways is dependent on the LIME staff, their energy, passion and vision.

Steering group: But what you did touch on and what R mentioned earlier is, you know, it's the Pathways, is it actually going somewhere or is it just carrying on as a sort of therapeutic project... And my feeling's that's not what Pathways should be doing, is just the carrying on. It needs to actually go somewhere.

Project manager: Yeah... Well... trying to analyse, if you like, is it going to go somewhere. If (participants) move on...and become self-confident and get jobs and do stuff then it's going somewhere isn't it?

Pathways was assessed to be 'going somewhere' if participants were living a better quality of life as a result of their connection with Pathways. To ensure this was happening, continuous and grounded analysis, particularly self-analysis of the Pathways project was necessary:

Steering group: I mean you're actually defining where you actually want the Pathways to go.

Project manager: Yeah is that good?

Steering group: Well, I think it's great because it's actually coming out of you know very specific projects and a one to one analysis of what's taking place. It's not about applying a set of rules from above, again you know it's about seeing what's happening on the ground and talking to the people who are directly involved and then that informs where you want it to go.

Researcher: So, how (do) you summarise what the vision is that's coming out?

Steering group: Well, the thing is, actually it was R reminded us of that word 'Pathways'... there is a dynamic in each of these projects that is worth taking forward. Are they going somewhere that, currently, Pathways can't justify (itself as) an ongoing support system or therapeutic support system?

**c) Venues:** The evaluation has identified key factors for choosing venues for future Pathways workshops, based on the sorts of problems artists, venue managers and participants had experienced. Venues in the future should:

- Be linked to other projects, agencies in local area (integration, location);
- Have good facilities (environmental psychology);
- Provide opportunities for cross referral (recruitment);
- Be places where artists enjoy working (well-being);
- Have venue support workers available (counselling and advice);
- Be well established venue (in order to build on their expertise and reputation).

*Me as a Canvas. Artist participant Margaret Hodgson.*



**d) Working practices:** The future development of Pathways needs to carefully examine the options of continuing with established artists already known to particular groups, thereby building on the trust and rapport already established, or moving artists between venues in order to facilitate the sharing and experience of different artistic skills. These issues were discussed at a Pathways meeting:

Researcher: ...It seems to me that what you have just been describing highlights a number of different tensions that you've got. Because the, the issue about whether you have rotating artists jeopardises the relationships that you have with people around their mental health issues. So you move your artists around all the time, don't build those long term relationships, and yet you give people a greater set of opportunities for different kinds of creative expression. If you keep the same artists then you, you not only have the mental health sort of relationships and all that trust stuff, but you also have the possibility of skills development within particular artistic genre. But you might get stuck. So you, if you were talking about skill development over time, not just within six months but over a long time, so that more people can get their stuff sold or be artists, then... you then have to work with the same people on their skills, and their skills progress and so might their mental health issues.

Artist: Yeah definitely.

Researcher: ...But you might only have a few people who engage with photography and some people who would rather do sculpture, so how do you, I suppose the question for me is, how do you provide Pathways into other arts activities for people, not just Pathways into other mental health support showing results.

Project manager: At the moment that has been down to the way in which the artists define their own practice, this is what we need to look at.

Here, the need to employ artists with an interest and ability to work across different art forms and with very different age groups and severity of mental problems is signalled. The artists felt that there was currently a movement towards multi-disciplinarity which was very encouraging in the art scene and useful in the context of Pathways:

...There are many artists who now work in a multi-disciplinary fashion, so that whole thing you know, you know, you train to be a painter so you're going to stay a painter all your life. Well some people do, there's nothing wrong with that, but it's a very old model now, and certainly in this context the kind of artists that are attracted to this kind of work are those that actually (are) multi-skilled, (with a) multi-disciplinary way of working and it's not about necessarily weakening you, you know. (Steering group)

However, this would require that artists develop adaptability, as well as skill in establishing trust and rapport quickly with new groups:

I think it depends on the adaptability of your artists and whether they are happy to experiment like that. I think on a personal level it dilutes your own practise and your own journey within your own practise. But I think in this sort of work, in this work role, I think it opens other doors for you so it does have a strength and a weakness. (Project Manager)

The benefits of mixing skills and workshops was appreciated by artists (as it had been planned at the outset of Pathways) , but this needs to be considered in the light of the needs and expectations of participants who often require time to develop trust in order to reveal aspects of themselves within the workshop sessions:

...some sort of gentle phasing could be good. I mean it could have been good if you guys (artists) had worked together as you originally planned... organise it so that you are able to do that (swop workshops) and other artists are able to be brought in as well so that there is a more of a mix, (even if) maybe (there) is an affinity with, you know, particular client groups. (Project Manager)

### **Links with City-wide health objectives**

The context in which Pathways has developed is one in which the importance of poor mental health, especially amongst those in areas of deprivation, is recognised in both the City Council's *Manchester Community Strategy*<sup>5</sup>, section on *Health Inequalities* and the *City's Manchester Strategic Health Plan*<sup>6</sup>. The Health Inequalities section of the Community Strategy notes that:

“Manchester residents also experience the highest levels of mild to moderate mental health problems in England.”

A key issue identified is to:

“Improve the mental health of local people, and reduce the stigma associated with mental illness“

Furthermore, the Strategy goes on:

“In relation to all existing services and new service developments, a greater emphasis will be put on ensuring that black and ethnic minority communities in particular, have better access to them. This not only means more culturally appropriate services, but greater engagement of the communities themselves in service delivery.”

Similar observations are made in the Strategic Health Plan.

“People in disadvantaged circumstances are more likely to have mental health problems; in addition, people with mental health problems are more likely to experience discrimination, social exclusion and poor physical health.”

The Pathways projects have all taken place in areas of multiple deprivation. However, more than this, they have contributed to the key requirements outlined by the strategy, if inequalities in mental health, evidenced in Manchester, are to be addressed.

The Pathways project has, as the above discussion of data from the evaluation shows, contributed to these requirements. Table 5 summarises the requirements to achieve strategic mental health targets for Manchester, and the impact of Pathways on them.

5 <http://www.manchester.gov.uk/regen/strategy/section6.htm> (retrieved 27.11.05)

6 <http://www.manchester.gov.uk/health/healthplan/diseases/mental.htm> (retrieved 27.11.05)

**Table 5: Contributions made by Pathways on Manchester's mental health targets**

Requirements to achieve strategic mental health targets for Manchester	Contributions made by Pathways
Increased awareness and understanding about mental health in the general population.	The presence of the Pathways projects in deprived areas as well as the high quality annual exhibition has contributed to increased awareness. In particular, Pathways advertising in local venues and the Pathways Exhibition are important ways in which awareness raising has begun. The choice to hold the Pathways Exhibition in a local centre rather than in central Manchester was expressly made so that local people become aware of Pathways.
A strengthened community and voluntary sector.	Pathways exists outside the formal statutory sector and links with other community and voluntary organisations have been made through the Pathways project manager, artists connections and the referrals manager. This has extended the sorts of services, external agencies can offer to local citizens as well as extending the scope of Pathways.
Provision of high quality services in primary care for people with common mental health problems.	The links between formal primary care services and Pathways could usefully be strengthened, and this was being undertaken specifically by the pathways referrals manager.
Provision of high quality specialist mental health services for people with more serious mental health problems.	Pathways is mostly aimed at people with common mental health problems. However some people with serious and enduring problems have participated and the evidence given in this report indicates that they were positive about the impact of Pathways (and of art itself) upon themselves.
Increased opportunities for people with mental health problems to participate in society to their fullest extent.	Participation with Pathways arts projects has opened up these opportunities for those involved. As the evidence above indicates, participant pathways into education, employment and ease of social interaction have all been linked, by participants and artists, to Pathways.

In addition to the conditions required to meet Manchester's vision on mental health, within the Manchester strategic plan, a number of short to medium term priorities were set. Whilst these appear more directed at formal services, it is possible to map out the ways Pathways contribute to these priorities, as in table 6.

**Table 6: Contributions made by Pathways on Manchester's short to medium term priorities for mental health**

<b>Short and medium term priorities to achieve strategic mental health targets for Manchester</b>	<b>Contribution made by Pathways</b>
Developing systems for getting people with mental health problems into work.	Some participants in projects have increased confidence and self esteem, are better able to make decisions about their lives and some have gone on to voluntary or paid employment.
Information and awareness campaigns about mental health, aimed at raising awareness and tackling discrimination against those with mental health problems.	Publicity about the projects as well as the annual exhibition have served to raise awareness and have enhanced awareness that those with mental health problems can contribute within their communities and to society.
Further development of the healthy schools programme to promote mental health The project based in a school had a positive impact on the children involved.	The project based in a school had a positive impact on the children involved.
Enhancing the capacity of the voluntary and community sector to provide support to people with mental health problems, including improving access to such services via primary care settings.	Pathways exists outside the formal statutory sector and links with other community and voluntary organisations, extending what they can offer local citizens. However, there is room for improvement in sign posting to and from formal services.
Establishing systems for improving the engagement of Mental Health and Social Care Trust staff in community networks to promote mental health.	Engagement has happened but not in a systematic way. With more solid funding and the possibilities for expansion and continuity, Pathways could contribute more substantially to this priority.
Building links between mental health promotion and crime and disorder planning.	No information collected.
Developing services that do not stigmatise people.	One of the greatest strengths of Pathways is its non-stigmatising approach to participants.
Offering care that is flexible, responsive, close to home and available 24 hours a day.	Not applicable.
Providing appropriate support to informal and formal carers.	Pathways has not been targeted at carers, but this is an area that could be expanded.
Developing a single point of access to a wide range of mental health service provision.	Information about Pathways is spreading. Surety of continued funding will be required Pathways is to contribute fully to such a network (assuming non formal services are to be included).
Tailoring services to meet the individual needs of those who require care.	Within each Pathways project individual needs are addressed.

Thus Pathways has begun to make a contribution towards Manchester's goals of reducing health inequalities, with reference to mental health. These are summarised in the statement issued by the Manchester health Inequalities partnership, one of the seven thematic partnerships relating to the core themes of the Community Strategy<sup>7</sup>. Members of this partnership have signed up to:

- A commitment to co-ordinated action to reduce health inequalities within the city and between the city and the rest of the country;
- A commitment to ensure that the way mainstream resources are allocated and decision-making occurs has a positive impact on reducing health inequalities.

In relation to the first commitment, Pathways has played an important part. If the second commitment is fulfilled in relation to the project, a sustainable future may be secured. It is not only Manchester that provides the context for the successful Pathways project to continue. The North West Regional Development Health Plan, *Investment for Health: A Plan for the North West of England 2003*<sup>8</sup> says of projects contributing to reduced health inequalities:

Prevention policies (that) reduce inequalities are investments which improve the quality of life in deprived areas and groups, reduce social exclusion and produce economic benefits, and reduce the demand for health and social care services from avoidable illness. (p.47)

This is in recognition that:

The underlying determinants of good health are to be found in the environments of everyday life, people's social and economic circumstances and the interaction of lifestyles and behaviour with those circumstances. (Foreword by John Ashton, NW regional Director of Public Health)

As we have seen Pathways is a project that works in a preventative way, is targeted at people living in areas of social and economic deprivation and has influenced participants' abilities to understand and make changes to their lifestyles and behaviours.

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.manchester.gov.uk/regen/strategy/section6.htm> (retrieved 27.11.05)

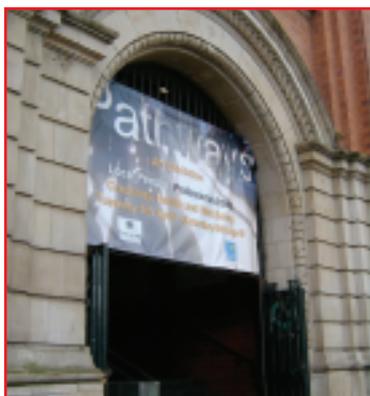
<sup>8</sup> [http://www.go-nw.gov.uk/health/inv\\_helath.pdf](http://www.go-nw.gov.uk/health/inv_helath.pdf) (retrieved 27.11.05)

## The Zion Centre Pathways Exhibition Evaluation

### The Venue

The Pathways exhibition (see Figure 3) was held at the Zion Centre, a multicultural, multi-purpose arts venue, in Hulme, Manchester from Tuesday April 5th to Saturday April 9th, 2005. This venue was chosen in order to raise awareness of pathways in a local community setting, rather than to site it within Manchester City centre.

**Figure 3: The Pathways Exhibition entrance**



*Zion Exhibition Pathways banner.*

The banner over the doorway read:



The Zion Centre is a community venue a mile from Manchester City centre, near to the location of some of the individual projects and 2-5 miles from others. The banner drew attention to the exhibition, and security meant that effort had to be spent to gain access. A researcher noted:

Good to see Lime/Pathways banner over the doorway to the Zion Centre, but then the door was closed - barricaded by a security buzzer. A concerted effort had to be made to enter, followed by a signing in process... (when I got in) the Pathways exhibition was empty. (Researcher, Field Notes)

It was unlikely, then, that members of the public would drop in, and, indeed relatively few visitors to the exhibition came 'because they were passing' (see Table 8). Information was gathered from a number of different sources including:

- completed feedback questionnaires (n=45);
- interviews with visitors during the exhibition and afterwards;
- comments made whilst looking at the exhibits;
- written comments made on 'graffiti sheets';
- Comments written on 'Art makes me feel...' posters;
- completed 'On the one hand art... and the other, art...' sheets;
- researcher field diaries;
- artists' focus discussion group.

**Publicity for the exhibition**

The forthcoming exhibition was publicised on a number of different networks, giving wide coverage of information about the project. These included:

- Manchester Arts Network;
- Manchester City Council networks;
- National Network for Arts and Health;
- South Manchester Healthy Living Network;
- Central Manchester Health Care Trust Intranet;
- LIME website and different local voluntary networks as well as Pathways venues.

In addition 320 people were mailed with invitations. Thus information about the project was widely disseminated locally, and throughout national networks, helping to raise the profile of the project and its outputs beyond those who actually attended.

It may have been possible for artists to promote the exhibition more, themselves. However, the nature of the projects and participant engagement, as well as unavailability of information far in advance of the exhibition made this difficult. As one of them said shortly before the exhibition:

I'm looking forward to it. I just needed some flyers, cos I've not been collecting names and addresses of people, cos that hasn't been one of the requirements. But I just feel that a lot of people are going to be missing out of the exhibition. (Participants are) just dropping in and out of sessions, and the parents - we haven't got names and addresses of the people. (Artist, interview)

**Who visited the exhibition and why?**

The exhibition did reach a large number of people. Over the five days of the exhibition approximately 200 people attended. The majority of these came to the launch on the first day. On the first day, twice as many visitors declared themselves to be artists than non-artists, although over the duration of the exhibition, there were equal number of self-declared artists and non-artists. Similarly, more men than women attended on the first day, but overall, 53% of visitors were women. Nearly half of those attending and completing a questionnaire on the first day had attended a workshop within the project. Table 7 shows the ages of visitors.

**Table 7: Age of visitors to the exhibition (from completed questionnaires)**

Age	Percentage visitors
Under 20	2*
20 - 29	32
30 - 39	24
40 - 49	32
50 10	

*\* over the course of the exhibition at least 20 children and teenagers attended: most did not complete questionnaires*

Most visitors came because they had been invited, knew an artist or a participant or knew about Lime and /or Pathways (see table 8). Few people just ‘dropped by’ and only one person said they came because they had seen a poster.

**Table 8: Reasons for coming to the exhibition (from completed questionnaires)**

Reason for visiting exhibition	Percentage of visitors
Invited by friend or partner	34
Interest in and knowledge about Pathways, Lime or Arts and health	18
Invited (general)	12
Have a family member involved	12
Passing by in the Zion centre or saw a poster	8
I am an artist or work in field of arts	6
Fascinated by how to express and survive everyday life through art	2
I believe in art as a medium of expression	2
Interested to understand community context	2
More orientation in the art world	2
To see what has been produced	2

Some disappointment was expressed, particularly regarding the launch, at what was perceived to be low attendance by those with influence in the arts and mental health fields, even though invitations had been sent to them. A visitor, experienced in arts and health development said:

...it was such a very great shame that on the exhibition on the opening, that they didn't manage to attract key figures from the health world and the arts world, as they're people who need to be influenced, who need to be educated about how this work can affect people... I know they invited, professor [key policy maker] down from the health side, and all people from Arts Council North West. You can't really say why people didn't come, there's obviously lots of reasons, but I think it's a great shame, because that would take the work forward. (Post-exhibition interview, arts and health development worker)

On the days following the launch, there were long periods of time with no or few visitors, and this was commented on by visitors and by the researchers.

I spent three hours at the exhibition today and four people came in. (Researcher, Field notes)

Enjoyed it, but I was the only one walking around - maybe it needs better publicity?  
(Questionnaire comment, visitor)

Thus most visitors who came, were already positively disposed towards the projects and the art work. The exhibition afforded relatively few opportunities for people unfamiliar with the project to learn about it, and extend their understanding of what kinds of activities and outputs are possible. In addition, there were no dissenting voices from a positive appraisal of the work.

## Views about the exhibition

It was clear that the exhibition contributed to the self-esteem of those who had participated in the projects. One participant, attending the launch, said:

Participant: I think it's just so brilliant, so, I don't know what, just so overwhelming really.

Researcher: What, the exhibition?

Participant: Well everything really, the whole thing (launch event) and I feel so proud that my work, my art is put up so everybody can see it. Fantastic.

Another said proudly:

Participant: That's my sister's (painting) Oh, Oh and it's been sold. Somebody's bought it, Oh (very emotional). (Participant interview at exhibition)

Another participant talked of how the way the art work was displayed in the exhibition helped her make more sense of the activity in which she had been involved.



*Light and Shadow Installation. Lead artists Rene Lumley and Jessica Bockley with FAB Group.*

Participant: When we were making this (black box) you just couldn't really see it or, or how it was going to work. But now that it's here (in the exhibition) it looks great and I know why, how it works.

Researcher: So whose art is it?

Participant: It's ours, all of ours... We all had a go with it, all our ideas, mine, the group and (the artist) as well. But putting it in here like this, in the dark, that really makes it something! (Participant interview at exhibition)

Not all participants felt the same degree of connection with their work. One young person minimised the role played in the finished product:

Researcher: What do you think of these [art] pieces?

Child participant: They're alright. Quite nice.

Researcher: Did you help make them?

Child participant: ...Sort of, just like painting and stuff. Nothing much. (Participant interview at exhibition)

The high quality of the exhibits was reflected in the visitors' perceptions of whose work they thought was on display. 85% of visitors (half of whom declared themselves to be artists and a different half of whom declared themselves to be project participants) thought the work was done by 'ordinary people like me'. It is impossible to know to whom 'ordinary people like me' refers - artists, project participants or others. At the same time 49% thought the work was done by experienced artists and 68% perceived the work to have been done by enthusiasts of art. Thus, the work was thought to have been done, in the main, by people with experience of and enthusiasm for art and/or Pathways. Additional comments made were that the work was done by 'brave' people', people 'with all sorts of talents and skills' and 'rich people'.

Given who had visited the exhibition, it was not surprising to find that the majority of the visitors thought the exhibition was:

- Interesting
- Calming
- Beautiful
- Stimulating
- Exciting
- Mystifying
- Fascinating
- Educational
- Visionary
- Challenging
- Informative
- Inspiring

One visitor captured the essence of the aims of the exhibition by stating:

I like the connection between art, artists and their community. (Questionnaire comment, Visitor)

Visitors were asked to indicate which pieces of art work they liked the most and which the least and to give reasons for their choices. Different people liked different exhibits best (and least) and all items of the exhibition were at least one person's favourite piece. Some liked exhibits for their aesthetic appeal; some because of the way they facilitated engagement and provoked thoughts and feelings in the visitor. Other pieces were identified because visitors thought they gave them ideas for their own practice. It was clear that some of the pieces served a function of reducing stigma and developing understanding, and enabled visitors and participants to have pride in the achievements and feel valued.

### **Quality of the art produced**

Visitors were, on the whole impressed by the quality of the art produced. Comments made about this included:

- Well put together
- Clever
- Brings out the best in you
- Clever, well executed
- Very therapeutic
- Interesting
- Informative and unpretentious
- Visually stimulating. Creatively interesting
- (liked) simply for beauty
- Beautiful and grounded in reality
- Fascinating - never seen anything similar
- Looks pretty

Some questions were asked, though, by researchers who had observed some aspects of the production of the works, of the extent to which art work displayed was the work of participants, artists or a product of them both. In part this was a concern about who made decisions about what work to include in the exhibition, and whether this was a decision about objective quality, rather than as illustration of the process used and of participant development.

In a participatory arts project, tensions may arise when it is artists that curate an exhibition based on work designed or made with (not by) the participants. This tension was reflected by two of the researchers who had participated in different projects.

I really do feel quite disappointed in the exhibition. Whilst it did more than meet my expectations in terms of the quality of the work, I really do feel that participants in the art projects were perhaps not as integral as they should or could have been... [with some of the pieces] it really did feel like the artists were displaying their own work... I was quite surprised to see that [the art work from one project] were all looking very different from when I'd last seen them. They had been painted a little more -extra lines and definition added - and they also had glitter lines over them. (Researcher, reflections)

Another researcher also thought the exhibition display differed from her experience of the project.

The display included pictures of people I did not recognise (from the times I participated) - the net result was a display that did not connect easily with my experience of the project. (Researcher, reflections)

It is worth noting that all exhibited work was anchored in participant experience, and was not intended to simply present work undertaken only by those participants. The essence of the Pathways project, as reflected by the exhibition banner, is that artists and local people share their practice: it is not an art training project.

Nothing was shown that wasn't an idea generated by or with participants. It should be understood that this is also the artists' work. The artists are sharing their practice with people not simply giving people the tools to make their own work. (Pathways Artist, feedback on draft report)

The question of balance between quality of the art as a product and understanding of the creation of the art as a process within the Pathways project was one that was picked up by a visitor who was familiar with both Pathways and the wider arts for health movement. The view was strongly expressed by an advocate of Pathways, that an exhibition of Pathways-type projects, should be as much about process as product, and that to view exhibits as 'favourite pieces', was to miss the point. When asked about his favourite part of the exhibition, he said:

...I go back to the point that art can be seen very simplistically as either being product or process. And the product is what you see in art galleries: and the product is 'I'm an artist, this is my work and you can view it as you like', that sort of thing. But art for health work seems to be much more about the process, and it's not to say that the product doesn't need to be really high quality. Therefore, to pick out the pieces and say that's my favourite is slightly, well is insidious in one way. And in another sense I feel ignorant in being able to comment on the individual facets of the exhibition, as I wasn't there when it took part. ...So you need what I would call interpretation ... [of what went on] ... the most obvious way is that there's a video made where somebody's telling people about the work and what's happened, or showing the work in progress which ... (Post-exhibition interview, arts and health development worker)

Some exhibits did explain a little about the process through which the finished products arose. For example, the information sheet accompanying the hop-scotch floor game and multiple choice video made with school children included:

... [the project had the) aim of providing the opportunity for young people to take part in activity that would help to develop existing personal skills in relation to dealing with everyday life. The project aimed to nurture creative talents and introduce new skills building up individuals' confidence and their ability to make decisions...The project draws attention to the difficulties faced in the school environment. Attendance and disruptions with classroom discipline and short attention spans are a big issue even when working with a group less than half the size of a usual class group. The benefits the young people have gained from this project were very much about the engagement with a process, the moment of creation, the moment the costumes were worn for the first time, the moment somebody carefully listened. (Information notice, School exhibit corner)

Similarly the notice accompanying the 'Molecule' gave information about the processes involved.



The idea for the molecule came from participants at the YASP sessions, as an extension of the atom work that took place in the workshops. They wanted to display all the work from the various groups in a creative way. The molecule represents the genetic side of humans displaying the emotional side, as well as the inner child that is in all of us - as it is also designed to look like a climbing frame in a park. The work displayed includes hand casts from The Manchester Foyer and from South Manchester participants, poems from various Central Manchester projects and stained glass designs from the Manchester Foyer. (Information notice, The Molecule)

*Molecule - sculptural display structure designed with Pathways participants for art exhibition (lead artists ALKIMU).*

### **Public appreciation and audience engagement**

Participants who also visited the exhibition engaged fully with the exhibits. This was particularly so with children who had participated.

...As soon as they walked in, they walked over to their bags, took off their school uniform and got into their costumes straight away as if it was their changing room. It was quite amazing to see the children so enthusiastic about getting into the costumes, and throughout the rest of the day there were children running around in red feather-boas, masks, wizard costume, green dinosaur slippers, and one child who put on a piece of net like a veil and some sort of green wig. (Researcher, Field notes)

Relatives, too, were touched when seeing what had been produced. The mother of a young man who had participated in the creative writing project, and who had since died, was strengthened by what she saw and heard about her son when she visited the exhibition.

(The young man's) mother and sisters arrived. His mum was shown what he had written - this was read out to her and made her weep. The writing and what (the artists) told her about (her son's) involvement let her "see a completely different side of him". She said "it's great that he felt comfortable in this place (the project) to be able to open up". Some of his writing will probably be read out at his funeral. (Researcher, Field notes)

Visitors to the exhibition identified ways that some of their favourite exhibits went beyond their aesthetic impact and drew them in, in an interactive way. Comments included:

- Makes you think
- Fun, enjoyment
- Relaxing
- Interactive
- Very funny
- Provocative images
- Brings people together
- I enjoyed making a wish
- I feel part of a big Pathways family -love everything

Thus the exhibition had the same impact on visitors as projects had on participants. The exhibition helped visitors gain a connection with the participants in a way that just hearing about the work could not have done. In part, then, the exhibition helped public appreciation of people's creativity, and had the potential to contribute to reducing the stigma of people with mental health difficulties, and enhance social inclusion. This was illustrated well by one comment:

[I liked the creative writing as] it was ordinary people who thought they couldn't write. A success.  
(Visitor comment about favourite piece and why)

The potential for reducing stigma in this way was limited by the familiarity of most visitors with the people and the projects, and the relatively few other members of the public that came. However, as discussed above, publicity for the exhibition and information about the project, extended beyond those who attended, and reached many more people.

### **Development of practice**

Some visitors gleaned some new ideas that might inform their own practice, or were encouraged to think in different ways. Explanations given of favourite exhibits included:

I'm interested in art in hospices - this [type of art work] would be good in palliative care. (Visitor (artist) comment on exhibition)

(It made me think that) with a few words one can make connections. (Visitor comment on exhibition)

Novel idea, using instant visuals and words. (Visitor comment on exhibition)

Others thought the exhibits gave them insight into what can be achieved through working together in difficult circumstances, and through the use of imagination and fun. The exhibition was summed up by one visitor, in explaining her or his favourite exhibits:

They bring out individuality and self expression reflecting what's going on in people's minds. Spontaneous. (Visitor comment on exhibition)

### **Pride and enhancement of self esteem**

The pride that participants took in seeing their work exhibited was evident to the researchers.

After a while, some school children arrived. I was really interested in this group, as they were all so eager! ...The project had involved making a video of scenarios (which were on a video), the school bags which had costumes in them, and a big hopscotch board. The interesting thing about the children was that they walked into the exhibition like they owned the place! It was so nice to see them interacting with the pieces (not just their own). (Researcher Field Notes)

In addition, several visitors said that they felt 'privileged to be here', and others expressed pride in seeing work done by family members.

[Visitor] told me that her sister had had a girl, and that the baby was a big baby and was fine. She was really pleased to see that there was a picture of the mother and baby in the exhibition, and directed me to it. Later on, when I bumped into [participant], I congratulated her on being a grandmother, and she was very proud too [of the displays of her granddaughter's work] (Researcher, reflections).



*Chess Board. Lead artist Yasmin Yaqub with Moss Side Powerhouse.*

One of the artists sold a painting, much to her, and the participant's delight:

Towards the end, I remember [one of the artists] being very excited as a piece had just been sold. Someone had inquired about an art piece, and [the artist] had rung the artist (participant) who had made the piece (one of the group members) and they had agreed to the sale, which was for £30.

[The artist] was very pleased about this! (Researcher, reflections)

None of the exhibits were promoted as being for sale, and this painting was sold on enquiry by a visitor. Opening the possibility of selling exhibits might provide opportunities for more

public displays of the value placed on the art work, and the esteem of the participants. However, whilst the potential for empowerment through display of art work is evident, it is also possible that lack of involvement of participants in decisions about art displays may lead to disempowerment.

...Wandering round, and looking at all the art pieces, again. Even as I think about this now, is this a disempowering process whereby art is actually done by artists, but passed off as being done by lay people? ...and in doing so, any augmented praise (as in if art is done by lay people its considered more impressive than by a professional) or any sense of achievement or pride, does this belong then to the artist, or to the group participants? (Researcher, reflections)

This observation highlights the issue, discussed above, of how far participation should go in a participatory arts project wherein artists and participants share their practice.

Some of the ideas generated by visitors to the exhibition give some insight into lay understandings of why it is that participation in art, and the production of works of art may lead to enhanced well-being and social inclusion.

## What is Art?

Visitors to the exhibition described art, on the evaluation graffiti board, in terms of self expression, ways of being, aesthetics and, for young people, activities. Comments listed are shown in Table 9. These positive aspects of art were echoed by the comments that visitors made about the benefits of the creative process. When asked to indicate what they thought the process of creating art did, all agreed that art:

- Is important for the well being of society
- Helps make people feel better about themselves
- Brings people together
- Can help people overcome their problems
- Gives people a different way of communicating with each other
- Can be a journey of self-discovery
- Can change a person's life for the better
- Challenges our ways of seeing the world

**Table 9: What Art Is (Graffiti Board comments)**

### Expression of:

- Feelings
- Self
- Love
- Emotion
- What you feel inside
- Possibility of self
- Imagination

### Ways of being:

- Life and people
- Being
- Expansion of mind
- Life and self expression
- My destiny
- Peace, escapism
- Past, present, future

### Activities:

- Dressing up
- What you make
- Playing
- Drawing and chilling

### Aesthetics:

- Beauty
- Wonder
- Fun

Additional comments about what art is, included art 'as a great leveller', 'helps us understand the chaos of our experience', 'improves understanding', really amazing and inspiring'.

These comments fit well with the reported experiences of those participating in the Pathways projects, discussed earlier.

Whilst art is seen as positive, visitors to the exhibition recognised that sometimes, doing art does not make people feel better. Visitors were asked to think about why art makes them feel better or not, their views again giving valuable insight into the strengths and hazards of projects like Pathways. Figure 4 summarises what visitors said about art making them feel better or not. The positive aspects are in terms of insight into oneself and coping, and these are balanced with the challenging aspects of self awareness and frustration.

Whilst these comments are not participants' comments, they do show appreciation that participation in art work does not always make people feel good, and that the process itself might even make some people at some times feel worse. This is an important aspect of working on participate arts in the context of mental health and well being.

Figure 4: When I do art it makes me feel better or/and it does not make me feel better because...

#### When I do art I feel better because...

##### Insight and self-awareness:

- Brings out my true self
- It's a life journey
- I can be free
- I am me when I am an artist
- Makes me release inner secrets
- Lets me reach deep beyond the surface
- It shows the real you
- I can express myself better
- It's the real me
- I get to show others what I'm really thinking

##### Coping:

- Stops me thinking of anything else
- Stops me thinking of things that stress me
- Makes my confidence grow
- Can escape from reality
- Am at one with the activity
- Makes me focused and gets my mind working
- Keeps me sane. I can lose myself

##### Children's views:

- Like doing it
- Get to relax and draw
- Relaxing and groovy, good
- Takes your mind off things
- Lets you draw

***Strengthening these gains can enhance the impact of arts on mental health***

#### When I do art I do not feel better because...

##### Insight and self-awareness:

- Become self-conscious and nervous
- Shows a weaker side of me
- Reveals my dark side
- Thinking or imagining something brings me up to reality
- Can be too introspective
- Makes me dwell too much on what is difficult for me

##### Frustrations:

- I can't always produce what I want
- Can be challenging
- Does not make me relaxed
- Can be stressful, working to a deadline
- It has to stop!
- Can be tiresome

##### Children's views:

- Messy
- Don't like or hate the teacher
- You have to write stuff (for school work)
- Don't always get it right
- Makes me angry if it doesn't go right

***Arts and mental health work has the potential for increasing these hazards and reducing the positive impact of arts on mental health***

## How might the exhibition be improved?

Visitors were invited to give suggestions for improvements for a Pathways exhibition in the future. Their comments included suggested improvements to the content of the exhibition and the venue and publicity:

### Venue and publicity

- Bigger venue, more artists, more exhibits
- Display in more centres
- More coverage (in advance)
- More publicity
- More advertising. Wider reach, targeting various groups in the community
- Advertise gallery more. Make known further afield
- Move away from traditional gallery setting

### Content

- More involvement of young people (15-26)
- More performance (if appropriate)
- More background on how exhibits were constructed - include photos of their construction?
- More exhibits that are obviously produced by non-artists
- Wider mixture of both individual and group art
- More stuff - works of art

## Concluding comments about the Exhibition

One of the visitors summed up the overall, positive reception of the exhibition:

I mean I thought, the exhibition was tremendous, in lots of different ways. I've been to a number of exhibitions at the Zion before, some of them which LIME have organised and possibly one or two others. I thought it was a really varied exhibition. There seemed to be a lot of things that people were exploring. It's quite a difficult thing to exhibit anyway I think, because as I understand, the nature of the artists involvement with the people that they've worked with has been very much process thing, and therefore an exhibition tends to be, well this is what you see. So it's very difficult to convey the process. People were stimulated clearly, and I think it was obvious that there was a real range of activity there, clearly from the writing from lots of visual stuff to the exploration work. (Interview, arts and health development worker)

As we have seen, the exhibition illustrated many of the benefits of the Pathways project as well as the artistic products of the work undertaken. Health and social inclusion gains were clear, not just for participants but also for visitors, many of whom showed insight into the mechanisms whereby participatory arts work might contribute to enhanced well being and participation. All visitors were positive about the different exhibits and the Pathways project. However, some of the potential for the exhibition to contribute to increase social understanding of the possibilities presented by arts and mental health work, in terms of community and service development, and increased understanding, was not realised. This was largely because the exhibition failed to attract large numbers of people, whether from local communities, professional agencies or strategic, decision making bodies.

In large part this was due to publicity and venue. If people do not know about the exhibition they will not come. The further people have to travel the less likely they will be to 'drop in' to an exhibition of work from an unfamiliar project. The social status of participants in their own localities will only be raised if work is exhibited there, or there is local press coverage in those neighbourhoods. On the other hand, there is prestige to be gained from seeing work displayed in a good, general venue such as the Zion Centre.

## Reflections on the Evaluation

The evaluation of such a complex phenomenon as the Pathways project within the context of LIME has proved to be a highly challenging exercise. The intended participatory approach in which artists acted as evaluators, and evaluators took part in arts workshops, was difficult to achieve given the very different working practices of both groups. Whereas the evaluation required a systematic and rigorous approach in which similar data was collected over time with participants, the art workshops were organised around responsiveness to participant needs and wishes, prioritising issues of choice and empowerment. This meant that the consistency of data collection was not always followed through.

The initial phase of the Pathways project had been evaluated prior to this evaluation. As in many fields of work, evaluations (and especially participatory evaluations) are emergent phenomena, each evaluation being tailored to the context, and changing as the context changes. The previous evaluation had set a precedent for the current evaluation in the sense that artists were aware of and had experience of the prior evaluation processes. This meant that changing evaluation practice was difficult, especially since this current evaluation began towards the end of phase two. Clearly there was a lack of shared vision for the evaluation between artists and researchers. Researchers needed time to understand what Pathways was about and how it worked, while workshops were ongoing and evaluation tools were being developed. The situation improved dramatically when an Appreciative Inquiry workshop was held (at the end of phase 2), which enabled researchers and artists to share their thoughts about Pathways and about evaluation. In this workshop, the more emergent aspects of evaluation were discussed, alongside issues of the researcher-artist and the artist-researcher, where each takes a responsibility for both art and evaluation.

Despite this, problems arose for those tasks where artists were required to collect data within the workshops. This meant that artists needed to inhabit two distinct and separate roles with conflicting requirements, something with which they were not comfortable. One solution was for researchers to be more involved in the data collection itself, which contravened in many ways the notion of the participatory evaluation. This also had implications for the depth of data which could be collected (as participants would not have generated the levels of trust necessary with researchers). A further consideration was that the researcher's continued presence could disrupt the dynamics of the group, simply by their being there. This was minimised as all observations were undertaken as participant observations as researchers always joined in the activities of the workshops. Nevertheless, participants and artists alike were all aware of the researcher's presence.

The evaluation tasks were also compromised by the complexity of the situation: in particular, the complexity of working in an artistic framework and with vulnerable people with mental health problems. Artists were very clear and quite firm about not wanting participants to fill in structured questionnaires. Despite several attempts to produce questionnaires that would be acceptable to artists, venue managers and participants, this data was not collected as some artists and support workers felt this would make workshops feel too much like visits to the psychiatrist rather than art workshops, and this would stop participants from coming. Clearly, there is some validity to this interpretation, however this level of gate-keeping did restrict participants from choosing themselves to fill in questionnaires or not. Consequently, there is no 'hard data' to support the largely qualitative evidence in this report.



Nevertheless, the evaluation has generated some extremely interesting data and the process of learning from working together has progressed in both directions. Indeed, the impact on researchers has been such that three researchers enjoyed the workshops and the art so much and gained confidence in their abilities that they have gone on to develop their creativity at home and in their own time. Something they all felt was a positive addition to their lives.



As a result of discussion and willingness to listen, genuine co-operation ensued which has enabled many more Pathways workshops to be evaluated and hence allowing workshop participants to add their voices to the evaluation. Perhaps the key message here is that evaluation cannot be fully planned at the outset, but is emergent in relation to the dynamics of the workshops and the participants in them. The array of methodological tools developed for this evaluation is now available within the repertoire of the LIME artists who can plan their future work with an evaluative frame in order to further improve pathways from arts into healthy communities.



*From top to bottom:*

*Light and Shadow Installation. Lead artists Rene Lumley and Jessica Bockley with FAB Group.*

*Balloon Sculpture. Tree of Life, artist participant Ian Peter Berrett.*

*Bean pictures. YASP, lead artist Yasmin Yaqub.*

## Concluding Remarks

The evaluation found that:

1. In general, attendance declined over the period of the workshops for both phases 2 and 3 of the project. This is not surprising given the vulnerability of participants, the short term and drop in nature of the workshops and the need to fit in with venue requirements. Attendance is only one indicator of the success of Pathways and must be seen as such.
2. Without any doubt, in terms of well-being and quality of life, Pathways participants (both regular attendees and those who used Pathways on a drop in basis) were highly positive about their experiences of the workshops, the artists and the art. Evidence was gained on this from workshops as well as the Pathways exhibition. At an individual level, Pathways was important for most in enhancing mood and promoting relaxation, building confidence and self expression as well as skills development and personal achievement. At a social level, Pathways helped people build friendships, as well as establish new acquaintances. The benefits of the generated social capital in thinking through problems, gaining advice and a shared sense of their own normality was evident within particular groups (notably long established groups and those held within closed communities), but could also operate in an exclusionary way to keep potential new attendees out. At a community level, Pathways helped people to get out and about with a purpose. It was more difficult to establish how useful such experiences of positive well-being were in the participants' everyday lives, but there were reports that the benefits of Pathways had an effect on well-being and improved quality of life over the longer term.
3. Perhaps the most compelling evidence of the success of Pathways is the ways in which some participants had progressed along their own personal journeys to a more fulfilling and happier life. Participants themselves perceived Pathways to have helped them take up opportunities in their lives that they could not do before. Opportunities in employment, in education, in leisure and cultural activities were all involved, suggesting that Pathways does have an important role in helping people to find the personal resources to progress their personal journeys and to experience social inclusion in the main structures of community and society. In this regard, evidence gained in this evaluation indicates strongly that Pathways contributes to PSA target 7: *improving outcomes for adults and children with mental health problems*, especially in terms of widened opportunities for social inclusions and PSA target 8: *improving quality of life*. Furthermore the project has contributed to the requirements for Manchester's Community Strategy and Strategic Health Plan.
4. Artist's perspectives indicated that workshops were well run and rewarding for both artists and participants. The Zion exhibition was hailed by visitors as an exciting and interesting event, showcasing Pathways to good effect. The ways in which workshops and artists provided the opportunity for empowerment, through trust, commitment and continuing care were highlighted. However, the dependency of some participants on the artists was problematic and the solution of mixing artists and workshops was voiced. Despite enjoying their work, artists were stressed at times by the job overload and role conflict involved, and were not always well equipped to deal with the difficult and upsetting problems brought up by participants. It may be that some counselling training would be useful in this regard.

5. Outsider perspectives were unanimously positive about the value of the Pathways mission, but interviewees were not always clear how Pathways worked and how it constituted a whole. Nevertheless, in general, the relationship of Pathways and Pathways artists to venues and venue managers was instrumental in generating successful workshop sessions. Artists appreciated the support they received, when given, although conversely, they felt stressed when such support was not easily accessible. Venue managers gave many accounts of the ways in which Pathways had helped to improve the short term and longer term well-being of participants as well as detailing their progress into employment, education and wider society.
6. The publicity of the project, and in particular the exhibition, contributed to the de-stigmatisation of people with mental health problems as they are seen to play socially valued roles (of artists) and enrich their local communities.
7. In terms of data triangulation, the strength of the current research lies in the fact that ALL stakeholders to the Pathways project gave the same account of its immense value to participants', their mental well-being and social inclusion.
8. There were issues of organisational procedure and support which could help to improve Pathways in the future, in particular those of the inter-linked issues of advertising, referrals and recruitment. Responsibilities for these critical areas should be fully addressed. In general, teamwork was of a high standard but communication between artists and between artists and managers could be improved. As this has been an emergent evaluation, Pathways has begun to put procedures and staff in place to deal with some of these problems and it remains to be seen how useful this will be.

It is hoped that the evaluation work undertaken with Pathways has been a useful experience, not just in generating these findings, but also in terms of developing understandings of their own working practices and it's implications for people with mental health problems. As in any evaluation, the work does not stop here, and the Pathways staff now have some tools and some experience to undertake self-evaluation for the future.

# Recommendations

## Advertising and Referrals

- Ensure the overall Pathways administrator has all the information and the contact details of collaborating agencies (actual and potential), artists' plans and availability in order to promote the project to potential referring agencies and to the general public so that individual projects reach those who will most benefit;
- Produce a consistent and strongly branded advertising campaign;
- Ensure advertising is prominently placed in participating venues;
- Talk through advertising with venue staff to promote their active involvement in recruitment and to ensure that advertising is timed to coincide with venue timescales;
- Building strong links with referring agencies needs to be prioritised and this takes a huge amount of time and effort;
- Improve recruitment by a strong positive, coherent and scientific message that Pathways works.

## Planning

- Conduct key organisational business through the Pathways manager to ensure that he has an up-to-date overview of activity and development of the various projects. A regular well-attended management meeting between key project staff is essential;
- Provide for continuity within localities so that Pathways gets known and appropriate links can be made with other projects and referring agencies, and so that those who might benefit most from involvement are introduced to the project;
- Make explicit the reasons for either recruiting the same or different artists to work within particular localities, taking into account the advantages and disadvantages in terms of mental health gain for those involved.

## Delivery

- Via overall administration ensure that appropriate cover is available for artists unable to conduct a particular session;
- Plan long term continuity within a locality or in partnership with particular collaborating agencies to avoid short term planning and delivery cycles;
- Within the Pathways project build in sessions for artists to come together to discuss their involvement, as well as participant engagement, and to identify their needs for peer and psychological support;
- Reconsider the role of drop-in projects and their purpose within the overall Pathways project.

## Evaluation

- Agree amongst artists and project administrators, in partnership with participants if possible, key indicators through which project infrastructure, delivery processes and outcomes can be monitored in the future for project accountability and improvement;
- Tailor evaluation methods to the particular circumstances of each project, reflecting on the usefulness and appropriateness of the methods throughout the life of the project. (The range of different methods used in this evaluation can be seen as a tool box from which to begin forward evaluation planning, but always with an openness to the development of new ways of capturing the workings of the projects);

- Ensure that information is gathered that links project aims, art forms, and actual outcomes in ways that are congruent with the art forms adopted within individual projects, and with the mental health and social inclusion needs of participants;
- Within each project, build in a specific process whereby projects are monitored in terms of participants, costs, attendance, delivery processes and expected outcomes, along with explicit statements about proposed changes in the light of feedback and learning. Collate these project reports into an overall Pathways report for presentation to the Pathways Board, so that a culture of continuous learning and project improvement develops.

### **Exhibition**

- Increase publicity and target community groups, professionals and decision makers as well as the local press. Target more publicity at the general public in order to bring more of those people unfamiliar with Pathways into contact with the project and its achievements;
- Consider the possibility of local as well as central exhibitions;
- The exhibition focused on completed art works and the distinction was not always clear about who had contributed what. The danger of artists largely determining the content and the form of the exhibition is that instead of it contributing to an empowering process, it might be disempowering for some participants. Furthermore, focusing on art work dilutes the information available about how the works were produced and the benefits of participation for participants and for artists. Within the exhibition, place more focus on the process through which artists and participants worked together to produce outputs - this would represent the unique features of the Pathways project more fully;
- In order to help those people that do attend the exhibition to get a good understanding of the Pathways project, consider including in the aims for the exhibition more information sharing about the processes of participation and creation, in addition to the finished art works. Make information available as to how exhibits were prepared and the role of participants in these decisions and in setting up the exhibition;
- Pathways is fragmented and it is difficult to get a sense of the whole for dissemination to others. Efforts towards demonstrating the Pathways project as a whole need to be developed.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1

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#### LIME Pathways Evaluation E-mail interview

First contact: 26.1.05

*Some questions about yourself, art and mental health*

1. Describe yourself as an artist
2. In what ways do you think art plays a role in mental health?

*Now in relation to LIME...*

3. In your opinion, what are the aims and objectives of LIME in general, and of the Pathways project in particular?
4. How did you get involved with LIME?
5. Which projects are you involved in and what is your role in each project?
  - a) Project 1: NAME
  - b) Project 2: NAME

*I need to ask you some questions about each project in turn*

6. PROJECT: NAME
  - a) Describe the project in terms of the sorts of artistic activities, access to materials, where it took place etc.
  - b) Who are the participants?
  - c) How did they know about the project?
  - d) Describe the aims and objectives of the project.
  - e) How have you tried to achieve the project aims and objectives?
  - f) What do you think the participants expected from the project?
  - g) What do you think the participants have got out of the project?
  - h) What worked well within the project and why?
  - i) What problems were encountered and why?
  - j) What do you think it was about the artistic process that helped or hindered the participants in terms of their mental health?
  - k) In your opinion, what were the main outcomes of the project for you, for the participants and for LIME?
  - l) If you were to run the project again, what would make it better?

*Finally, your comments*

8. Let me know anything that you think is relevant to the LIME Pathways evaluation or any questions you think I should have asked but haven't.

Thanks for this - can you try to answer as fully as possible and then I'll send more questions, but based on what you tell me in response to this message.

### **LIME Pathways Evaluation Reflexive Diary/Analysis**

Please write about your personal experiences of the project: and the role you feel you have played in linking art and mental health within the project. The sorts of things to consider in this respect are:

- what went well, what was problematic, why and how;
- write about your feelings, your frustrations as a person and as an artist;
- explain what sorts of artistic processes were going on in the project and how they link (or not) to the mental health of the participants;
- what did the participants tell you about their experiences;
- characterise the atmosphere in the sessions;
- anything else you think might be useful.

The more you write, the better will be the evaluation of the project so please be as honest and detailed as possible.

**PROJECT NAME:**

### **Focus Group Schedule (Artists and Researchers)**

1. Understanding mental health
2. The relationship between art and mental health
3. The workshops: opportunities and constraints
4. Personal journeys: pathways out of and into...
5. Dealing with complex situations
6. Organisational and support issues
7. Expectations of evaluation
8. Moving evaluation forward

**Women's Refuge Questionnaire**  
**Designed by Jessica Bockler**

1. What have you liked about the Pathways project?
2. How have you benefited from the Pathways project? What have you got out of it?
3. Why did you like it? Did you feel better in mood/enjoy having a good chat/socializing/meeting and getting to know people?
4. How did it make you feel doing arts and crafts and drama?
5. How do you think your children benefited from the sessions?

**a) Written Accounts**

What does art (writing, painting, photography etc) mean for you in your life?

Art makes me feel...

**b) Graffiti Boards**

*Beginning of workshop:*

Right now I feel...

*End of workshop*

Right now I feel...

When I am writing (painting etc)...

## Appendix 6: Tree People data

Workshop	Before	After	Impact
Tree of Life	Sleepy	Fit	
	Not very good now	Happy today	
	Feeling rushed	Trying to get to the top but not as quick	
	Need a helping hand	Chilled	
	I am not really happy today	Relaxed	
	Feeling restless	Relaxed	
	I feel down because I have not got any friends still and I am a spinster still. There is no-one that I can talk to at the moment. I am going to be on my own until the day I die. I am so alone.	I am cold me again	
	I am not really happy today	I feel a bit happier now	
	Physically tired	Happy, pleased with myself	
	Happy, I feel like my old self	Enjoyed learning something new	
	Sleepy	Awake	
	Tired	Pleased with my image, 'Wales Waterfall'	
	Happy to observe	Joined in, pleased	
	Wobbly	In pain	
	Not very happy	I am OK here	
	Climbing, stabbing pain	Happy but still because of the pain	
Down	No change		
Not very happy, knackered	Not very happy but more energy		

## **LIME Pathways Evaluation Project**

### **Information Sheet for Participants in Artistic Activities**

The LIME Pathways project is a programme of artistic activity centred on mental health and well-being in community settings. It focuses on areas with high incidences of ill health and artists work with local people to find creative ways of overcoming emotional difficulties and the daily stresses associated with ill-health. It is extremely important to understand the ways in which artistic activity is linked to mental health so that future art programmes for mental health can be as effective as possible and help to improve quality of life. To do this, the current evaluation seeks information from all people concerned with the programme such as artists and community participants in the artistic activities to find out the best ways to organize such programmes in the future.

As you have been a participant in the artistic activities, I would like to ask you to take part in this evaluation. The sorts of information needed for the evaluation includes your thoughts on how effective the programme has been and your feelings and experiences about art and mental health. In addition, some information about you and your health may be required.

This information will be collected in either written form or in talks with the evaluation researcher. However, anything you tell will be made completely anonymous. This means that what you say will be an important part of the project, but no-one other than the evaluation researchers will know that you said it. You can decide to withdraw your help from the project at any time you want (without having to offer any explanations), and your participation in any further art projects will not be affected in any way.

Once we have all the information required, we will write a report for LIME on the evaluation findings. Please let the researcher know if you would like an overview of these findings. If you need any further information about the evaluation, or if you would like to discuss any of the issues involved then please get in touch with:

Judith Sixsmith  
Department of Psychology and Speech Pathology  
Elizabeth Gaskell Campus  
Manchester Metropolitan University  
Hathersage Road  
Manchester

Telephone 0161 247 2545

*Thank you for your help*





# Pathways<sup>®</sup> Project Evaluation Final Report

Judith Sixsmith and Carolyn Kagan

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