



CASE STUDY: SHAPING AND INFLUENCING RESEARCH THROUGH THE ADOPTION OF 'PARTICIPATORY ARTS' ('HANDS-ON' ARTS INVOLVEMENT FROM THE PUBLIC) APPROACHES TO REFLECT LIVED EXPERIENCES WITH COMMUNITIES

ARC NWC Theme: Equitable Place Based Health and Care
Project: 'Participatory arts', 'hands-on' arts involvement from the public (PAIR).

KEY AIMS

- Increase meaningful involvement of seldom heard groups in health and care research.
- Use participatory arts (theatre, storytelling, music, film) to reflect real lived experiences.
- Build a collaborative regional infrastructure ('hubs') linking researchers, NHS, community groups, and creative partners.
- Ensure research priorities are shaped by communities and reflect their needs.
- Improve how research findings are shared through creative, accessible formats made with communities.
- Strengthen relationships with voluntary and community sector organisations.
- Develop a more diverse research workforce by involving creative arts and community organisations as equal research partners.
- Explore how participatory arts can be used across all stages of research, from priority setting to dissemination.
- Identify barriers to wider adoption of the model and prepare for a larger NIHR Programme Grant.
- Generate early learning to shape future evaluation of the approach's impact.

BACKGROUND

It is unclear how the public are involved in creating and using arts-based approaches and what the evidence base is of effectiveness of participatory arts supporting applied research. This innovative project aims to better understand how these approaches can be used across all research stages - from naming problems or concerns (priority setting), to design, planning, and delivering research and sharing findings and learning to make research more accessible for communities currently underrepresented within health and social care.

The team behind the PAIR project come from different disciplines within Health, Social Care, Education, Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) and the Arts.

Pennine Care NHS Foundation Trust are the host organisation with co-lead PIs from University of Manchester and Made by Mortals, a creative arts organisation based in Greater Manchester. Other members of the research team include Lancaster University, Applied Research Collaboration North West Coast, Applied Research Collaboration Greater Manchester and the Research Support Service.

IMPACT

There should be direct benefit to people and their communities from being involved in research. Bringing 'participatory arts' ('hands-on' arts involvement from the public) to health and care research can 'bring people's experiences to life', to shape and influence research. It can offer opportunities to share and create experiences. Although participatory arts have been used in research by different means; for example, music, theatre, film, and storytelling, the breadth and nature of these approaches and their potential influence is unclear.

The Participatory Arts in Health and Care Research (PAIR) project aims to better involve the lived experience of seldom heard groups in research with the help of £125,000 from The National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) for a Programme Delivery Grant.

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ARC NWC Theme:

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Project: PAIR

IMPACT CONTINUED

The aim of this development work chime with the NIHR Agenda for Action on promoting inclusion in public partnerships and will support a joined-up infrastructure ('hubs') by building a consortium to strengthen relationships with community organisations and groups; set priorities that reflect the needs of communities; improve dissemination to study participants and underserved communities, through creative, innovative approaches; and develop a more diverse research workforce, by extending health and care research into creative arts organisations and community groups working with underserved populations as partners.

Collectively, the stakeholders (including several elements of NIHR infrastructure) believe it is possible that researchers, practitioners, commissioners, policymakers, and underrepresented communities, can co-produce a research project on an equitable and recognisably mutually beneficial basis.

The community groups supported by stakeholders in the project (via Made by Mortals) hold knowledge in the form of lived experience that can make a substantial impact on helping others through research. These groups want to use their experience and creativity to inform and challenge local and national health and social care policy, strategy, and practice.

Ultimately, this research will help ensure that there is a direct benefit to people and their communities from being involved in research utilising participatory arts. Made By Mortals approach is to present the opportunity to strengthen the health and wellbeing of the communities they are aiming to serve through the research process itself. They also get lots more imaginative and creative ways to communicate their research findings - in films, audio, theatre, and workshops - made by the communities the research is aimed at and in their authentic voices.

The research team are pleased to be involving local voluntary sector partners in this project from Lancaster, Blackpool, Burnley, and Tameside. They are engaging with fellow researchers across Lancaster University who might be interested in exploring the value, benefits, and fun that creative, participatory methods can bring to their public involvement and engagement activities.

NEXT STEPS

This development project is intended to extend the participatory arts approach, both geographically across the North West region and into other populations/service settings. The intention is to prepare for a fuller Programme Grant application by considering the barriers to adopting this participatory arts model on this wider footing and also develop proposals for robustly evaluating its impact, as such evidence is lacking at the moment.

The creative community model being adopted aims to bring together multiple approaches - including immersive audio, films, and music theatre shows to create public dialogue that genuinely involves co-production between different stakeholder groups, rather than being directed solely by researchers or policy makers.

The project aligns across the NIHR infrastructure (ARC, RSS) in both Greater Manchester and the North West Coast, as well as the Public Patient and Community networks so has wide point of reference for developing ideas and progressing the embedding of participatory approaches. Through a series of workshops and communication and dissemination pieces there will be opportunities for stakeholders involved or interested in health and care research to learn more about how the model can be deployed within their specialities. We are currently discussing ways of mainstreaming participatory approaches in Cumbria through our work with local partners on economic inactivity and eliciting the voice of those groups stigmatised by being out of work.