

INTRODUCING

'On the Edge of Art'

No barriers, simply opportunity!

Introduction

'On the edge of Art' addresses the barriers and perceptions in society that people with a physical or mental health challenge often face when attempting to promote their creativity or follow their creative aspirations and passion.

Through a broad based inclusive programme we will continue to bring artists together, no matter what their challenge or circumstance, in a cohesive and inclusive celebration of community spirit.

This will culminate each year in an annual arts festival/exhibition called 'Engage in the Arts' that will be held at The Birmingham Contemporary Art Gallery.

Partners on the Programme

In collaboration with The Birmingham Contemporary Art Gallery will be People Matters Network who, through their on-line community Birmingham We Are, is building one of the most inclusive, digitally accessible art and culture trails ever created by any city. This initiative is bringing together creatives from across local communities by providing a safe digital space for people to follow their creative passion.

The on-line communities established by People Matters Network are followed by over 100,000 people across the UK, many of whom face mental health challenges and the platform has become a positive outlet and a form of 'medicine' for their wellbeing.

Through this partnership, a mix of digital and traditional engagement will be organised through our monthly "Inspire" social networking events that will be used to bring creatives together.

A further partner on the programme is Birmingham Mind, the largest independent mental health charity providing mental health support both in and outside the city. Birmingham Mind promotes wellbeing and recovery services by providing high quality support and actively challenges the stigma of mental distress. As a partner of The BCAG, Birmingham Mind will offer practical and emotional support to people on the programme.

Working side by side (practically and digitally) we will help individuals achieve their creative potential, while continuing to break down the barriers often faced by people that prevent them from accessing certain opportunities.

Working alongside the programme, emerging and established artists will act as mentors to those with creative aspirations.

We will be delivering practical and emotional support to artists through workshops, mentoring sessions, coaching and, as appropriate, one on one or group therapy sessions.

Target audience of the Programme

The programme will focus on emerging artists who are either self-taught or have little or no formal academic training in the arts. These people are artistically talented and are looking to pursue a career in the arts.

It is widely recognised that it is incredibly difficult for non-established and emerging artists to get their work seen through traditional channels, and even more difficult for those who lack support due to their individual circumstances which may include social, economic, environmental, physical or mental health challenges.

The programme will capture individual artists' stories and document their creative journeys.

Specifics of the Programme

Once every two weeks, artists from across different communities will come together to work on individual and collaborative projects in an inspiring workspace at the gallery.

They will be able to take part in a variety of workshops covering many topics such as how to present a professional portfolio, how to prepare a canvas for painting and the business side of the arts which will include pricing, marketing and sales skills.

Emphasis will be placed on supporting the artists' mental health needs and our partner Birmingham Mind will be pivotal in working with us to deliver co-ordinated one to one guidance as well as group sessions.

All of this will be complemented with monthly social networking events called 'Inspire' evenings, bringing participants together with other professional artists to share experiences, support each other and collaborate using the gallery space as a central hub.

An inclusive, collaborative and well supported digital platform involving different community groups will allow creatives who feel artistically isolated and lack the academic and social opportunities to be able to fulfil their creative potential.

Why is this different?

A common complaint about art galleries and art institutions is that they can appear pretentious, too exclusive and fail to showcase diversity in the arts.

This programme is completely inclusive and transparent in order to appeal to a wide audience who wouldn't normally be inspired to get involved in a community arts initiative. The BCAG has already made a name for itself as a welcoming and inclusive space that encourages people from all backgrounds to visit and this programme goes one step further.

The hub for the programme is The Birmingham Contemporary Art Gallery at No.5 Arena Birmingham. However, the programme will work closely with other art galleries and local community groups and by sharing digitally accessible and downloadable content, neighbourhoods will be able to deliver their own workshops locally.

Capacity and funding

The initiative can be as large as funds permit.

Individual programmes will accommodate a maximum of 24 participants each year. Each programme will be guided by a 12-week research and consultation phase to be completed by our community engagement team operating within and across neighbourhoods.

The cost of taking a creative through a 12 month programme is £5,000 each or £120,000 for 24 participants.

The initial areas being covered include Hockley, South Side, Dudley Rd, Smethwick, Ladywood, Bearwood, Aston, Handsworth, Nechells, Erdington, Stirchley, and Kings Heath.

Programme lead

Leading the initiative is Albert Wallace who has worked in and managed several residential establishments over 19 years, specialising in support services for vulnerable young people often facing complex mental health needs, associated learning difficulties and challenging behaviours.

Albert has also worked alongside various low-income community groups associated with young people in accessing help through community engagement programmes.

His values are guided by the Social Model of Disabilities and working with qualified art therapists and with Birmingham Mind, Albert has developed a model to support creatives with physical limitations as well as providing mental and emotional support for participants who require it.

An important aspect of this process is the support network which will enable the participants to join larger creative groups and organisations where they will be able to meet and socialise with other creatives.

Albert Wallace has formal training and a keen understanding of the Health and Safety Act 1974, the First Aid at Work Regulations 1981 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999. This also includes safeguarding and protecting vulnerable people and every programme will follow and cover all national safeguarding guidelines ranging from arrangements of interviews and background checks on all volunteers, mentors, therapists and consultants.

For more information about the Programme, contact:

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