

paintings in hospitals



Who we are
What we do
Why it matters



Quentin Blake, *Life Under Water 4, 5 and 6*, 2009. © the artist. Part of our Art for Children and Young People loan scheme.

Who we are

We were founded in 1959 by Sheridan Russell, Almoner at the National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery. Sheridan had been exhibiting works by contemporary artists in waiting rooms, corridors and wards and began to understand the positive contribution that art could have on people's health and wellbeing.

With the help of the Nuffield Foundation, Sheridan set out to create a unique art collection: one containing artworks chosen specifically to comfort and support patients and carers alike. Through the following decades, with the aid of Sir Dennis Proctor, former Chairman of the Tate Gallery; Roger de Grey, former President of the Royal

Academy and many other patrons, trustees and supporters, our art collection and our charity's impact grew.

Sheridan was passionate that *everyone* should experience the therapeutic benefits of art and in the 1980s we began to develop a regional network enabling care sites outside of London to access our collection.

Today we work across England, Wales and Northern Ireland and care for a diverse collection of over 3,800 artworks. As well as four distinct artwork loan schemes, we now bring engagement activities, art projects and creative workshops to patients, service users and carers.

What we do

We use art to relieve sickness, anxiety and stress in health and social care sites across the UK. Every year we bring comfort, enjoyment and reassurance to nearly two million people through our engagement activities and loans of artworks from our unique collection.

Our work helps to create calming, restful, and engaging environments that nurture and support service users of all ages and backgrounds.

Art loans and displays

We make it easy to borrow artworks from our collection and to take part in our engagement projects. We fundraise to heavily subsidise the cost of loans to ensure that they are affordable and only ask borrowers to contribute a small amount to help us with the remaining costs.

We help care sites through the process of choosing, transporting and handling artworks. Our experience of working across a wide range of health and social care settings allows us to help sites to choose the art that best suits the needs of their service users.

We work across all areas of health and social care, including hospitals, hospices, care homes, GP surgeries, alternative therapy centres and special needs schools. Our work helps the public to get more from the local care facilities they use.

Art collection

Our collection has over 3,800 diverse artworks. These are not just paintings but also drawings, prints, textiles, photographs, sculptures and animations. Over 2,000 artists are represented, including Josef Albers, Gillian Ayres, Ian Davenport, Andy Warhol, Wilhelmina Barns-Graham, Elizabeth Blackadder, Mary Webb, Patrick Hughes, Quentin Blake, Helen Chadwick, Catherine Yass, Ben Rivers and Sonia Boyce.

‘The object and colour in the materials around us actually have a physical effect on us, on how we feel’

Florence Nightingale

Engagement projects

Our artist residencies, tours, creative workshops, and other engagement projects are designed to enable people to experience the therapeutic benefits of art and creativity. We regularly evaluate the impact of our work and share the results via our website, social media and blogs.

Partnerships and collaborations

We have working relationships with many national and regional museums, including the V&A, Arts Council Collection, Hayward Touring, and the London Transport Museum. Artworks from their collections can be seen alongside our own. Partnerships also allow us to deliver outreach activities such as talks, exhibitions and artist residencies to enable those disadvantaged by age or ill health to experience great art.

Why it matters

Our surroundings have a huge impact on the way we feel. Whether it is a GP surgery, hospital ward, or care home, we will all find ourselves within a health or social care setting at a point in our lives

Stark clinical environments can be unwelcoming and frightening places with little to offer in reassurance, distraction or comfort. But, thankfully, visual arts can humanise these settings, transforming them into uplifting, calming and supportive public spaces.

Recent studies and our own evaluations have proven that engagement in the arts can dramatically improve wellbeing for both patients and carers. In our engagement project, *Interact*, our work was found to have:

- increased levels of joy and pride in service users,
- increased levels of wellness and happiness in service users.

A Study of the Effects of Visual and Performing Arts in Healthcare by Chelsea and Westminster Hospital (2004) also showed that placing art in care environments can:

- reduce overall levels of anxiety, stress and depression in patients;
- shorten patients' lengths of stay within the hospital;
- lower the amount of pain medication needed by patients;
- increase staff morale and staff retention.

'A picture in A&E called *Beach Scene* takes me to a different place.

I thought you should know that your work not only helps the ill get better, it helps the well stay well'

Police Officer, North Wales



Martha Theos, *Jewels in Bird and Plane in a Fish, 1992*. © the artist. Part of our Art for Everyone loan scheme.

Our people

We would like to thank our trustees, staff, volunteers, artists, and health and social care partners who work with us to create more inspiring, interesting, and stress-free environments for all those in health and social care.

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