

projectart works

1. ABOUT US

Based in Hastings, the organisation is the UK's leading artist led organisation working with people we describe as having complex needs. Project Art Works is a National Portfolio organisation for the Arts Council and delivers intensive programmes in-house through PROPEL and with National organisation across the country with EXPLORERS.

Our definition of Complex Needs

The term 'complex needs' embraces a number of neurodiverse states of being such as severe learning disability and/or autism and/or cognitive impairments and/or behaviours described as challenging that combine to produce multiple and intersecting support needs. Sometimes these are also combined with complex physical needs as well. People with learning disabilities and behaviours that challenge are some of the most excluded in society. This is because they are very often dependent on carers and agencies for access to the wider world and experiences such as art and culture.

Art and Change

In a social and political landscape that is constantly shifting, our work seeks to address areas of need as they occur. Our artistic approach is as much about our ability to affect positive change in society as it is to produce artefacts. This is infinitely interesting territory. It holds our attention and propels us continually to shape new approaches to art and collaboration.

Inclusive Practice

Holistic and personalised approaches are central to enabling people who have complex needs to achieve quality of life. Nothing should happen in isolation. If someone needs support to live well it is important to work with all those who love and support them as well as the professionals involved in decisions that may impact on their lives.

Through art we explore the potential of people with complex needs and those that support them and try to positively impact on the overall quality of their lives. Our activities include 1:1 workshops, group participatory workshops, professional development, support for whole families, advocacy and advice and interventions that improve quality in care and support. We also produce temporary exhibitions that reveal the abilities of our artist/makers and organise loans of their works to businesses. We have built partnerships with people with complex needs, their families, support workers, care providers, statutory agencies and galleries across the UK. These partnerships inform our programmes and reveal gaps in knowledge that we try to address through projects, forums, films, productions and articles.

Participatory Programmes

PROPEL

Propel is a three-year programme of specialist in-house studio provision in Hastings and Peer support for new and existing participants with complex needs and their families. Different days in the week offer activities targeted to best address different individuals' needs.

Tuesday

The Tuesday Accelerate Studios is a creative studio programme for adults with complex needs, including those with profound and multiple needs. An experienced artist team support the workshops to facilitate choice and exploration through art. Within the studio, the artist team create changing installations and sensory environments to engage participants in collaborative and individual creative journeys.

Wednesday

Project Art Works' **Supported Studios** enable adults with complex needs to develop their creative practice alongside an Artist Mentor and explore their potential as artists.

We have created a studio setting where a diverse cohort of individuals, with the support of their family and key people in their lives, can further their learning and take more control over their own trajectory as artists. The studio promotes a group ethos, with participants' developing their personal practice and adaptive skills whilst supporting and encouraging their peers.

Thursday & Friday

Parachute ACTIVATE is a project for people in need of positive and creative solutions to particular periods of transition in their lives. The project offers a wide range of high quality materials and equipment, which the participants are encouraged to use them in exciting and expansive ways.

The project is facilitated by two experienced artists and a trained support worker. The artists and support worker have training in techniques such as Positive Behaviour Support, Person Centred Active Support and Total Communication.

Art Breaks

Art Breaks is a project that focuses on children and young people with complex needs, alongside their parents, carers and non-learning disabled peers. It offers a series of high quality creative workshops giving children the opportunity to work in collaboration with a team of highly skilled professional artists and experience art as a tool for exploration, communication and self-expression.

Art Breaks workshops run during school holidays and weekends and are delivered at our studio base in Hastings and regional venues within Sussex.

Peer Support Network

The Peer Support Network brings together people who have complex support needs, families, carers, support workers, commissioners and providers to share their knowledge and experience. The Network is an initiative developed in direct response to a need articulated by the individuals and families we work with.

Each forum explores the lived experience of disability, celebrating best practice and also working constructively with providers to identify and find solutions to gaps in services, information and provision. Network members are encouraged to work together to achieve successful personalised pathways for the people they care for and support. Recent workshops and forums have focused on Continuing Healthcare eligibility and reviews and how to recruit, train, manage and retain skilled support workers.

Explorers: Illuminating the Wilderness

EXPLORERS is a three-year programme of collaborative work with 12 national and international cultural partners. It will deliver six co-commission exhibitions and installations across the UK and internationally, to form a festival of cultural inclusion in 2019.

The EXPLORERS programme will positively increase public, artists' and arts professionals' awareness of the extraordinary contribution people with complex needs can make to mainstream culture and will position them as leaders.

The co-commission process begins with a series of Awareness and Encounter Days. These involves working across whole staff teams, exploring terminology, communication and expectation. These events connect with the social care sector, and directly with people with complex needs. Staff teams and participants get time to observe one another, develop relationships and find creative moments in inclusive and friendly environments.

The inherent awareness raising and discourses in EXPLORERS will open up greater understanding of the relevance to art and culture of diverse states of being. Different ways of perceiving and interacting with the world provide rich territories for creative programming and new art.

Partners include:

- Tate Liverpool
- MK Gallery
- Autograph ABP
- Fabrica
- Photoworks
- De La Warr Pavilion
- UNSW, National Institute for Experimental Arts, Sydney, Australia
- The Forestry Commission
- Artsworld SE Bridge
- Hastings Borough Council
- East Sussex County Council

Visit the Explorers Website at [**explorersproject.com**](http://explorersproject.com)