MUTUAL RECOVERY THROUGH COMMUNITIES OF CREATIVE CONNECTION

The roles of adult community learning and community arts initiatives

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Overview

The study is concerned with creative practices and mental health and well-being. The focus of the research is how these practices can help create shared spaces for learning, creativity and social support in order to promote people’s well-being and recovery for those who have experienced mental health difficulties. We are referring to this as ‘mutual recovery’.

The study is focusing on adult community learning (ACL) and community arts settings. It is part of a consortium research programme: Creative Practice as Mutual Recovery: Connecting Communities for Mental Health and Well-being, led by Professor Paul Crawford at the University of Nottingham.

Aim:

To explore mutuality in creative ACL and community arts settings, how this can impact mental health and wellbeing for a range of people involved, and how the goals of mutuality, wellbeing and mental health recovery affect wider educational goals and traditions in adult community learning.

Policy context

- Mental health is a pressing social policy and public concern.
- Heightening concerns about the well-being of carers in the UK.
- Need to support mental health and adult education practitioners.
- Growing public scepticism about mental health services and clear opportunities for rethinking the nature of public provision in this field.
- On-going need to demonstrate the wider benefits of learning, beyond a solely economic agenda.
- Documented potential of ACL and community arts for supporting well-being and promoting mental health recovery.
- Using arts and educational provision for therapeutic aims and the effects of aligning this provision with a mental health and well-being agenda require critical exploration.

Partnerships and methods

The research is being conducted in partnership with the Workers’ Educational Association (a third sector adult community learning charity) and two London-based community arts projects. Research methods include participant observation, qualitative interviews and focus groups.

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