

## Summary of qualitative research undertaken at Start in 1989

### EXTRACTS FROM:

### *A Tentative Start: Evaluation of Alternative Forms of Care for Chronic Users of Psychiatric Services.*

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#### ABSTRACT

**Objective** - To assess the effects on the established psychiatric services of a new form of care for patients with long term disorders.

**Design** - Case note survey of change of utilisation of services.

**Setting** - An arts based service part funded by Central Manchester Health District operating within the community.

**Subjects** - 26 patients from Central Manchester who had been long term users of the psychiatric services.

**Results** - Once engaged in the new service there is significant reduction in the use of the in patient and day hospital facilities. Additionally, patients are referred to fewer health professionals possibly reflecting an improvement in their psychiatric status.

**Conclusion** - Artists working within the mental health field have significantly altered the utilisation of services for chronic patients. This has had the effect of freeing much needed resources and, anecdotally at least, improving quality of life.

#### DISCUSSION

The study did not give us any information on patients who were referred to the service but who did not attend, nor did it provide any data on customer satisfaction. However the reduction in the use of day hospital and inpatient services by these people once they attended START is an interesting finding and indicates that the development of this popular arts based service may have freed places in our heavily utilised day hospital and inpatient services. This has supported the day hospital's current policy to focus upon acute illnesses and allowed extra places to be available for those who required care in these medical settings. Our results also suggest that the provision of this form of day care may also have a role in reducing the risk of relapse of an illness episode requiring admission to hospital.

Despite its limitations, this brief audit appears to show that the development of services specifically for the chronically mentally ill can result in a gain of resources elsewhere in the system. This must represent a considerable benefit and cannot be ignored by managers of services for

these types of patients. Additionally it appears that these types of people gain a lot of personal benefit and much prefer it to long term care in hospital settings.

**UTILISATION OF SERVICES IN THE 100 WEEKS BEFORE AND AFTER  
COMMENCING START**

**(MEDIANS AND 95% CONFIDENCE LIMITS)**

	Before	After	Change
No. out-patient appointments	8.1 (5.5 to 11.2)	7.9 (5.5 to 10.5)	0.3 (-2.5 to 3.5)
Total weeks at day hospital	25 (12 to 43)	0 (0 to 0)	25 (12 to 43)
Total weeks as in-patient	8.0 (12 to 12)	0 (0 to 0)	6.8 (12 to 12)
No. referrals to other professionals	6.0 (4.5 to 7.5)	0.4 (0 to 1)	5.3 (3.6 to 6.5)

**REFERENCES**

Bridges K, Brown L

Psychiatric patients work alongside artists on the prize winning project.

British Medical Journal 1989; 299:532