



ARTLINK INTRODUCTORY DESCRIPTION

- Artlink believes that participation in the arts has a vital role to play in realising personal goals and encouraging positive change in the lives of disabled people and those who care for them. Artlink's approach is unique, our depth of experience in this field, our ability to adapt and respond, to question and learn, forms the bedrock of all of our work and establishes us as a leader in this field.
- Artlink has a 30-year history of directly engaging with disabled people which shapes contemporary arts practices within health and social care. Over the years Artlink has built trust within each of the communities we work in and gained insight into the pressures experienced by these communities. We have a clear understanding of the negative impact of the shifts in social and health care policy on people with long term support needs and especially those with ongoing complex care needs.
- To help navigate this ever-changing landscape Artlink works with participants and artists to devise flexible responses. We establish new forms of collaborations between disabled people, artists, families and carers within the arts. Often we value process over product, investigating how the arts can give voice where none has existed before and work across sectors to encourage new perspectives and bring about change.
- Artlink is committed to celebrating difference and, through bringing people together from many different backgrounds, to enhance ways of working within health and social care. As a result we have established a reputation for innovative practice, both at home and abroad.

ARTLINK AIMS

- Supports the right for all to participate in cultural life regardless of ability, supporting progressive opportunities for cultural involvement.
- Draws on lived experiences to inform a collaborative arts practice that is both relevant and enduring.
- Challenges every day inequalities by encouraging creative thinking within health and social care that offers positive solutions to what are often complex situations.

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Artlink Edinburgh & the Lothians is
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with Charitable status.
Scottish Charity No. SC006845



Edinburgh & Lothians
Health Foundation



- Learns through open dialogue; developing discourse that creatively merges the experience and knowledge of the individual, artist, scientist, care worker, and the family member, and informs wider health and social care practice.
- Pioneers collaborations between individuals, artist and institutions nationally and internationally; providing opportunities to experiment and innovate which foster social progress.

EXAMPLES OF ITS WORK

Through forging long term strategic partnerships across culture, health and social care we have been able to achieve a long term collaborative approach with disabled people, their families and wider supports. These dynamic relationships have shaped imaginative responses to tricky day-to-day problems. Highlights of this work are:

- [Arts Access](#) links between people who want to discover and enjoy the arts in Edinburgh. Our members go to a wide variety of events at theatres, galleries, museums, cinemas, historic buildings, sculpture parks. We do our best to ensure that the trickiest part of an Arts Access outing is choosing where to go. We provide 'What's On' information to help with decision making, and then we book tickets, match members with volunteers who would like to accompany them and organise transport. It's a door to door service, and it is important to us that both volunteers and members enjoy their experience.
- [Socialites](#) provides bespoke activities for young people with learning disabilities and autism who find it hard to fit into the mainstream. Each project works with the very specific interests of the young person and uses it to introduce new experiences and make likings to the wider community
- The [Ideas Team](#) an experimental programme which develops new contemporary arts practices shaped by the interests and lived experiences of people with profound learning disabilities. This project is the first of its kind and will culminate in an exhibition of art works informed by people with complex disabilities, made by artists which challenges presumptions of ability, access and hierarchy.
- [Ever Present Past](#) worked with established artists from the UK and USA in a series of collaborations with patients and the community, to mark the bi-centenary of the Royal Edinburgh Hospital and mental health care in Lothian. The project explored the history of the Hospital through a series of talks, events and workshops and artist placements throughout 2013 – the Hospital's bi-centenary

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year. The programme culminated in a public exhibition at the [Talbot Rice Gallery](#) from 16th November 2013 to 15th February 2014

- [Curious Routes](#) testing practice which connects the creative skills of individuals with mental health problems to people and organisations who share a common interest. This has led to exhibitions at ECA, working with Scottish Bee Keepers for the Royal Highland Show to developing community groups for people, isolated in their communities.
- [Investigate Create](#) which brings disabled audiences and artists together to develop innovative, accessible projects which look to influence long term programming in theatres and art venues.
- [KMA dot com](#) For the past few years, the members of KMA dot com have been devising a way of working together that challenges them to reconsider their roles in making art. The 13 members meet twice a week in a studio in Midlothian. The workshops strive to find ways to include all members, whether they are feeling quiet, industrious or playful. The group's working practice is based on finding different ways of making artworks together, finding a common language, based on actions and not words.
- To draw attention to an issue we have worked with well known authors to create an imaginative series of [essays](#) and [short stories](#) exploring fiction as a way to describe real life experience. These short stories have covered topics from the perspective of a young person whose parents have schizophrenia, to a parent of a person with complex disabilities to a young mans experience of the PIP assessment.

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