



**The Queen's Award  
for Voluntary Service**

*The MBE for volunteer groups*



**Borderland Voices: Arts  
for Health & Mental Wellbeing**

## **Borderland Voices reaches its 21<sup>st</sup> birthday**

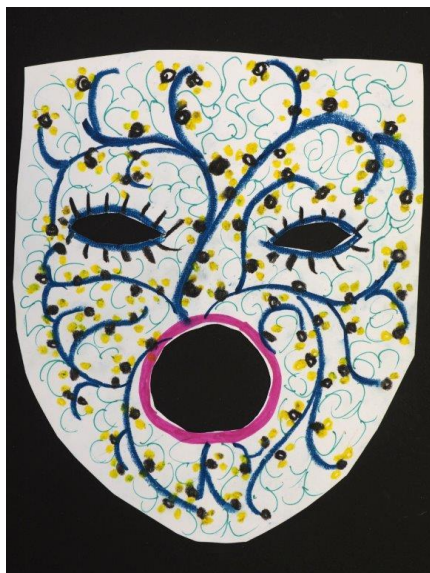


*Our gallant abseiling fundraisers – Jaz, Richard & Zuleika, centre, & families*

**Borderland Voices Annual Report, 2018-19**

## **Introduction and executive summary, Andy Collins, Coordinator**

As our Leek-based micro charity reached its 21<sup>st</sup> birthday milestone this year, we continue to focus on Borderland Voices' (BV) key strengths: delivering weekly, free, professionally-led workshops in a range of arts media to support health & mental well-being. But in these days of financial austerity, it's both increasingly difficult to obtain large grants & correspondingly hard to piece together enough in small grants & donations to cover our outgoings. Both statutory cutbacks & steadily increasing demand for our services are highlighted by a generous gift of arts materials from the Ashcombe Centre, Cheddleton. The Community Mental Health Team based there no longer have staff to deliver any arts-based activities.



***Mask making with Cassie***

***working with university student Cassie.*** They 'mothered' her, increasing her confidence & ability, while Cassie encouraged some very creative work. Although mentoring took up some of my time, her voluntary input did save us money.

BV's small group of volunteers is essential to our smooth running & in this category I include both our trustees & our participants themselves. The former support me in all manner of ways, from attending

Although funding is a challenge, the value of arts for mental well-being is increasingly recognised nationally & internationally. The growth of Social Prescribing/Arts on Prescription is a particular expression of this. If we can keep BV going until Social Prescribing comes to N Staffs (it is just starting in the S of the county) we should be well placed to offer a service. I just hope we are paid for it.

Our talented & dedicated professional artists never fail to inspire participants, who this year also had the pleasure of



***Margaret & Andy centre & a selection of guests at the official opening of our new premises***



meetings on my behalf to offering advice & guidance. The latter form a mutual support network which contributes almost as much as the art sessions to the value of BV.

Thanks to our SW Peak grant & other generous support, we visited the glorious Staffordshire Moorlands several times in one of the hottest summers many can remember. Nothing could quite match receiving the Queen's Award, but ***the official opening of our Bank House premises*** was a packed & joyous event.

We experimented this year with 2 additions to our service. Therapeutic colouring (2 sessions per month, 1 afternoon, 1 evening, offering intricately pre-printed sheets for those who find a blank sheet of paper daunting) was unsuccessful. The new self-help Thursday morning art group, on the other hand, is now a regular fixture. 5 or 6 proficient artists meet weekly, bringing their own materials, helping one another as needed & contributing £2/session (like Patchwork).

As coordinator, a large part of my role is applying for funding & subsequently justifying what we achieve if we're successful. Understandably, the amount of evidence required has increased over the years. I completed the final reports on our Silver Service Award & People's Power Fund money. These were as nothing, however, compared with assembling paperwork to claim our South West Peak grant in arrears.

While Richard & Zuleika's sponsored abseil raised both funds & awareness, our ***involvement in the 'Gawain in Leek' festival*** not only raised awareness but also offered BV participants, Leek College students & the public a chance to learn a new painting technique from international artist Sue Prince – just one of the outreach activities funded by our SW Peak grant.

We impact participants' lives in many ways. Here are just a few (more below) of the things that matter to them about BV: 'Unquestioning acceptance that people may, or may not, have mental health issues, without needing to elaborate'; 'It's as though I'm a different person: until I



***Clive tells the story; Sue (R) holds one of the 4 painted panels***



***Model theatre, made with Cassie***

discovered BV I hated myself, my life & all my mistakes'; 'It's essential to my wellbeing that I recognise my own self-worth & can contribute something of value'; 'When I'm here, I'm happy; it's taught me how to write & paint & provides me with a place to play'; 'I've become strong enough with group feedback to 'take it or leave it' without resentment, making me more assertive outside this intimate group'; 'It keeps my mind active'; 'When I start from home, I know I'll feel better when I get back'. In other words we counteract stigma, change people's lives by boosting self-esteem & independence & keep minds alert in a safe, happy place.

With apologies to the Dogs Trust, I like the thought that 'BV is for life, not just for Christmas'.

## Our objectives. We:

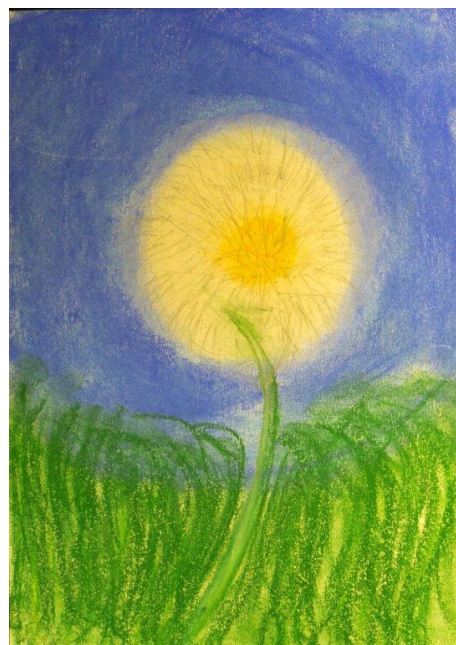
1. Provide weekly, free, enjoyable arts activities, in all forms, to support the health & mental wellbeing of regular participants, in & around the Staffordshire Moorlands;
2. Employ local professional artists to facilitate arts sessions;
3. Encourage participants to socialise & support one another, whether or not they have mental health issues, to help combat stigma;
4. Tackle stigma through displays, exhibitions, public events, publications, media coverage etc. which also raise awareness of our work;
5. Participate in community arts events as funding permits.

## Under each heading, these are our Key Achievements this year:

1. **Weekly, free arts sessions.**



**A selection of BV Patchwork landscape pieces matched with calligraphy by an Onecote group tutored by Sheena**



**Summer meadow**

## ***Yet again, a 'patchwork' of grants has secured our core activities.***

During this financial year, our main funds have come from a South West Peak Landscape Partnership grant (Heritage Lottery) to 31.12.18; the Co-op Local Communities Fund; the efforts of Richard, Zuleika, Jaz (& families) & anchor-man Mark in a sponsored abseil; & a contribution which arrived in 2018 from the residual funds of North Staffs Voice (a mental health advocacy charity which tragically had to close at the end of 2017).

We received other smaller amounts from Leek Town Lands; the High Sherriff's Fund (Humphrey & Judy Scott-Moncrieff); Leek College of Art; Leek Inner Wheel; Maggie & Ken Hunt; the Masons' Staffordshire Provincial Grand Lodge; Leek Rotary Club; Viv Young & Pauline (% of her book royalties).

Meanwhile, Andy has made unsuccessful larger applications to the Postcode Community Trust, (National)



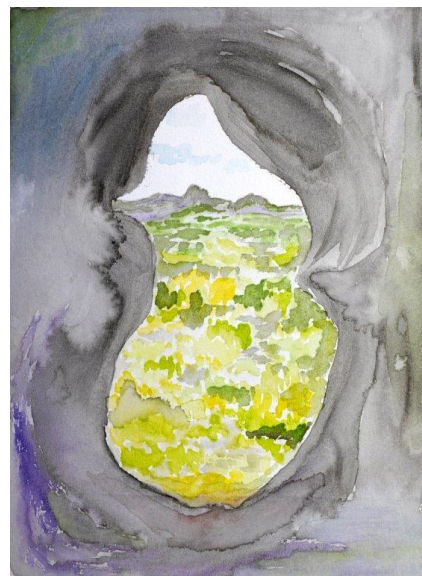
Masonic Charitable Foundation, Woodroffe Benton Foundation & Inman Charitable Trust. In these days of financial austerity, it's both increasingly difficult to obtain large grants & correspondingly hard to piece together enough in small grants & donations to cover outgoings.

## 2. Arts-sector employment.

***We employed 15 professional artists & provided a work placement for a university student.***

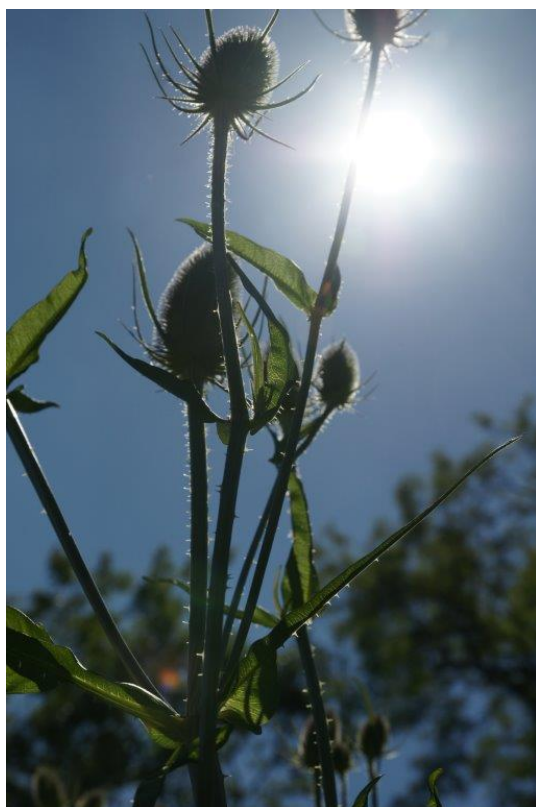
We employed 12 different visual artists, some delivering more than 1 set of workshops. Media included 'kantha' quilts, felt, fabric painting, photography, wax resist, printing, mini-books, watercolour, mini well-dressings, model making & 'shrinkles' (painting on a special plastic which shrinks slightly when baked). Again, much of the work produced was inspired by the SW Peak as part of our Landscape Partnership funding. Having access to professional artists who can offer such a range of skills benefits participants hugely. Three professional writers shared facilitation of the writing group at BV.

In addition, we were most fortunate to have Cassie - a Creative Expressive Therapies student from Derby - with us for 3 months. She led a mix of writing & art sessions, bringing young ideas & a drama-focussed approach. Although Andy had to spend time mentoring her & writing progress reports, Cassie's input saved us on artists' fees in the first 3 months of 2019.



***Watercolour – from Thor's cave***

## 3. Socialisation & peer support.



***High summer, Dove Valley. Photo courtesy Jon***

***Creative sessions & visits buzz with conversation & laughter; people keep in contact during the week & this all reduces feelings of isolation.***

We organised a number of visits, the writing group being particularly blessed. Pam invited them to her 'Stone Caravan' (converted barn) to soak up inspiration from the surrounding moorlands. Leek College of Art extended a repeat invitation to the 'Astound' exhibition in Nicholson Institute plus an opportunity to work with drama students on the theme of 'Stigma'. Finally, they visited Warslow Hall, not normally open to the public.

Both groups enjoyed 3 day visits to the Dove Valley Centre: Elspeth, Paul & Sarah provided the 1<sup>st</sup> gratis to acknowledge our Queen's Award; Buxton Artists' Cooperative Stone & Water funded the 3<sup>rd</sup> & we're enormously grateful to them all for these outings. Such visits greatly enrich the lives & experiences of participants & inspire wonderful writing, art & photography.

Everyone enjoys the traditional Christmas lunch at Tittesworth restaurant which brings together participants, trustees, volunteers & supporters. But to paraphrase the Dogs Trust, 'BV is for life, not just for Christmas': participants attend sessions for both the arts activities & to be part of a caring community. People share fun & laughter but also support one another throughout the year.



**Moorlands Heroes presentation: Nicola, Sheena, Graham Stow, Andy, Liz. (Sentinel image)**

#### 4. Tackling stigma & raising awareness.

***Although we couldn't hope to match our Queen's Award achievement, we were runners up in the Leek Post & Times/Sentinel 'Moorlands Heroes' award & achieved plenty of media coverage, not least for our official opening at Bank House plus Richard & Zuleika's daredevil exploits abseiling off a viaduct on the Monsal Trail.***



**Special features of the SW Peak: BV 'patchwork'**

We increased our calendar print-run to 150 which as ever rapidly disappeared - either sold or distributed as complimentary copies to publicise our work.

To take the message out to a wider public, we helped plan & deliver a Mental Health Awareness Day stall on Leek market, instead of activities in the Foxlowe.

It was 'standing room only' at the official opening of our new premises in Bank House (performed by Cllr Margaret Lovatt). By good fortune, keen gardeners among our participants had tidied the



garden, where people could spread out into the glorious sunshine with a buffet jointly provided by the Co-op, participants & trustees.

Our involvement in 'Measuring the Good' (whereby a mentor helped Andy redesign our feedback process to improve our impact reporting) featured as a case study in a national publication <http://www.cfefficiency.org.uk/programmes/measuring-the-good/>.

Andy regularly attends both Healthwatch & Staffs Moorlands Voluntary, Community & Social Enterprise (VCSE) Forum meetings to network & update other groups on our activities. We also featured in a short video made for Support Staffs 5<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration in Stafford (to which Andy took Cassie on her final day). The sponsored abseil succeeded in raising both funds & awareness, as people stopped to watch & ask questions. Even an Australian visitor made a substantial donation.

## 5. Community involvement.

***We attended a range of events in Leek & further afield & delivered various outreach activities.***

We took the stand & an art activity to the West End Fun Day; the display to Endon well dressing & to a County Council 'First Help' event at the Moorlands House. Andy continued to attend meetings about 'Designing future local health services in the Staffordshire Moorlands' (involving the future of the local hospitals including Leek).

She also represented BV at the Dove Valley Centre's Meadow Day & Apple Day; Dr Plot's Festival (arts in Leek); meetings about an SMDC Creative People & Places bid to Arts Council England; the SMDC arts review; Leek Arts Forum; the annual creative industries roadshow, Leek College; the Forum for rural research on health & well-being (FRRESH – Keele University) & the Leek lights switch-on to publicise the Gawain festival.



***Marlene's Macmillan Cancer support coffee morning***



***Folded books: outreach workshops in Onecote; we also delivered calligraphy***

In a welcome innovation, we were delighted to host a Macmillan Cancer Support coffee morning organised by participant Marlene.

SW Peak funding allowed us to provide a number of outreach events. These included 'Moorlanders' in Flash Village Hall, a double bill of short plays by Pam Bell crafted from the words & memories of local people; Sheena & Sarah delivering calligraphy, pocket sized books & mixed arts in Onecote & Fernilee; Gordon offering Gawain-inspired literacy & art work in schools Warslow, Longnor & Hollinsclough schools; & the 4-day Gawain Festival.

This last revolved around a piece of narrative folk-art, setting the Gawain legend in the local landscape, painted in egg tempera on linen. International artist Sue Prince taught in Leek College & gave 2 days of public workshops; there was an evening lecture with medieval food & finally a fully-booked guided walk over the Roaches.

## Impact/value

***Last year, this section was largely informed by feedback on our visual arts activities. In May 2018, writing group members responded to the NHS 'What matters to me?' campaign. It aims to highlight a***

***person-centred approach in health & social care, but was an ideal opportunity to explore what matters to our participants about BV. After a selection of the answers, we mention a couple of national documents which underline the value to the statutory sector of arts for health & mental well-being activities like ours:***

- The opportunity to contribute;
- Being asked to do a small thing for someone else;
- Feeling the empathy of others;
- Getting & giving respect;
- The welcoming atmosphere, the quiet, undramatic way in which that environment is created, the absence of any sense of them-and-us;
- It keeps my mind active & I meet other people who continue to amaze me;
- The unquestioning acceptance that people may, or may not, have mental health issues, without the need to elaborate on them;
- It's as though I'm a different person: until I discovered BV I hated myself, my life & all my mistakes;
- It's essential to my wellbeing that I recognise my own self-worth & can contribute something of value;
- When I'm at BV, I'm happy; it's taught me how to write & paint; it provides me with a place to play;
- I've become strong enough with group feedback to 'take it or leave it' without resentment, making me more assertive outside this intimate group;
- When I start from home, I know I'll feel better when I get back;
- That BV survives, because most of us need support at some point & today there are so few places which can offer this arts-based service.



***Public 'Gawain' workshop, egg tempera painting in Leek College***



***Miniature tableau based on the local tradition of well-dressing***



**NICE (the independent National Institute for Health & Care Excellence) publishes guidelines on all aspects of health & care. In NICE guideline [NG32] 'Older people: independence & mental wellbeing' reviewed March 2018**, under Principles of good practice, it suggests each activity should:

- include a clear description of what is on offer
- take place at regular times & in a regular location
- provide the opportunity to socialise
- complement other activities that may support different aspects of older people's independence & mental wellbeing e.g. physical health, social connectedness & sense of purpose.

This neatly summarises what we offer at BV, to our participants old & not-so-old.

### **NHS - VCSE review & Action Plan 2018**

This similarly emphasises the role of organisations like BV:

'The voluntary, community & social enterprise (VCSE) sector is an important partner for statutory health & social care agencies & plays a key role in improving health, well-being & care outcomes. Recent legislation & strategy documents such as the Health & Social Care Act 2012, Care Act 2013 & NHS Five Year Forward View 2014 have recognised this & promoted the role of VCSE organisations in service provision.'

'This development is underpinned by the following assumptions about the VCSE sector:

- Being close to communities, it is ideally placed to identify the assets, needs & aspirations of service users & carers
- It brings specialist expertise to public service delivery & is particularly well placed to support those with complex & multiple needs
- It often provides better value for money due to its focus on early action, preventative services & the wider social value.'

(Unfortunately, recognising that the VCSE sector provides value for money is one thing, providing financial support is another.)

## **Volunteers**

***Short or long-term, 'homegrown' or from outside, we rely on people with a range of talents***

Our small, dedicated group of volunteers is invaluable. We missed Sheena's input while she was recuperating, so we're delighted she's now easing back into supporting the patchwork group & mounting artwork. Richard still regularly helps with the art group & maintains our photographic record. Arts graduate Zuleika volunteered with the art group for many months & Richard persuaded her to join him in the sponsored abseil, which significantly boosted our income. As ever, pro bono accountant Liz supports Andy with budgets, finances & IT matters. We were very fortunate this year to welcome 2 student volunteers, each for several months. We've already mentioned Cassie but Leah (Staffordshire University) also fitted in seamlessly with the art group. Other volunteers did everything from providing car-share transport or raffle prizes to permanently wall-mounting artwork or driving a minibus. Finally, it's important to salute our

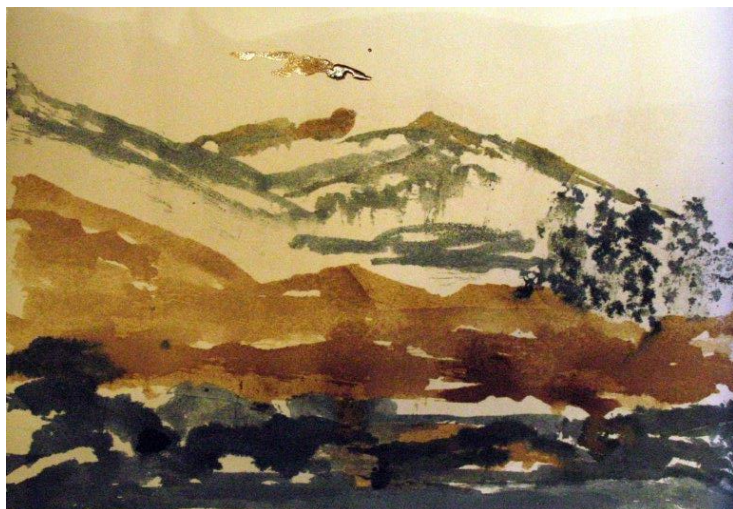


***An unusual take on January/Janus – looking back to winter vegetables, looking forward to summer fruits***

participants' peer support network. Between sessions they phone, email or visit one another, especially anyone who's struggling for some reason.

## Long-term strategy

*While funding is key to our survival in the short/medium term, we could benefit in the longer term from certain developing trends.*



*Landscape using natural dyes & resist techniques*

A volunteer to lead a Friends Group would still be immensely helpful in raising both funds & our public profile but we have attracted some new trustees. There are also various potentially favourable national developments.

During the year, Arts Council England (ACE) undertook public engagement towards their strategy for 2020-30. Commenting on the draft plan, published subsequently, a senior ACE researcher said, 'We believe that there are **potential positive wellbeing benefits** for everyone through most types of arts & cultural

engagement, & through being creative more generally, whether that arises from the enjoyment of seeing a performance or exhibition; **the calmness & confidence that can stem from learning to create an artwork** or play an instrument; or **as an antidote to isolation, whether through the social connection to others, or even just getting out of the house.**' (My emphases).

The All Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health & Wellbeing published an Inquiry report (Creative Health: The Arts for Health & Wellbeing) in 2017 & has been pursuing its 10 recommendations since. At a meeting in November 2018, Matt Hancock, then Secretary of State for Health & Social Care endorsed the key messages:

- the arts & social activities can help keep us well, aid our recovery & support longer lives better lived
- they can help meet major challenges facing health & social care – ageing, loneliness, mental health, & other long-term conditions
- & they can help save money for the NHS & social care system

He commented, '**What has the biggest positive effect ... is personal creativity. Taking part. Having a go. Dusting off forgotten skills. Or learning new ones,**' (which we have known for 21 years).

He made the case that '**prevention is fundamental to the future of the NHS, social prescribing is fundamental to prevention & the arts are fundamental to social prescribing**'. (Again, my emphasis). Which brings us to social prescribing.



*Another arresting January/Janus image*



In social prescribing, health professionals refer patients to support in the community, in order to improve their health & wellbeing (usually through a link worker). In his blog, Darren Henley, CEO, Arts Council England said, 'Social prescribing can't replace drugs, or surgery, or any other treatment proven to work, but ***we can't afford to ignore its potential to prevent or alleviate a range of conditions. Broadening access to the arts should be a core part of this*** ... To create a healthy, happy, meaningful life for everyone, we have to recognise the power of artists, arts organisations, museums & libraries in healthcare & beyond.'

BV carried out an innovative 'Arts on Referral' project in 2006/7 funded by the Big Lottery. Offering individuals 'social prescriptions' to a suite of community activities, instead of or as well as traditional treatment, is now seen as essential to the future of the NHS. BV can (indeed already to an extent does) provide this; but the danger is that no money will follow increased demand when social prescribing is established in N Staffs.

## Networking & links

***Andy works hard to maintain a broad network of contacts.***



***Landscape in 'kantha' quilting, an embroidery technique from the Indian subcontinent, originally using up old saris***

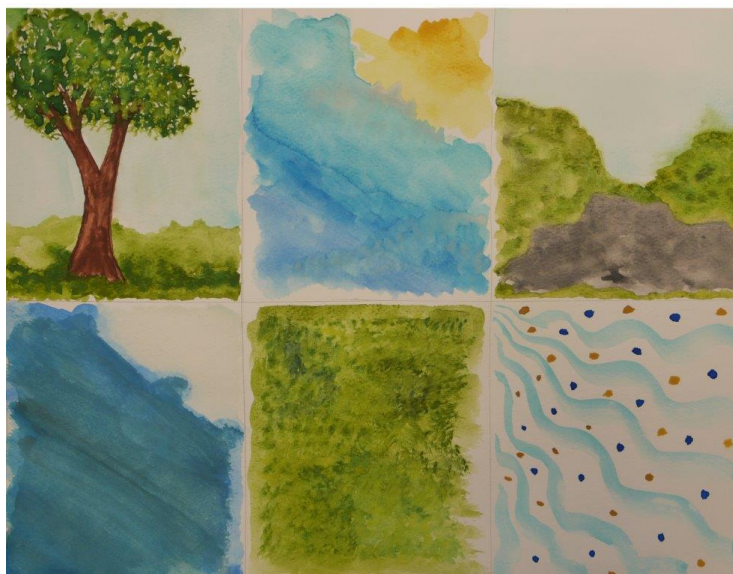
We license our premises from **Support Staffordshire (Staffordshire Moorlands)** so that Andy can maintain close links with our voluntary & community sector umbrella body just by going upstairs. As a result of the move to Bank House, we updated all our policies, procedures & risk assessments.



***Shape inspired by well-dressing, images drawn from Egyptology***

**We also have close links  
with the following:**

- Moorlands Information Group (mental health: statutory & voluntary bodies & service users)
- Staffordshire Moorlands District Council: Officers & Councillors
- Kniveden Partnership (N Staffs Combined Healthcare NHS Trust)
- Staffs Moorlands Voluntary, Community & Social Enterprise (VCSE) Assembly
- W Midlands Arts, Health & Wellbeing
- Leek Arts Forum
- Staffs County Council: Library Service; councillors
- Stone & Water (Buxton-based artists' cooperative)
- Changes – 12 Steps to Mental Health
- Brighter Futures & the Mental Health Helpline
- The Foxlowe Arts Centre
- Leek College of Art
- Dove Valley Centre
- Healthwatch
- Health & Care Forum
- Dr Plot's Festival
- Forum for rural research on health & well-being (FRRESH – Keele University)



*Semi abstract designs for a 6-page seasonal book*



*Abstract collage*

The **Adult Community Mental Health & Social Services Teams** continue to refer people to us, as do **Rethink & Homestart**.

But we require no referral & warmly welcome anyone who comes along on the strength of word-of-mouth, an article in the paper or a radio interview.