

Healthy and Creative Ageing Project

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Background: The Healthy and Creative Ageing Project is a Capital Health Network funded initiative, facilitated by the Canberra Alliance for Harm Reduction and Advocacy (CAHMA). The project provided support to 48 (35 female and 13 male) Canberrans over 40 years of age, with lived experience of Alcohol or Other Drug use or experiencing other areas of marginalisation. The project consisted of four different intervention types: peer treatment support and case management, counselling, creative art groups and transport. There were 10 facilitated ceramic and printmaking sessions with three visits to cultural institutions.

Description of Model of Care/Intervention: The project consisted of four different intervention types: peer treatment support and case management, counselling, creative art groups and transport. There were 10 facilitated ceramic and printmaking sessions with three visits to cultural institutions.

Effectiveness/Acceptability/Implementation: Significant uptake was seen across all intervention types with: 48 people engaged in Peer Treatment Support with 236 occasions of service; 13 people (27%) attending 80 trauma informed counselling sessions, and 25 people (52%) participating in the creative art sessions. Participants in the creative art sessions identified a strong match between their reasons for attending the group and the activities provided (mean = 4.75 out of 5). The reasons for attending included to socialise, meet new people, do something for myself, connect with support, learn a new skill, be creative, do art, for my mental health, have fun and relax.

Conclusion and Next Steps:

Consistent with the findings from A Hidden Population: Supporting healthy ageing for people who inject drugs and/or receive pharmacotherapies (AIVL, 2019), our program participants also reported experiencing multiple co-occurring issues, premature age-related issues, barriers to accessing services, stigma, discrimination, and substantial marginalisation. Pivotal to the success of the group was having multiple treatment options available along with fun opportunities for community members to engage with other peers in a non-clinical setting. Unfortunately, this highly successful project was only funded for a year and there is still ongoing need in this area.

Implications for Practice or Policy:

Pivotal to the success of the group was having multiple treatment options available along with fun opportunities for community members to engage with other peers in a non-clinical setting. Unfortunately, this highly successful project was only funded for a year and there is still ongoing need in this area.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

The Healthy and Creative Ageing Project was funded by the Capital Health Network from 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024. The project was facilitated by the Canberra Alliance for Harm Minimisation and Advocacy, who brokered service partnerships to facilitate group activities, trauma informed counselling, and an independent evaluation through the Australian National University.