

One day art exhibition at the Botanic

Edinburgh charity, Rowan Alba, is staging a one day exhibition at Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh next week as part of an art project set up to help those who are socially isolated.

The exhibition will showcase service-users' work in View from the Inside, an exhibition of art and poetry created by the Rowan Alba CARDS Community. CARDS stands for Community Alcohol Related Damage Service and the community was set up during the pandemic.

The art project was designed to allow service users to engage in meaningful, creative activity with a freelance artist who has been working with CARDS over the last 6 years and with whom they have built a trusted relationship. CARDS is a befriending project for those in Edinburgh with alcohol related brain damage and engaged with 20 people who received materials suited to their individual needs in fields such as painting, photography, knitting, drawing and modelling.



Sam Rutherford

Freelance digital artist Sam Rutherford who led the project said: "I am passionate about enabling community groups to have their voices heard and the arts is the perfect platform for this. We have had huge support from the National Galleries of Scotland and the Botanic Gardens in helping us deliver the

CARDS café and when we had to move online, it was vital that we worked hard to retain the sense of connection and community amongst the service users. View from the Inside is a powerful collection of creativity from the service users and has given them a meaningful and therapeutic outlet for expressing their thoughts, feelings and experiences.”

The original project – CARDS café – was initially developed in response to clients saying they wanted more social contact and this saw service-users visit public places such as the National Galleries of Scotland and the Botanic Gardens, to share experiences & socialise in a safe space.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the focus shifted to a remote art project, with the aim of helping the CARDS community stay connected, share their stories and increase their social interaction while self-isolating.

- 
- 

Shaun, a CARDS service user said: “I had never painted before, not since primary school probably. I gave it a try when the CARDS team gave me the art materials. I used watercolours and painted a picture purely from my imagination and I copied one from a postcard. I felt closer to the other CARDS service users through the pandemic because we found a way to connect with each other through the art. You don’t feel so alone I suppose. I used to pace the floors for hours in the early hours of the morning when I couldn’t sleep. Now I paint. I find it really relaxing.”

Tracey Stewart, CARDS project lead said: “We are immensely grateful to the funders, artists, volunteers and CARDS staff who have made this project possible. The past 18 months have been challenging for the whole of society and have left many people feeling overwhelmed and isolated. This is especially

true for those people who may, for whatever reason, not feel connected to their community and already live in a socially isolated way. CARDS was founded on the premise that we can never underestimate the power of human contact and the art project combines connection and community with creativity. It has allowed our service users to have a voice, to feel part of something meaningful and to share their stories. This is incredibly empowering and after a decade of delivering the CARDS service, we know all too well how crucial social connections are. The art project is a powerful demonstration of how a little bit goes a long way.”

Supporters and funders of the art project include the Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (The ALLIANCE). Professor Ian Welsh OBE, Chief Executive of the ALLIANCE commented; “The work that Rowan Alba has delivered over the past two years in their CARDS self-management project highlights the difference that art and expression can make for people with long term conditions as part of their self-management. The Self-Management Fund invests in building capacity within the communities we live – where people live their lives and do their self-managing.

“This project highlights the importance of connection and reminds us that we all are entitled to the right support to be able to live our lives on our terms. The CARDS project and the work of Rowan Alba shows the impact that self-management approaches can shift the focus to prevention and to wellbeing for individuals living with long term conditions.”

The free exhibition will take place on 24 September 2021 at Caledonian Hall, Royal Botanic Gardens from 1pm to 4pm.

[*View from the inside*](#)