

# **The Possibility of Colour - Northwest Tour 2022 - Project Overview & Evaluation Summary**

## **The Project**

This 14-year project covers the development and 1<sup>st</sup> full production of Pete Carruthers' new play 'The Possibility of Colour'.

The play has been created with input at every stage from health professionals, academics, students and people with lived experience of the themes explored within the play.

These themes include mental health treatment, social attitudes to normalisation and divergence, forced treatment, coercive control, voice hearing, neurodivergence, synaesthesia, the use of Artificial Intelligence in healthcare and much more.

One of the main aims of the project is for the play to be used as a powerful, immersive and challenging pedagogical tool within the training of compassionate and reflective health professionals.

Following 2 extensive periods of research and development in 2015/16 and 2021, the play enjoyed its first full production and tour in November and December 2022. The tour included 10 live performances of the play at 3 theatre venues (in Salford, Preston and Ormskirk), plus 2 online sharings of a recorded performance and 2 in person screenings of the recorded performance for student nurses in Nottingham.

Each performance and screening was followed by an audience Q&A discussion with invited guest experts.

Thanks to funding from Health Education England, 1,350 student nurses were given the opportunity to attend a performance and post-show Q&A discussion for free. Attending the play and Q&A (plus reflection time) was counted as official placement/practice hours as part of their nurse training.

There are plans to take the play on a much larger national tour in 2024 with the aim of expanding this offer to thousands more student nurses, and potentially even more students and professionals from all fields of health and social care.

## Evaluation Summary

Here is a brief summary of the full evaluation report, based on written audience feedback from the 2022 tour of the play. The report is being used to support the further development of the project.

### **Quality of the play - power, complexity, sensitivity.**

Audience feedback on the play has been almost universally positive. The overall average audience score was 4.8 out of a maximum of 5 stars.

Audience members described the play as 'thought-provoking', 'deeply insightful', 'raw', 'urgent', 'powerful', 'uplifting', 'important', 'emotional', 'accurate', 'empowering', 'sensitive' and 'funny'. Specific praise was given to the way the play explored the complexity of the issues explored, how well researched the material was, and that it helped people with lived experience to feel 'more seen' and 'less alone':

*'Absolutely brilliant. Thought-provoking and deeply insightful. Not just a black-and-white understanding of the difficulty but shows the complexity of the issues and struggles.'* (Healthcare Assistant / Student Mental Health Nurse)

*'It was absolutely fantastic. It was a unique way of challenging 'normal', which I believe will resonate with people wherever it is seen. The topics covered are raw (with me in tears in some parts!) but it was so well put together, and performed brilliantly, that they were dealt with sensitively and accurately. It opened my eyes to experiences people face and the decisions often made for them rather than with them.'* (Student Nurse)

*'It did feel very uncomfortable at times, powerless as an onlooker, but that was what made it so engaging!'* (Counsellor / Psychotherapist)

*'Thank you for bringing this to peoples attention. It made me feel less alone in the issues I've had and demonstrated it in such a beautiful way.'* (Student Nurse & Expert by Experience)

*'I no longer feel so alone in who I am and my understanding of how truly vast the spectrum of self is has widened greatly. I am very grateful for this experience, thank you.'* (Expert by Experience)

## **Post-show discussions**

Feedback on the post-show discussions was also very positive. Audience members appreciated the time it gave them to digest the play and hear how it resonated with other people. Experts by experience reported that it was encouraging to hear health professionals responding positively to the messages within the play and to the wider use of story-telling as a form of education.

*'I appreciated the time it gave me to digest what I had seen and really think about what the play was saying and hear how it resonated with people in different ways.'* (Mental Health Lived Experience Engagement and Inclusion Facilitator)

*'Superb. So brilliant to hear so many different point of views from professionals in the industry. Encouraging to hear that mental health nurses support the use of creative story telling as a form of education/recovering.'* (Expert by Experience)

*'Having people with lived experience of the subject matter reflecting on the play and the process helped to bring more depth to the issues raised in the play.'* (Specialist Nurse (Early Intervention Psychosis) )

## **Use of the play to challenge professional practice and as a novel way to train health professionals.**

Student nurses, qualified clinicians, lecturers and experts by experience reported that the play was useful as a tool to provoke reflection and discussions around professional practice, and as a powerful, innovative way to train new and existing health professionals:

*'I experienced this play as an invitation to do better and work towards service provision that goes about things differently.'* (Trainee Clinical Psychologist)

*'As an adult nursing student, this gave me a brilliant exposure to mental health, which I feel will help me to become a more empathetic healthcare professional in the future.'* (Student Nurse)

*'Thought provoking and had a lasting learning effect, often the most significant learning is from something that invokes strong emotions.'* (Student Nurse)

*'I was really excited to see how our student nurses were clearly affected by the themes in this play.'* (Senior Lecturer in Mental Health Nursing)

*"An excellent educational tool for students & window into mental health. Real life experience - delivered in a safe environment.'* (Registered Nurse)

*'Great relatable teaching moments without realising you're learning.'* (Student Nurse / MH Support Worker)

*'As an autistic person, too, it was much more inviting and easier to stay focused. It was a sensory experience. Much better than an ordinary classroom lecture.'* (Expert by Experience)

*'Could have massive impact on exactly the people this "overall package" is aimed at: students / service users / academic staff / nursing staff - all disciplines.'* (Senior University Lecturer)

*'Needs to be integrated with training and continuing professional development of those within the NHS.'* (Doctor)

*'The desire to use this production in the context of training medical professionals is brilliant. I am involved in teaching medical students and, although the concepts of enabling patient choice/involvement in treatment pathways and ideas around how we define disability and what is 'normal' are emphasised, these are generally presented in ways that are very dry and theoretical - using a production such as this would have a much greater impact.'* (Senior University Lecturer)

*'ABSOLUTELY BRILLIANT! This play should be MANDATORY for at ALL mental health professionals, student mental health nurses, trainee nursing associates; and an option for other healthcare students.'* (Trainee Nursing Associate, based at an Early Intervention for First Episode Psychosis Team)

*'Have recommended to as many people working within mental health and psychology as possible.'* (Senior Lecturer in Mental Health Nursing)

### **Views changed by the play and discussion.**

In response to the question 'Have your views changed at all after attending this event?', 41% of audience members answered 'yes'. This included 40% of student nurses and 39% of health professionals and health lecturers.

The next question asked, 'If your views have changed, how have they changed?':

*'Makes you question the nursing process as a whole.'* (Student Mental Health Nurse)

*'It just highlighted to me the need for understanding of individual needs when treating someone and a client centred approach to treatment rather than diagnosis driven, one-size-fits-all paternalistic model.'* (Student Mental Health Nurse)

*'Makes me want to completely embrace every individualistic feature about myself to the fullest potential. I will limit saying 'I wish I didn't feel like this again'. I want to be less judgmental towards others.'* (Expert by Experience)

Of those who answered 'no' or 'uncertain' the vast majority went on to explain in their written feedback that although their views hadn't changed, they had been 'ignited' or 'strengthened':

*'My views haven't changed rather ignited to continue to look at the complexities of humans and ensure we maintain best interests and encourage choice, not simply the illusion of it but genuine choice of care.'* (Healthcare Assistant / Student Mental Health Nurse)