Research study

Online art therapy in the Western Isles: Evaluation of a pilot service

You are being invited to take part in a research study which aims to evaluate the pilot online art therapy service offered to adults living in the Western Isles. This information is intended to help you decide if you would like to take part. Please read this carefully and ask any questions you might have.

# **Background of this project**

# Art therapy is a safe and acceptable evidence-based intervention that brings multiple benefits to clients experiencing a range of psychological difficulties, as well as mental and physical health conditions. Art therapy in not only an effective treatment option, but also a supportive intervention for those simply interested in enhancing their emotional wellbeing. By encouraging creative expression and working within a therapeutic relationship, art therapists help clients to address their emotions. Artistic skills are not required to benefit from art therapy since the focus is primarily on the creative process.

# Despite high demand for art therapy and its multiple benefits, it is not widely available to people living in rural and more remote areas of Scotland. Limited number of practicing art therapists, geographical challenges and time and financial burdens of travel mean that many clients miss out on this valuable intervention. Online delivery might increase access to art therapy where such services might not be available face-to-face and has additional benefits of increased privacy, which might be particularly welcomed by clients in small communities.

# **What is this research about?**

# An online art therapy service will be piloted in the Western Isles in order to establish the need, acceptability and feasibility of such service. Evaluation is an important part of this pilot and involves gathering perspectives of staff involved in the service and those who are its recipients.

# **Why have I been selected to take part?**

# You are invited to take part because you have been referred to an online art therapy service. It is important for us to understand your experience and gather any insights you might want to share in connection with this pilot service or any potential similar service in the future.

# **What would taking part involve?**

# If you agree to take part, you will be invited to complete an online survey (a weblink will be provided), consisting of a short self-assessment questionnaire of how you have been feeling recently and a short questionnaire pertaining to your expectations and the actual experience of the online art therapy service. You will be invited to complete the survey twice: prior to starting your online art therapy and on completion of the course of therapy sessions. It should take between 10 and 20 minutes to complete the survey each time, so the total time you spend in this study should not be more than 40 minutes.

# Completing the questionnaire is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time by simply closing the survey window in your internet browser. Your participation in the online surveys in completely anonymous. We will not ask about any personal details, including demographics or email addresses, and in case you choose to provide any data that might potentially lead to you being identified (e.g. details of where you live or services you use), we will anonymise any such responses. Because we will not collect your name or email address, we will ask you to choose a memorable nick name which you would be able to enter at the start of each questionnaire. This will help us link your responses from the two surveys, so that we know that they come from the same person. It is important that you remember your nick name as the second time you complete the questionnaire is likely to be after a couple of months from when you complete the survey for the first time.

On completion of the second questionnaire you will also have an option to contribute your artistic response to the experience of taking part in an online art therapy. This is entirely voluntary. You will be invited to share a photograph of your artwork with us by sending it to the lead researcher (ania.zubala@uhi.ac.uk) or uploading anonymously to Padlet <link here>. We will only use the submitted images for scientific purposes, which might include reproduction (anonymously) in academic journals and at conferences, for example to illustrate findings of this project. We will never use your images for commercial purposes. If you upload your image to Padlet, you will also be able to see other respondents’ images and they will be able to see yours. This will act as a non-commercial gallery space for this project.

# **What will happen if I decide not to take part or if I change my mind?**

# Taking part in this research study is completely voluntary and deciding not to participate will not have any negative consequences for you. You will still be able to take part in an online art therapy service. You will also be able to withdraw your consent to participate at any point prior to data analysis, including after you have completed the questionnaires, by emailing Dr Ania Zubala (ania.zubala@uhi.ac.uk). If you withdraw your consent, your data will be deleted. We may not be able to withdraw your data once analysis is completed.

# **What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

# There will not be any direct benefits for you from taking part in this research study. However, by taking part you will be genuinely helping us to advance research on art therapy and in particular to enhance our understanding of the needs and views of those receiving online art therapy services. Therefore, you might feel that the time you have volunteered to share your experience is meaningful and you have made a valuable contribution to developing a service which may be beneficial to others in the future.

# **What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?**

# We do not foresee any risks or disadvantages to you in taking part in this project. However, we are aware that thinking about using a psychotherapy service might bring up emotions and potentially uncomfortable feelings. Self-report questionnaires used in this project are safe tools, carefully developed and tested in a wide range of research studies and should not cause a particular discomfort. We are aware, however, that sharing how you have been feeling might be difficult at times. You are free to withdraw from this research at any time if you feel uncomfortable. If at any point you feel that you might need additional emotional support in connection to taking part in this project, you might find the following links helpful:

# Health and Social Care Partnership (IJB) for NHS Western Isles: https://ijbwesternisles.scot/ Children and Families Services at St Lennan’s Centre: 01851 822749 or website: <https://www.cne-siar.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/children-and-families/> Breathing Space: 0800 83 85 87 or website: <https://breathingspace.scot/>

# **Who is organising and funding this study?**

# This study is undertaken by Dr Ania Zubala from the University of the Highlands and Islands and has been funded by the NHS Western Isles.

# **What if I have questions?**

# Please contact Ania, the lead researcher, at ania.zubala@uhi.ac.uk

She will be happy to discuss any aspect of this project.

# **Data protection note**

# The legal reason for using the data you have provided is that it is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest or in the exercise of official authority vested in the controller. That being the delivery of a course of study or research undertaken at, or by, the university or its students.

Anonymised data from this research study will be kept safely on the University of the Highlands and Islands servers for a period of ten years. It might be used for academic publications and conference presentations. If direct quotes are used, care will be taken to ensure that respondents are not identifiable (e.g. names of organisations, employers, place names, etc. will be removed).

The data controller for this study is Dr Ania Zubala, Research Fellow, UHI (ania.zubala@uhi.ac.uk)

For any data protection enquiries please contact UHI’s Data Protection Officer at dataprotectionofficer@uhi.ac.uk

Thank you for reading this information