



BLOC LAB: Creativity & mental health

A mixed media artists residency exploring the relationship between participatory arts and mental health. In collaboration with Suffolk Artlink, Association for Suffolk Museums, Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust and Suffolk County Council.

Key dates:

- Deadline for applications: 29th November 2021 at 12PM
- Interviews: 15th & 16th December 2021
- Notification: 17th December 2021
- BLOC LAB week: 17th – 21st January 2022 (weeklong residency at Ipswich County Library)
- Future planning LAB: 7th - 9th February 2022 (3-day residency at various locations in Stowmarket and Ipswich)
- 7-week course delivery, February - April 2022 (7 half day sessions).
- Date tbc: Mental Health First Aid Training (1 day)

Fee:

The total fee paid to artists is £2,995 ex VAT. This fee includes £1760 for 8 days of R&D (8 days @ £220 per day) and workshop delivery at £1,235 (7 half days at £145 + 1 day @£220). This fee is inclusive of meals during the residency as well as materials and travel expenses, with materials and travel expenses also reimbursed throughout the project.

NB: The cost of artist's time to attend Mental Health First Aid Training will not be reimbursed (course fees at £300 per person), however all lunch and travel expenses to attend will be reimbursed for the day.

Context

In response to the national mental health crisis following the pandemic, organisations from across Suffolk have come together to explore the role creativity plays as catalyst for nurturing mental health in the community, specifically for people living with mental health challenges. With a wealth of experience in mental health and wellbeing programmes, Suffolk Artlink, Suffolk Libraries, the Association for Suffolk Museums, NSFT and Suffolk County Council have collaborated to create this opportunity for artists to practically develop a toolkit of skills which champion best working practices to support people of all ages living with mental health challenges.

We are inviting six local artists to come and use our buildings as a workspace to develop their practice as a community artist or practitioner. Throughout the residency, artists will build the skills for clinical and creative working practices to support both their own mental health, as well as the mental health of the people they work with.

Following the LABs, artists will work collaboratively with each other, experts by experience (people with recent or personal experience of using or caring for someone who uses mental health services), and an assigned museum or library space and member of staff to develop and deliver a 7-week course with participants with mental health challenges. This opportunity will be paid and is a pilot phase of a planned larger scale programme.

What the project will provide

- Inspiring workshops with expert guest speakers
- Suffolk Needs Met training
- Mental Health First Aid training
- One-to-one advice from the week's facilitator
- Time for reflection and space to develop current work or to create new work
- Working and social time with peers for discussions and meaningful exchange of ideas and practice
- Opportunity to develop a series of workshops which support participants living with mental health challenges
- Artist MOTs led by Suffolk Libraries Wellbeing Manager
- The tools to ensure you can create safe and supportive sessions in the future which nurture participants mental health
- A best practice toolkit for evaluating work

Benefits to artists

- Focused time for the development of ideas and projects
- Being in a peer environment and experiencing artforms outside of their current practice
- Working collaboratively with Suffolk Artlink, curators and library staff and their communities as a test bed for new ideas
- Opportunities to exchange ideas, share work and feed your creativity through encountering the experience of others both in and outside the arts
- Input of inspiring speakers and practitioners
- Support for mental health and wellbeing in creative industries
- A greater understanding of clinical best practice when operating in the creative sector

Criteria for Application

- This LAB is for Suffolk based artists working in any discipline (including but not limited to: music, technology, paint, sculpture, film, writing, poetry, theatre, sound recording, installations, dance etc)
- Applicants must commit to all dates identified in the residency, including some evenings
- Applicants must have good availability for delivering the 7-week courses in Spring 2022
- We are looking for artists who are keen to create work with roots in the community
- A proven commitment to their discipline, either through a portfolio of work or relevant course, qualifications or awards
- Living and/or working regularly in Suffolk (as defined by the Suffolk county boundaries)

How to apply

Please email a personal statement of 250 – 500 words to arts@suffolklibraries.co.uk explaining:

- Why you would like to be involved in the project
- What excites you about this opportunity
- What skills you might like to develop over the duration of the project

Please provide as much detail as possible in this section so that we have an opportunity to understand your creative practice.

Please also attach a CV (2 pages max) and/or a portfolio of your work. Please put "ALM LAB - *your name*" in the subject line of the email.

Interviews

To understand our artist's practice fully, we will be meeting selected artists in person for an informal interview. We will ask that each artist prepares either a 10-minute presentation of their work or a workshop style task that is representative of their creative practice.

All panel questions will also be sent to artists selected for interview ahead of time, so they are able to prepare.

For any further questions about the opportunity or your application, please email arts@suffolklibraries.co.uk