

ARTS FOR ALL MENTORING SCHEME

IMPACT EVALUATION REPORT

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1. Introduction and background

The Arts for All mentoring scheme was introduced in 2010 with a pilot scheme and since then has been matching mentees and mentors with the aim of creating opportunities for residents from disadvantaged communities in north Belfast to develop skills across a range of artforms, as well as opportunities to exhibit their work. The scheme also aimed to develop expertise within the community arts sector.

Since then, the scheme has run annually, incorporating an annual exhibition of mentees' work.

2. Aim of this impact evaluation

The aim of this impact evaluation is to report on the continuing efficacy and outcomes of the Arts for All mentoring scheme, by obtaining feedback from mentees and mentors and summarising findings from this feedback.

3. Methodology

A questionnaire was devised in association with Arts for All staff Heather Floyd and Jill McDermott, comprising 12 questions for a range of mentees over the past three years (2012-2013, 2013-2014 and 2014 -2015) with the age range varying from school age to over 70.

The questions were tailored to gauge the mentees' overall experience of the scheme and the difference the scheme had made to their lives and lifestyles.

The mentees were also asked to evaluate Arts for All's management of the scheme on a scale of 1 - 10, as well as any suggestions as to how the scheme might be improved.

In addition to the questionnaire, three in-depth case studies were carried out, again with mentees being interviewed on the telephone.

A total of 12 mentees were interviewed.

Three mentors were also interviewed by telephone to determine their experience of the scheme and how the scheme had impacted on their lives.

All mentees and mentors were interviewed on the telephone by Vicki Maguire in November 2014.

Case study 1

Mentee 1	Artform: Poetry	Mentor: Moyra Donaldson
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Mentee 1, who lives in north Belfast and works in private industry, started writing poetry in August 2012 at the age of 50. He had previously never been involved in arts/creative activity of any kind.

"I used to walk past the **John Luke Gallery** every day on the way to work and never noticed it! One day I decided to call in and Heather told me about the mentoring scheme.

The scheme was brilliant. Moyra really got me organised. Every week she encouraged me to go away and think about various aspects and introduced me to performance poetry. I thought she was going to be like a school teacher, but every week we formed a plan of where we wanted to be at the next session.

The scheme was exactly right for me at that time.

I found myself doing poetry readings at the gallery – I read about 6 pieces and this was the first time I had ever done a reading to a live audience (at the mentoring scheme exhibition).

Moyra encouraged me to think of a timeline and get my work organised in electronic format. I now have two collections of 'mindfulness' type poetry under the title of 'Stillness within the Storm'.

I now want to get my work published and am currently working towards that goal. Moyra has been great in guiding me. She encouraged me to start a mindfulness blog to build a fan base and I now have 17,000 views of my blog with 14,000 from the USA! And 30,000 views of my google+ page.

I get comments from all over the world which has been a huge confidence boost.

Now I can go to a publisher and say I have an audience.

I was not creative at all at school and had no confidence. The scheme has been fantastic for me to get peer approval.

I can call myself a writer now! As well as getting published, there are so many different avenues I can follow: I am interested in poetry as therapy and helping charities like Lifeline. I'm also interested in writing song lyrics for musicians - I met a music producer at Arts for All who encouraged me.

The scheme has opened me as a person and encouraged me to share and help other people – I was previously in a closed world of work.

It was a joy to work with the staff at Arts for All – they kept me up to date and put me with a very good mentor. They challenged me as well, including in ways they perhaps didn't realise. I would give them 10 out of 10 for their organisation.

I think it's great to have the mentoring scheme in north Belfast, for school-leavers as well as residents. It brings together people from different backgrounds with everyone sharing their work. I can't speak highly enough of the organisation and the ripple effect it produces to make a difference."

Falling Leaf Whispers

*I Falling Leaf who speaks to you in dreams.
Your spirit guide on this earthly plane.*

*I am your guiding light, unseen but felt in your heart.
Came to teach, to enlighten, to love, to protect, to guide,*

*Plant your Purple Tree, nurture and nourish it
Watch it grow into a mighty forest.*

*Where Wolf, Bear and Eagle are free again
In harmony with the ancestors of the red man.*

*Lead the awakening warriors back to the rainbow.
along the red pathway, to the source of your soul.*

Run Strong.....

Mentee 1

Case study 2

Mentee 2	Artform: Mixed media	Mentor: Anu Sundaralingham
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Mentee 2 was one of the first group of mentees in 2012.

She was in the lower 6th at Belfast Model School for Girls and studying A level Art. She was aware of the mentoring scheme as her mother had some colleagues who were working with Arts for All.

At the time, she was doing mixed media, felt and paper making and textile work at school.

She wanted to gain more experience for her A level course work and as her teacher was more ceramic-focused, she had no-one to guide her.

All the mentoring sessions took place over 6 weeks on Tuesday evenings at Arts for All.

“I had a really good rapport with my mentor, Anu, she helped me think of new ideas and think outside the box. She stimulated my creativity and gave me feedback.”

I created a final piece for my A level and for the exhibition. The mentoring sessions really helped me, I would not have been able to produce the artwork without Anu and the mentoring.

My teacher was really impressed as my project was much more experimental and innovative than the other A level students' work”.

She got an overall C for her A level, just missing a B – and went on to interview for a B.A. (Hons) in Art at the University of Ulster.

“I was able to show my portfolio of work done on the mentoring course at the university interview and they were very complimentary. I am 100% sure that the work I produced on the mentoring course helped me get into university. I believe it strengthened my portfolio and gave me the edge.”

The mentoring sessions really gave me confidence and taught me skills that my teacher was not able to show me. I also enjoyed being able to help and show the other girls at school the techniques that Anu had taught me.

The fact that the mentoring scheme had helped me become more creative and innovative – it's really helping me now on my university course.

Mentee 2 believes that other people would really benefit from the course:

“If you are in a big class at school, it's easy to get lost and you end up holding back as there are so many people. Having a one-to-one mentor gave me the opportunity to shine.”

How does she want to take forward her career as an artist?

“I want to finish my degree at the University – during my year's work experience I would like to go to the USA on an exchange project – to join a similar course. I also want to do more exhibitions. Eventually I may want to teach. I think the A4A course was extremely well-run and would give it 10 out of 10!”.

Case study 3

Mentee 3	Artform: Spray painting	Mentor: Jonny McKerr
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Mentee 3 has found the Arts for All mentoring scheme to be a life-changing experience for her. She knew she had a talent, but she couldn't see the way forward. Now she is looking forward to her first solo exhibition in January in the **John Luke Gallery**. Her journey started with a call into the Arts for All office:

"I had done my A levels and did well, but I lost my father just as I was embarking on a University Foundation course and I left it as I couldn't see any future in it.

I was assigned Jonny McKerr as my mentor at Arts for All and the sessions gave me the confidence I needed. He introduced me to spray paints and I'm developing different portrait styles. We are still really close and I know he is always there as a support for me.

I went away from our sessions feeling grounded and knowing my next step. It's not like having a teacher, but it was inspiring and motivational.

Then Jill (from Arts for All) asked me if I had ever thought about facilitating workshops so I thought I would give it a try. It was a very big step for me but I really enjoyed it. I started to do arts workshops for kids with autism and I felt I had really achieved something. Now I'm interested in art as therapy.

I'm lucky to have been able to find a balance between facilitating and my own creative journey.

I am so grateful that I had the opportunity to take part in this mentoring scheme, I owe my happiness and my state of mind to it – all my family and friends have noticed the change in me. The change in my life is unreal – now I have a purpose and I'm earning a living from facilitating.

I owe so much to Heather and Jill – they believed in me and supported me and I'm now getting more coaching from Jill.

I think it would be a real shame if Arts for All didn't continue the scheme – it's such a great thing for people out there who don't have the confidence.

I would give them 11 out of 10 for the organisation of the scheme!"

Mentee 4	Artform: Photography	Mentor: Louise Smyth
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1. How did you hear of the A4A mentoring scheme?

Louise (my mentor) was in my school during a workshop. My teacher said to me to apply for photography and photoshopping.

2. When did you start the mentoring scheme?

October 2012, final year of my Art A level.

3. What did you hope to achieve through taking part in the mentoring scheme?

To open my ideas, improve my technique and make my A level result better.

4. What were you doing when you started the mentoring scheme?

Doing my A levels – 2nd year. I was at St Patrick's College in north Belfast.

5. Please describe your general experience of the mentoring sessions.

They were very enjoyable and I had really good fun. My mentor Louise Smyth brought in models and showed me how to enhance my photoshoots all around the place. She did a photo shoot of me as a gift!

6. What have you been doing since finishing the scheme?

I finished in 2013. Last year I was still in school and did another course to help me get into university. I got an A in art and a B in moving images and was really pleased. I'm going to do the foundation year and pick my specialisms next year. I'm aiming towards photography.

7. What are your plans for the future?

Doing a B.A. (hons) and definitely want to do photography as a profession.

8. Do you feel the scheme impacted on your life and if so how?

Yes definitely. My school didn't do photography, so the scheme gave me confidence and showed me what was possible. I might have given up – the scheme really focused me and gave me that extra push.

9. Do you think the scheme is important to north Belfast and if so how?

Definitely. The help they give you in school is restricted - one-on-one is brilliant for getting ideas and a new perspective on art.

10. On a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 is poor and 10 is excellent, please indicate how you think the scheme was managed.

I would give it a 10. The meetings were great – very friendly and helpful.

11. Are you still in contact with Arts for All?

I'm not in contact with Arts for All, but I keep in touch with Louise.

12. Do you have any other comments or suggestions for future mentoring schemes?

Nothing I can think of – it's brilliant the way it is!

Mentee 5	Artform: Photography	Mentor: Louise Smyth
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1. How did you hear of the A4A mentoring scheme?

My art teacher encouraged me and I knew Mentee 4 who did it last year.

2. When did you start the mentoring scheme?

2013

3. What did you hope to achieve through taking part in the mentoring scheme?

To improve my photographic technique and learn photo-shopping.

4. What were you doing when you started the mentoring scheme?

The second year of my A levels which included art.

5. Please describe your general experience of the mentoring sessions.

It was fun and entertaining and gave me a good boost of confidence. I made new friends as well as exploring different photographic techniques.

6. What have you been doing since finishing the scheme?

A foundation course in art and design at Belfast Met.

7. What are your plans for the future?

I'm going to apply to Dundee University or the University of Ulster at Magee for a photographic degree. I want to earn a living from photography.

8. Do you feel the scheme impacted on your life and if so how?

Definitely. It gave me more confidence and I acquired skills I didn't have.

9. Do you think the scheme is important to north Belfast and if so how?

Yes, I think it helps the community integrate – different people from different cultures come together as well as different types of art.

10. On a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 is poor and 10 is excellent, please indicate how you think the scheme was managed.

10 out of 10. It was very well organised and the end of scheme exhibition was brilliant.

11. Are you still in contact with Arts for All?

I email Heather and call in now and then. I'm also still in contact with Louise.

12. Do you have any other comments or suggestions for future mentoring schemes?

Not really, but it would be good to have a web group for chats and to show work and exchange ideas.

Mentee 6	Artform: Photography	Mentor: Louise Smyth
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1. How did you hear of the A4A mentoring scheme?

I popped into Duncairn Community Centre for a chat and Heather was there.

2. When did you start the mentoring scheme?

2013

3. What did you hope to achieve through taking part in the mentoring scheme?

A better understanding of how the camera worked. I had always just had it on an automatic setting – it just seemed too complicated.

4. What were you doing when you started the mentoring scheme?

I was unemployed and photography was just a hobby.

5. Please describe your general experience of the mentoring sessions.

One-to-one is so easy – you pick things up quickly and aren't under any pressure.

6. What have you been doing since finishing the scheme?

I've done photography for a couple of weddings – people seemed delighted with what I did and I was chuffed. I was very nervous beforehand though. I'm still unemployed but at least I feel I have something to work towards.

7. What are your plans for the future?

I'd like to take it further and set myself up as a photography business.

8. Do you feel the scheme impacted on your life and if so how?

Yes definitely. I have more confidence and feel 100% happier.

9. Do you think the scheme is important to north Belfast and if so how?

I think the scheme is very important. But people don't know about Arts for All – it was at the bottom of the street and I didn't even know it was there.

10. On a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 is poor and 10 is excellent, please indicate how you think the scheme was managed.

I would give it 11. They don't treat you like a dummy – they are on your level. They didn't make me feel stupid – I've always been afraid of making a fool of myself and the one-to-one is a real benefit. It was very relaxed and informal.

11. Are you still in contact with Arts for All?

Yes.

12. Do you have any other comments or suggestions for future mentoring schemes?

No – I don't think you could improve it at all!

Mentee 7	Artform: Photography	Mentor: Louise Smyth
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1. How did you hear of the A4A mentoring scheme?

Through the historical society of which I'm a member.

2. When did you start the mentoring scheme?

From 2013 to 2014.

3. What did you hope to achieve through taking part in the mentoring scheme?

To improve my photography/camera techniques and improve my skills on the internet.

4. What were you doing when you started the mentoring scheme?

I am a full time carer – photography had been a hobby of mine at school but I hadn't done anything with it for years – it was just a dormant hobby.

5. Please describe your general experience of the mentoring sessions.

My mentor Louise was brilliant. We were given a lot of support on the scheme. The final exhibition was brilliant and it was great to have people looking at my photographs. Louise helped me to prepare them and they looked very professional.

6. What have you been doing since finishing the scheme?

I've been taking photographs and videos for various local organisations and it's been very rewarding for me. I couldn't have done this before the course.

7. What are your plans for the future?

I would like to develop my own website and post photos of local places – both recent and historical – especially for people living abroad.

8. Do you feel the scheme impacted on your life and if so how?

Yes – it re-kindled my interest in photography and gave me something to look forward to every week. As I am a carer it's not always easy to get out. It gave me respite.

9. Do you think the scheme is important to north Belfast and if so how?

Definitely. It gives an opportunity to meet people you wouldn't normally meet – people from all ages and backgrounds.

- 10. On a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 is poor and 10 is excellent, please indicate how you think the scheme was managed.**

10 out of 10. It was perfect. Anything they said would happen did happen.

- 11. Are you still in contact with Arts for All?**

Yes I call in 2 or 3 times a week, it's on my route as I walk my dog.

- 12. Do you have any other comments or suggestions for future mentoring schemes?**

I think just to keep the funding coming. For working class people like me, it would be impossible to afford a course like that.

Mentee: Mentee 8	Artform: Weaving	Mentor: Lucy McMullan
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1. How did you hear of the A4A mentoring scheme?

It was very fortuitous, I had just become interested in weaving that summer. I was driving down York Road and thought I would call into Arts for All - I knew Heather from the Community Arts Forum.

2. When did you start the mentoring scheme?

2012

3. What did you hope to achieve through taking part in the mentoring scheme?

An opportunity to pursue the interest I had discovered as well as the opportunity to be taken seriously as a creator of art. I had already done a print course at Belfast Print Workshop.

4. What were you doing when you started the mentoring scheme?

I was working as an independent consultant.

5. Please describe your general experience of the mentoring sessions.

Because of my printmaking experience, I started with Anu Sundaralingham as my mentor, but when I realised what I wanted to do was the weaving I actually sourced my own mentor, Lucy McMullan, who is a lecturer in York Street and a weaver. I had met her at a workshop at Our Space and invited her to mentor me. Heather then got her onto the scheme.

So the scheme was extremely flexible and allowed me to switch direction – it was wonderful that it was tailored to meet my needs.

6. What have you been doing since finishing the scheme?

I finished the scheme in 2013 and since then have acquired a loom of my own and when I have a change I work away to improve my skills. My mentor recommended books and I'm teaching myself. I have recently joined the Guild of Spinners, Dyers and Weavers Ulster Group who meet at the Ulster Folk Museum.

7. What are your plans for the future?

I am planning to pursue a qualification in weaving through the Guild. I would also like to get other people involved – weaving is such an absorbing and relaxing activity. I guess I've become a champion for weaving and enthusing other people to give it a try!

8. Do you feel the scheme impacted on your life and if so how?

Absolutely. It felt like it was such a privilege to have a mentoring partner, a skilled practitioner on a one- to-one basis. I feel it has opened up avenues in terms of how I see the world and has raised my awareness levels. It made me feel that there was a new direction for me, a door opening.

9. Do you think the scheme is important to north Belfast and if so how?

Yes and particularly for young people who may get left behind at school. I think it's about the quality of the experience for the individual and for the scheme to be in north Belfast – what an opportunity! At the exhibition opening, there was such a collective pride in the room of friends and families – a sense of achievement as well as a sense of community. For some people in north Belfast who have a poor educational experience, maybe this is the first time they have had a positive experience.

10. On a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 is poor and 10 is excellent, please indicate how you think the scheme was managed.

9. It was very well organised.

11. Are you still in contact with Arts for All?

I am in contact with Arts for All informally and try to keep up the contact and I still have some contact with my mentor.

12. Do you have any other comments or suggestions for future mentoring schemes?

It would be lovely if it could be developed so that there could be something more structured for the mentees to check in with their mentors after the final exhibition – maybe organise an additional session one month after the exhibition to see how the mentees want to take things forward?

Mentee: Mentee 9	Artform: Painting	Mentor: Dawn Crothers
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1. How did you hear of the A4A mentoring scheme?

I walk past it every day – I just decided to call in one day.

2. When did you start the mentoring scheme?

From 2013 to 2014.

3. What did you hope to achieve through taking part in the mentoring scheme?

To improve my painting technique and learn as much as I can.

4. What were you doing when you started the mentoring scheme?

I'm retired now. I had been painting for about 7-8 years – I started an art class in the Midlands after my son had died and I was very depressed.

5. Please describe your general experience of the mentoring sessions.

I found the sessions really useful. I picked up lots of tips on technique from Dawn.

6. What have you been doing since finishing the scheme?

I've gone back to the Midland to do a refresher in oils. Dawn is still helping me.

7. What are your plans for the future?

I'd like to find another mentoring scheme and do any other art courses I can find. I'm happy just trying to improve. There's an exhibition coming up next April and I'll be putting 2-3 paintings into it.

8. Do you feel the scheme impacted on your life and if so how?

Yes – it gave me the motivation to paint more and better and it gave me an opportunity to see what other people do. It made me want to get deeper into my work and try a life portrait. I've done portraits of people's pets, mostly from photos, and they've all been really pleased. I also like doing horses and I'm also doing Carl Frampton – he trained in our club at the Midland.

9. Do you think the scheme is important to north Belfast and if so how?

Definitely. The problem is communicating the benefits to the people of north Belfast.

10. On a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 is poor and 10 is excellent, please indicate how you think the scheme was managed.

10 out of 10. I couldn't find any fault. Heather and Jill do their best. I think it's just where they are. I think there are more people who would like to do it – especially pensioners.

11. Are you still in contact with Arts for All?

Yes.

12. Do you have any other comments or suggestions for future mentoring schemes?

Maybe some more marketing? I don't think people know what's going on at Arts for All although there are some very good murals going up now and people are seeing them.

I think painting is very good for people who are depressed. It lifts them.

Mentee: Mentee 10	Artform: Print	Mentor: Helen Shields
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1. How did you hear of the A4A mentoring scheme?

I went along to the final exhibition of the previous year's scheme and was inspired to take part. The timing was spot on as I had just been made redundant from the Royal Mail.

2. When did you start the mentoring scheme?

In September this year when I was just starting my new job.

3. What did you hope to achieve through taking part in the mentoring scheme?

To improve my skills and develop as an artist.

4. What were you doing when you started the mentoring scheme?

The timing was great – I had been made redundant and had just started a new job. I was going through a period of change.

5. Please describe your general experience of the mentoring sessions.

Helen is a very good listener and gives me time to talk things through. She guides me in such things as producing artistic statements that I wouldn't have done on my own. It's good to be with someone who's been there before – in the same process as myself.

6. What have you been doing since finishing the scheme?

n/a

7. What are your plans for the future?

I have a creative plan till Christmas, but I'm also working on a piece for the end of scheme exhibition – possibly a book incorporating my poetry. Long term, I would like to do a residency somewhere and concentrate on a body of work. I will apply to the ACNI scheme (Support for Individual Artists Programme).

8. Do you feel the scheme impacted on your life and if so how?

Yes definitely – it just came along at the right time for me. Heather has been very supportive and inspirational. I've also started a City and Guilds photography course.

9. Do you think the scheme is important to north Belfast and if so how?

Definitely. North Belfast needs more creative opportunities and arts in north Belfast generally needs more promotion.

10. On a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 is poor and 10 is excellent, please indicate how you think the scheme was managed.

9 out of 10 - superb. Very welcoming and encouraging. I'd like to give something back.

11. Are you still in contact with Arts for All?

n/a

12. Do you have any other comments or suggestions for future mentoring schemes?

More get-togethers with other mentees and the group in general.

Mentee 11	Artform: Digital music	Mentor: Cormac O’Kane
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1. **How did you hear of the mentoring scheme?**

My younger sister who is an artist had called into Arts for All and had suggested I apply.

2. **When did you start the mentoring scheme?**

2013

3. **What did you hope to achieve through taking part in the mentoring scheme?**

I just wanted to learn more and improve my technique. Cormac (my mentor) had a studio in University Street where I could go.

4. **What were you doing when you started the mentoring scheme?**

I am a painter and decorator, so was doing that as well as making my own songs in my studio. I was doing a bit of DJ’ing too.

5. **Please describe your general experience of the mentoring sessions.**

It was brilliant. I met people I never would have met before. It was amazing to be in that sort of studio. Cormac helped me in every way he could.

6. **What have you been doing since finishing the scheme?**

Still painting and decorating, but now doing more of my own songs and working towards getting an album together. The scheme has made me more confident, and I’m doing more music and doing it better.

7. **What are your plans for the future?**

To get my own album out when my songs are ready and to get more paid music work. Arts for All are going to help me set up events and workshops for under 16’s to help them make music.

8. **Do you feel the scheme impacted on your life and if so how?**

Yes definitely. It brought me out of my shell and gave me confidence.

9. **Do you think the scheme is important to north Belfast and if so how?**

Yes definitely. I think it helps people who are stuck and also gives them a chance to meet people they wouldn’t normally meet. There’s not many places like that! (i.e. Arts for All).

10. **On a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 is poor and 10 is excellent, please indicate how you think the scheme was managed.**

10 out of 10 - superb. Very supportive.

11. **Are you still in contact with Arts for All?**

Yes. I'm seeing them soon about doing some events for them.

12. **Do you have any other comments or suggestions for future mentoring schemes?**

I think it would be a good idea to have more music on the scheme.



Arts for All mentee working with her mentor at T13



Untitled#01 from series Ordinances and Angels by Arts for All mentor 3

Mentor 1	Artform: Spraypainting
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1. How did you get involved with the mentoring scheme?

I already had a working relationship with Arts for All as I was facilitating arts workshops at youth clubs in the area.

2. Please describe your arts background.

I studied classical animation in Dublin as well as doing an illustration course and a one-week course in street art. I frequently work with spray painting and I often get commissioned to do murals, as well as exhibiting my own canvasses.

3. Please describe your overall experience of the mentoring scheme.

I find it very rewarding in that it's a one-to-one relationship and the mentees are highly motivated and enthusiastic. In a large group, you can't focus on one student. You get more done and can have a really good brainstorming session. It's effortless.

One of my mentees was fed up with the restrictions of doing her A level and I know her teacher was keen for her to get her involved. She was able to have fun and not feel constrained to do certain things – she was able to come up with ideas and be creative. It gave her a break from the pressure.

4. Please describe any benefits of the mentoring scheme for you/other artist mentors?

I believe it helped me refresh my work outside my comfort zone, encouraging me to be experimental and making me brush up on my skills. I found the museum visits very stimulating. It helped me to get back to basics when I can get too busy doing art - related jobs which are not artistically creative and working to very specific design briefs. Any time you collaborate with someone you come up with something innovative and very different.

5. Do you think the scheme is beneficial for north Belfast?

Definitely. I think it's fantastic to have something like this on their doorstep

6. Any ideas or suggestions for improvements?

I think it would be great to have more group meetings with the mentors so they could collaborate.

7. On a scale of 1 to 10 where 10 is excellent, how would you rate A4A management of the scheme?

10. The A4A staff were so supportive.

Mentor 2	Artform: Photography
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1. How did you get involved with the mentoring scheme?

I had already done some work with Arts for All and knew Heather, so when I heard about the scheme, I applied.

2. Please describe your arts background.

Community development is really my background, but I went back to university recently and did an arts degree. Photography had been a hobby of mine for a while, so I'm a new artist.

3. Please describe your overall experience of the mentoring scheme

It's a great scheme, a brilliant thing to have in terms of accessing the arts and has been a very positive experience for me. I have two mentees at the moment - this is a new role for me because I've only recently graduated. To be mentoring in the arts seems strange for me and it will be interesting to see what my mentees think. I'm slightly lacking in confidence because I'm new to mentoring. My mentees are very different, one doesn't have the basic skills and one is a retired chemist with a scientific mind. This is very interesting for me as I'm quite intuitive and have a different approach – I'm worried about what he will think. I think matching mentors and mentees is challenging – trying to get the right fit in terms of outlook and perspectives. Maybe mentors should be involved in the decision-making process about who is assigned to them?

4. Please describe any benefits of the mentoring scheme for you/other artist mentors?

It's too soon to ask that question, but I think it makes you look at things differently and I'm also learning from the mentees. It's good to be sharing my knowledge.

5. Do you think the scheme is beneficial for north Belfast?

Definitely.

6. Any ideas or suggestions for improvements?

I think the scheme could be longer in terms of hours. Also, I didn't really enjoy the initial training session about the mentor/mentee relationship, am not quite sure why - it just didn't really work for me.

7. On a scale of 1 to 10 where 10 is excellent, how would you rate A4A management of the scheme?

8. Overall very good.

Mentor 3	Artform: Drawing, painting
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1. How did you get involved with the mentoring scheme?

I was in contact with Arts for All as they had given me studio space in their building. They invited me to apply for the scheme.

2. Please describe your arts background.

I've been working in community arts for around 30 years and my work has developed very organically. I've never had a plan, but rather I've just developed my drawing, painting and sculpture by working with people.

3. Please describe your overall experience of the mentoring scheme.

It was brilliant. The mentee/mentor relationship is very much a partnership, a shared thing. It's a lovely process. It's a proper exchange of ideas and it works both ways. I love it because it's such a genuine process.

4. Please describe any benefits of the mentoring scheme for you/other artist mentors?

I think it really makes you articulate what you do and therefore there can be no vagueness about it and you share the core values you have developed over the years. There's something very real about it. My mentee is older than me, but he's sharing his lifeskills with me, so there's a sharing of two different lives. It's very much a growing experience for the mentor as well as the mentee.

5. Do you think the scheme is beneficial for north Belfast?

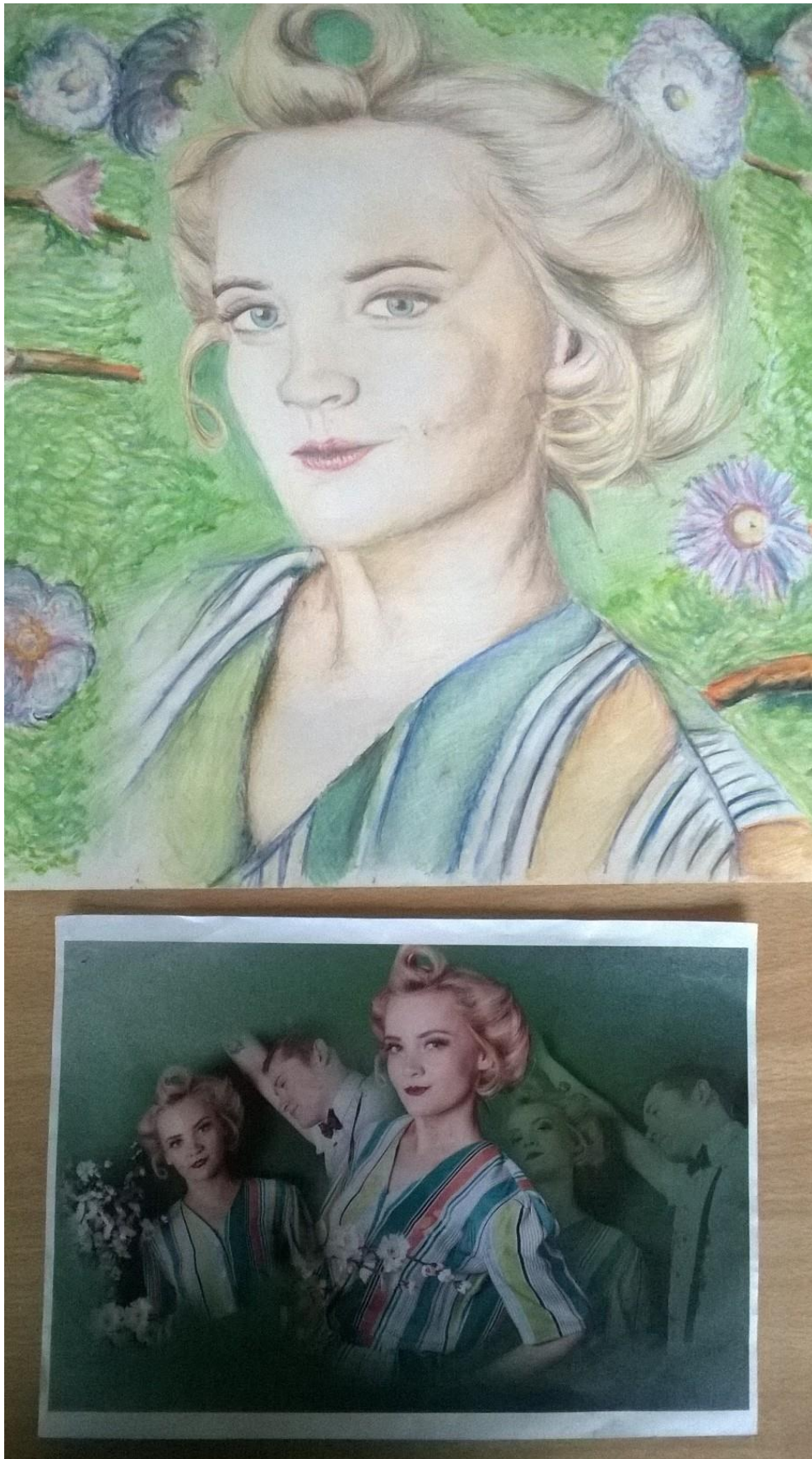
Definitely. Arts for All bring a lot of different people together from different backgrounds. Art is fantastic for showing people new paths and allowing them to think for themselves. I trust what art does for communities and individuals. They're not just alone in their own little bubble and they're made to feel less isolated.

6. Any ideas or suggestions for improvements?

I think some kind of follow up meeting after the end of the programme would be good so that things just don't dissipate afterwards.

7. On a scale of 1 to 10 where 10 is excellent, how would you rate A4A management of the scheme?

10. It was really good and they were very supportive. They have a very non-judgemental attitude and allow us the freedom to be who we are.



Untitled by Mentee 5

Arts for All mentees 2012 – 2014

Mentee	Year	Mentor	What mentee was doing when s/he started	What mentee is doing now	Any comments
Mentee 1	2013 - 2014	Moyra Donaldson	Working full time in industry. Writing poetry as a hobby.	Still working in industry but now calls himself a writer. Is writing and performing poetry. Has developed a 'mindfulness' blogsite. Planning to get work published.	"The scheme has opened me as a person and encouraged me to share and help other people – I was previously in a closed world of work."
Mentee 2	2012 - 2013	Anu Sundaralingham	In Lower Sixth at Belfast Model School doing Art A level	At University of Ulster studying animation.	Believes the work she produced on mentoring scheme helped her secure place at University.
Mentee 3	2012 - 2013	Jonny McKerr	Had just left a University foundation course and did not know what she wanted to do.	Is making a living from facilitating arts workshops and working towards her first solo exhibition.	Believes the mentoring scheme was a life-changing experience for her.
Mentee 4	2012 - 2013	Louise Smyth	Doing A levels – 2nd year. He was at St Patrick's College in north Belfast.	Foundation year of University. Plans to do B.A. in photography.	"My school didn't do photography, so the scheme gave me confidence and showed me what was possible. I might have given up – the scheme really focused me and gave me that extra push."
Mentee 5	2013 - 2014	Louise Smyth	Second year of A levels.	A foundation course in art and design at Belfast Met. Wants to do a B.A. in photography and follow as a career.	Emphasised the 'confidence boosting' impact of the scheme for him.
Mentee 6	2013 - 2014	Louise Smyth	Unemployed. Photography was a hobby.	Starting to do wedding photography.	Hopes to develop photography business.
Mentee 7	2013 - 2014	Louise Smyth	Full time carer.	Providing photographic service to community groups.	"It gives an opportunity to meet people you wouldn't normally meet - people from all ages and backgrounds."

Mentee 8	2012 - 2013	Lucy McMullan	Working as an independent consultant.	Has acquired her own weaving loom, has joined a weaver's guild and is working towards a weaving qualification.	"I feel it has opened up new avenues in terms of how I see the world and has raised my awareness levels. It made me feel that there was a new direction for me, a door opening."
Mentee 9	2013 - 2014	Dawn Crothers	Retired. Had started painting when his son died.	Painting more, doing animal portraits for people and doing a refresher course in oils.	"I think painting is very good for people who are depressed. It lifts them."
Mentee 10	2014 - 2015	Helen Shields	Had just been made redundant and was starting a new job in the arts.	Working on a creative plan till Christmas 2014.	Plans to develop a body of work, do a residency and apply for ACNI SIAP scheme.
Mentee 11	2013 - 2014	Cormac O'Kane	Painting and decorating, making his own songs.	Still painting and decorating, and doing more of his own songs and working towards an album. Arts for All helping him set up music workshops for younger people.	"The scheme has made me more confident, and I'm doing more music and doing it better."
Mentee 12	2013 - 2014	Grainne Kielty	Was in Lower Sixth doing A levels.	Got an A in art at AS level and is doing a foundation course at UU.	Nicole credits her A grade to the mentoring scheme.

7. Conclusions

Without exception, all mentees who were contacted had very positive feedback about their experience of the scheme.

All had benefitted in some way, whether just having improved skills in their chosen artform to having undergone transformational life changes such as mentee 3 who had lost her way before starting the scheme and subsequently has embarked on a new career which she attributes completely to having taken part in the scheme.

An additional benefit which many recorded was increased confidence and self-esteem, as well as the chance to meet and make friends with people they wouldn't normally meet.

The one-to-one aspect of the scheme was highlighted as a significant benefit, with participants able to feel more relaxed, less self-conscious and able to pick things up much quicker than in a group situation.

For older participants like mentees 7 and 9, the scheme helped them develop a more positive outlook.

For younger participants like mentees 2, 4 and 5, the scheme helped support their educational achievements and, following the attainment of good grades at AS and A level, they have all progressed into further education.

For many of the younger mentees, the scheme allowed them access to techniques and artform specialities which they were unable to access at school, as well as encouraging them to be more innovative. Arguably, the younger mentees may not have progressed into further education had they not taken part in the scheme. This is an extremely positive and important outcome.

The organisation of the scheme also received nearly 100% positive feedback, with Arts for All and its staff being highly praised for their supportive and encouraging style, as well as their general management and coordination of the programme.

Mentors were highly praised, reflecting Arts for All's ability not only to recruit mentors with the right personal skills as well as levels of expertise, but also the ability to match the mentors with the mentees, getting the right fit. In the case of mentee 8, the scheme had the flexibility to adapt to her evolving artistic needs by allowing her to change mentors.

The majority of the mentees are still in contact with Arts for All and/or their mentors. Many of them would have liked to have seen a more formal continuation of this contact in terms of reviewing and revisiting their general progress with their mentors and with the group in general.

Mentor feedback was positive, with all mentors reporting a rewarding experience. Mentor 3 summarises the mentor/mentee relationship: 'My mentee is older than me, but he's sharing his lifeskills with me, so there's a sharing of two different lives. It's very much a growing experience for the mentor as well as the mentee.'

All mentees and mentors felt that the scheme was beneficial to north Belfast, citing reasons of current poor access to the arts, lack of awareness of the arts as well as of Arts for All,

community development and cohesion. The opportunity of a one-to-one mentoring scheme such as this, free of charge, was clearly a benefit to all participants, many of whom would not have been able to otherwise take part.

8. Acknowledgements

Thank you to all the mentees and mentors who gave their time to feedback on their experiences.

Vicki Maguire, December 8, 2014



End of mentoring scheme exhibition, 2012 the John Luke Gallery

Arts for All mentoring scheme, November 2014

