

Orb Community Enterprise

IMPACT SUMMARY 2013-2014

“Community Arts for Positive Mental Health”



Introduction - About Orb Community Enterprise

Orb Community Enterprise is an established charity and social enterprise promoting Positive Mental Health and providing better life opportunities to people at risk of the effects of poor mental health such as isolation, lack of influence, lack of opportunity for self-development and difficulty accessing learning provision or employment. It does this through engaging individuals in creative and learning activity in a community focused environment, promoting increases in influence, confidence, self-esteem, skills, knowledge and greater opportunities to volunteer & work.

The majority of its work takes place at Orb Community Arts, a supportive and welcoming space in the heart of Knaresborough with high quality facilities including a recording studio, rehearsal room, performance area, DJ booth, creative IT suite, art-space and garden. There is also external provision of sound, lighting and event support to a range of charities, schools and local organisations and a well-developed volunteering programme ensuring that all members of the community, including service users, have the opportunity to develop and utilise their skills both within Orb and in the wider world. This extended work further helps break down barriers, combat stigma and promote greater awareness and better understanding of mental illness, its effects and the potential solutions.



“Andy* has the most improved global quality of life both witnessed and reported in recent years and I view his Orb sessions as essential to this, as does he.”

Rick Allan – Assertive Community Outreach Mental Health Team Manager

*name changed

Overview 2013-14

2013-14 saw Orb continue to consolidate its position as a vibrant, growing and increasingly successful organisation that is a valued component in local health care, a promoter of the creative arts contributing to the quality of local community life and a champion promoting positive attitudes toward mental health & wellbeing.

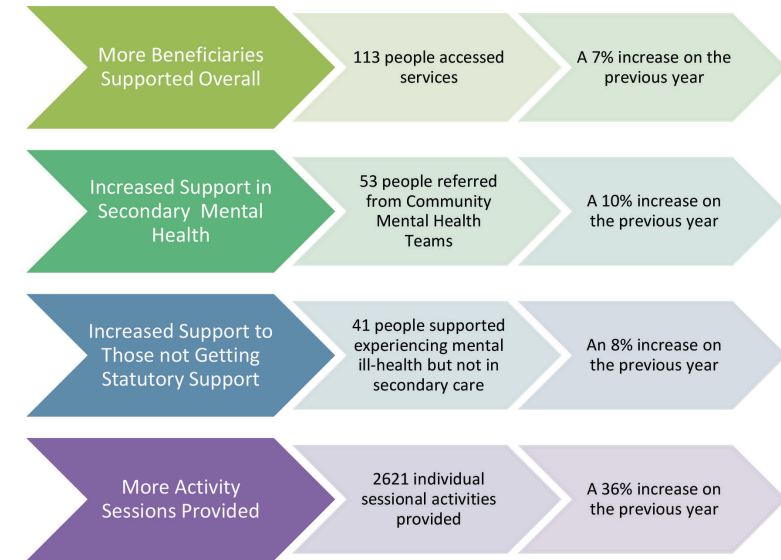


Key developments over this period included:

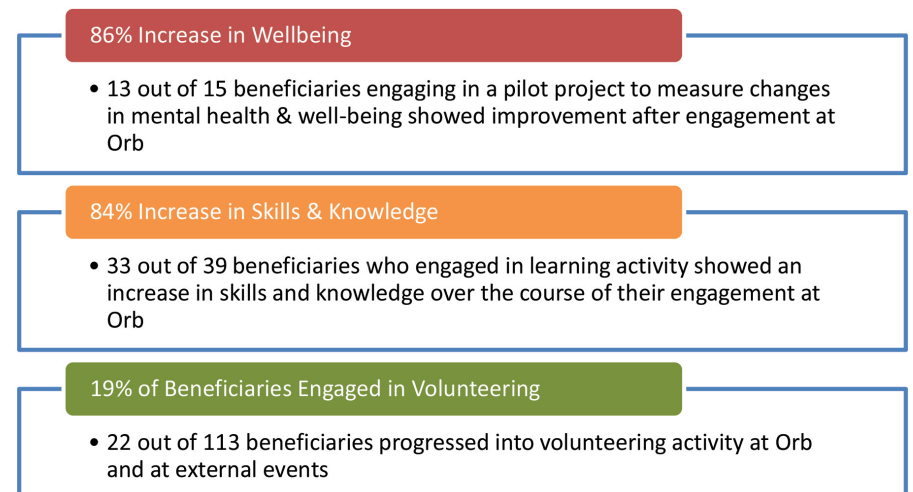
- an increase in the number of people supported
- an increased focus on targeting those most at risk of mental ill-health and most in need of Orb's support
- a strengthened relationship with North Yorkshire County Council Health & Adult Services and local Community Mental Health Teams working to deliver day services to those experiencing severe and enduring mental ill-health
- an increased ability to support people at risk of falling through gaps in statutory support
- an increase in provision of sessional creative activity, access to 1-1 well-being support and opportunities for skills training and volunteering
- a better trained and more skilled staff and volunteer team
- the development of a more robust monitoring process to record the impact of engagement on skills and wellbeing helping make the case for service provision not just to those already suffering mental ill-health but also to those at risk of developing mental health conditions or suffering a relapse
- the incorporation of the 5 Ways to Wellbeing into the organisation's work, a process developed by the New Economics Foundation and supported by Mind and the NHS, to promote better mental health
- a concerted effort by the Trustees, Management and Staff team to develop the quality and effectiveness of the organisational structures underpinning Orb's work, culminating in a Strategic Review, that sharpened the organisation's focus and laid solid foundations for the next stage in its development

The following section assesses Orb's work in more detail, using this Outcomes Focused Framework as its basis.

Orb's work in numbers



Orb's impact on beneficiaries



Achieving Orb's Aims



The Aim

“To promote positive mental health and provide better life opportunities to people experiencing or at risk of the effects of poor mental health”

An Outcomes Focused Approach

Orb has a clear Outcomes Focused Approach to its work that puts its beneficiaries at the heart of everything it does. Its core Aim is broken down into three broad Outcome areas in which it wants to make a change to the lives of these beneficiaries. Each Outcome has a range of service activities that are designed to help bring these changes about.

These Outcomes and activities are designed to form a sequential Orb journey in which beneficiaries are supported to engage within a stigma-free community, grow in confidence through participation, develop skills through learning, and use these skills in volunteering. This takes them from isolation and disengagement toward a place where they are participating in and contributing to their community as valued members.

The Five Ways to Wellbeing

This journey implicitly reflects the Five Ways to Wellbeing, an evidence based approach to better mental health developed by the New Economics Foundation and promoted by Public Health England, the NHS and national mental health charity Mind. Its core principles are:

- Connecting with others
- Being more active
- Taking notice of the world
- Keeping learning
- Giving to others

These are all key components of the journey taken by beneficiaries at Orb and reflect the outcomes they achieve through participation, making a clear connection between engagement and overall improvement in mental health & wellbeing.

(For a detailed representation of this approach, see Appendix 1: The Orb Outcomes Triangle)



“Without Orb my transition from acute illness to normal life wouldn't have been successful” - Service User

Orb's work by Outcome



Outcome 1

“Beneficiaries will feel less isolated and have increased opportunities to participate in and influence valued community activities”

Fundamental to Orb's work is the provision of a safe, supportive and stigma-free environment, high quality and relevant facilities and an inspiring range of activities which encourage beneficiaries to break the cycle of disengagement and isolation that many of them experience. As part of this community, they are empowered to make choices for themselves both in the design of their own care and learning packages and through involvement in regular consultation and advisory groups that directly impact on the charity's work.

Reaching more of those who need support

Orb continued to make efforts to identify and engage with those most in need of its support. Whilst actual numbers supported showed only a modest 7% increase on 2012-13, rising from 106 to 113, this was against a background of statutory support to those with severe & enduring mental ill-health becoming increasingly restricted to the most unwell. Nevertheless, referrals from Community Mental Health Teams actually increased 10% during this period reaffirming both the continued need for the service and the regard it is held in by mental health professionals. This trend was reinforced by an 8% increase in the numbers of people referred to Orb experiencing mental ill health but not in receipt of statutory support, a number which could have been greater had sufficient funding been in place. Numbers were also affected by Orb's decision to focus more strongly on its core mental health work with an end to involvement in projects primarily focused on digital inclusion and youth work slowing the growth in overall service user numbers. On balance though, it was noticeable that Orb was providing a service to a growing beneficiary base that better reflected the aim of the organisation.



“Thank-you so very much for my training and certificate, it means so much to me, but most of all thank you for the privilege of spending time with your enormously talented clientele. What an honour to be part of the Orb and everything it stands for” Jean – Volunteer

More support through increased provision of activities

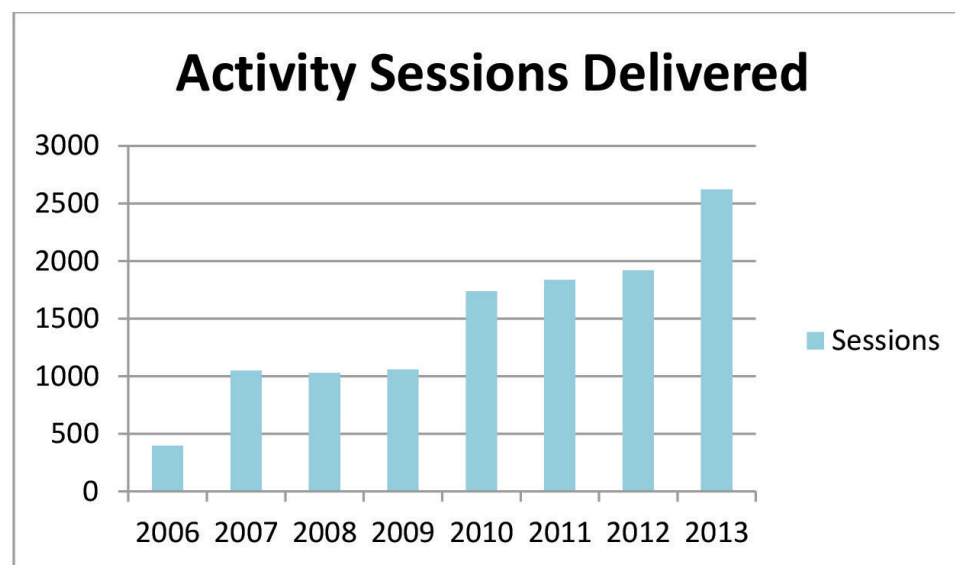
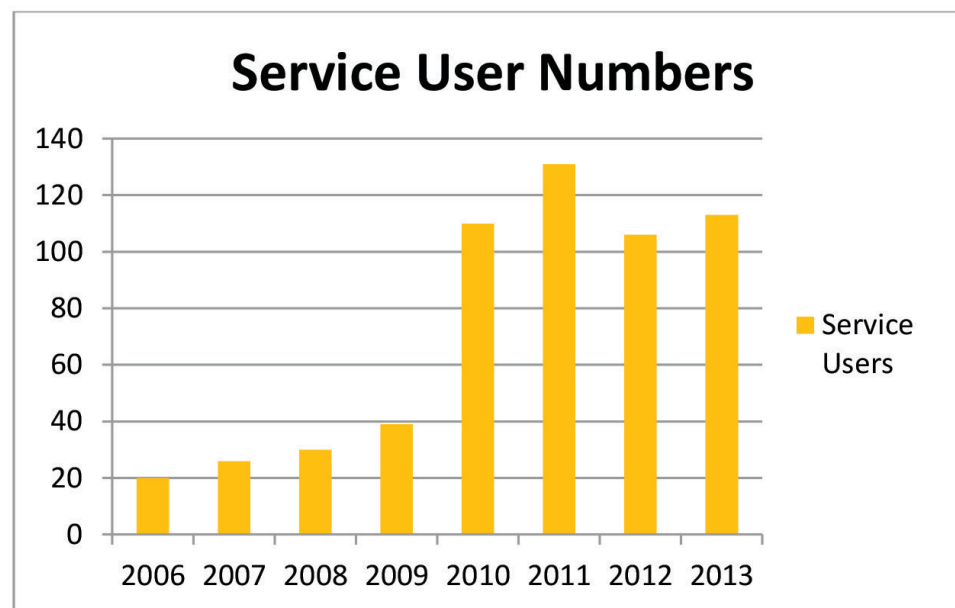
Significant progress was made in the range and number of individual sessions of support Orb was able to provide to beneficiaries annually with a rise from 1921 to 2621, equivalent to a 36% increase in activity. This meant that the average amount of individual support per person provided rose from an average of 18 to 23 sessions over the 12 month period.

Sessions focused around the following key areas:

Music – At 47% of delivered activity, music remained core to Orb's work. This included instrument lessons (in guitar, piano and drumming), DJ skills tuition, songwriting sessions, recording sessions, music technology training and music group work and included a range of opportunities to perform both at Orb and in the wider community. Activity was supported by a range of volunteers, as well as a part time studio manager working three days a week, so guaranteeing a core service and appropriate volunteer training. The combination of high-quality, varied and flexible facilities, unique to the area, combined with the reliability of a paid core member of staff and additional volunteers all contributed to an increase of 260 sessions on the previous year.

IT – At 23%, IT also figured highly in Orb's work, with individuals accessing basic IT skills training, digital photography, digital film editing, web-design, blogging and desk top publishing, with beneficiaries also getting the opportunity to contribute content to Orb's social media and online presence by way of film and photography projects. Most of this service delivery was provided by the volunteer team, under the supervision of the Project Manager. There was a nominal dip in actual sessional IT activity of 52 sessions on the year before, reflecting Orb's withdrawal from delivering a dedicated Digital Inclusion Project for UK Online, but this did not impact on the range or accessibility of IT options to the core beneficiary base.

Art - At 9%, Art activity remained steady with a slight increase of 34 in the number of individual sessions provided on the previous year. A regular weekly class was continued, delivered by a qualified paid sessional art teacher, ensuring a quality regular core session. This was supplemented through the year by volunteers delivering shorter term individual art projects. Beneficiaries also had the opportunity to contribute to a number of exhibitions including one in the Community Gallery at Harrogate Public Library.

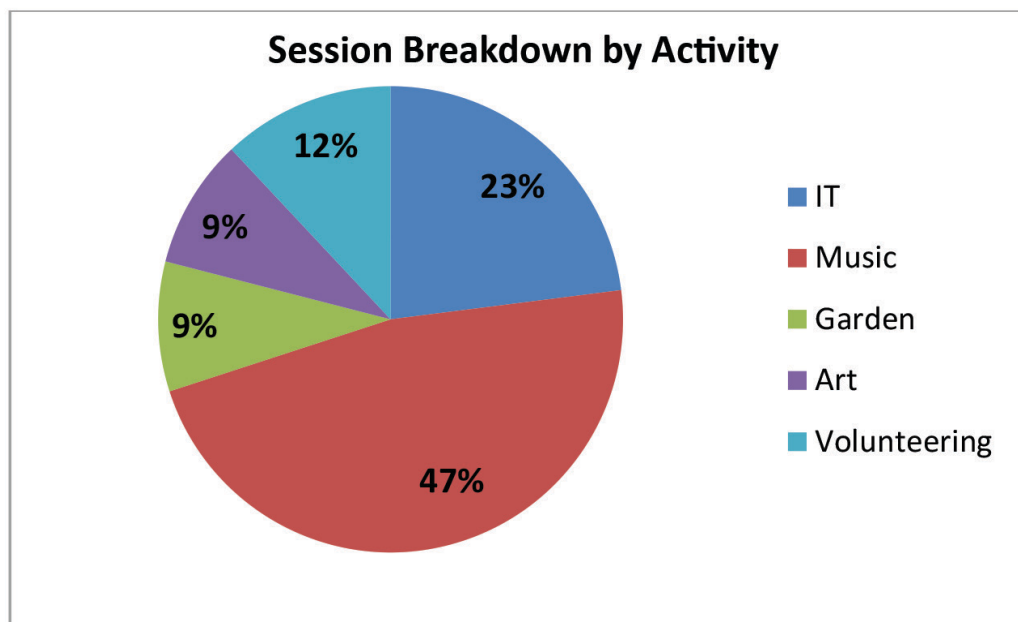


Gardening –At 9%, the garden project showed a marked increase in activity. With an increase of 172 individual sessions on the previous year, this reflected the increased usability of the space with the majority of the hard landscaping finished, all the main garden features such as the water cascade, sheds and shelters in place, and produce beds and foliage well established. Whilst restricted funding meant there was no paid gardener in post for this financial year, service users and volunteers still made significantly more use of the space as a result of this work being finished. Produce from the garden was used by beneficiaries to bake goods for Orb’s annual summer open day and music festival and a range of produce was made available free of charge to service users throughout the year in order to encourage healthy eating.

Volunteering & Event Support – At 12% of sessional activity and with an increase of 286 sessions on the previous year, this is the area that has shown the most significant growth. This reflects the development of more focused volunteer training developed through Orb’s Community Learning programme and the provision of this to service users alongside active encouragement to develop work skills through hands-on experience. The range of activities beneficiaries have engaged in has also broadened from a traditional base of involvement in community events to also embrace delivery of art, gardening, music and IT day services, setting up art exhibitions and providing catering for Orb events.



“I have gained so much confidence - I wouldn’t have dared to do this before. I appreciate learning in a relaxed environment and I feel comfortable asking questions and for help” – Service User



Increasing wellbeing support and promoting choice and empowerment

1-1 Wellbeing Support Sessions

Part of Orb's work in 2013-14 included the development and introduction of structured 1-1 individual support sessions with a more focused wellbeing agenda. A pilot project was introduced in which beneficiaries were able to discuss their own wellbeing and draw up their own programme of support, empowering them to take control of their own lives. These sessions were repeated after a period of engagement allowing participants to reflect on their progress both in what they were doing and in how this was affecting their mental health. Of the 15 individuals supported to engage in this process, 13 registered improvements based on accepted wellbeing measurement tools – a rate of around 86%. These individuals also showed much stronger outcomes in terms of progressing into volunteering, employment and study. This work reinforced the community learning programmes already in place which also offered beneficiaries the ability to input into their own learning plans. This is more fully discussed in the Outcome 2 section.

Consultations & Advisory Group

Orb also continued to promote beneficiary involvement with and influence over the wider organisational decision making processes. This took the form of 7 consultations and advisory groups over the 12 month period. Of these, four concerned the general running of Orb, two focused on the garden project specifically and one was used to develop a new area of activity around creating radio show podcasts. All of these meetings were open to service users, volunteers, staff and partners and were advertised both internally and via social media. People unable or unwilling to participate in a large group discussion were encouraged to contribute named or anonymous comments and suggestions via an 'ideas box' in the Orb lounge area.



“Keep up doing a great job and helping people in the community, you really helped me by allowing me to gain some work experience at your wonderful organization and I am forever thankful.” Yazdan – Volunteer

Outcome 2

“Beneficiaries will have improved knowledge, interpersonal skills, life skills and/or work related skills”

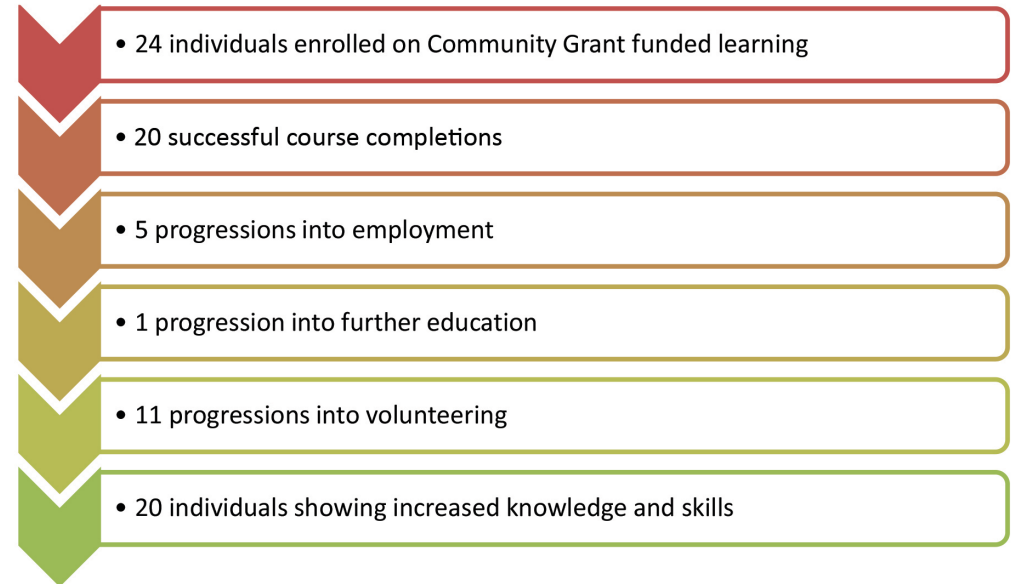
Once individuals have engaged in activity at Orb, they are encouraged to further develop their knowledge, skills and abilities in tangible ways. Mental ill-health is a profound barrier to accessing learning and personal development opportunities, and Orb aims to provide these through a range of unaccredited Community Learning Courses and through involvement in performances and exhibitions that celebrate a beneficiary’s talents and ability.

Community Learning Courses

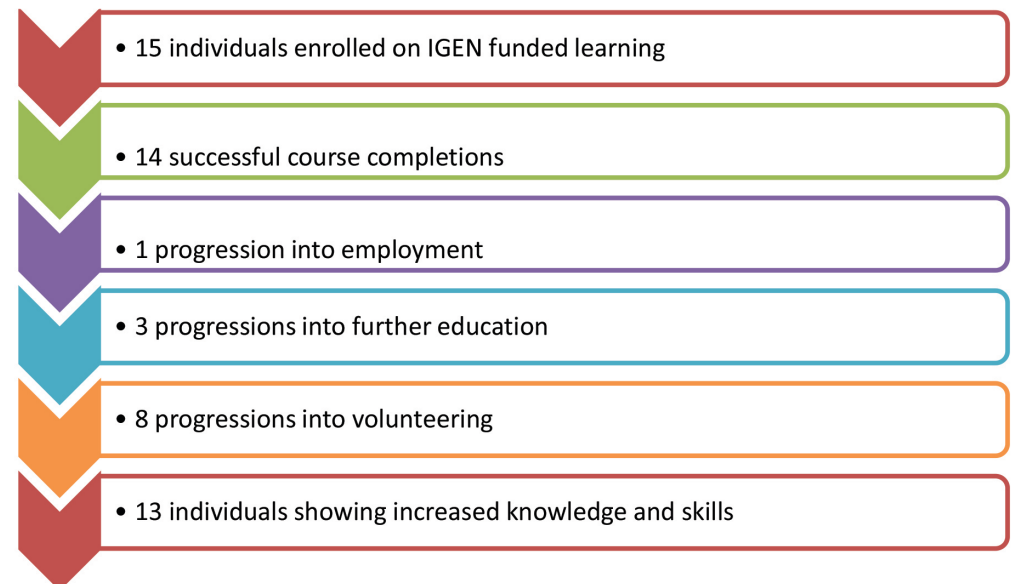
Opportunity for personal development is primarily provided in the form of Unaccredited Community Learning Courses. These have the advantage of taking place in an informal environment, without the often negative connotations those experiencing poor mental health associate with more mainstream learning provision, including the anxiety of expectation around accredited learning and the inability of establishments to provide tailored support that takes into account people’s barriers to engagement.

In 2013-14, Orb focused this learning provision on volunteering skills themed around working in one of Orb’s key areas of music, art, IT or gardening, combined with using these in supported volunteering experience. 24 individuals engaged in courses funded through a European Social Fund Community Grant, and 15 through funding from the IGEN Trust with 84% showing increases in skills and knowledge. There were also significant benefits associated with learning engagement, especially given the nature of the beneficiary base, with 6 progressions into employment, 4 progressions into further education and 19 progressions into volunteering.

Community Grant Funded Learning Outcomes



IGEN Funded Learning Outcomes



Events, exhibitions and podcasts

Beneficiaries are also supported to celebrate their skills and abilities through a range of events and exhibitions over the year, giving the skills and knowledge they have developed at Orb a practical and tangible outlet. In 2013-14, this consisted of:

Two art exhibitions – one internally as part of Orb’s annual summer showcase and open day, and one externally for two weeks in Harrogate Central Library’s Community Gallery, both of which featured a range of artwork produced individually and co-operatively over the previous year

One garden open day and food stall – featuring cakes and savouries made by beneficiaries from ingredients sourced in the Orb garden

Four musical events – one as part of Orb’s annual summer showcase and one as part of Orb’s Christmas Party, both featuring a range of singers, bands and DJs performing on stage with professional sound and lighting and two evening performances in which Orb members provided support to headline artists using Orb’s performance space as a venue

Excluding the Christmas party, all of these events and exhibitions were open to the general public, further validating the skills and abilities of the participants.

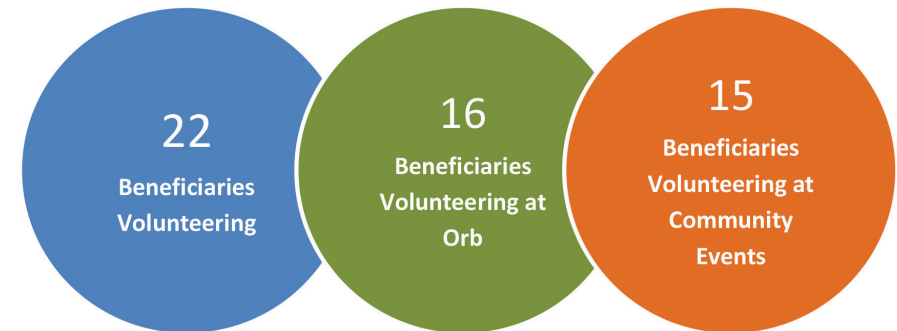
Outcome 3

“Beneficiaries will develop confidence and high level employability skills through volunteering in the community”

Progressions into volunteering

The final part of the Orb Journey and the last of Orb’s dedicated Outcomes is to offer beneficiaries who have grown in skills and confidence the opportunity to put these to use in actual volunteering. This can be within Orb itself, contributing to the organisation’s day to day running, or externally by assisting in Orb’s provision of event support in the wider community. In both cases it provides individuals with the practical experience they are often denied and allows them to give something back to others, a key component of mental wellbeing.

In the last year, 22 beneficiaries progressed into volunteering after engaging in creative and learning activity. Of these 22 beneficiaries, 16 were involved in volunteering internally, getting involved in administration, cleaning, garden work, helping deliver art and music sessions and contributing material to Orb’s social media and promotion work. 15 of these 22 were also involved in event support both at Orb and in the wider community helping provide sound, lighting and staging support, hanging art exhibitions and catering for events. In addition to the in 4 in house performances previously mentioned, Orb also provided sound & lighting support at 12 external events. Of these 16 events, beneficiaries volunteered at 8.



Orb's Community Focus



Orb's primary concern is to address the needs of its beneficiaries, and fundamental to this is overcoming the stigma around mental ill health so that they can play a valued role in an inclusive community. As a result, it is crucial that Orb has a strong and inclusive Community Focus that allows people experiencing mental ill-health to work alongside those who are currently well, and ensures that the organisation and those associated with it make a positive contribution to the quality of local life. This is achieved through a well-developed Volunteering Programme open to anyone with an interest in creativity and mental well-being and through an external Sound & Lighting Event Support Service provided to other charities, schools and local organisations.

The Volunteering Programme

Orb utilises the skills of a range of volunteers across all its activities and in 2013-14 involved 55 people in its volunteering programme. All volunteers receive full training utilising a bespoke package, including not just the practical skills needed to work in a community arts environment, but also in working with vulnerable people. Beneficiaries who want to progress are encouraged to become full volunteers and the programme is run in a spirit of mutual support and skill sharing.

In 2013-14, volunteers contributed 2385 hours of support, often equating to between 1 and 2 additional members of full-time staff. This was in every aspect of Orb's work, including day to day tasks such as cleaning, administration, service delivery including provision of music, art and IT sessions, work on the garden project, input into writing funding bids, promotional work and helping out with event support.

Community Events Support

With a dual commitment to offering its beneficiaries experience of practical volunteering in the real world and to providing them with the chance to contribute to and participate more fully in the local community, Orb has established an Events Support Service. This consists of a sound and lighting resource and associated expertise which are offered to a range of other charities, schools and organisations at a reasonable cost.

2013-14 saw Orb actively support 16 events locally including providing sound at a high profile sell out rock concert at Knaresborough's Frazer Theatre, running the performance stage during both Knaresborough's Easter and Christmas Fairs, providing a PA for the Remembrance Day service at Knaresborough Castle and providing sound and lighting for King James School's annual fashion and technology show. Equipment was also loaned to a range of organisations for a variety of events including meetings, concerts, pantomimes and shows.

Orb can now count on the Lions, the Rotary Club, Harrogate & District Family Society, charity group Avalon, Knaresborough Silver Band, the Frazer Theatre and many other local organisations as regular users of its events support service, firmly placing it at the heart of community life and helping de-stigmatise and raise the profile of mental health.



Recognition & Ensuring Quality



Orb has now established itself as a recognised organisation promoting Positive Mental Health and delivering a range of services around wellbeing, learning and creativity for over eight years. In doing so it has received a range of awards, developed a network of partners and embraced an ethos of continuous improvement that pay tribute to the effectiveness and quality of its work.

Awards & Quality Marks

Duke of York Community Initiative Award
North Yorkshire County Council Health & Adult Services Quality Assurance Framework
North Yorkshire County Council Approved Provider
Matrix Quality Assurance Standard

Key Partners

North Yorkshire County Council Health & Adult Services
Tees Esk & Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Community Mental Health Teams for North Yorkshire
Your Learning Consortium Knaresborough

Continuous Improvement

Orb is continually working towards improving itself organisationally and in terms of the quality and effectiveness of the services it delivers. During 2013-14 it:

- continued working towards PQASSO accreditation, the quality assurance standard designed especially for third sector organisations by the Charities Evaluation Service
- used funding from the Liz & Terry Bramall Charitable Trust to further develop the quality of its Volunteering Programme
- used funding from the IGEN Trust to improve its Impact Monitoring
- provided the Trustees with an external programme of support and development delivered by Harrogate & Ripon Centre for Voluntary Services
- undertook a full strategic review to refocus the organisation's aims and set the agenda for the next stage in its development



Orb - A Success Story

Looking back over 2013-14, it is clear Orb is making an increasing impact locally in its aim to promote a positive attitude to mental health & wellbeing and improve the lives of those affected by mental ill health. It has made real and significant efforts to reach those most in need and provide them with effective and quality support that has a lasting personal, social and economic impact. It has done so by working effectively with a range of statutory and third sector organisations as well as the local public to ensure it makes a genuine difference to real problems. However, as an organisation, it is well aware that there is still a huge amount of work to be done in this area and has set out a solid agenda for the coming years.



Future Plans

The economic recession of the last 5 years has put an enormous strain on statutory services, third sector organisations and the people it supports, yet Orb has successfully negotiated this difficult period and emerged stronger than at any point since its inception. As it continues to establish itself, so its plans are now growing in scope and ambition. The Strategic Review carried out at the end of 2013-14 addressed in depth the need for Orb's work, the challenges facing supporting those who needed its support, and the best ways to achieve this. It has led to the following goals being established for the years ahead:

- To consolidate Orb's position as an integral part of secondary mental health services for those suffering severe and enduring mental ill-health and in receipt of secondary mental health care support
- To better meet the needs of those at risk of mental ill-health and not receiving statutory support by working toward establishing a direct link with the local Clinical Commissioning Group and GP practices to allow direct referral of patients by 'social prescription' into Orb's services

- To work with Public Health to contribute to the Prevention Agenda by developing services in the community that keep local people well
- To promote a stigma-free attitude to mental ill health and to promote a positive attitude to maintaining good mental health by engaging in community focused creative activity and volunteering
- To develop training and learning opportunities which practically support those experiencing mental ill-health to engage in volunteering & work
- To develop training and learning opportunities which support employers and staff to implement good mental wellbeing practice in the workplace
- To maximise Orb's reach by extending service provision beyond core daytime hours
- To develop a larger, more effective staff team that reflects the significant increase in Orb's work
- To develop Orb's capacity and longer term security by exploring options to purchase and renovate its current premises

At a time when the prevalence and huge negative social and economic impact of mental ill health on individuals and communities is becoming increasingly recognised, it is clear that the need for accessible and local solutions like Orb is greater than ever - not just in supporting those already experiencing mental ill-health, but in ensuring that everyone takes a more positive approach to maintaining mental wellbeing and plays their part in creating a healthier, happier and more productive community in which all can flourish.

*Leon Fijalkowski
Project Manager
November 2014*



Appendix 1

The Orb Outcomes Triangle

