

# Metal

## Press release

7<sup>th</sup> November 2017

### ***Second Anniversary of ground-breaking NetPark Mental Well-being project***

The 4 January 2018 marks the second anniversary of the critically acclaimed NetPark Mental Health and Wellbeing Project, which over the last two years has used digital art, iPads and the outdoors to work with 806 people living in Southend with a mental health condition and/or dementia.

Delivered in partnership by arts organisation Metal, Southend-on-Sea Borough Council and the Clinical Commissioning Group, the NetPark Wellbeing Project was born out of a desire to create an innovative service that would have a positive impact for people living with (or caring for those living with) mental health concerns and dementia, whilst also giving scope for volunteering opportunities.

At the end of our first two years, the NetPark Wellbeing Project is one of five finalists in the National Dementia Care Awards and the Highly Commended Runner Up in the Guardian Award for Innovation in Mental Health services at the Advancing Healthcare Awards. The following statistics help to explain why our project had attracted national attention:-

Of 806 participants, living with mental health:-

- 73% of participants say their symptoms have improved
- 81% of participants say their self confidence has increased
- 77% of participants say they feel more confident in using technology
- 43% of participants asked, stated their visits to GP/Crisis team had reduced since coming to the project

Of 83 volunteers that have taken part in the project so far:-

- 60% disclosed that they live with a diagnosed mental health condition.
- 98% state they have benefitted from volunteering
- 85% state the project has helped them improve their stress and anxiety levels.
- 74% (61 volunteers) went on to higher education/return to education or employment

For 86 people living with dementia:-

- 1,234 hours of free art therapy using iPads as a creative tool have been provided to those with dementia

- 1,234 hours of respite for those caring for a loved one with dementia
- Use of the iPad to create artwork has encouraged confidence in using technology for healthcare and other social services and needs.
- 6 people living with dementia took part in creating a new digital artwork, now permanently sited within NetPark called Garden of Remember, working with an artist, writer and illustrator.

The project uses the collection of digital artworks at NetPark, the first digital art park in the world in Chalkwell Park, Southend-on-Sea, created by Metal. There are currently 15 artworks, each responding in very different ways to the landscape, people, wildlife and/or history of the park. Each artwork is an App which can be downloaded onto your smart device, either iPad, iPhone or Android which then guides you to the GPS located content. The works are engaging and playful and designed to take you on a different journey around the park, providing a variety of experiences in the park environment that are in turn surprising, funny, informative and thought-provoking. Designed for a variety of audiences, the range of works ensures that there is something to enchant all ages and allows for a shared experience or individual contemplation.

Jo Dickinson, Strategy and Commissioning Manager for Mental Health and Dementia, Southend Borough Council said,

“I am really proud of our project co-ordinator, Emma and her team of dedicated volunteers, without whom, the project would not be possible. Working in Partnership with Metal has been really exciting as it’s enabled us to think of new and innovative ways to offer help and support to people with mental health issues and dementia. Digital art in combination with use of the park has been hugely beneficial for people and we have also seen the positive impact of working across generations.”

Colette Bailey, artistic director of Metal, said, “It has been amazing to see the inspiration that the digital artworks in the park bring to the participants of the NetPark Wellbeing Project and the work that they create in response, using iPads in our digital studio at Metal Art School is equally inspiring. The impact and greater sense of wellbeing that creative expression can bring is well-documented and it’s been brilliant to witness that first hand as the project has matured and developed.”

More details visit [www.metalculture.com](http://www.metalculture.com)

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## **EDITOR'S NOTES**

### **NetPark**

NetPark is the first digital art park in the world. Developed by arts organisation, Metal, it is a visitor attraction for Southend and presents a collection of specially commissioned, site specific, digital artworks and stories for Chalkwell Park in Southend-

on-Sea.

Partners have included, R&D Digital Art Fund, The Arts Council, Leigh Horticultural Society, ROH Bridge, Southend Borough Council, University of Brighton and software developers, Calvium.



The digital park logo to indicate public green space with open wi-fi was developed as part of the NetPark project.

Visitors to NetPark can access the works via smart media (mobiles and tablets). For those without access to smart media, there is a facility to loan equipment, free of charge, from Metal who are based on site.

### **About Metal**

Metal was founded in 2002 and has been active in Liverpool since 2004, the South Essex region since 2007 and Peterborough since 2012. Each of our spaces: Edge Hill Station in Liverpool, Chalkwell Hall in Southend and Chauffeurs Cottage in Peterborough were renovated to create centres of activity for artists, creatives and community. From these bases, Metal have worked with artists and local agencies to provide the catalyst that is helping to transform the potential for thriving creative and cultural industries in these three places over the last ten years.

Metal also works directly with artists from overseas and across the UK helping them to research and realise ambitious projects and ideas that take place in a wide variety of contexts within the region. These ideas often respond in a specific way to place and are innovative in content. We take a developmental approach to local creativity and talent - training, mentoring and supporting the growth of knowledge and capacity in the sector, encouraging cross-sector and cross-disciplinary conversations and sharing of knowledge.

Metal also creates its own projects - large in scale, high in impact and involving a wide number of participants and audience from all walks of life. Each year Metal works with around 1200 artists from across the world, 18,000 active participants, over 60,000 live audiences and more than 100,000 online audiences.

### **About the Digital R&D Fund for the Arts**

The Digital R&D fund for the Arts was a £7 million fund to support collaboration between organisations with arts projects, technology providers, and researchers. It was a partnership between Arts Council England ([www.artscouncil.org.uk](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk)), Arts and Humanities Research Council ([www.ahrc.ac.uk](http://www.ahrc.ac.uk)) and Nesta ([www.nesta.org.uk](http://www.nesta.org.uk)).



Supported by Nesta, Arts & Humanities Research Council and public funding by the National Lottery through Arts Council England