



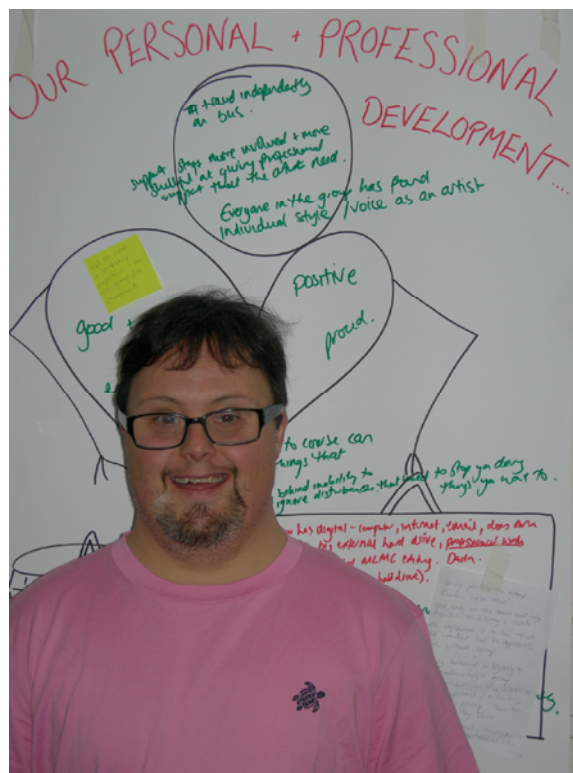
External evaluation of Flash Frame project.

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Evaluation undertaken by Alison Leverett-Morris



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Lucy Skuce and Danny Smith, at the externally facilitated project evaluation meeting.

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1. Project aims.

Project aims, as per the ACE (Grants for the Arts) proposal:

OFVM wants to:

- Support artists, with a learning disability, to develop their practice and realise their artistic potential.
- Support artists, with a learning disability, to develop their understanding of the arts infrastructure and funding system, build their network and understanding of exhibition/distribution opportunities.
- Increase the number of accessible professional development opportunities for learning disabled artists in Oxfordshire.
- Increase the number of learning disabled artists producing new artwork in Oxfordshire.
- Raise the profile of, and develop audiences for, the work of learning disabled artists in Oxfordshire.
- Identify alternatives to the traditional gallery space for public presentation of work (including on-line opportunities).
- Build on its experience of working with artists with learning disabilities and deliver a programme of tailor made opportunities that respond to the identified needs of potential participant artists.

2. Evaluation aims.

The external evaluation focussed on working directly with the participant artists and aimed to:

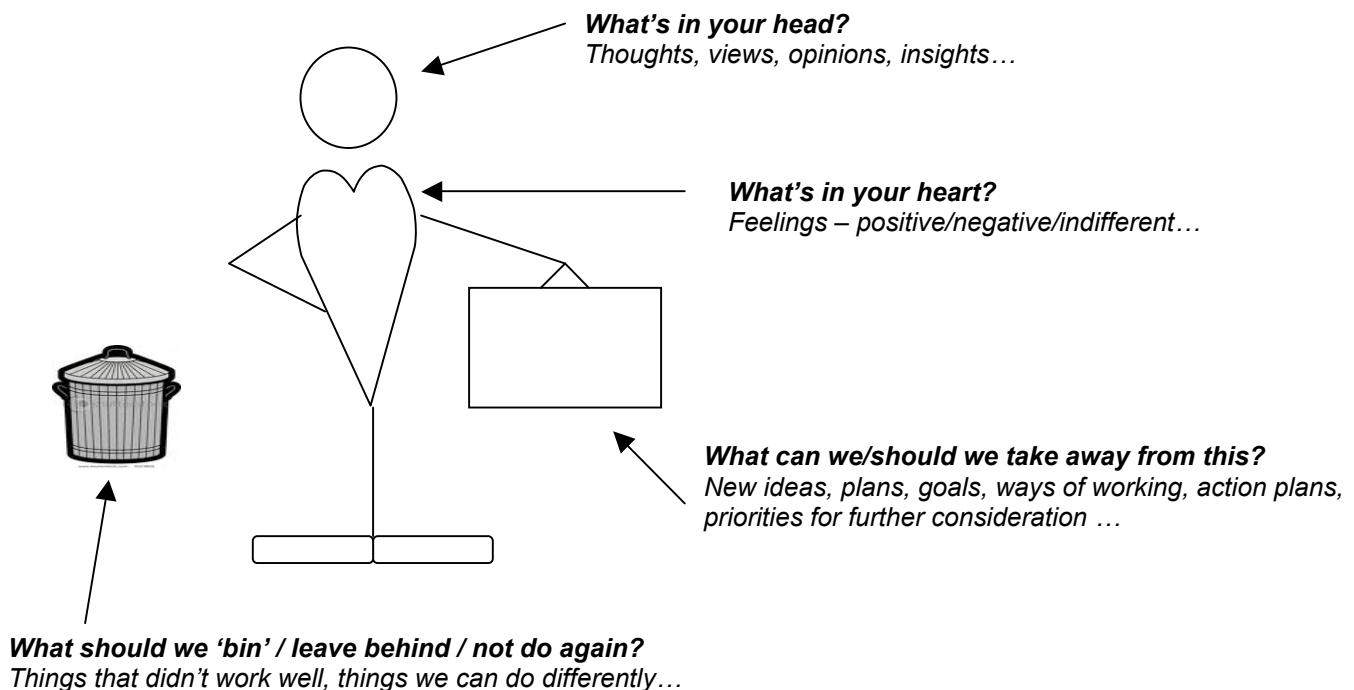
- Complement the extensive internal documentation and evaluation undertaken by OFVM throughout the course of the project.
- Create an opportunity for the artists to share their views and experiences of the project with an independent person that had not been involved in its management or delivery.
- Facilitate a process of reflection that would capture the artists' opinions and feelings about the project process and content and how it has impacted on their personal and professional development.

3. Evaluation methodology.

The evaluation began with the artists spending a morning together with OFVM staff and support workers 'refreshing memories' on the content, process and achievements of each stage of the project by looking at photographs, films and through conversation. This was followed by a 2-hour session, facilitated by the external evaluator, which focused on four distinct areas related to the project process, content and impact:

- The recruitment and selection process.
- Arts training opportunities.
- Personal and professional development.
- Future aspirations.

Four large sheets of paper were displayed around the room, each detailing one of the above headings and a diagram which invited responses on thoughts, feelings, experiences and ways forward, as illustrated below:



The meeting included whole group, small group and individual working, enabling the artists to share their experiences, views and opinions on each of the 4 subject areas. Findings for each area are presented in tables in Section 4 below, which present both individual comments and information generated from group discussion. Please note that the information shared by the artists is presented exactly as was given (verbally or written).

The artists were then asked to complete a feedback sheet and these findings are presented in Section 5 below.

4. Findings from facilitated meeting.

The Recruitment and selection process:	
<p>'Head'</p> <p>(Thoughts, views, opinions...)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "The application process was quite easy" • "Support from OFVM was good... they took photos of our artwork, visited us at home, gave us support to be able to apply for the course" • "It's important to me that I know in advance about all my commitments, that my support worker is aware, family aware and myself aware and day services so support can be planned. We have busy lives. When we commit to something we don't want to change it. We all felt it was managed well by OFVM".
<p>'Heart'</p> <p>(Feelings...)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Felt excited when I got the email saying I'd got a place. • Felt important. • Felt fantastic. • Felt good. • Made me feel I wanted to put hard work into it because I'd been successful.
<p>'Bin'</p> <p>(What didn't work well / what are we leaving behind / what could have been done differently)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "In the past people wouldn't appreciate my artwork. They would touch my prints with their fingers. I am leaving behind 'putting up with people not valuing my artwork". • Leaving behind low confidence as artists.
<p>'Suitcase'</p> <p>(What are taking forward?)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excitement for the course ahead. • Some new connections with artists, others and some more strengthened connections. • More fussy now about my art. I consider it very important and don't like it if anyone touches my artwork. • Happy about other people's work. • Do more now. Go out for walks to stay healthy. • A new interest in technical possibilities, including digital skills. • An interest in shadows and light, texture, photography, the fairground. • Artistic inspiration. • Doing a lot more painting including at Day Service. • Buying new equipment. Before the course had some old cameras (8mm, VHS, Hi8), since getting a place on the course bought on ebay new professional equipment [including] sony camera, external microphone. • Taking forward new skills of how to buy equipment.

Arts Training:	
<p>'Head'</p> <p>(Thoughts, views, opinions...)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New challenges. • New skills, new painting techniques, animation, blue screen, cameras, editing my own work, writing story board. • Seeing other artists' work. • Business cards. • Town Hall exhibition. • Visiting Brookes University and Modern Art Oxford. • Creative exchange event. • New opportunities. • "Seeing the installations inspired my own work on installations" • New techniques.
<p>'Heart'</p> <p>(Feelings...)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helped me do better work. • I like showing my work to people, it made me feel good about myself. • Positive training of art. • I felt very proud of showing my work at the exhibition. • Interesting. • I felt it was interesting looking at other artists' work. • Inspirations from others' work. • Like meeting professional artists. • Feels good people seeing our work: over 3000 at exhibitions and web.
<p>'Bin'</p> <p>(What didn't work well / what are we leaving behind / what could have been done differently)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nervousness. • Previous life. • Bad things in life.
<p>'Suitcase'</p> <p>(What are taking forward?)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New skills. • Professional presentation. • A lot more motivated. • Can now edit work without help. • Can now write without help. • More independent. • Made me want to do more. • Inspiring others. • Sell work. • I know what I want to do in the future. • Recognition by professional artists.

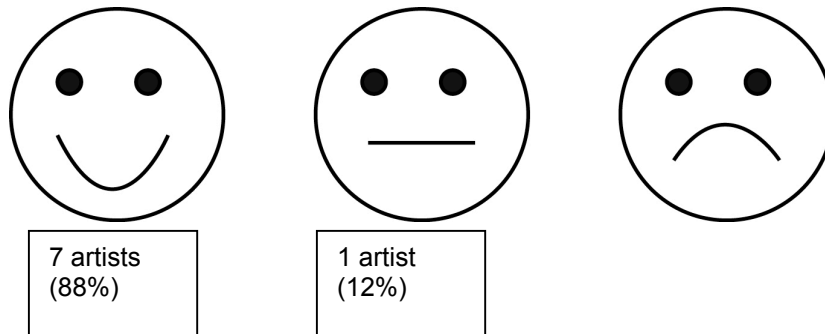
Personal and professional development:	
<p>'Head'</p> <p>(Thoughts, views, opinions...)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travel independently on the bus. • Support staff more involved and more skilful in giving the professional support that the artists need. • Everyone in the group has found individual style / voice as an artist.
<p>'Heart'</p> <p>(Feelings...)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good and fantastic. • Positive. • Proud. • Enthusiastic. • Excellent. • Happy and fun. • Motivated to come to course. • Can ignore noises and things that irritate. More focus. • Feel on crest of something important. An arts group. A movement.
<p>'Bin'</p> <p>(What didn't work well / what are we leaving behind / what could have been done differently)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaving behind staying in bed and not doing much. • Dishonesty. • Ignoring weather barriers. More incentive to overcome barriers.
<p>'Suitcase'</p> <p>(What are taking forward?)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being part of a group 'the Shadow Light artists' • Taking forward a loyalty to the Shadow Light group and a feeling that it is something important, a learning disability arts group. This feeling has been instilled by Chris. That our group is important. "One lady at the exhibition only focussed on my work. I explained to her that I wanted her to appreciate the whole group. I liked the lady making comments about my work, but didn't like her ignoring everyone else's work". • Getting the professional support I need. • More of a professional relationship. • Seeing more of your friends. • Friendships. • Used to get brought to the project, now travel independently. • Support staff skilled up to give the support the artists need, which is very important in terms of the artists working independently/at home /outside of project sessions. • New digital equipment, internet, email, ability to do own editing, big external hard drive, professional work, a website. • Getting paid work as an artist for My Life My Choice and Dada South.

Future aspirations:	
<p>'Head'</p> <p>(Thoughts, views, opinions...)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think I want to have my own business – a diner that sells my artwork. • Think it is possible to be a professional artist. • Think its possible but difficult to make films, time is a factor.
<p>'Heart'</p> <p>(Feelings...)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feel the future is bright. • Feel I want the group to stay together. • Feel we can do more stuff together, more films, more editing, more artwork. • Show people what we can do in life. • Belief. • Fantastic. • Excellent. • Feel proud about our future as artists.
<p>'Bin'</p> <p>(What didn't work well / what are we leaving behind / what could have been done differently)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not leaving internet on all night, more environmentally aware. • Coming in late. • Old equipment. • Feelings of anger and being controlled by others. • Voluntary work, not being paid. • Paperwork. • Uncontrolled. • Doesn't use Word doc any more when writing scripts, uses BBC professional scriptwriting software.
<p>'Suitcase'</p> <p>(What are taking forward?)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start something new and fresh. • Want to sell work. • Want to be more involved in home town (Wallingford) and make films about the town and local people. • All of the artists have developed ideas for making future work and these ideas have been included in a new Arts Council funding application. • Sale of work. • Being paid as an artist. • Offered more exhibitions (The Jam Factory, West Oxford Community Centre). • Hope to secure funding for continued production of new artwork (ACE Unlimited strand, a project for 2012).

5. Findings from the Artist feedback sheet.

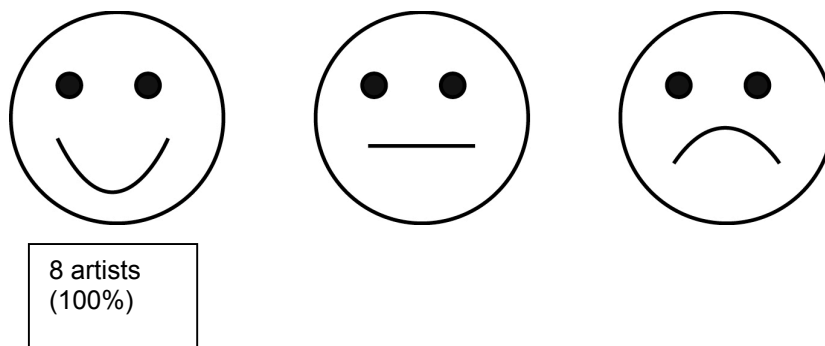
The feedback sheet was completed and returned by all 8 artists. The findings are presented below, in accordance with the number of artists agreeing with each statement and as a percentage of total forms returned.

Accessibility of the application process:



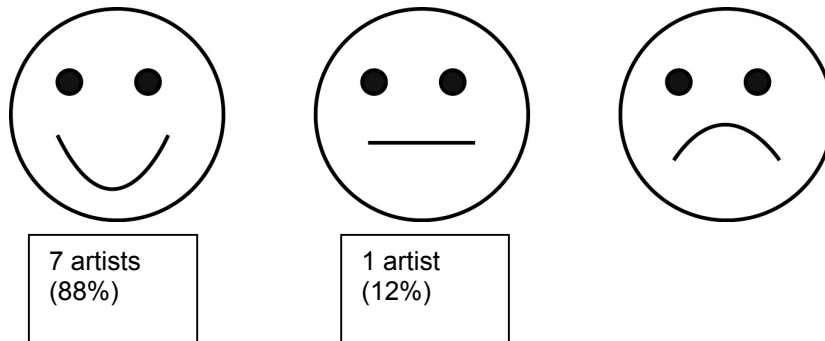
7 out of the 8 artists found the application process fully accessible and one artist found it satisfactory. This demonstrates that OFVM was successful in developing and implementing an accessible recruitment and selection process for the artists with a diverse range of learning disabilities.

Support provided by OFVM during the application stage:



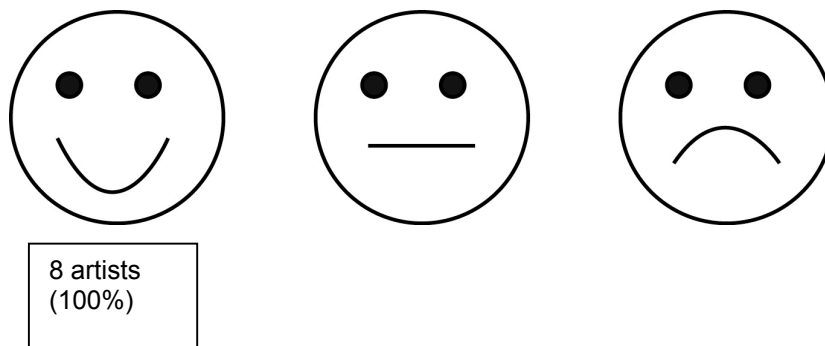
All of the artists were fully satisfied with the support received from OFVM during their application for a place on the programme. This demonstrates that the support provided by OFVM (which included home visits, supporting with the photographing and collation of artworks, preparation for interview etc) was appropriate and relevant for artists with a learning disability.

Professional development support provided by the professional artists delivering the programme:



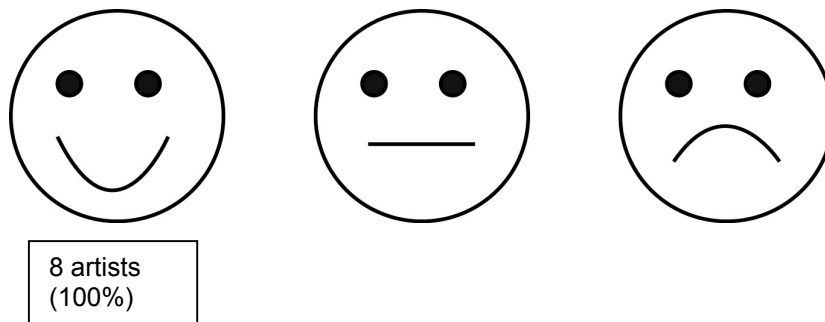
7 out of the 8 artists agreed that the professional artists, contracted by OFVM to deliver the programme, had successfully met their professional development needs. One artist felt the professional development support was satisfactory. This demonstrates that OFVM was successful in contracting appropriately skilled professional artists, able to deliver professional development opportunities bespoke to the needs of artists with learning disability.

Recognition of artistic talent (by OFVM, the artists and support workers working for OFVM):



All 8 of the artists felt their talents as artists are recognized by OFVM, and the artists and support workers working for OFVM. This demonstrates that OFVM was successful in branding and delivering the programme as a distinct professional development programme for talented artists, and not an 'entry level' participatory project.

Practical support provided by OFVM during the programme (help with travel, practical arrangements, access support etc):



All 8 of the artists were highly satisfied with the practical support provided by OFVM during the programme. This demonstrates that OFVM was successful in providing an appropriate balance of support that ensured the artists did not experience practical barriers to their full involvement whilst also promoting independence.

Progression in relation to understanding of issues to do with ‘the arts world’ / arts organisations / being a professional artist:

Before the project:

Very low	Low	OK/reasonable	High	Very high
1 artist	1 artist	4 artists	1 artist	1 artist

At the end of / as a result of the project:

Very low	Low	OK/reasonable	High	Very high
0 artist	0 artist	1 artist	0 artist	7 artists

Prior to the programme one artist felt their understanding of issues related to the arts world / being a professional artist was very low, 1 artist felt their understanding was low, 4 artists OK/reasonable and one artist, very high. At the end of the programme, one artist felt their understanding had progressed from very low to OK and the remaining 7 artists rated their understanding of issues related to being a professional artist as ‘very high’. This finding demonstrates that the arts training, introduction and exposure to key ‘workings’ of the arts world and building of arts networks, facilitated by OFVM, was successful in supporting the artists’ progression as professional artists.

Progression in relation to confidence in abilities and potential as an artist:

Before the project:

Very low	Low	OK/reasonable	High	Very high
1 artist	1 artist	1 artist	4 artists	1 artist

At the end of / as a result of the project:

Very low	Low	OK/reasonable	High	Very high
0 artist	0 artist	0 artists	1 artist	7 artists

Prior to the programme, the artists had mixed levels of confidence in their abilities as professional artists. One artist rated their confidence as very low, 1 artist as low, 1 artist as OK/reasonable, 4 as high and one artist as very high. At the end of the programme, one artist had progressed to a high level of confidence and the remaining 7 artists rated their confidence level as very high. This demonstrates that the programme was

successful in progressing confidence and supporting the artists to recognize their potential as professional artists.

Things the artists didn't like about the programme or would like OFVM to change or do differently in the future:

Six of the artists returning the form said they were entirely happy with the programme. One artist suggested that OFVM could play music in the background during artistic sessions. One artist was unhappy about being interrupted by other artists on the programme when trying to speak: "speaking for myself is very important and being encouraged to".

6. Achievement of project aims.

The evaluation found that OFVM has successfully achieved each of its project aims, as detailed in its ACE, Grants for the Arts, proposal¹.

Project aim:	Evidence of achievement:
Support artists, with a learning disability, to develop their practice and realise their artistic potential.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 artists with a learning disability successfully completed the Flash Frame professional development programme. • All 8 artists received technical training and support to develop new skills. • At least 2 of the artists independently purchased new equipment, enabling them to extend their practice, further to technical advice received from OFVM. • All 8 artists successfully produced a body of new work including final films and visual artworks exhibited at Oxford Town Hall gallery and online.
Support artists, with a learning disability, to develop their understanding of the arts infrastructure and funding system, build their network and understanding of exhibition/distribution opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All 8 artists said they benefited from engaging with arts professionals at Oxford Brookes University, Modern Art Oxford and OVADA (Oxford's Visual Arts Development agency). • All 8 artists have actively engaged with the process of publicly presenting their work (at a Creative Exchange event held at MAO, exhibition at Oxford Town Hall gallery, and online). • The artists have submitted a funding application to the ACE Unlimited strand (a project for 2012). One of the artists attended a funding information forum and has been voted by the group as the 'voice' representing their views on this application.

¹ It is important to note that details relating to OFVM's achievement of the project aims are informed **only** by the data elicited at the facilitated evaluation meeting involving participant artists. It is therefore reasonable to consider that OFVM has extensive further evidence and detail of the programme's achievements.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final feedback form evidences progression in all 8 artists in relation to their understanding of issues to do with 'the arts world' / arts organisations / being a professional artist
Increase the number of accessible professional development opportunities for learning disabled artists in Oxfordshire.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Achieved through the range and quality of opportunities offered throughout the 2-year programme (including workshops for the 15 artists initially shortlisted, followed by the full programme of opportunities for the 8 selected artists).
Increase the number of learning disabled artists producing new artwork in Oxfordshire. Raise the profile of, and develop audiences for, the work of learning disabled artists in Oxfordshire.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8 artists with learning disability in Oxfordshire produced new artwork for public audiences. Audiences of 3000+ at Oxford Town Hall exhibition and online gallery.
Identify alternatives to the traditional gallery space for public presentation of work (including on-line opportunities).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All of the 8 artists have their own web page / online gallery/presentation of work. Presence on YouTube, Facebook.
Build on its experience of working with artists with learning disabilities and deliver a programme of tailor made opportunities that respond to the identified needs of potential participant artists.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive feedback from the participant artists noting the quality of access and practical support, management and artistic delivery provided by OFVM.

7. Conclusions.

The external evaluation does not set out to provide a robust analysis of the Flash Frame Project or a critique of the artwork produced. Rather, it aims to complement the internal documentation and evaluation undertaken by OFVM by creating an opportunity for the artists to share their views and experiences of the project, with an independent person that has not been involved in its management or delivery. The facilitated process of reflection captured the artists' opinions and feelings about the project and how it has impacted on their personal and professional development, confidence and future aspirations.

The passion and enthusiasm of the 8 artists who have successfully completed the programme (now known collectively as The Shadow Light artists) was tangible during the evaluation meeting. The views, experiences and feelings they shared revealed a strong sense of personal pride and achievement, a sense of value for the group as a whole and a genuine appreciation for the support and opportunities enabled to them by OFVM.

In terms of personal pride and achievement, it was evident that the artists recognized being granted a place on the programme as a personal achievement (OFVM received 30 applicants for just 8 places). All of the artists gave examples of how being selected to join the programme had made them feel "important", "fantastic", "excited" and motivated "to put hard work into it". One artist described "putting up with people not valuing his artwork" as a key thing he 'left behind' when he was awarded a place on the

programme. In the final feedback forms, all 8 of the artists said they felt their talents as artists are recognized by OFVM, and the artists and support workers working for OFVM.

Furthermore, as the artists reflected on the project content (artistic and technical training, building of arts networks, exposure to other artists' work, engagement with professional artists and arts organizations etc) it was evident that they had fully taken on board the ambitions of the project and understood it as a professional development programme for artists.

These findings are indicative of OFVM's success in branding all aspects of the project as an investment in the personal and professional development of talented artists with a learning disability – and not an entry-level participatory project.

In terms of personal development, the evaluation found that the project has had a positive impact. Each of the 8 artists shared personal examples including traveling to project sessions independently and overcoming personal barriers that previously impaired their development as artists, such as poor weather, distracting noises or lacking motivation. In relation to personal confidence in their abilities as artists, at the end of the programme, one artist felt their confidence had progressed to a high level. The remaining 7 artists felt their confidence had progressed to a very high level. This demonstrates that the programme was successful in building confidence and supporting the artists to recognize their potential as professional artists.

In terms of professional development and future aspirations, the feedback indicates that each of the artists has significantly developed their individual artistic style and “found their voice as an artist” – as demonstrated through the final works presented at Oxford Town Hall Gallery and online. The evaluation also found examples of the artists purchasing new digital media equipment and resources to enable them to extend their practice independently, and securing exhibitions, mentoring opportunities, training programmes and paid work outside of the opportunities offered by OFVM. The artists shared aspirations to sell their own work more widely, set up their own businesses, “show people what we can do in life” and “leave behind feelings of being controlled by others”.

As a direct result of the project the group have set up as a constituted group. It is clear that the project has fostered a strong sense of value for the group as a whole and a determination for it “stay together” and continue to develop. The artists feel inspired by the ‘Shadow Light Artists Group’ and describe feeling “on the cusp of something important happening – a learning disability arts group or movement”.

Each artist has been inspired to continue to develop their practice and formulate new artistic ideas that stretch beyond this particular programme. These ideas form the basis of a funding application, which has been submitted to ACE's ‘Unlimited’ strand (a project for 2012).

In conclusion, the externally facilitated meeting with the Shadow Light artists, found that OFVM has been successful in its management and delivery of the Flash Frame project and that the programme has had a highly positive impact on the personal and professional development of the eight, Oxfordshire based, artists involved.